It’s never too late to be fashionably late

The H&Mification of Oslo

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IV
Abstract

From 2010 to the present, a different, more fashion-conscious air has arguably been blowing into the capital of Norway; socio-culturally, media-wise and above all as a performed and visual part of the city’s everyday life. Namely, in the shape of the increasingly fashionable way young citizens dress themselves. However, and as argued throughout this thesis, the most notable change over the last few years has been the increasing commercial input from acclaimed design-neighbour Sweden: eight Swedish retail brands opening fourteen new stores within the city centre of Oslo between 2008 and 2015. In short, the shopping topography has changed, and our sartorial habits with them. Or so it seems.

Taking my subjective observation, as well as the factual alterations above as my point of departure, I constructed the thesis by thinking the two together, asking the following questions: Why is the style and dress-practise of young, female Oslo citizens arguably more oriented towards international fashion ideals now than a few years ago? Might the change in dress code relate to the recent implementation of trendy, Swedish retail stores? And further, if there is a link between the two, what makes Swedish retail fashion particularly appealing to young Norwegian customers apart from the uplifting price tag?

Based on extensive empirical research, I found the young and ‘fashionable’ to unanimously prefer Weekday, Monki and COS, as the H&M-subsidiaries made them feel unique and different. Thus in the end, the thesis came down to dissecting a paradox: How had a mass producing mega company managed to position itself as the one, trustworthy broadcaster of ‘unique’ and ‘different’ fashion? My guess: through dressing monoculture in camouflage and similarity as difference. Analyzing the H&M Group’s aesthetic-didactic aptitude as an incident of micro cultural imperialism, I turned to Tod Hartman’s analyses of the imperialist powers of related company Ikea, changing his highly critical and essentially negatively imbued term Ikeaization into the ambivalent, yet less condemning H&Mification.

Through a novel body of empirical research, this thesis contributes to filling a gap in fashion academe, as research on the high street remains curiously limited even in the face of unprecedented fashion democratization. Further, conducting an analysis of Norwegian fashion as a contemporary, everyday practice, I frame two topics not yet researched: Norwegian fashion as a practiced phenomenon – as opposed to one designed and manufactured – and one too contemporary to yet having been granted its own scholarly account. In so doing, I finally venture to make a contribution to a field but sparingly
researched within Norwegian academe, and to a discipline not yet established here: fashion studies.
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Introduction

‘At the intersection of modernity and the everyday, mass-culture has contributed to both the ordinariness and the extraordinariness of fashion.’¹

Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark

Moving back to Oslo in 2010 after a one year stay in the notorious fashion hot bed London,² I noticed a change: Instead of finding myself back in a town of decent, but soberly dressed compatriots – parka jackets and Nike tights³ – I was surprised to find the contrary: people were, in want of a better word, looking better. More fashionable. Sharper, cleaner and more oriented towards international style ideals. What had happened? Had the scales fallen from my eyes as I had been away? Had the sartorial edicts of the new armada of fashion bloggers become common knowledge? Or had other unknown fashion industrial occurrences started to guide peoples’ looks in novel and more sophisticated ways?

This highly subjective observation formed the basis of my thesis: the personal experience of a remarkably swift and ‘general’ ‘style upgrading’ unfolding in Oslo from 2010 to the present. The spread of one homogeneous ‘look’ increasingly in tune with the consecrated ideals of the international fashion system.⁴ A notion amongst others shared with one of the leading real estate developers in Oslo, Carl Erik Krefting, saying: The Norwegian economy is strong (…) and we see that Norwegians have become far more fashion- and quality conscious than they were earlier.’(2012, my translation).⁵ Yet, however international the ‘looks’ of the young and ‘fashionable’ – and however diverse and multifaceted the Oslo shopping scenario had become – the exponents of the new style still looked like Weekday⁶ advertorials in motion rather than reflections of Oslo’s constantly expanding body of shopping alternatives.

³ As an example, the number of participants in the Oslo run Sentrumsløpet increased from 1700 to 10 000 between 2008 and 2013. Alexandra K. Djupesland, “Påmeldingsboom for sentrumsløpet,” Hioa.journalen.no, May 20, 2013, http://journalen.hioa.no/journalen/Sport/2013/04/22/påmeldingsboom-for-sentrumsløpet.
⁴ For explanation of the fashion system and being ‘fashionable’, see page 3.
⁶ Weekday is one of the subsidiaries of H&M.
Taking the ‘Weekday-look’ as my cue, I discovered three correlations: Firstly, the timespan of the ‘new look’ overlapped with the implementation of new Swedish retail stores: Gina Tricot: 2008, Monki: 2008 and 2009, Weekday: 2009 and COS: 2013 and 2014. Secondly, looking at the stores’ offerings, and back at the young and ‘fashionable’, the promoted and enacted ‘looks’ appeared strikingly similar. Thirdly, all the actors except Gina Tricot were not only affordable, design intensive and highly concept conscious brands, but daughter firms of one giant retail company: H&M. I thus posed the following main research question: Have the recent implementation of the new Swedish retail brands helped facilitate a ‘style upgrading’ through the offering of affordable and trend conscious, yet similar designs? And subsequently: If finding that the young and ‘fashionable’ do embrace the Swedish newcomers, as spearheaded by the H&M firms, exactly what make these brands appealing? According to the young and ‘fashionable’? In light of relevant diffusion/ consumer theory?

Putting the thesis into play, I asked two further questions: How to objectively define the ‘fashionable’? And further; how to methodologically and theoretically link the emergence of a more ‘fashionable’ demography to the simultaneous emergence of new Swedish retail stores?

Mounted on top of the thesis’ key data, I found that the respondents did prefer the daughter firms of H&M above all other shopping alternatives. Even more strikingly, instead of lamenting economic limitations and stylistic homogeneity, they stressed the brands’ ‘unique’ and ‘different’ qualities. Thus, the thesis’ concluding chapter came to deal with a paradox: How had the subsidiaries of one, singular mega company, selling versions of one ‘look’, managed to come off as the facilitator of unique and different styles?

I realized I was not looking at the local diffusion of high street fashion anymore, as much as at an instance of micro cultural imperialism. Subsequently, I turned to Tod Hartman’s theorizing on the imperialist powers of the similar company Ikea. Modifying his term Ikeaziation into the related H&Mification, I lastly argue how a similar, yet differently distributed monoculture, might spread through camouflaging stylistic similarity with conceptual difference. And moreover, how an incident of cultural imperialism is not bound to be an act of solely negative ramifications if counterbalanced by heightened levels of cultural awareness.

7 The low price retail company Gina Tricot arguably shows up a less complex brand identity than the H&M subsidiaries. For instance, while their website is filled with flirtatious models under the heading ‘Set Vacation Free’ and the link to Instagram, Weekday’s boasts models with ‘normal’ bodies; ambiguous gender types and a link to their company “i.d.” putting ‘feminism’ on the agenda. See http://www.ginatricot.com/no/no/start, accessed May 15, 2016, and http://shop.weekday.com/de/, accessed May 09, 2016.
Thus, as the very framing of the hypothesis demanded empirical research to gain footing, this chapter first discusses the preliminary findings that set the stage for the rest of the thesis.

In the second part, I present the literature review. As research on high street fashion proved limited, the overview introduces the thesis’ interconnected areas of enquiry and the theoretical gaps I found when pursuing them: the missing academic interest in high street fashion, the success of Swedish retail brands as spearheaded by H&M and Oslo, Norway as a site of fashion scholarly production. It thus serves three main purposes: It briefly introduces the field of fashion studies and the concept of fashion, it closes in on the missing academic interest in high street fashion, and it presents the few works that contextualize the current diffusion of high street fashion: mainly that of Sophie Woodward and Rachel Lifter.

Finally, I state the thesis’ aims and objectives before I present the thesis’ chapters and their individual content.

**Something fashionable is stirring: Oslo 2010-2013**

When embarking on the thesis 2013, it was far from the most obvious time to address the Norwegian field of fashion as a flourishing one: The Norwegian Fashion Institute (NFI) had just lost its governmental support (2012) after four years of existence, the founder of Oslo Fashion Week Pål Vassbotn was threatening to shut down his long-fought-for design platform (2013) and the most merited fashion educational system – even though reinstalled in eligible locations at the new National Academy of The Arts (KHIO) (2007) – had yet to spawn designers or brands with long-lasting careers, healthy turnover or national or international impact. Simultaneously the few successful key players of recent years, except for Moods of Norway, had ended their careers or ventured into other projects. Arne & Carlos being the most eclectic example, moving from fashion design to hand knitted Christmas balls, Easter bunnies and internationally best-selling hobby books.

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8 The discussion of theory is moved to the joint methodology and theory chapter as it serves the role as tool of analyses.
10 The future of Oslo Fashion Week laid out by Vassbotn at the meeting announcing the end of NFI back in 2013. I am indebted of this insight to then project manager of Fashion Fokus, Siw Andersen. OFW had been heavily criticized throughout its existence, amongst others by designer Veronica B. Vallenes, stating: ‘(It) doesn’t attract buyers or international press in the same way as Copenhagen Fashion Week does.’ Dorothea Gundtoft, *Fashion Scandinavia: Contemporary Cool* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 229.
However, even if the Norwegian governmental relationship to fashion did not reflect new and progressive attitudes, fashion still not being actively promoted as an important post-industrial business in spite of the political decree that helped erect NFI, a different, more fashion-conscious air was arguably blowing into the capital of Norway: commercially, media-wise, and above all, as a performed and visual part of the city’s everyday life. Namely, in the shape of the increasingly ‘fashionable’ way young citizens dressed themselves.

‘Fashionable’ here refers to a style and a clothing-practise distinctly in tune with the trends, brands and garments as promoted and consecrated by what Kawamura calls the international fashion system: the nexus of influential fashion designers, brands, editors, photographers, magazines, bloggers and other fashion leaders connected to the star studded part of the wider popular culture.\(^\text{12}\) A system that – with particular importance regarding young, Norwegian dress practice – is increasingly succumbing to the modern capitalist demand for ‘cool’ luxury clothes at less expensive price rates. Meaning that retail brands such as Zara and H&M have been sanctioned as legitimate fashion, not only by consumers, but by the high end of the fashion industry.\(^\text{13}\) A feature of the business stretching back to the last twenty-to-fifteen years, as detailed in Chapter 1, yet a fairly recent reality to hit the shopping topography of Oslo\(^\text{14}\) – a term that I specifically coined to underscore the spatial, cultural and socio-institutional proximity that tie the shops and brands within a given urban milieu together, as well as to their customers.\(^\text{15}\)

However, the city’s shopping topography and level of store-diversity, has been changing:\(^\text{16}\) The opening of a Zara flagship store in 2008 was a first herald of the increased access to fast, cheap and design intensive fashion, while the establishment of Oslo ‘fashion district’\(^\text{17}\) some four years later, introduced a new plethora of bona fide luxury brand stores like Mulberry, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Bottega Veneta and several others. Simultaneously, the


\(^{14}\) Norway has neither had the British fashion retail-innovators like Top shop, Marks & Spencer nor American chains like Urban Outfitters and American Apparel, nor Japanese Uniqlo. Until recently, neither affordable yet high end-aspiring chains like Zara and COS were a part of the cityscape. In short, H&M was the only big retail player living up to the ’fashion system demands’ of attractive, desirable and cheap fashion until recently.

\(^{15}\) Topography: ‘the physical or natural features of an object or entity and their structural relationships.’ Merriam Webster accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/topography.

\(^{16}\) For the outline of the shopping topography of ‘Central Oslo’, see Chapter 3, x.

\(^{17}\) Line Kaspersen, “Luksusboom I Norge: Nå får Norge sitt eget ‘fashion district’.”
new department store Eger (2009), located right in the middle of Oslo’s main shopping street,18 implemented new brands and strategies to push the luxury segment forward.19

However, in terms of unleashing not only new and fashionable products, but complete fashionable styles into the Oslo shopping topography, the most significant change over the last few years, as argued throughout the thesis, has been the increasing commercial and cultural input from acclaimed design-neighbour Sweden. Since 2008, eight Swedish retail brands have opened fourteen new stores within the city centre of Oslo: Gina Tricot, Monki, Weekday, MQ20 and COS represents the low- to just below mid-price newcomers, while the mid-market brands Tiger of Sweden, Filippa K and Acne opened new branches clustered together in the new exclusive ‘fashion district’.21 H&M opened another Flagship store on the nearby shopping street of Bogstadveien, and yet another shop on the main shopping street. Rounding up the list of alterations, Danish mid-market brands Ganni, Malene Birger, Birger Et Mikkelsen and Samsøe and Samsøe also opened their first stores in central Oslo (and Norway), while the Norwegian chain store Bik Bok – low priced and design savvy – launched three new branches. In sum: fourteen new Swedish stores; five of the retail concepts being brand new on the Norwegian market, as opposed five brand new Danish and five22 additional Norwegian23 – New assets of a city outspokenly keen to brush up on its commercial makeup.

In tandem with the increased access to fashion as local consumption, the last few years have seen an equal increased access to fashion as mediation. Over the past seven years, a plethora of new Norwegian fashion- and life style magazines have entered the market including Stylemag, Woman, Wixen, Personae, Smug, Stella and Tableau.24 In addition, the newspaper Dagens Næringsliv successfully launched the Friday magazine D2 (2007); arguably the single most important event as its distilled, cool and dedicated lifestyle reporting has served to lift fashion onto the breakfast tables of both women and men. Furthermore, a

18 For a verbal outline of the Oslo shopping topography, see page 38.
19 The Close-by competitors, Steen & Strøm and Paleet, were upgraded and rebranded in 2014.
20 MQ, unlike the other newcomers, is not a branded store, but a multi-brand store and thus not a conveyor of a coherent design concept.
21 All the already had older counterparts in the elegant, nearby shopping street Bogstadveien.
22 See the end of footnote below.
24 Later magazines notably include amongst others PS. and Recens Paper.
few Oslo-based fashion-gearied websites made their mark, such as Smuglesning.no, Oslonights.no and Min.mote.no while fashion blogging went skyrocketing with local crusaders Styledevil and Vanilla Scent, and later international ambassadors like A Portable Package, Hippy Hippy Milkshake and Hanneli Mustaparta. The rapidly increasing amount of ‘local’ fashion media serves to underscore, not only the increased access to fashion information, but the gradual acceptance of fashion into the Norwegian public discourse – even if still lacking the critical interest granted other (pop)cultural expressions like film and music. In sum: not knowing about fashion was getting harder.

**Literature Review: Framing neglected fields of research**

“There has been a general tendency to ignore and neglect institutional factors in the discussions of fashion production.”

Yuniya Kawamura

**Introducing fashion studies**

Writing about fashion, I do so within the particular academic framework of fashion studies. A by now well established discipline, fashion studies is made up of the intersected areas of amongst others art history, sociology, social anthropology, ethnography, design history, history of economics and cultural studies. In the process of inaugurating the field, scholars have trailed the history of shifting clothes and styles, and the rise of fashion in its modern sense. They have assessed the role of clothes – and in particular that of fashion – in the social construction of identity; class, age and gender and further surveyed fashion’s inextricable linkage to the driving forces of modernity: industrialization, urbanization, capitalism and mass media. Not to forget, scholars have discussed and negotiated fashion’s uneasy positioning between art and commerce, elitism and democracy, symbol and commodity. To sum up, fashion studies have dealt, and continue to deal, with human

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30 See expanded comment on fashion next page and footnote 37.
behaviour as reflected, pushed and controlled by our need and desire to face the world in a state of dress. As aptly remarked by Elizabeth Wilson: ‘dress (still) is the frontier between the self and the not-self.’

Yet, even as a phenomenon inseparable from modernity, dress and fashion has been, and still is, a marginalized field of academic interest. Lou Taylor writes:

(c)lothes’, especially those related to Western European feminine fashions, were considered to be a frivolous and ephemeral characteristic of society. As such, to study them would therefore be to trivialize history itself and the subject was seen as an unworthy vehicle of ‘serious’ academic research.

Or as epitomized by Gilles Lipovetsky: ‘The question of fashion is not a very fashionable one among intellectuals.’ However and happily, the field has found itself flourishing over the past two decades.

Existing research on high street fashion

In this thesis I overridingly adhere to Kawamura’s conceptualization of fashion, as she does not only draw a useful line between the immaterial phenomenon ‘fashion’ and ‘fashion clothing’ (the material it is made from), but as she analyzes it as a ‘system of institutions’. Befitting my hypothesis, she amongst others draws attention to the complex socio-institutional mechanisms embedded in the diffusion of fashion: i.e., ‘(…) the spread of fashion within and across social systems.’ Further explaining, she writes: ‘Diffusion theories of fashion can focus on individuals, which can give a small-scale analyses, or on institutions, which is a systematic, large-scale approach.’ As already stated, this small-scale study encompasses both consumers and institutions, yet closes in on the institution’s power to implement style.

31 Significant works of different scholarly aim and origin amongst others include Thorstein Veblen’s *Conspicuous Consumption* (1899, sociology/ economic theory), J. C. Flügel’s *Psychology of Clothes* (1930, psychology), Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of style* (1979, sociology/ cultural studies), Elizabeth Wilson’s *Adorned in Dreams* (1985 women’s studies/ cultural studies), Christopher Breward’s numerous contributions (see amongst other *The culture of Fashion*, 1995 cultural history/ fashion history) as well as those made by fashion studies scholars Caroline Evans and Valerie Steele (respectively, and amongst other, authors of *Fashion at the edge*, 2003 and founded/ editor in chief of the first critical, academic fashion publication *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* Est. 1997).


37 Ibid., 74.
According to fashion theory, new clothing styles only turn into the immaterial concept fashion when adopted by a dominant part of society: the fashion leaders and the followers. Only then, fashion’s modern function as mass movement and popular culture is put into play.

However, and oddly, even if the last ten years have seen an unprecedented acceptance of high street brands and designs into the realm of high fashion, the contemporary retail market’s effect on everyday clothing practice – the majority’s opportunity to partake in wearing the latest ‘consecrated’ styles – yet remains largely un-explored as a massive fashion historical advent. In fact, and as remarked by Sophie Woodward: ‘There is a notable absence of research into the high street as a mediator of new fashion styles, which forms a cultural backdrop to understanding and locating street style, as there are clear continuities in the fashion and styles between the two domains.’ Addressing the same absence, as well as providing one reason why, Rachel Lifter, in her account of London indie style (2012), states: ‘Within both waves of theorization (here referring to the CCCS’ research on subculture and post-subculture, (my parenthesis)) youth cultural styles are understood to be the product of the creativity of young people.’ Yet, ‘(t)he influence the fashion industry might have over these constructions is ignored.’ (My italics). Working to reverse the disparaged status of fashion as an everyday phenomenon, Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark add one further explanation: ‘(…) scholarship in fashion studies and fashion history has tended to focus on the avant-garde, the extraordinary, and the unusual, especially regarding its origin and design.’

Rightly, scholars such as Christopher Breward has detailed how cutting edge high street stores like Top Shop and Chelsea Girl were crucial in unleashing fashion into the British youth- and popular culture, as well as into the global market, from the 1960s onwards.

38 Marilyn Revell DeLong writes: ‘Theories of fashion distribution all have in common the identification of leaders and followers. The fashion leader often transmits a particular look by first adopting it and then communicating it to others. Fashion followers include large numbers of consumers who accept and wear the merchandise that has been visually communicated to them.’ Revell DeLong, “Fashion, theories of,” in The Berg Companion to Fashion, ed. Valerie Steele, (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 323. See also Taylor, The Study of Dress History, 1-2, 102 and Kawamura, 1-2, 79.


40 Tungate, Fashion Brands, x.


And more recently, Shinobu Majima – working from the field of economic history and consumer culture – has stretched the importance of the British high street into the present, portraying the fashion multiples’ role within the economy and the consumer society of post-war Britain. Yet, neither Breward nor Majima have extended their inquiry into how the new breed of highly design intensive and brand focused high street stores, as spearheaded by ‘chic destination store’ Topshop and as currently pushed by the H&M group, might visibly affect a consumer society’s level of fashion capital. A term coined by Agnes Rocamora and Joanne Entwistle that, borrowing its concept from Bourdieu, describes how fashion knowledge is adopted and worn as an important means of positioning oneself within a given milieu: i.e. ‘the capital specific to the field of fashion.’

Research on Swedish retail

Over the last decade, a few studies have carefully unpacked the design, branding and marketing strategies that have ushered Sweden into its current status as a fashion nation. At the forefront, and writing from the point of view of culture economy/ geography, Atle Hauge has surveyed the field, amongst others with Anders Malmberg and Dominic Power. Put together, their body of work provides poignant analyses of the leading Swedish fashion industry and its brand-focused ability ‘to put fashion into clothes’. With particular relevance for my hypothesis, Hauge, Malmberg and Power also argue how nurturing a design culture within a geographically close-knit and ‘dense socio-institutional milieu’ – as most prominently acted out in Stockholm – creates correspondingly close-knit cultures surrounding design, aesthetics and brand innovation. In short, they argue ‘that place does

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play a distinct role in processes of fashion branding and more generally in the creation of immaterial value.\textsuperscript{51} I.e., the elusive material that Kawamura argue is fashion per se.\textsuperscript{52}

Yet, even if making manifest the importance of geographical proximity in the making of fashion, none of these studies have looked at how the close-knit character of a design culture, as particularly nurtured by the H&M Group, might carry cross-border “transfer-value” at the stage of fashion diffusion. I.e. that the design cultural footprint of Stockholm/Sweden – if allowed to settle as a ‘full’ nexus of shops – might be both price-compatible and distinct enough to act as a unified taste-influencer on a par with Ikea; even without the physical roof to announce the national, cultural and aesthetic unity. A point I will return to in Chapter 2 when introducing Tod Hartman’s term \\textit{Ikeaization}. Finally, and re-stating the still inferior role ascribed to fashion within academe: Even if celebrated as a national pride,\textsuperscript{53} H&M – and the modern Swedish fashion industry – had yet to receive a full academic survey until the publication of economy historian Carina Gråbacke’s research on the fashion industry in Stockholm 1945-2010 (2015).\textsuperscript{54} Her account will serve as a guide to company-specific facts and numbers in Chapter 5.

**Norwegian fashion academe**

Lastly, turning to the minor academic body produced on fashion and dress in Norway, a few scholars have worked consistently over the last few decades. These include the art historian Anne Kjellberg; amongst others detailing the history of high fashion design in Oslo throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century; art historian Tone Rasch; amongst unraveling the troubled consolidation between Norwegian fashion designers, the textile industry and the arts and crafts community, and the extensive research done by ethnologist Ingun Grimstad Klepp; detailing clothes and consumer behavior, and recently: wool and sustainability. In addition, a few master theses have been conducted over the past few years concerning the absence of critical fashion journalism in Norwegian fashion magazines, Norwegian fashion designers, Norwegian Fashion blogs and the awareness of ethics in the consumption of fashion and clothing. However, apart from Anne Hambro Alnæs’ investigation of contemporary dress practice as ‘instruments of division and belonging’, what emerges is an almost non-existing

\textsuperscript{51} Hauge, Malmberg, Power, “The Spaces and Places of Swedish Fashion,” 527.
\textsuperscript{52} Kawamura, \\textit{Fashion-ology}, 1-2.
academic body on fashion as a current, practiced phenomenon. This, then, is the first study to address Norwegian fashion thus, and the first to use fashion studies as the academic vehicle through which to put the analysis into play.

High street fashion as fashion proper and the unique vintage

Turning to the few accounts that have treated the current impact of high street fashion, I re-introduce the aforementioned work of Sophie Woodward and Rachel Lifter. Not only as they afford proof of the missing debate, but as they provide valuable insights that further situate my thesis.

Based on a mass fashion observation (MFO), Woodward conducted her research in Nottingham through the Nottingham Trent University. Over the course of several years (2001-), students recorded the local shifts in styles and style groupings through photographs and interviews (700 in total). Through that body of data, the study’s aim was to remove the current myth of street style from the narrative of the subculture, and into a nexus of different arenas of fashion production as centred around the different loci of ‘the street’: the shops, the streets, the bars and the social web interlacing them. What she found was that streetstyle, even in the face of post-subculture, retained its power as a tool of distinction through the logic of ‘marginal differentiations’; ‘difference’ signified by the ‘unique’ sourcing of outfits rather than visibly ‘unique’ sartorial traits. And yet, even if the love of vintage was the catch phrase used to explain the preeminent means of acquiring ‘uniqueness’, ‘authenticity’ and what Alexandra Palmer would call ‘connoisseurship’, the study revealed that several respondents greatly valued the high street’s fashion offerings – even if you might end up having ‘(…) stuff that everyone’s got.’

As to be discussed in Chapter 4, Woodward recorded three tropes I would later run into: Vintage and other ‘alternative’ sampling (second hand shops, markets and jumble

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56 I have not been able to find an endpoint or a ‘concluding’ article on the study, also called The Fashion Map Project. See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/global-denim-project/sophiewoodward, accessed March 08, 2016.
57 Woodward, “The Myth of Street Style,” 83-84, 87, 89. Elaborating further, Woodward writes: ’Street style as an idea, phrase, practice and image can be located in numerous sites: as part of popular parlance, within media representations of fashion in the street sections of magazines, in outfits that are assembled, in exhibitions and academic accounts.’ 84.
sales) equalling ‘the unique’ and the high street both representing a cherished source of fashion, as well as one possibly making you look ‘the same as others’, as it is ‘mass-produced’. However and interestingly, Woodward’s respondents, as opposed to mine, disclosed marked ambivalence attached to flagging both sources as valid sites to procure fashion, even when admittedly – and happily – doing so.

However similar the observations, Woodward does not go into the vital question of which shops are perceived ‘cool’ and which less so. And even if asking the respondents what they are wearing and where they have bought their clothes, neither does she explore the aspect of why they shop where they shop? Woodward sheds light on the high street’s ability to deliver appreciated goods, and thus ‘fashion proper’, yet excludes how stores and brands might be perceived and valued differently. Also, and oddly, Woodward – even if opening her essay by acknowledging the high street’s vital position within the fashion system, and later questioning her respondents’ ‘blind’ adaptation of the ‘authenticity’-mythology attached to second hand sourcing – she still works through the negative rhetoric of the high street monopolizing on ‘alternative’ shopping sites such as second hand shops. Perhaps as a result of her respondents’ real if trend-driven ambivalence, and/or of unwittingly letting the polarized argument of preceding subcultural theorists like Ted Polhemus rub off. As a result, Woodward reproduces the by now outdated bias of vintage equalling ‘alternative’ versus the high street reading predatory mainstream; a theoretical rupture implicitly challenged by her own study, and as further contested by Rachel Lifter’s PhD thesis and my own research.

Turning to Rachel Lifter’s contribution to the field, she found several factors that help move the high street into a position of academic recognition, where my thesis proposes it to be. First, her indie-clad respondents – even if also preaching the ‘unique’ gospel of vintage – regarded mainstream shopping alternatives as viable input into their do-it-yourself, or DIY, clothing practice. Lifter’s research, as well as that of Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark (Old Clothes, New Looks, 2005), is the only one I have found that empirically challenges the strict, (fashion) scholarly divide between the high street read as ‘mainstream’, and second hand as a shorthand for ‘subculture’ and ‘authenticity’ – as most notably championed by Dick

60 “The Myth of Street Style,” 87-88. Woodward notes that ‘(...) 78% of the people interviewed stated that they regularly shopped in charity or second hand shops. As Chapter 5 will show: second hand sources clocked in second as the most preferred shopping destinations when counted together.
61 Ibid., 97.
62 Ibid., 89-90.
63 Ibid., 88.
Hebdidge, Ted Polhemus and even Woodward’s late research.\textsuperscript{64} Lifter writes: ‘No longer is popular fashion deemed the ‘Other’ against which ‘alternative’ cultures (such as second hand cultures) define themselves; instead, popular fashion trends and the stores, with which these trends are associated, are now understood to be ‘cool’ (or, at least acceptable).\textsuperscript{65}

Second, and also similarly to my findings, she found that her respondents distinguished between different strata of the high street, and that they – unanimously – regarded only a selected handful as attractive sites of procuring fashion – even in the fashion fair ground of London. The most preferred shops, which she coined the \textit{nexus of ‘cool’}, were – apart from multifarious sites of second hand shopping – Topshop (UK), American Apparel (US) and Urban Outfitters (US). Less frequently, respondents referred to Uniqlo (JAP), H&M (SE), Zara (ESP) and Primark (UK).\textsuperscript{66} As for the one quality making them the most attractive sites, Lifter compressed the shops’ common denominator as being ‘youthfully oriented’ as well as being able to actively align themselves with ‘notions of the ‘alternative’’.\textsuperscript{67} For instance, Topshop and Urban Outfitters were including vintage or vintage inspired-clothes into their regular stocks at the time, as well as fusing second hand market-like modes of display into their shop interiors. A strategy first noted by Angela McRobbie,\textsuperscript{68} and a technique still deployed by H&M daughter firm Weekday. American Apparel, on the other hand, rather infused their styles and brand image with loud tokens of ‘anti-fashion’, by Morna Laing deemed ‘porn-chic’\textsuperscript{69}. Through her indie-respondent’s conscious differentiation between high street stores, Lifter moves the once negative and polarized academic discourse surrounding the high street, into one of differences and appreciated qualities. One where certain brands and shops manage to stick their heads out of the once homogenously perceived mainstream through offering design intensive, yet above all highly concept conscious, shopping spaces and brand identities. Hence, although exploring the sartorial production of a fashion formation through the discourse of identity and youth/ subculture, Lifter – as one of the first – pinpoints the \textit{new} high street’s ability to produce low priced fashion that is

\textsuperscript{64} See Dick Hebdige’s \textit{Subculture: the meaning of style} (1979) and Ted Polhemus’ \textit{Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk} (1994), and the updated version, \textit{Streetstyle} (2010).
\textsuperscript{65} Rachel Lifter, draft of “Chapter 5: DIY dress practice and the relationship between secondhand garments and high street brands,” 21. The draft was given to me after I met her for an informal interview researching a thesis on retro styles. As its original structure embodies the findings most central to my thesis, I kept it as a reference.
\textsuperscript{66} On part of the analyses, however, she only discusses the three first as conveyers of the right breed of ‘alternative’ lifestyle. Lifter, draft of “Chapter 5,” 8-22.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 7.
designed and promoted to be both ‘alternative’ and ‘fashionable’; subcultural and mainstream, and perceived precisely thus. Yet again, even if Lifter thoroughly places indie within the wider fashion/ popular culture – calling it a ‘mainstream’ cultural formation70 – her scope does not include pondering the ramifications imbedded in the striking fact that the number of ‘cool’ or attractive stores boil down to a number of three, maximum seven, within a city of 8,6 million inhabitants.71 Or as I propose: how popular stores like these might inaugurate ‘mainstream’ fashion formations in their own right, to borrow Lifter’s term describing the indie style formation.72

Aims and objectives

Before stating the thesis’ aims and objectives, one more clarification must be made: However targeting an increased orientation towards internationally consecrated fashion ideals, what I henceforward will call ‘consecrated cool’, the sartorial change is particularly notable as it seems to take the shape of a ‘general upgrading’, rather than a subculture-specific phenomenon. An upgrading of style expertise and a dress code that is seemingly just as easily accessed, accepted and worn by the mainstream customer as by those of subcultural capital.73 Subsequently, this thesis is not a concealed portrait of Oslo’s latest figurehead of contemporary ‘cool’, the hipster.74 Rather it is about defining a set of new, fashionable and above all accessible sartorial tools: about locating their origin, tracing their spread and their reason for spreading.

The thesis’ aim is threefold: It strives to capture the diffusion of a young, popular fashion formation. This research is novel in that it does not view style as the product of the creativity of young people, as has been the academic tradition since the Birmingham School

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70 Lifter writes: (Indie) is not a ‘spectacular’ youth cultural formation, defined outside of or in opposition to ‘mainstream’ popular fashion trends. Lifter, Contemporary indie and the construction of identity, 17.
72 Lifter, Contemporary indie and the construction of identity, 17.
74 Throughout the time of writing, the hipster has been the popular shorthand description for caring (too much) about being – or simply being – the embodiment of ‘contemporary cool’. In a post-subculture perspective, the hipster is regarded as the final ‘mainstreaming of subculture’, as she – yet more often pictured as a mustached he – has made manifest the absence of other style-groupings/ subcultures. A couple of the respondents claimed the label. See for instance Drew Millard, “How did the hipster become mainstream!” Vice, December 15, 2015, accessed 7, March, 2016 http://www.vice.com/read/hw-how-did-the-hipster-become-mainstream-hipster-week and Alice Pfeiffer, “The Hipster is dead, long live the hipster,” The Guardian, October 03, 2015, accessed 27, March, 2016. http://www.vice.com/read/hw-how-did-the-hipster-become-mainstream-hipster-week.
of Cultural Studies, but rather as an occurrence linked to its local commercial underpinnings and these underpinnings’ wider fashion systemic implications; in this case, to an incident of micro cultural imperialism.

Through targeting high street fashion, the thesis also contributes to filling a gap in fashion academe, as research on the high street – even in the face of unprecedented fashion democratization – remains curiously limited.

Lastly, conducting an analysis of Norwegian fashion as a contemporary, everyday practice, I frame two topics not yet researched: Norwegian fashion as a *practiced* phenomenon, as opposed to one designed and manufactured, and one too contemporary to yet having been granted its own scholarly account. In so doing, I finally venture to make a contribution to a field but sparingly researched within Norwegian academe, and to a discipline not yet established here: *fashion studies*.

**Thesis structure**

*Chapter one* offers a fashion historical backdrop to relate how the high street came into its current position as a *consecrated part* of the once strictly elitist fashion system. Hence, it also explains why looking at high street fashion and everyday dress practice to understand a society’s current relationship to fashion; both as part of its commercial and cultural life.

*Chapter two* is a combined methodology chapter and theory review. As the thesis came to frame a scholarly gap, rather than target an established theoretical discussion, explaining the empirical scope is placed center stage. In the first section, I outline the empirical research project conducted between January 2013 and August 2015. I.e.: The choosing of Norwegian fashion magazines *ELLE*, *Costume* and *Stylemag* as an analytical tool to define and legitimize the present visual and verbal articulation of consecrated styles (fifty-three copies); the designing of the survey questionnaires and the sampling of the fifty-three respondents or *style exponents*. Finally, I detail how I went about the interpretation of data.

In the second part, I discuss Tod Hartman’s analyses of the ‘Ikeaization of France’ to make clear the theoretical framework of my concluding analysis. Two other works on Ikea, that of Ursula Lindqvist and Sara Kristofferson, are consulted to stretch Hartman’s views further, while Patrik Aspers helps frame the terminology underscoring the market of affordable fashion. Concluding the chapter, I finally discuss the thesis’ methodological limitations and debatable issues before I introduce possible future research trajectories.

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75 Rachel Lifter, *Contemporary indie and the construction of identity*, 16. See also Woodward, “The Myth of Street Style”. 
**Chapter three** prepares the sampling and interpretation of the survey data in Chapter four by settling two vital matters: 1) Why look at print magazines instead of digital media to pinpoint consecrated style advise? And 2) Exactly which ‘looks’, brands and copies are chosen to promote the current ideals of ‘fashionable’? Framing the logic and structure of the fashion magazines, I turn to Yuiya Kawamura, Ane Lyne-Jorlén and Brian Moeran.

**Chapter four** presents the main findings of the survey questionnaires in the shape of a collective interview; a full-bodied chapter aimed at providing a rich context around the answering of two of the thesis’ main questions: Where do the young, female and ‘fashionable’ shop, and why do they prefer these shops instead of others? Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann’s research on the qualitative interview guides the interpretation of data.

**Chapter five** takes the unanimous preferring of H&M and its subsidiaries: Weekday, Monki and COS, and explores their paradoxical ability to instil notions of ‘the unique’ and ‘the different’ in the style exponents through deploying Hartman’s analyses of Ikee’s cultural imperialist spread in France. However, turning his highly critical, and essentially negatively imbued term *Ikeaization*, into the ambivalent, yet less condemning *H&Mification*. 
Chapter 1: Everyone should have the right to look good! On the global democratization of fashion from the post-war era to the present

‘Every shopper has become a fashion professional. They are beginning to resemble those who work in the industry’. 76

Mark Tungate

The lines above are drawn from the concluding chapter of marketing journalist Mark Tungate’s heavily researched book Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara. Tungate’s statement is bold and generalizing, yet it resonates oddly well with a very real potential, if not yet consummated reality that has been created by the fashion industry, the global consumer society and their ever closer relationship. Yet how and when did the mere consumer turn expert? And which events turned the once elitist fashion expertise into a naturalised, global know-how?

As the roots, means and mechanisms behind the post-war democratization of fashion 77 is at the core of the thesis, the following chapter introduces a shortlist to the most vital changes in the fashion system, from the immediate post-war era to the present, that has made the democratization process move forward. It thus both provides an international backdrop to the latest Norwegian developments – as detailed in the introduction – as well as serves as a preparation for later analysis.

Introduction

As the hierarchical world that gave birth to high fashion was about to close down, and the youth-, pop- and subcultures of the 1950s and 60s rose to the fore, the post-war society was about to offer a line of events that would lay the fundament of a new, more fashion-conscious population willing and educated to use clothing as the ultimate expression of modernity, individuality and distinction. The material welfare was on the up, the economy was booming, and so were the wartime babies. 78 To grasp the changes, we might open up the discourse by

76 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 208.
77 I have found no work specifically addressing fashion history through the lens of ‘democratization’. Probably because the general history of fashion – both as idea and materiality – is inextricably linked with the general history of Western society’s trespassing into modern, mass consuming culture. C. Kidwell and M. Christman’s Suiting Everyone: The Democratization of Clothing in America, however, deals with the mass production and distribution aspects that made the democratization of clothing – not to be mixed with fashion – possible. See also Revell DeLong, “Fashion, Theories of”, 326.
78 Breward, Fashion, 150.
envisaging the familiar picture of a football match: Two teams equally, and increasingly, wanting to conquer the same grounds and the same trophy – the hype, the masses, the money. The two teams read ‘high fashion’ and ‘street fashion’. Two concurrent, initially separate spheres, that constantly drew closer to each other as the Western socio-economic scenery was about to merge high culture with popular tastes.

**The transformation of high fashion**

First, and following a development ushered in by The Second World War, Paris and France lost its position as the only supplier of consecrated high fashion. The US had the economic superiority, the most advanced technology and the right ambition for the new era, and by the mid 1970s USA did not only return French fashion to Europe in the stellar shape of Hollywood costumes, but had created their own fashion identity of elegant, sportive and above all casual wear. New names included Bill Blass, George Beene, Ralph Lauren, and later Calvin Klein and Donna Karan. At the same time, Italian fashion was about to get rebooted with first Florence, and eventually Milan, as the new fashion capital and ambitious newcomers Georgio Armani, Gucci, Missoni, and the young German Karl Lagerfeld (then with Fendi). With Mary Quant, the concept store Biba, Ossie Clark and others making London swing back on to the fashion map, the fashion system – although still focused around old European metropolises like Paris and London – was about to turn from old, elitist and Northern-European to young, ‘cool’ and international.

In tandem with the relative de-centralisation of fashion came the final blow to the old, enclosed system. Haute couture – the former generic definition of high fashion meaning exclusive, often extravagant, clothing made to measure – lost its ruling power to the New York-born war child, ready-to-wear fashion (RTW). Ready-to-wear – or pret-à-porter – refers to all standardized, factory made clothing sold in finished condition, it being dreary hats or exclusive blazers. In other words high fashion borrowed the production techniques of the mass market, and became a standardised object in its own right; high material quality with a tailored feel bereft the act of personal fitting.

80 Breward, *Fashion*, 207.
81 Ibid., 13.
83 As all mass-produced clothing – both pre- and post-industrial – are called ready-to-wear, my ready-to-wear fashion is a constructed word to mark the difference. See Jean L. Druesdow, “Ready-to-wear,” in The Berg Companion to fashion, ed. Valerie Steele, (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 391-395.
84 Jackson and Shaw, “Ready-to-wear,” 35.
The development was, perhaps paradoxically, amongst others led by the star couturist Christian Dior. Hailed as the saviour of high fashion and the creator of ‘The New Look’, or the look from 1947 to the mid 50s, Dior did not only bring the high end customers back to the front row after The War, but sought to distribute his goods and visions as widely as possible as he recognized the necessity of going global and attract new ‘non-elitist’ customers to secure the brand’s economic survival. Or as Mark Tungate puts it: “Dior (…) realized that (high) fashion could be repackaged as a mass product”. From 1948, Dior ready-to-wear branches sprung up all over the world.

As one of the first, he also picked up on licensing: The act of selling your company name to befitting manufacturers in order to turn your brand into a total experience, or even a whole world to inhabit, without having to design and make the products in-house. Hence, not only high fashion, but the scent and feel of luxury, was about to become obtainable to the masses by breaking fashion empires into bits and pieces designed to cater for all tastes and wallets and to both sexes: Perfumes and stockings, golf clubs and table wear. Or as in the case of Dior’s golden protégé Pierre Cardin – fashion history’s most extensive brand licenser – everything from restaurant chains to luxury cars to hairdryers. Product licensing and merchandising would in turn become the economic fundament of the late modern fashion industry. Thus, and much aided by the strong interest of mass media, brands like Dior, Pierre Cardin, his American counterpart Ralph Lauren and other ‘all-encompassing’ brands to come, helped naturalize the idea of fashion, and the purchasing of fashion, as acquisitions of complete lifestyles rather than the mere buying and wearing of fashionable clothes.

However, high fashion’s gradual orientation towards the masses, and the global market, did not only hinge on the industry’s desire to take part in the economic welfare of the post-war era, it was also deeply dependent on the influence of a brand new sociocultural category and their avid consumer demands: ‘The teenager’.

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86 Ibid., 12.
87 Ibid., 11, 12.
The Teenager: How to conduct a fashionable revolt

Today fashion in general, and the idea of creating a total lifestyle through sartorial and stylistic means, is a concept as much connected to the post-war advent of youth- and subcultures, and the trope of ‘the street’, as the world of luxury brands. 92 ‘The street’ too claimed the right to give ‘fashion followers’ lessons in acquired ‘distinction’, yet as we shall see, the two worlds were about to merge and intertwine in the face of popular culture.

Often regarded and researched as a predominantly British phenomenon93 – particularly by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)94 – the aftermath of The War saw a string of distinct and different-looking subcultures emerge on to the streets, as the teenagers were finding their way to mark opposition towards the parent-generation, and the class-based society at large, through new dress codes and money to spend.95 Over a course of forty years came the teddies, the beats, the mods, the rockers, the skinheads, the hippies, the punks, the B-boys, the ravers and others.96 Figureheads of ‘independent fashion’ – or anti-fashion – that most clearly epitomized the influential power of young, non-conformist dress over the established fashion system.

Simultaneously, the less rebellious, still style-hungry teenagers also got to look ‘cool’ while raising parent’s eyebrows through the new outlets that, akin to the subcultures, sartorially and ideologically shunned the strict conformity of the inter-war years.97 On came a young, cheap and up-dated version of ready-to-wear, in London starting out with the so-called ‘boutiques’ such as Mary Quant’s Bazaar, Barbara Hulanicki’s Biba and Tommy Robert’s Kleptomania, yet also with the chic but cheap high street chains like Chelsea Girl, Miss Selfridges and Top Shop.98 New concept stores by and for the young that offered new lifestyles and identities by merging innovative design with the impulses from film, dance, subcultures, the pop- and op art scene99 and the new celebrity culture buzzing around pop music and the first wave of ‘real’ and accessible teenage-supermodels like Twiggy and Jean

94 CCCS was founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart and laid the foundation of the new field of cultural studies. 
95 Breward notes that after World War II, and following the Macmillian economic boom, many working- and middle class British teenagers found they had twice the disposable income as their parents had at the same age. Breward, Fashion, 150.
96 Polhemus, “Street Style,” 653.
97 Breward, Fashion, 150.
99 Wilson, Adorned in Dreams, 176.
Shrimpton. A new type of design-conscious fashion had been made affordable and bountiful and London led the way.

The coming of youth-, and in particular subcultures, was important for several reasons. First, it showed with unmistakable force, that the late capitalist society of the 50s had spawned a new type of consumer. One ready to suck in the content of alluring commercials and advertisements, but also one keen to use the information – and their money – in a personalized way. In this climate of opposition to previous, streamlined conventions, the key to acquiring an instantly interesting and successful persona became distinction through sartorial ‘authenticity’. Yet, as your father’s suit did not reflect ‘different’ but ‘same’– what better way to amplify your ‘authentic’ ambition than to self-confidently dress in something that would outrage him, beguile classmates and ideologically bind you tighter to your peers?

Second, although ‘streetstyle’ has always existed, in particular the British subcultures and the ‘cool’ boutiques helped erect the term as a common catch phrase; a fact and a powerful myth the fashion system would soon capitalize on with great success. Subsequently, ‘streetstyle’ came to represent and embody ‘authenticity’ and ‘coolness’ from its very beginning. It showed that people and environments outside of the fashion establishment could generate fully-fledged fashion on their own to be recognized by the system itself. Further, it proved ‘the street’ able to create a parallel system of fashion leaders and followers taking cues from a wide host of pop-cultural expressions rather than the pages of Vogue. The influential and demanding generation of the babyboomers helped to remove the equation mark between moneyed class and fashion expertise. Instead, not only information about fashion and fashionable people, but ‘chic’ clothing, was made available at all price marks, and – as the 60s turned into the flower powered 70s – it could even be thrifted, some thirty years ahead even moving vintage fashion from its historical outré and shabby associations into the mainstream, as a highly commodified fashion alternative to wearing new designs. Hence, the emergence of both youth- and subcultures stated the

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100 For the first time, young, ‘individual’ models cut out for photo shoots rather than catwalking, replaced the pre-war ideal of the mature, ‘impersonal’ and ‘classically’ beautiful model, becoming pop-stars in their own right; their poses, presence and ‘look’ transgressing the promoted outfit. Breward, *Fashion*, 106-107.
101 Ibid., 150, 182-183.
103 Ibid., 652.
105 Breward, *Fashion*, 150.
already obvious fact; that ‘youth’ and ‘radical newness’ from now on would be fashion’s greatest asset regardless of strata.

Soon however, the high end fashion system – or at least the mass mediated part of it – realized that the young, cutting edge styles of the (London) streets served as the perfect remedy for a magazine-business about to bore young consumers stiff with snobbish gowns and passé morals. Much aided by the notorious Diana Vreeland, the editor of American Vogue, the redemption of the style guide was made by hiring young, street-wise photographer-heroes such as David Bailey as well as distinct models like Twiggy, Veruschka and Cher. With young sexy street culture fixed in glossed, tantalizing photos, the number one fashion magazine was back in consecrating power and saved from economic decline. As a historical novelty, street fashion was openly ‘bubbling up’ – as coined by Ted Polhemus – instead of ‘trickling down’ and admitting to do so.

The strong influences from the youth cultures of the 60s and 70s also brought about other postmodern staples of the fashion industry that would become important to the further democratization of fashion, as well as our perception of how the fashion system works. First, and again heading back to London, the new ‘boutiques’ such as Biba – as emphasized by Christopher Breward – did not only represent new, alluring shopping scenarios, but brand new arenas of ‘advanced’ identity-creation, socializing and mutual sharing of sartorial expertise; shops that appealed to the eye as well as the consuming intellect. Hence the new generation of entrepreneurs, and particularly those of subcultural capital, roughly aimed for the same goal as their high fashion counterpart; to create buyable ‘worlds’ that helped reflect the unique standing of the individual. It would take time, however, before the luxury industry fully understood that being ‘authentic’ no longer was about wearing the ‘correct’ and most fashionable brands, but about ‘aiding’, rather than ‘dictating’, the individual consumer in curating their own ‘unique’ style. The high street, on the other hand, was quick to follow.

108 Diana Vreeland: The eye has to travel, documentary, DVD. Epix Pictures, USA, 2011.
109 Ibid., 2011.
111 In this environment, trends were known to emerge as products of the mutual sartorial admiration between shop owners and their customers, as the owners incorporated the visitor’s tastes and styling preferences into their new collections – in contrast to the rigor and deference of the pre-war era. Breward, Fashion, 150.
112 Sarah Thornton was the first to coin and expand Bourdieu’s ‘cultural capital’ to fit the similar but reverse logic of subcultures. A logic most notably fuelled by the need to oppose the (life)style ideals favored by conventional culture - ‘the mainstream’ – and the fright itself for being ‘mainstreamed’. See Sarah Thornton “The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital,” 191.
A long awaited marriage draws closer

As the new ‘ambient’ shopping model of Biba proved profitable, already well-established high street chains followed suit by smartening up during the 60s and 70s. Happening again in the early 90s, the phenomenon was coined ‘mass-lux’. British mail-order catalogues put another brick in the wall by hiring pop stars to model their collections, while retail chains like Chelsea Girl and Topshop crowned the chain reaction with an exhilarating pace of stock change that would define a watershed in retail: Cheap and chic designs that pioneered ‘the just-in-time’ principles that now dominate the manufacture and distribution of mass-market fashion goods. Thus, the shopping spaces for the young and ‘different’ were turned into mainstream staples of an increasingly design conscious high street that allowed mass fashion education to thrive as the ‘supermarket of styles’ – again Polhemus’ term from the seminal Streetstyle: From sidewalk to Catwalk (1994) – grew bigger, cheaper and more bountiful.

Also starting in the mid 1960s, and steadily accelerating into the present, the whole circuit around fashion grew tall and fashionable in its own right: Shop-owners, hairdressers and tailors gained celebrity as style arbiters, while the first generation of the postmodern high priests of fashion, the stylists, gained fame. Simultaneously, the fashion press exploded and the cult of celebrity moved to new heights, notably including the fashion designers themselves. Or as Elisabeth Wilson sums it up: Fashion became fashionable in itself already in the 1960s, while the chasing of ever more fashionable lifestyles turned into one of the most vital hallmarks of popular culture. Mick Jagger’s bum-clinging stage-gear and Lady Di’s wedding gown – the press had it all covered and the mass looked, learned and elaborated.

After the recession of the late 1970s, the early 80s brought new wealth and apparent order to the world economy. Now, the retail industry merged into a few transnational corporations, cyber technology was put into play and the electronic mass media spawned a new, tight infrastructure of global networks. Simultaneously, the industry was growing

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114 Breward, Fashion, 154.
115 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 33.
116 Retail means “the set of business activities involved in selling products and services to consumers for their personal, family or household use (while) a retailer (often) serves as the last distribution channel that links manufacturers and consumers.” See Seung-Eun Lee, “Retailing,” in The Berg Companion to Fashion, ed. Valerie Steele, (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 596.
117 Ibid., 154.
118 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 13.
120 Elisabeth Wilson, Adorned in Dream, 178.
increasingly more dependent on the economic expansion secured by heavy licensing and the much-criticized outsourcing of manual work to third-world countries; the West had fortified the framework of limitless mass consumption.\(^{122}\) Moving back to the realm of fashion, the third-world outsourcing, together with the fitness boom, made the clothes of the 1980s cheaper, more bountiful and increasingly casual.\(^{123}\) In tandem, the visual value of the brand – the logo – sailed up as the new fashion-signifier while the mediated dreams of celebrity and interesting ‘lifestyles’ outshone the popularity of bona-fide high fashion clothing. An event leading Teri Agins to deem the period ‘the end of fashion’.\(^{124}\)

Again looking at the high fashion/ street fashion bias, the early 80s also saw the invention of iconic niche lifestyle magazines *i-D* and *The Face* that inaugurated the perhaps most well-known staple of our present time recording of (street) fashion, namely ‘the vox pop formula’: Pictures taken on the street of ‘random’ stylish people, that embody the ‘uniqueness’ and the ‘authenticity’ that the luxurious high end, and the fast forward retail fashion, both have been said to swallow.\(^{125}\) The same decade also marked the seismic birth of MTV and the first pop star to embody the maximum synergy-effect between (pop) music, celebrity, fashion and popular culture: Madonna. A pop star finding a trademark look that came to represent the first celeb styling manual of clothes, make up and accessories that was not only strikingly new, but overwhelmingly cheap and easy to copy.\(^{126}\) Thus, like street-smart Biba helped define the future path of shopping experiences, Madonna’s fashion-chameleon strategy marked the future trajectory of pop-celebrity style cults and fashion collaborations.

After the crack in the American stock market in 1987, and after the grunged, democratic anti-fashion look of the early 90s, the high fashion industry regained its power as true harbingers of luxury, status and design innovation through young star designers like Tom Ford and John Galliano; respectively bringing sex and spectacle, as well as commercially viable total visions, back in to the dormant business: Exclusive fashion, that was eager to sell itself ‘cheaply’ through aggressive marketing strategies unlike before.\(^{127}\) High fashion was back on its high horse, and yet the distance from the mass market remained willfully blurred.

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\(^{123}\) Tungate, *Fashion Brands*, 15.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 15.


\(^{127}\) Tungate, *Fashion Brands*, 16-18.
Already in 1994 Karl Lagerfeld was among the first superstar designers to create a collection especially made for a mail order catalogue. A type of collaboration consummated ten years later (2004) when the timing was finally right to make the long awaited marriage between high fashion and the high street official, as Lagerfeld happily put his infamous white gloves to the drawing board to make H&M customer’s wildest fashion-dreams become affordable reality. “But it’s cheap!” a hysterical dandy yells in the commercial, propped up at a fine-dine restaurant table. “So what?” replies the metallic voice of Lagerfeld. A simple reply that roughly sums up the major movements of the last ten to fifteen years. Answering the “so what?” we are about to draw to the preliminary end of the history of fashion democratization.

Answering the ‘so what’?

As already introduced by mentioning the British retail star Topshop, the usurp of not only that British retail chain, but fellow success stories like Swedish H&M (1968) and Spanish Zara (1975), high street chains did not only lead the way by offering fresh, quality design at reasonable prices, but introduced ‘fast fashion’ as a common goal for the joint fashion industry. Much aided by the flow of digital information and the swiftness of production, these brands put catwalk trends and street impulses back onto the street within a matter of weeks. Meaning, up to half a year before the high end collections hit the stores. In other words, the retail chains are the places where you can actually touch, try and buy the latest look first. And, as many could afford a pair of Prada sunglasses, but not the dress to match, why not visit the flagship store of an acclaimed and elegant copy-cat retail chain that provides the same looks – and more of them – for far less? Like Tungate’s prime example Zara: Cheap alternatives “(…) that doesn’t feel cheap.”

H&M’s high-low collaboration-formula has since become a mainstream staple of the international fashion system. A simple logic of joining hands between retail stores and high end designers to let the ‘cool’ mass appeal and reach of the former rub off on the exclusive flair of the latter, and vice versa, to mutual raised sales and rejuvenated status. As visibility

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128 See Susanne Ljung’s “För 9 år sedan: Design samarbeten blir prestige.” StyleBy, no. 20 Höst 2013, 153. Ljung is the figurehead broadcaster/journalist of the Swedish broadly contextualizing show on fashion culture, Stil I P1.
129 See Karl Lagerfeld’s H&M commercial: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NYGtjVXcmw.
130 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 44.
131 Ibid., 41, 42.
132 Ibid., 42.
133 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 40.
and popcultural hype has become a primary concern to most brands regardless of standing. Karl Lagerfeld thrust his exclusive Chanel-air into the public pool of H&M and came not only clean, but strengthened, out on the other side. Important to note however, is that not only the high-low collaborations, but ‘cool’ and rewarding collaborations in general, have become a standard practice within the wider fashion system\(^{134}\) – as have the relying on cool hunters, style forecasting agencies, street style photographers and fashion bloggers to share, compress and ‘formalize’ knowledge about the current (and future) fashion zeitgeist in order to stay tuned and minimize the risk of production without demand.\(^{135}\)

Finally, as escalating from the mid 1990s, globalization in conjunction with the explosion of digital communication, have added dramatic change to the distribution, marketing, consumption and above all sharing of fashion.\(^{136}\) Online shopping have made most items available at a click’s notice, the blogosphere, and its citizen journalism, has penetrated the established fashion sphere – a point to be returned to in Chapter 3 – while the industry is constantly getting closer to ‘the inside’ of consumer demands through ever more sophisticated marketing techniques.\(^{137}\) As a result, the digital age opens up for critical consumer engagement and actual influence on a whole other level than earlier: The comparison of prices and styles, the opportunity to give active feedback through web sites, blogs and social media, as well as providing a valid platform for small scale designers to reach out to consumer societies and find a place alongside conglomerate enterprises. At the same time, new digital and cyber-technologies have made the industry able to monitor customer’s tastes and consumption patterns. In short, the ever more competitive, risk-driven and fast paced fashion industry – cheap retail or luxury – now hinge on the constant and multifarious interaction with the consuming masses through surveys, focus groups, cool hunting, trend-forecasting as well as ‘straight forward” monitoring through data mining and inventory tracking, in order to rise sales and fulfill existing desires, while at the same time trying to fuel and predict the future demands of the ever more knowledgeable customer.\(^{138}\)

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\(^{134}\) Gwyneth Moore, *Fashion Promotion: Building a brand through marketing and communication*, (Lausanne, AVA Publishing SA, 2012), 149-150.

\(^{135}\) See Tungate, Chapter 6, “Anatomy of a trend”, 69-74.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 15.


\(^{138}\) Stone, “Fashion marketing and Merchandising,” 296.
Conclusion

In the timespan from World War Two to the present, fashion has moved from high to ‘common’ alongside the general culture’s move from high- to popular, from ‘adult’- to ‘teenager’ and from the old society’s strict class structure to the post-war blurring of hierarchy, authority and identity. The fashion industry has further moved from homegrown to outsourced, from continental to global, from limited to flooding and from manual and analogue to digital and virtual. In being a vital part of the globalization and global economy, fashion has also moved from the purchasing of items to the mass consumption of symbols and lifestyles; from fashionability meaning the wearing of fashionable fashion, to the intelligent consumer’s curating of his or hers personal style. Finally, we have gone from fashion communication finding its way through word of mouth, the ‘actual’ street, newspapers and television to the World Wide Web buying and sharing of fashion information and expertise.

Moving back to the football match-analogy from the introduction, high fashion and street fashion have not only played the same game throughout the last sixty years, but increasingly pulled the same tactics to achieve the same goals. In short, fashion has become far more democratic in conjunction with the sharing, making and distribution of other popcultural phenomena like film and music. High (quality) fashion still remains a privilege to the comparable few, however, as does the entrance into the tight circuit around the core of the fashion system. Yet the images, the ideas, the looks and the many ‘real’ versions of the current, internationally ‘consecrated’ ‘look’ have become open and accessible knowledge available to most people. Or as street style websites show – few are the urban spots around the world that does not have one globally tuned fashionable citizen – or hundreds – not only knowing that a pair of jeans, a t-shirt and a pair of sneakers will do the trick to stay moderately in tune with the fashion zeitgeist, but someone who knows that ‘consecrated cool’ – as always a paradox – right now would preferably make the shoes New Balance ones, the jeans skinny, high- waisted and Acne, the T-shirt your boyfriend’s, your bag from Chanel and your scarf from a thrift shop. Ideally – we are the brand and garments should adjust to our unique identity while silently saying all the right things. Because, as fashion guru Jean-

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139 Rabine, “Globalization,” 372.
140 Fashion bloggers like Tavi, Bryanboy, Susie Lau and the Norwegian Hanneli Mustaparta, however, mark the new strong interest in letting the ‘it-factor’ of fashion outsiders’ and clever fashion amateurs rub off on the established scene, as readily shown by Marc Jacobs naming a handbag B.B bag after the influence of Bryanboy.
141 See for instance Scott Schuman’s The Sartorialist: http://www.thesartorialist.com/.
Jacques Picart puts it: ‘It’s not enough to look fashionable – one wishes to appear intelligent as well.’

142 Tungate, *Fashion Brands*, 32.
Chapter 2: The empirical trident: Designing and conducting the empirical research

‘We must find out the actual agencies through which fashion works so that we can review concrete ways in which fashion is formed and felt.’

Yuiya Kawamura

As style practice is an ephemeral concept, and my aim has been to track and define alterations in style due to concrete changes in the inner city shopping topography of Oslo, the research topic was divided into a line of interconnected objects of analysis: the fashion magazines, the survey questionnaires and the high street stores. Subsequently, this chapter introduces the mixed method approach used to conduct the field work: The recording and categorizing of texts and images from fifty-three fashion magazines, the sampling of the exponents’ photographs and survey questionnaires and the analyzing of the questionnaire data. Having retrieved and analyzed the data, I finally apply Hartman’s term Ikeazization to approach the favored shopping locations: Weekday, Monki and COS. The different parts respectively lean on fashion studies and social anthropology, qualitative research and ethnography, and social anthropology and design history.

The stepping-stone-structure of the thesis is summed up as follows: A selection of Norwegian fashion magazines was used to define the internationally ‘consecrated’ dress practice. This practice was relocated on a street level as a performed dress code. These practitioners were given survey questionnaires to gain knowledge of what they wear and where they shop and why. Finally, the list of favored shops moved the thesis in the direction proposed: that the recent Swedish retail stores, and the subsidiaries of the H&M company in particular, are the key players when an internationally geared dress practice appears to have escalated over a time span that, incidentally or not, overlaps with the increasingly intensive settling of Swedish retail brands in Oslo. The analysis of the H&M Group’s style diffusion power in Oslo – of the monoculture in camouflage – constitutes the last chapter; further examining the style, brand building techniques and the mutual design culture arguably making them particularly popular, defining of the current ‘consecrated cool’ as unfolding in Oslo over the last few years.

Finally, and keeping in mind the thesis’ inherent interdisciplinary and willfully eclectic design, the chapter is completed with a discussion of shortcomings and debatable

143 Kawamura, Fashion-ology, 74.
issues in relation to the sampling process and analysis of data. Lastly I summarize the future research trajectories embedded, if not acted upon, in this thesis.

The totality of the empirical research was conducted between January 2013 and August 2015, whilst the sampling of style exponents and the concurrent reading of magazines were executed between August 2013 and October 2014. As for complimentary interviews, these were carried out in July and August 2015. The final shop analysis was conducted winter/spring 2016.

**Carefully reading ‘glossies’**

In order to qualify and anchor my own subjective experience of an ‘upgraded’ and more internationally oriented style, I needed a certified looking glass as a means of verification. Defining the present visual and verbal articulation of internationally ‘consecrated cool’ as acted out in Oslo, I subsequently deployed the Norwegian fashion magazines *ELLE*, *Costume* and *Stylemag* as analytical tools. To summarize: three internationally tuned mainstream magazines, or *mediating channels*, were used to link the emergence of the new retail stores with the style exponent’s actual ‘looks’ and shopping preference. This link was made not only through their visual style recommendations, but also through the accompanying copies and the brands on display. The selection was based on the following short hand descriptions:

*Elle* (1997-): The currently biggest and bestselling fashion magazine in Norway with a scope singularly focused on sartorial matters and beauty. *Costume* is moulded in Danish original.

*Costume* (2006-): The currently biggest and bestselling fashion magazine in Norway with a scope singularly focused on sartorial matters and beauty. *Costume* is moulded in Danish original.

*Stylemag* (2012-): A recent addition taking popular fashion mediation one step further through targeting the strictly fashion-seeking and fashion-consuming reader. Modelled on the Swedish original *StyleBy* centred round the international blog star Elin Kling, it focuses on the synergy between the blogosphere, street fashion and the established fashion sphere.

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In tune with initial observations, the magazines aptly reflected the international fashion system and trend scenery, while visibly mirroring the latest fashion on the streets of Oslo. Hence, they fulfilled the role as trend observers and broadcasters, and provided full-bodied descriptions of what the Norwegian version of an internationally oriented style ought to look like, as well as giving information about where to purchase it.\(^{146}\)

Precisely because of the apparent self-evidence in using magazines as a reflection of contemporary style practice, I find it essential to legitimate my source material further through a description of the printed mainstream magazines’ current status, structure and function within the international fashion system in general, and in the face of digital media in particular. In that endeavor, I drew upon the fashion magazine research conducted by socio anthropologist Brian Moeran and fashion scholar Ane Lynge Jorén, as well as that of fashion scholar Yuniya Kawamura.

Conducting the trend analysis set between August 2013 and October 2014, and running parallel to the style scouting, it consisted of carefully reading some forty-one magazines\(^{147}\). As the aim was to give an extensive description of the consecrated trends, rather than to perform any profound case study,\(^{148}\) I approached the analysis as straightforwardly as possible. I charted each magazine’s editorial structure – both visually and textually – and then made detailed lists of the recurring trends: the ‘looks’, items and accompanying copies. In addition, I decided to count all the items featured in editions from March 2013 and March 2014; an itinerary constructed to get detailed if basic insight into which brands were promoted by the mediated gate keepers of fashion\(^ {149}\). The March editions were chosen as they feature catwalk reports of spring/summer-collections and thus come in fat volumes. The list is included in Appendix 3. I also used contemporary Danish and Swedish counterparts to the Norwegian magazines, and to a lesser extent English to set the trends against an international backdrop as represented by our closest-knit fashion allies

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\(^{146}\) I also applied the Oslo-based websites Smuglesning.no and Oslnights.no as cross-references to keep me updated on the synergy between fashion, celebs and the various shapes and shades of Oslo ‘pop culture’. I.e. those sporting the ‘dressy’ and arguably ‘sub-cultured’ versions of ‘consecrated cool’, as opposed to the everyday-versions I was looking for when retrieving the style exponents.

\(^{147}\) Both Norwegian ELLE and Costume has a frequency of twelve editions per year. Stylemag was published at slightly more irregular intervals, producing some six editions per year at the time of conducting the research.


(twelve issues from the same time period). Copies of Norwegian Elle and Costume dating back to 2006 were also deployed to question and contextualize my experience of change.

Finally, I conducted one structured and one semi-structured interview with two fashion professionals, mainly concerning the status of each of the magazines within the Norwegian fashion system: Former fashion journalist and stylist Lars Midtsjø, then showroom manager at the fashion PR-company Patricksson Communication, and portrait and former fashion photographer Kjell Ruben Strøm. The core question of the interview was also directed to a few other fashion insiders (See Appendix 2).

To illustrate my findings – to set the present against the past, and the mediated fashion against the practiced – I also found it essential to visualize the argumentation of the chapter with a picture appendix. The images were retrieved from the magazines analysed and the Internet. (See Appendix 1).

**Designing and executing the questionnaire-based survey**

The survey questionnaire was constructed to serve two main purposes: 1) To reveal the branded origin of the consecrated style through asking where the style exponents shopped their clothes, and 2) To enquire after why they shopped precisely there. In other words, the two questions placed at the core of the thesis. The quantitative data on current shopping preferences are respectively found in Appendix 8, while an extract of the photos of the style exponents are found in Appendix 7. Briefly explaining the term style exponent, I designed it to make clear the particular function and quality of the survey’s respondents.

To deepen and support the primary statements, I further added eleven open-ended questions to allow the respondents to reply relatively freely, to reflect further and hopefully produce fuller arguments. Hence, I also posed questions about style inspiration, previous shopping habits and unfulfilled fashion aspirations. The questionnaire was designed not only to capture the ‘looks’ and brands of the style exponents, but the thoughts and language used to express their sartorial leanings as well as their ideas about the fashion unfolding in Oslo in

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150 See for instance Riegels Melchior: “From design nations to fashion nations? Unpacking contemporary Scandinavian fashion dreams,” 177-200.
151 Magazines gathered from my own ‘home archive’ of fashion magazines.
152 See Chapter 4, 10-11.
the timespan discussed by the thesis, from 2010 to the present. Information better described as excerpts of their (fashionably) lived worlds, rather than pieces of quantifiable data.

In short, I designed a predominantly qualitative survey questionnaire to generate necessary and anticipated, as well as unexpected insights. The sampling method was mechanical in its predefined, standard line of questions. However, in principal it utilized the methods of a conventional qualitative research interview as getting the respondents to take part in the survey was founded on personal interaction on the street, and later correspondence via mail. Further arguing along the lines of Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, the data was partly socially produced, as a successful interaction was the premise for gaining the respondents’ trust and personal interest. Subsequently, as the questionnaire was hinged on the respondent’s descriptions of their lived worlds, the thinking, executing and analysis of the data was directed by Kvale and Brinkmann’s research, instead of social science survey methodology. Kawamura’s general introduction to using qualitative methods in fashion scholarship was also consulted before embarking on the sampling.

The final number of respondents was determined after deciding upon using Kvale and Brinkmann’s methodological guideline in compliance with two sociologists at The University of Oslo. As for the age span, I chose an age segment more or less in tune with the target readership of Norwegian ELLE and Costume; 18-35 opposed to the magazine’s 18-39. More importantly, it represented the segment I defined as acting out the sartorial change, as well as embodying a difference of age that might open up to different answers regarding past and present shopping habits, as well as general outlooks.

Note that questions 11 and 12, asking for their views on Oslo as a ‘style site’ in comparison to Stockholm and Copenhagen are excluding from the discussion. Possibly appearing as paradox, I have regarded the answers as too rich to balance out the thesis well, as it is primarily geared towards shedding light on the diffusion of fashion, and not on consumption as part of the creation of identity; collective or individual. See the section on “Future research trajectories,” 41 and Conclusion 89.

Kvale and Brinkmann write the following on the qualitative research interview: ‘The aim is not to quantify. The interview aims at nuanced descriptions of the lived world of the interviewee through words, not numbers. (My translation). Ibid., 48-49.


Resolving aspects of the methodology, I spoke to then PhD candidate Are Skeie Hermansen and then MA-student Pål Halvorsen on several occasions, both having read my outline before giving advice. Further, in line with administering my questionnaire as a qualitative research interview, I looked to Kvale and Brinkmann’s pointing to the insight of the relative lower degree of knowledge obtained after a certain amount of interviews depending on the time and resources at hand. They suggest 14 +/-10 workable amount of respondents. Kvale and Brinkmann, Det kvalitative forskningsintervjuet, 129.

See Chapter 4, 8-9. The website of Stylemag does not suggest any age group, yet appears to target the same readership as the other two.
However, outside the scope of the thesis, I also included survey questions concerning basic demographic data such as age, line of study/work and place of dwelling. This data is not acted upon within the scope of this thesis, but included as a tool for later critical enquiry or secondary analyses. Clearing the questionnaires ethical code of conduct, three questions concerning consent to academic and other publication was placed at the bottom of the survey sheet. Most ticked off; the remainder agreed verbally.

**Framing ‘the trap’: People and places**

A basic, yet important point due to my notion of a general, non-subcultural ‘style-upgrading’, was to seek out the respondents in *central Oslo in general*, rather than to approach specific environments where pop- and subcultural capital, and an interest in self presentation, logically thrive. I.e. creative schools like Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO), Westerdals School of Communication, School of Fashion Industry (SoFI) and The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) as well as ‘hot’ bars, hangouts and gallery openings. Yet, to make the unspecific term ‘central Oslo’ concrete and workable, I initially drew the map of my field due to the following reasons and anticipated obstacles:

Starting out within the prime centre of the shopping topography of Oslo, the main shopping street Karl Johan, I stopped at Oslo Central station to the south, Grunerløkka to the east, Majorstuen to the west, and Adamstuen to the north. The outer borderlines of the commercially ‘dense’ part of the city containing the most popular brands and high street stores, and an array – not only of different streets – but of cafés and bars where people were likely to have the time and tranquillity to sit down and answer the three page questionnaire. Second, and to secure a high frequency of ‘vox pop’ encounters, as possible, I figured it advisable to make the confines of the field match my daily travel routes to and from Blindern Campus, my own home (Adamstuen) and the city centre. Thus, the route did not only fluctuate with the commercially dense part of the city, but also with the roads and public transportation moving me and other students between the three major, and largely theory-based, institutions of higher education in Oslo. Before executing the sampling, I further included Blindern Campus (The University of Oslo), Norwegian Business School (BI) and Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA) as a sociocultural mirror

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161 A part of the city located right in between Blindern and the central city.

162 Grønland, the part of the city hosting the greatest variety of ethnicities, was thus not included, as the style scouting was designed to happen at the intersection of the densest part of the Oslo shopping topography. And, as it did not concur with my daily travel route.
of the target group. Here, Blindern Campus served as a natural focal point both in the capacity of being my home university, a continuous site of style information and the by far largest institution of higher education in Oslo.163

Hunting and gathering
As I had hoped, people were easily flattered. Most style exponents agreed to answer my questionnaire; to having their picture taken, and were by and large smiling and sometimes faintly blushing at my impromptu advances. However, in spite of knowingly being food for fashionable admiration, only a few of the exponents let any ‘fashionable self-awareness’ shine through when posing for their straight-ups. The surprise and their ‘unschooled’ body language being an important if minor detail, as it arguably underscores the ‘naturalized’ quality of their ‘consecrated cool’ ‘looks’.164 But then again, maybe my method, for better or worse, was disarming: ‘Excuse me!’ I said, often trotting up behind someone ‘cool’-looking, ‘can I ask you a question?’ ‘Yes,’ they said, and I would continue: ‘Well you see, I am conducting a master thesis on the style development in Oslo over the last five years, and since your look reflects the positive changes, I was wondering if you would like to answer some questions?’ However, I made it a rule never to use more than two of the returned survey questionnaires if addressing a group of several potential style exponents to avoid gathering too much same-cultured information.165

Only one vital change occurred when conducting the sampling: Having thought approaching people at cafes would be the easiest way to secure answers, and have them back immediately, I soon found my time consuming acquisition-model a restraint when scouting style exponents on the street. In addition, the brief quality of the street meetings lowered my bar for enquiry. Over half of the questionnaires were conducted via email correspondence, only fifteen sheets never returned.166 As for the length and thoroughness of the replies, surveying through ‘live-recordings’ versus ‘home-reports’ made little difference.

163 The share of female students at the different universities as of 2013 reads: UiO (2013): 16 080,5, BI, Oslo (2012 NB): 13 630, HiOA (2013): 11 601,4. See Web-link in the bibliography. The links as were too extinctive to fit within the space of a footnote.
165 Courtesy also played a vital part in asking all or both members of a small group.
166 I did run re-request, yet I limiting my friendly ‘nagging’ to two per person, and three in a couple of instances of styles regarded as not only well-put together, but as supremely symptomatic of the times.
A last brief note on the easy access to data might also be due to me looking the part as a trustworthy fashion scholar, a detail resonating with Rachel Lifter’s fieldwork experiences. Yet while Lifter applied the parts of her wardrobe matching the topic of her research, i.e. that of the indie style, I have the feeling I gained authority through wearing my regular outfits: relaxed dressing a la Woody Allen’s neurotic screen women rather than the sharp ‘look’ of an aspirational fashion blogger. I.e. a ‘look’ as being in the know without looking too ‘fashionable’ and thus possibly – too intimidating.

As to the important question of how the style exponents were singled out, I rooted my findings – not only in my personal experience of ‘consecrated cool’– but equally in the careful, concurrent scanning of the ideals promoted by the mainstream magazines mentioned above. I concurrently also checked the ‘sartorial information’ of the style scouting against the initial list of items made when researching the outline of the thesis. Thus, the fieldwork was done as cross-section between Andrew Hill’s observing ‘the fleeting images of people passing in the street’ in the tradition of flânerie and Sophie Woodward’s ethnographic mass fashion observation as introduced in the previous chapter.

On the note of concurrently scanning magazines, it also seems necessary to point out that while executing the style scouting, I avoided visiting the Swedish stores more than the picking up of the store’s brand fanzines, or an occasional purchase, would necessitate to omit gathering information (un)voluntarily steering me towards those buying and carrying their styles. As a trained keeper of visual imagery, I was well aware of restricting my sources of ‘unambiguous’ information.

Only a few times the women I stopped appeared to be foreign instead of Norwegian. Tellingly, they were often Swedish. However, and in tune with the ethnic makeup of Oslo, the list of respondents does not only feature ethnically Norwegian, Caucasian women, but also women of Asian, African and the Middle Eastern decent.

**Constructing the collective interview**

On close-examining the chronologically filed survey questionnaires and ‘straight ups’, I found the material surprisingly rich and fastidious. I thus decided to design the write-up as a ‘collective interview’; letting the individual voices be the driving force of the text’s narrative

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168 The list remained fairly unaltered from the initial observation to the actual research. See Chapter 3, 53-54.
through the extensive usage of quotes rather than applying summarised renditions. As for the overall structure of the chapter, the individual questions served as headlines to each section in correspondence with the original survey questionnaire; each section crowned with a structured summary of the major response tendencies. The real first names of were used as they had already agreed to include the photos taken of them.

Having decided upon the chapter’s shape and structure, I read and re-read all the survey sheets carefully while making a list of recurring themes and tendencies; marking common and illustrative answers, as well as ticking off the exact quotes to be translated and included in the appendix in its totality (See Appendix 9). I then plotted all the quantifiable data into tables before returning to the final edit and translation of the survey’s main response tendencies; here taking care to preserve the original tone of the language, and for the most part, its orthography. To provide a high degree of transparency, I decided to include most variations to avoid making any ‘simplification’ before compressing the data into its final presentation. In the original outline I also plotted variations over common answers into grids, however removed from the final appendix to make room for the full answers. In short, I strived to capture the major tendencies while keeping a keen eye for undercurrents, ambiguities and paradoxes; determined to retain the full breadth of the somewhat alarmingly homogeneous data – especially on part of their favoured brands – through the reproduction of the thoughtful, highly personal and often quite entertaining texts written by the respondents.

**The successful spread of Swedish design-monoculture**

– *Ikeaization* gets a related term

After having analyzed all the survey questionnaires, holding them up against the initial hypothesis, I found myself looking at a strikingly unanimous list of shopping preferences. The stores were not only Swedish as suspected, but subsidiaries of the H&M Group: Weekday, Monki and COS in addition to H&M. Thus, the internationally oriented style unfolding in Oslo over recent years did appear to be *made in Sweden.*

Understanding the ‘style upgrading’ in Oslo as a systemic (bi)product of the H&M Group, I stepped outside the barren path of high street academe to looked for theoretical support geared towards the ‘imperialist’ power of design companies in general. Reading social anthropologist Tod Hartman’s article “The Ikeaization of France” (2007), I found and apt ally, a perfectly related case study and a befitting term to borrow: Ikea and *Ikeaization.*

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170 The original appendix can be retrieved on personal request.
Exploring Ikea’s imperialist spread in France, Hartman’s research stems from observations similar to mine: that of furniture superstore Ikea mastering the art of pushing back most other competitors. As Hartman observed, Ikea did not only gain market dominance through offering ‘(…) goods that (are) eminently democratic – attainable, unpretentious and inexpensive’\(^{171}\) – but through giving customers different and complete life style scenarios and identities such as the architect-designer and the mindful minimalist.\(^{172}\) This strategy bears resemblance to the mechanisms that I later argue are at work when the H&M subsidiaries have managed to gain unparalleled popularity in Oslo. A conceptual strategy – or if unintentional, an occurrence – even more sophisticated than Ikea’s, as the commercial and symbolic roof uniting the different style identities and store concepts remain invisible.

Furthermore, Hartman is a particularly helpful ally as he enters the gates of Ikea with a battering ram hiding underneath his eloquent polemics, as I do not: Rooted in a theoretical backdrop of Bourdieu, Weber and Žižek, Hartman uses the alluring identity-scenarios to move through to the critique-worthy aspects of flying the color of ‘The Green Giant’ while simultaneously being grossly dependent on labor from developing countries and unfair trade. Thus, Hartman’s term Ikeaization embodies the admirable and ‘fun’\(^{173}\), but dark side of design mega companies such as Ikea and H&M. Through his analyzes, he criticizes their ability to spread cultural imperialism uncontested through offering ‘inexpensive, practical, and design-conscious products’,\(^{174}\) through the production means necessary.

My translation of Hartman’s term into H&Mification acknowledges the full weight of being able and willing to dominate. However and importantly, analyzed through the lens of this hypothesis, I do not view the Swedish style hegemony – to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci’s term\(^{175}\) – as an expression of late-capitalist evil. Rather, I use the term H&Mification, and later on ‘monoculture in camouflage’, as a tool to isolate and theorize the particular institutional mechanisms imbedded in popularization of one given ‘look’. The critical account of the H&M Group’s overriding strategies is thus absent: Firstly, as the scope of this thesis does not allow investigating H&M’s level of intent behind the Oslo-settling

\(^{172}\) Ibid., 483-487.
\(^{173}\) Ibid., 485.
\(^{174}\) Ibid.,485.
process. Secondly, as I perceive Hartman’s account of the efficient but sinister colonizing powers of Ikea as highly apt, yet also too one-eyed on a par with Woodward’s criticism of the ‘monopolizing high street’. And thirdly, as I right from the initial state of research have viewed the unfolding of the new ‘consecrated cool’ as a ‘style upgrading’; as the democratization of a new sartorial tool box apparently endorsing its followers with increased levels of fashion capital. Real capital or not – to paraphrase Hartman’s rhetoric – I argue that the Swedish invasion has served to raise the young Oslo-inhabitant’s level of fashion capital, even if the ‘new look’ in essence is a monoculture in pretty camouflage. As was Dior’s.  

Counterbalancing the adamant rhetoric of Hartman, I further apply the critical accounts of Ursula Lindqvist and Sara Kristofferson. Lindqvist uses Derrida’s concept of ‘the archive’ to explore how Ikea has become ‘(...) one of the world’s most recognized and reproduced archives of national culture in the global marketplace.’ Unraveling the idealized national narrative that underscores Ikea’s ‘political power and cultural authority’, she amongst others discusses how Ikea has gained prominence through acting as a space of cultural learning, even if, or just because, the truth of its content is questionable. 

Kristofferson argues along similar lines, yet explicitly makes way through Ikea’s aptitude for merging the corporate’s own narrative with that of Sweden’s national image. She explores how Ikea has interlaced the narrative of Ikea/ ‘Swedishness’ to fortify the role as culture-benefactor, instead of that of the imposing colonizer; Swedish ‘virtues’ keeping the enterprise safe from bad connotations. Together, the three accounts of Ikea are called forth to help contextualize the workings of H&M through highlighting the national, sociocultural and commercial backdrop that underscores both companies. Last, but not least, I turn to Patrik Aspers’ economic-sociological account of affordable fashion brands. Akin to Kawamura’s theorizing on fashion, he frames the production and diffusion of fashion as a social web of different actors and institutions. His terminology serves as an apt steppingstone when entrenching the vocabulary particular to the field of affordable fashion.

Self-criticisms

As a thesis of tentative scope and methodologically eclectic design, I spent some time finding the right balance between the wish to produce an ‘accurate’ social scientific survey –

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176 See Chapter 1, 3.
uncharted terrain for a scholar from the Humanities – and the recognition of my thesis making a ‘strict’ social scientific design superfluous due to its’ qualitative aim and placement within fashion studies. However, looking closely at the appendix considering the demographic data of the style exponents, my conduct is open to a few important criticisms on account of the sampling process. Firstly, the statistical data is influenced by the somewhat narrow sampling from the demography found at the Blindern Campus at the University of Oslo: I was thinking too little about the likelihood of gathering respondents of similar background, interests and preferences, and too much about their apt ‘looks’ and availability. However, I mainly approached people in the big common areas: the main library and the central campus square (Frederikkeplassen) to make the decisions as un-preconceived as possible. In retrospect, the responses of the style exponents showed different academic backgrounds, even if the variations were limited. Still, and to summarize, I ended up gathering a relatively high number of style exponents from Blindern, as they made it possible to amplify the volume of data. I sampled fifteen respondents from Blindern Campus, three from Norwegian School of Business (BI), one from Oslo and Akershus University College (HiOA) and thirty-four from central Oslo as described above.180

A similar critique might be levelled at the gathering of six respondents at a friend’s birthday party.181 Finding myself surrounded by strangers and barely acquainted, I took the liberty to run a mini ‘mass sampling’. Subsequently, I was overriding the rules I had set for gathering information. Again, the different apt ‘looks’ and the greedy fashion scholar led the way rather than the poised social scientist.

As for the thesis’ core argument of a ‘general style upgrading’, the sampled data might also be criticized for not showing ‘general’ shopping inclinations as the style exponents’ lines of work and study do lean towards creative and/or artistic educations and professions in twenty of the fifty-three cases: students of Art History, ‘Culture and Leadership’ and so forth. In other words, many of them proved to be representatives of a sociocultural segment more prone to be carrying updated ‘looks’. However, the thesis still holds that the Swedish retail culture, as spearheaded by the H&M Group, is democratic and didactic enough to encompass different demographics.

\[\text{180} \text{The initial idea was to balance the acquisition of style exponents due to the number of female students at the different educational institutions.}\]

\[\text{181} \text{Style exponents No.32 – No.37.}\]
Future research trajectories

Most notably, I have left out the perspectives of youth- and subculture as well as the often-implicit themes of identity and gender. This is not to say that the one overriding, ‘Swedish look’ excludes its merging with – or branching into – styles belonging to specific sociocultural milieus. Rather I have bypassed the perspectives to demarcate that I view the ‘general style upgrading’ unfolding in Oslo over the last few years, as the outcome of the popular sharing of one sartorial ‘toolbox’ rather than the emergence of one, homogeneous youth- or subculture. And further, as I analyze the construction/diffusion of fashion as the act of an institutional force, and not as the (co-) creation of groups or individuals.

Outside the scope of identity, the thesis’ brand-charts and the rich consumer-narratives might also serve as apt steppingstones if exploring young, female consumer culture: for instance picking up on the themes of fashion and morality and consumer ethics and sustainability.

As will become evident in Chapters 4 and 5, the same data might also be well suited to shed light on the history of Norwegian fashion practice and consumption, as well as on the broader theme of national identity as expressed through fashion and dress culture – by itself, or in comparison to that of other Scandinavian countries. See in particular the responses to questions 11 and 12, Appendix 9 that is left out of this thesis’ scope.
Chapter 3: The style and style diffusion power of mainstream ‘consecrators of cool’

'To be well known in fashion today, you have to appear in the women's press.'

Isabel Marant

This chapter details the springboard analysis of the thesis’, asking two subsequent questions: 1) In the age of digitalization, why turn to the tactile pages of fashion magazines to find the style advise that hold significant consecrating power? And 2) Exactly which ‘looks’, brands and copies are promoted as ‘fashionable’ by Norwegian fashion magazines with the power to consecrate?

Apart from pinning down the mechanisms and power structures embedded in fashion magazines in general, the following chapter serves three purposes: Firstly, it legitimizes why looking at fashion magazines instead of addressing fashion blogs and other digital and social media. Secondly, it methodologically situates the mediating channels in question, ELLE, Costume and Stylemag, as well as presents their current take on ‘consecrated cool’. Thirdly, through answering the first two questions, this chapter launches the tools needed to state that the style exponents are not only subjectively ‘cool’ but objectively fashionable; the magazines serving the part as consecrated style manuals.

Hence, the following tri-partite analysis mirrors Grace Lees-Maffei’s production-consumption-mediation paradigm by reversing the order of the structure, mediation – the most resent methodological focus to enter the design historical discourse – serving as the founding steppingstone.

Fashion magazines as cultural product and commodity

Unpacking the importance and influence of fashion magazines, social anthropologist Brian Moeran makes a first useful partition, dividing fashion magazines into two separate categories: cultural product and commodity. Thus, he aligns the so called ‘glossies’ with other mass media productions like art, film, radio, newspapers, and – and as stressed by

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182 Tungate, Fashion Brands, 116. Features on Isabel Marant appeared in ELLE, Costume and Stylemag in conjunction with the release of her collaboration collection with H&M 2013.
184 Ibid., 352-353, 365.
Yuiya Kawamura – fashion itself.  As a cultural product, Moeran notes, ‘fashion magazines circulate in a cultural economy of collective meanings’. At a content level, this means an inextricable linkage with the fashion industry, as magazines follow its biannual release of main collections: spring/ summer and autumn/ winter.  Using the seasonal calendar as its building blocks, the magazines offer fashion stories, inspirational interviews, styling-recipes, mix-and-match-pages, news from the worlds of fashion and celebrity, and not to forget; inventories of where to purchase all the goods on display. In short, they provide readers with extensive visual and textual (life) style guidance, with a strong focus on new fashionable appearances, it being clothes, make-up or detox cures; what Moeran calls ‘(…) experiential and behavioral models in which the reader’s ideal self is reflected and on which she can herself reflect and act.’

Another crucial, and steadily growing, feature of mainstream fashion magazines – and an increasingly prominent part of the Norwegian titles in question – is the encouragement of identification with the editorial staff and the new Y-Generation of ‘self-made’, multitasking fashion professionals and/ or ‘it’-girls – with their preferred styles, Fashion Week experiences and mingling with friends who more often than not, are celebrities. For case in point, see first page of Appendix 1 featuring Norwegian blogger-model Hanneli Mustaparta.

Another focal novelty, as of 2008 till the present, is the new urge and opportunity of having direct contact with readerships, the encouragement of checking out the blogs and Instagram-accounts connected to the magazines, as well as attending magazine-hosted shopping-events. A question of maturity and saturation of social media perhaps, as ELLE and Costume back in 2011, still not avidly promote staff members as autonomous ‘fashion leaders’, in spite of the already booming (fashion) blogging-culture.

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188 As does all three magazines in question.
191 The token ‘it-girl’, has been a ubiquitous plus-word referenced throughout popular fashion discourse the last decade to describe women who embody the zeitgeist. The current ‘it’-girl preferably holds a merit-list akin to: blogger/ model/ actor/ designer/ show host. Like Jenny Skavlan. See Appendix 1.
As an intermediary of style set between production and consumption, a ‘glossy’ thus represents what Kawamura calls a gatekeeper of fashion; one of the proponents of the system that creates the ‘(…) symbolic boundaries between what is fashion and what is not fashion and also (determines) what the legitimate aesthetic taste is.’\(^{193}\) Headed by an exclusive stronghold of editors – empowered gatekeepers in their own right – magazines thus interpret and mediate the seasonal mood in order to coax readers to keep buying their vision. A thoroughly successful formula, if we follow Kawamura, as well-established fashion periodicals, regardless of outline and readership, enjoy ‘(…) the trust (…) and acceptance by a large portion of the audience it serves.’\(^{194}\) Simultaneously big international titles, like the different editions of *Vogue*, need to produce A-level fashion content – i.e. creatively outstanding fashion stories – in order to maintain the necessary credibility within the inner circle of the fashion system, called ‘the fashion village’\(^{195}\). However, as supply and demand are becoming more locally tuned, and more consumer-driven,\(^{196}\) the sartorial content of a fashion story also reflects what sells well in the given country; to the consuming reader’s tastes and preferences.\(^{197}\) A feature to be readily displayed in the next chapter.

Lastly, critical journalism, as recently criticized by Norwegian fashion journalist Mari Grinde Arntzen,\(^{198}\) is not part of a ‘glossy’s editorial profile; Norwegian *ELLE, Costume* and *Stylemag* adhering to the norm. Rather, and as vividly portrayed in the documentary on American *Vogue, The September Issue*, influential magazines criticize by silence and exclusion and leave the critical discussion to the heat of the meeting room.\(^{199}\)

Turning to the fashion magazines’ role as a commodity, the essential argument of why turning to print magazines instead of digital media, are found here: Even as the products of the publishing and print industries are in decline,\(^{200}\) print media remains the paramount interface where brands can advertise big and make their goods reach out to end-consumers. Tungate cuts it short, saying: ‘(…) fashion companies still rate glossy magazines as the best


\(^{194}\) Ibid., 79.

\(^{195}\) Moeran, “‘More Than Just a Fashion Magazine,’” 734.


\(^{197}\) Brian Moeran, “More Than Just a Fashion Magazine,” 730.


way of reaching their target markets.’

Thus, the majority of the magazine’s revenue still stems from advertising, and the brand’s PR-departments continue to work hard to make editors and magazine staffs include their products in fashion spreads and ad pages. As Masoud Golsorkhi, founder and editor of niche fashion magazine Tank remarks: ‘Most fashion magazines are an extension of the marketing departments of large fashion companies.’ And further, if first having accepted the friendly bribery of an accommodating brand, ‘(i)’t’s very difficult to write nasty things about your friends.’ In the March 2014 edition of Norwegian *ELLE*, 89 out of 182 pages consisted of advertising.

Finally, the pioneer luxury online-shop Net-A-Porter’s branching out into printed media in 2013 serves up a last illustration to explain how print magazines retain their status. Debating the paradox of the new ‘glossy’ *Porter*, *Wall Street Journal* journalist Christina Binkley asked: ‘Why (...) step backward into publishing on paper?’ Replying that ‘(...) it turns out, women prefer to read about fashion on glossy pages even as they shop online.’

Or as Natalie Massenet, founder and executive chairwoman of Net-A-Porter Group Ltd. put it: Even if 60% of their target consumer’s purchases are online, ‘(t)hese are (still) women who love fashion magazines.’ Thus, Ane Lynge Jorlén’s research on niche fashion magazines appears to be transferable to the cache of present day ‘glossies’: ‘While the online versions have a couple of advantages over fashion magazines (...)’ here referring to the constant news-update, the cheap produce, and the offering of virtual, yet ‘personal’ and ‘authentic’ extensions of the magazine, ‘(...) the printed magazine is valued for its tactile quality (...) it renders a different kind of reading’. Furthermore, the most important harbingers of style innovation – the fashion stories – are still reserved the tactile editions. *ELLE, Costume* and *Stylemag* do not post fashion stories online.

Summing up, and at the time of writing, the printed magazine still holds a higher degree of consecrating power than digital fashion media. Not because they retain their power

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201 Tungate, *Fashion Brands*, 118.
202 ‘We are 70 percent funded by advertising’, Xavier Romatet, president of Condé Nast France, relates, ‘but we are not enslaved by our advertisers’. Tungate, 115. See also Morean, “More Than Just a Fashion Magazine,” 728.
203 Ibid., accessed, April 04, 2014.
205 Ibid., accessed, April 04, 2014.
as creative and socio-institutional epicentres, but because fashion companies still prefer paper-based ads and appearances. This is a simple fact, but one of unprecedented consequence as long as the preference remains a driving force of the fashion industry. As we have seen, the ‘glossy’ is also highly valued for its trustworthy content and tactile quality. As such, it represents the only other long lasting, in it-self-consecrated fashion object on a par with the material fashion is made of. Hence, fashion media do not only serve as an intermediary between the production and consumption of fashion, but as a fashion object to be consumed in its own right.

**Empowered Norwegian fashion magazines: ELLE, Costume, Stylemag**

Introducing the chosen mediating channels of fashion, **ELLE** (1997- ) represents the Norwegian version of the worldwide bestselling fashion magazine, and is the oldest surviving ‘glossy’ on the Norwegian marked with an annual circulation of 30 279 in 2013.\(^{208}\)

Combining sartorial fashion with objects and assets complementing a fashionable lifestyle – travel, food, fitness and career – the Norwegian version adheres to the international blueprint. Not so much centred around promoting cutting edge novelty and new design talents, as concerned with confirming and reflecting the established fashion system, both text and image-wise. As follows, it promotes slightly more ‘dressy’ and ‘composed’ styles than the other two magazines, even when covering ‘edgy’ ‘looks’. As exemplified by the following excerpt: ‘Back to the punk: (T)he slightly dirty-looking punk has taken a shower and come back in a more luxurious packaging’\(^{209}\) (See Appendix 1). Also worth a remark, is that the editorial profile hinge on a slightly higher age mark than that of **Costume** and **Stylemag**.\(^{210}\)

Concerning **ELLE**’s target reader, the webpage of its publishing house Egmont describes her thus: ‘The **ELLE**-reader is an urban, active and opinion-leading girl, aged 18-39’. She is also well educated with an income of her own disposal.\(^{211}\) **ELLE** was awarded ‘Magazine of the year’ in 2013 by Mediebedriftenes Landsforening (Norwegian Media

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\(^{209}\)**ELLE** Norge, NR. 08, August 2013, 29. All subsequent magazine copies are translated by me.

\(^{210}\)Hypotheses deduced from the experiences of portrait- and former fashion photographer Kjell Ruben Strøm with the photographer agency Palookaville, interviewed by me at Kaffebrenneriet, June 03, 2014. For interview schedule see Appendix 2.

Businesses’ Association). As for web-activity, two fashion blogs are attached to the ELLE web site.

**Costume** (2006-), the challenger, is currently the biggest, bestselling Norwegian fashion magazine, with an annual circulation of 36 378 (2013) and a scope singularly focused on sartorial matters, beauty and celebrity. Moulded on the sleek, Danish original, **Costume** boasts a younger staff and a younger style ideal than ELLE, with fashion editor Hege Badendyck representing one of the key figures in the Norwegian fashion system. A position reassuringly backed by the publishing house Bonnier. The editor has her own Costume-blog and a private website in addition to a mandatory Instagram- and Twitter account. In 2013, she could also pride herself with being ranked as one of the ‘Seven new street-style stars to watch’ by Vogue. A smart feather in the cap of editor and magazine alike.

Further departing from ELLE, Costume actively promotes the Y-Generation of fashion professionals and ‘it-girls’, with five individual bloggers featured on their website. Subsequently, the magazine participates in the building down of barriers between the realm of high fashion and the new generation of media savvy one-man-bands as opposed to ELLE that still stresses the poise of high fashion over the democratization of the old hierarchy.

As for the target reader, she is described as a woman aged 18-39, equal to that of ELLE, ‘(who) loves clothes and accessories, and is always updated on the latest trend (and) wants to know what happens – preferably before it happens’.

Lastly, Stylemag (2012-), a recent magazine addition with an annual circulation of 13 424 (2013), targets the strictly fashion-seeking and fashion-consuming reader. Modelled on the Swedish original StyleBy centred around the international blog star and fashion designer Elin Kling, it focuses on the synergy effect between the blogosphere, the

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212 Ibid., accessed April 17, 04, 2014.
214 Norwegian Costume also buys fashion stories from its counterpart. See for instance Norwegian Costume and the borrowing of two fashion stories from the Danish Costume July 2014 issue.
216 Detailed in mail-interview with Lars Midtsjø, April 30, 2014.
established fashion system and the (inter)active consumer. And importantly: on the circuit’s connection to the editor-cum-blogger herself, Celine Aagard (See Appendix 1). As such, Stylemag epitomizes the increasingly strong ties between the blogosphere and the magazine industry; the paper magazine tweaked into the perfect vehicle for the individual fashion leader’s consecrating power.\footnote{See for instance Celine Aagard striking a pose as a cover girl, front cover of Stylemag NR. 5, May 2014. See Appendix 1. See also Malin Kulseth and Alix Idsahl-Voisin, “Moteredaktør på forsiden av eget magasin,” ND.no, accessed August 29, 2014, http://www.nd.no/2014/08/moteredaktor-pa-forsiden-av-eget-magasin/.} However, a strong leader needs a befitting entourage, and the magazine’s website displays a blog-roll of eleven Norwegian fashion bloggers, five of them ranking amongst the twenty most read fashion blogs in Norway as of 2014.\footnote{Blogglisten, accessed 30 April, 2014, http://blogglisten.no/kategori/1.} Again, the extensive blogroll highlights the increasing democratization of the fashion capital, and the importance of spreading a magazine’s ‘vision’ through different mediating channels and fashion professionals to stay in touch with readers/consumers. As a digital offset, Stylemag promotes a young, blogger-oriented style practice. Equally important, they promote the new breed of consecrated media-behaviour; amongst others being the first Norwegian fashion magazine to make all items available through direct online order.\footnote{“Vinnere av årets mediepriser,” Nordiske Mediedager, accessed May 07, 2014, http://www.nordiskemediedager.no/nyheter/vinnere-av-arets-mediepriser/.}

As for the magazine’s readership, the publishing house Aller does not spend one word detailing the target reader. Instead, it focuses on the positive alliance between magazine, readers, bloggers and current and future advertisers: on the joint community of shared interests and the pleasant prospect of mutual prosperity.\footnote{“Stylemag: Inspirasjon,” accessed 30 April 2014, http://www.aller.no/merkevarer/stylemag/merkevarens-innhold/magasin.}

Of the titles in question, I find Costume to be the magazines that renders the contemporary scene with the highest level of ‘fashion village’ integrity. Lars Midtsjø explains their standing as the result of being owned by the respected publishing house Bonnier’s, as well the magazine’s own success in attracting the most acclaimed fashion professionals: A favourable situation making them able to create the most ambitious creative content on the mainstream Norwegian fashion scene.\footnote{See Appendix 2. Midtsjø and Strøm’s statements were backed by informally gathering the views of acclaimed fashion photographer Baard Lunde and food/fashion photographer Veslemøy Vraaskar and founder of the independent fashion show-platform UP (www.updesign.no/), Julie L. Parisi. The two latter interviewed by Ingrid Alice Clausen, for me, April 30, 2014 and the latter by me, via mail May 11, 2014.} Finally, and after extensive style scouting, I find the magazine’s compilation of clothes, ‘looks’ and models, to be the magazine that best mirrors the Swedish-informed ‘consecrated cool’ as practised on the streets of Oslo. Furthermore, it best mirrors the performed and curated version of it, as
amongst others offered by the ambitious cool hunting site Oslnights.no. In consequence, *Costume* represents the most apt style manual when seeking to define Oslo’s street style, as the following analysis will show.

**‘Consecrated Cool’: The Style Promoted in *ELLE, Costume* and *StyleMag* 2013-2014**

The preceding section introduced *ELLE, Costume* and *Stylemag* as important Norwegian gatekeepers of fashion. Subsequently, the remainder of this chapter answers the second question posed at the beginning of this chapter: *Exactly which ‘looks’, brands and copies are promoted as ‘fashionable’ by Norwegian fashion magazines with the power to consecrate?*

Even though different ‘looks’ are on display, the predominant tendency as of 2013 – 2014, might be aptly grouped and discussed under the conceptual umbrella of the Neo-90s. A sanitised update of a selection of 1980s’ and early 1990s’ mainstays bereft the heftiest patterning, the casual use of vibrant primary-colours, the inclination of pumping up volumes and the adding of ‘feminine’ elements like bows and frills in addition to shoulder pads and aggressive makeup up. (See Appendix 1). This is a style that pays tribute to the downplayed 50s-reminicent style of *Twin Peaks*; the softened corporate masculinity of Woody Allen films; the youthful, sportive Americana of popular series like *Beverly Hills 90210*, as well as the early design works of the likes of Calvin Klein (minimalism), Marc Jacobs (catwalk grunge) and Vivien Westwood (catwalk punk). Last, but not least, and as persuasively championed by Californian brand American Apparel, the present effortlessly synthesises the early 90s loose and casual ‘anti-fashion’ – currently re-named *normcore* – with the fitness-boom of the 80s and its eye-catching, bodycon fashions. In short: An ideal putting the body of the casual, sportive yet classy American into the original shoes of the subcultural Londoner to meet the particular climate of Northern Europe. (See Appendix 1). Strictly item-wise, and before moving back to the different ‘looks’ and modes of assemblage, we find the following items most frequently promoted:

- See-through blouses; sharp, monochrome men’s shirts; lumber-jack shirts with plaids; figure-hugging bodies; cropped tops; loose, big and round-necked knit-sweaters; sweatshirts with logos; vide suit-pants; dark drainpipe-jeans; 501s in light washes; crotch clinging denim

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shorts (all options preferably high waisted or ‘mum’-like\textsuperscript{228}); ankle-gracing knit-cardigans; long, angular and tailored coats; bomber jackets; matching twin-sets (pants/jackets, shorts/sweaters); post-punk lace up boots (still preferably Dr. Martens); sneakers (retro New Balance, Converse, Reebok, Superga and Nike); Birkenstock sandals, small backpacks (frequently Fjällräven); beanies; clusters of layered jewellery (chunky and ‘punky’, or pendant-simple); 60s and 70s-reminicent ‘quirky’ sunglasses and last but not least, a great array of sportive elements. Not only backpacks, sneakers and sweatshirts, but caps, running shorts, zippers, hoodies, tennis socks and sporty fabrics like netting, spandex and neoprene.

As for colours, fabrics and patterning, we find a strong focus on blacks, whites and greys, as well as monochrome surfaces in a pastel-to-earth-coloured palette. If patterning is involved, bold stripes, checks (however on decline) or expressionistic ‘splashes’ represent frequent currencies. Last but not least – and as naturally reflecting the immense popularization of denim over the last four decades\textsuperscript{229} – sophisticated denim fabrics in all shapes and washes permeate the picture. (See Appendix 1).

‘Back to the 90s!’ The promoted ‘looks’ and accompanying copies

Moving from sheer items, and back to the particular ‘looks’, both the garments and the styling of the clothes re-represent what I have called the ‘Neo-90s’. Turning to the narratives of the fashion magazines, the visual and material expressions are explained and hailed with accompanying titles like: ‘Back to the 90s: Denim, jersey and sporty elements creates the 90s-inspired metropolis-style’. ‘Back to the 90s!’ (Front cover and fashion-inside reportage), ‘90’s realism’, ‘Grunge: The rebel in you can rejoice over several designer’s inspiration from the 90s grunge period’. \textsuperscript{230} ‘LOGOMANIA: The 90s vibes are back on the catwalk’. Or more elaborate copies like: ‘Malin is attracted to ugly-pretty things like 90s-elements as cropped tops and bomber jackets. Her wardrobe mostly consists of vintage treasures’: ‘We are talking about punk, 90s and casual cool. Get updated on the strongest tendencies of the year’\textsuperscript{231} and ‘Hints of punk: the punk trend rules the fashion zeitgeist. This is how you give the summer

\textsuperscript{228} The fashion term ‘mom-jeans’ was brought to my attention by two of the style exponents: Mona and Therese, discussing their new, ‘trend-instigated’-tastes. See No.46/ Mona and No.47/ Therese, Appendix 12, 19.


outfit a punky twist!’  

Apart from the explicit references to the 1990s – the figure of the punker and the grunger, the new logomania and the novel generation of statement jewellery – we find three other dominant trends displayed across all three magazines. First, and as particularly favoured by our neighbouring Danes, numerous texts and images refer to (90s) ‘minimalism’. As in the following two excerpts from Costume, reading: ‘The new minimalism: This Falls’ minimalism has a sober and feminine take. Choose delicate materials and play with contrasts. Simple makeup and natural hair ads a gentle expression’, and ‘Minimal: The minimalism of 2013 is a cross breed between the experiential forms of the 80s and the feminine, clean expression of the 90s. Think Commes des Garcons’ peculiar lines mixed with sober Calvin Klein’.

Second, and naturally prolonging the dress code of minimalism, several spreads allude to the pull of men’s wear. As in the following examples from Costume: ‘Man up: We’re still inspired by the masculine’ and ‘Feminine Men’s Style’. Or as put by ELLE: ‘The Men’s Coat: The feminine and the masculine are to be mixed as never before this season.’

The third, and final major trend provides a generous dedication to sportive garments, or activewear. A fashion industry term describing the clothing segment that fuses street-style with travel accessories and sportswear; high performance materials paired with urban aesthetics into ‘utility chic’ styles. A trend harking back to the 30s, while gaining postmodern prominence within North American youth culture in the late 1970s, as style preferences took a collective turn towards a newfound interest in urban, sports-oriented street-style. As remains the case, with grunge-recycling columns like: ‘Sneaky business: Jogging shoes are no longer reserved for running tights and a sweaty T-shirt. Now, you are supposed to style

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232 *ELLE*, Norge: Both examples NR. 08, August 2013, 29, 56-57, 59-60.
234 *Costume*, NR. 09 September 2013, 246, 253.
235 *Costume*, NR. 05 May 2013, 29.
237 *Costume*, NR. 03 March, 2013, 182-183.
238 *ELLE*, Norge, NR. 09 September, 2013, 56.
jogging shoes and sneakers with your best-looking lace dress and red lipstick.'\textsuperscript{240} Or as Danish \textit{ELLE} simply put it: ‘The preferred look of the 2010s is sporty (,) just remember to be everything but rugged and sweaty.'\textsuperscript{241}

Last but not least, and as stressed by sociologist Sean Nixon, the casting of the models contributes to the creation of the mediated, consecrated ‘looks’.\textsuperscript{242} Again \textit{Costume} offers the models and the non-sartorial styling that most clearly convey the ‘casual cool’ idiom of the garments. In general, their fashion stories display a more androgynous, or boyish type-casting; more angular body types and facial features and less ‘pretty’ expressions. Styles completed with downplayed make-up and hair (preferably long) teased into varieties of \textit{natural}. As opposed to the more classically feminine casting, and more glamorous styling, predominantly preferred by \textit{ELLE} and \textit{Stylemag}. (See Appendix 1).

Briefly comparing the Norwegian magazine’s take on ‘consecrated cool’ to that of their Danish and Swedish counterparts, we find a re-representation of the same ‘Neo 90s’ tendency, albeit mainly focused around minimal styles. Worth a remark, the fashion spreads do not only dwell on ‘minimalism’, but frequently put their own label on it, minting it ‘\textit{nordic} minimalism’ and ‘\textit{scandi} cool’ (my italics). Danish \textit{ELLE} unabashedly announces that ‘Nordic minimalism is one of the biggest international trends.’\textsuperscript{243} Furthermore, the magazines do not only promote the impact and purity of Scandinavian design, but stress the exquisiteness of homespun brands;\textsuperscript{244} as illustrated by a twenty-page long fashion story titled “Great Danes”.\textsuperscript{245} These points illustrate how Danish and Swedish design-confidence appears to excel the Norwegian. And as discussed below, the confidence is not misplaced even if young Norwegian women look to Sweden.

Summing up, the previous section has argued how \textit{ELLE}, \textit{Costume} and \textit{Stylemag} show a collective leaning towards the trend that I have coined the ‘Neo-90s’. I have not argued that the 90s revivalism is the only, or single most important ‘look’ acted out on the international catwalks as of 2013–2014, but rather stressing the \textit{look} – or the styling ethos – that has been the most outspokenly appreciated by the Norwegian ‘glossies’ within the given time period. A preference much shared with their English, and particularly Danish and

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{Stylemag}, NR. 10, 2013, 114.
\textsuperscript{241} “Sports star,” in \textit{ELLE} Danmark NR. 05 May, 2014, 86.
\textsuperscript{243} All examples extracted from \textit{ELLE}, Danmark, NR. 03, March, 2013. In order of quotation: 297, 53
\textsuperscript{244} Particularly the Danish magazines dedicate columns to national design- and retail professionals. Such as a six page reportage on designer Mads Nørregaard in Danish \textit{Costume}, NR. 08, July 2014, 34-39.
\textsuperscript{245} \textit{ELLE}, Danmark, NR. 03, March, 2013, 240-264.
Swedish, counterparts. Neither have I stated that the 90s input has been absent from Norwegian fashion magazines prior to 2013-2014. On the contrary, punk, minimalism, men’s- and activewear were all given textual and visual output in the five preceding years. However, the 1990s played out as an eligible pasts amongst others instead of acting as the one, uniting imperative.²⁴⁶ In short, and as argued above, all the major current trends might be happily married within the casual confines of the ‘Neo-90s’: The minimalism, the men’s wear and the activewear combined into the latest take on the post-war ethos of dressing up while dressing down.

**Brands and Prices**

Moving from items, style and styling to the exact brands; their prices and origin, *ELLE*, *Costume* and *Stylemag* re-represent the by now customary mixing of high-end brands with affordable retail, as discussed in Chapter 1. Brands like Stella McCartney and Prada put into *intelligent consumer-play* with between-prêt-a-portèr-and-design-retail Acne, mid-price design-retailer Ganni and Malene Birger, and low-price chains like Bik Bok and H&M. However, as the counting of items and labels below shows, the all over tendency leans towards a favouring of brands belonging to the high end of the mid-price segment. The affordable low-price segment clocks in at the second highest frequency. Prét-a-portèr is the least included category, all though putting its mark on the most prestigious fashion stories.²⁴⁷

As for the nationality of the favoured brands, as will be thoroughly returned to in chapters 4 and 5, counting all the items featured in the March 2013 editions shows an itinerary of the following ten most frequented brands out of a total 386:²⁴⁸ Swedish retail brands: H&M (46), Acne (35), COS (21); Danish brands: Bruuns Bazar (19), Ganni (19), Inwear (24), By Malene Birger (17), Samsøe & Samsøe (17), and other: Zara (15) and Asos (15). Counting again one year later, March 2014, the list remains fairly unchanged: Swedish brands: H&M (31), Acne (24), Filippa K (20), COS (14); Danish brands: By Malene Birger

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²⁴⁶ The 2013-2014 booming of the 90s reference is a feature worth noting as the influence of the 90s has been very much on the up on the fashion scene already in 2009/2010. A trend observed and recorded when undertaking research on ‘retro’, and its 90s-oriented bend, when living in London in 2009/2010. The observation of the 90s being one out of several references is based on the careful scanning through my home archive of *ELLE* and *Costume* magazines stretching back to 2007.

²⁴⁷ The case study of the Norwegian fashion field *Motepilot* (2008) offers a diagram with the different price ranges of retail. However, as the segmentation of retail develops quickly, and the boarders between categories are increasingly blurred, I refrain from applying fixed price ranges in compliance with Gisle Mariani Mardal, the chair leader of Norwegian Fashion Institute. See Karun Nordgård, Karin Fensgård and Siv Marina Flø Karlsen, *Motepilot: En undersøkelse av det norske motedesignfeltet*, (Oslo: Norsk Form, 2008), 43, 45.

²⁴⁸ The counting included not only clothes, but all accessories: shoes, jewelry, watches et cetera.
Summing up the figures from the March-issues, both years, the Danish retail industry gains the highest total score with a representation of 168 items. The Danish also boasts the greatest variety of brands frequently included. The Swedish on the other hand, are distinguished by a higher frequency of the same ‘top’ labels, and enters second with 145 items. Particularly H&M and Acne are recurring guests, Acne being the one brand constantly on display across all three titles, sections and strata of ‘fashionables’. This selective preference for only a few Swedish brands resonates strongly with the style exponents’ choices, to be discussed shortly. As do the general exclusion of retail brands not stemming from our neighbouring countries.

Looking more closely at the March inventories, as well as the total volume of all three magazines 13/14, another noteworthy feature stands out: The strong favouring of only a handful of the cheap retail brands. That in spite of the low-price segment’s significant design-upgrading the last ten years, as discussed in Chapter 1 under the token ‘masslux’. Notably, brands like the Danish Vero Moda, Swedish Lindex and Kapphal, and Norwegian Cubus, are all more or less absent. As is the American high end of the low-price chain Oasis and Spanish Mango. H&M, Monki and Bik Bok, on the other hand, are regulars across all three titles, as illustrated by the inventory above. Again, and as already mentioned, affordable fashion is not only generously included, but given élan and opulence positioned alongside high end brands in the most credible fashion stories. A by now familiar fashion main staple vividly captured by the styling of international blog-star Hanneli Mustaparta in Costume’s September issue 2013: Calvin Klein, Gucci and Acne put alongside Ganni, H&M, Lindex and Cubus. Again restating the contemporary imperative of the eclectic, and thus ‘intelligent’ consumer, as well as reflecting the magazine’s interest in not only cutting edge ‘consecrated cool’, but equally the cheap, accessible and democratic version of it. The local shopping topography of Oslo, however, remains the natural reference. The joint inventory thus mirrors the general fashion consumer behaviour in Norway as the majority of the 40 billion crowns annually spent on clothes go under the label of cheap retail. As Chapter 5 will bear testament to.

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249 FWSS – mid price brand – is the only Norwegian brand to make a mark on the top ten-list.
250 Amongst the other brands surpassing a total score of ten items 2013/2014, five out of t13 are Danish.
251 Bik Bok wakes just below the top ten-list, the 2013/-14 counting offering 11/ 12 items. See Appendix 3.
252 See for instance “Hanneli The Body Mustaparta,” in Costume, NR. 09 September 2013, 212-235
Conclusion

This chapter has applied the mainstream fashion magazines *ELLE*, *Costume* and *Stylemag* to make manifest the current, mediated version of ‘consecrated cool’. In legitimizing why using printed fashion magazines as the most significant mediating channels at the time of writing, the chapter posed and answered the following two questions, namely: 1) *Why still look to the tactile pages of fashion magazines to find the fashion representations and style advise that hold significant, consecrating power?* And 2) *Exactly which clothes and 'looks' are promoted as 'fashionable' by Norwegian fashion magazines with the power to consecrate?*

Answering the two questions, the chapter has explained three interlocked themes: Firstly, it has detailed how the print magazine, even in the face of digitalization, has the role of creative pivot within the fashion system, and furthermore as in-it-self valued fashion product. Most importantly, it has argued how fashion companies still favor printed magazines as a vessel for advertising their products and brand identity.

Secondly, this chapter has outlined, and thus methodologically situated, the *mediating channels*\(^\text{254}\) in question: *ELLE*, *Costume* and *Stylemag*. It has rendered their similarities and singularities, and thereby also given a restricted view into the particular structure of the Norwegian fashion system both regarding editorial profiles, digital interaction and readerships. Subsequently, the analysis has advocated the value of using fashion magazines as a design historical source material through deploying, and reversing, the order of Grace Lees-Maffei’s *production-consumption-mediation paradigm* by way of *mediation*.

Thirdly, and most importantly, this chapter has launched the objective style manual needed when in the next chapter venturing out to verify and sample the core of the thesis: the everyday fashion practice of the young, female and ‘fashionable’ Oslo citizens. The next step thus makes way through the act of *consumption* and the language surrounding it: the wearing, preferring and shopping of fashion-clothing.

Chapter 4: Wearing our neighbor on the sleeve: The shopping preferences of young, female Oslo citizens

‘I don’t think a Mulberry bag or a Max Mara coat would have made me much happier.’

Anette

Having retrieved my style exponents, their looks and thoughts, as thoroughly described in Chapter 2, the following presents the findings from the survey in two sections. The first section details the quantitative data derived from the answers to questions one and two: 1) What are you wearing and where have you bought the items? And 2) In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most, and why do you choose exactly these? The latter questions thus provide the ranking list of the style exponent’s most frequented shopping destinations – the very footing of the thesis – while simultaneously giving qualitative insight into the crucial question of why they prefer these shops instead of others?

The former questions, on the other hand, serve to provide the necessary visual and material samples of the practiced ‘consecrated cool’, as well as to give exact knowledge of the branded fundament of the photographed ‘looks’. However, as the vox pop encounters proved to be an affirmative litmus test of the respondent’s shopping preferences in general, the main emphasis is placed on the second question to avoid double exposure of the same arguments.

Moving to the second, mainly qualitative part, the chapter presents the answers to the rest of the eleven questions in the shape of a collective interview. The form of the interview was chosen, as the majority of the responses were generous and thorough, and thus underserving of a schematic presentation. As in the first section, the second also makes way by letting the individual questions serve as headlines to separate the different response tendencies. It facilitates an easy cross-referencing with the translated compilation of representative answers found in Appendix 9; an overview provided to enable a transparent guideline when reading through the examples picked out and discussed below. Similar, if scattered replies are sometimes grouped under the heading of one question to make a tendency coherent even if recurring under the headlines of different questions.

255 No.19/ Anette, 139.
256 Note however that as the answers to question 3) Do you deliberately choose shopping location according to the item/style you are looking for? If yes, where do you shop which items? overlap with those given to the second, the rest of the shared interview starts with question 4. Furthermore, 13) How would you describe your own style? is rolled into question 1. As for excluding the responses to questions 11 and 12, I have regarded them as too rich to balance out the thesis well, as it is primarily geared towards the diffusion of fashion as opposed to consumption as part of the creation of identity; collective or individual. As a few of the responses to question 11 are applied in Chapter 5, they are included in Appendix 9. The responses to question 12 are excluded.
Subsequently, this chapter serves to shed light on two of the thesis’ most vital research questions: Refocusing the questions from the Introduction, they read: 1) *Might the change in dress code relate to the recent implementation of trendy, Swedish retail stores into the nexus of the Oslo shopping topography?* And 2) *if there is a link between the two, what makes Swedish retail fashion particularly appealing to young, female and ‘fashionable’ Oslo citizens?* Presenting and analysing the data as a collective interview, the chapter will also provide a thick description of the thoughts and language underscoring the fashion capital of the respondents, or of their (fashionably) lived worlds. Last but not least, the body of data provides the necessary entrée into the last and concluding chapter, dissecting the H&M Group’s establishing of a style hegemony without anyone really taking notice.

**The vox pop list**

1) *What are you wearing and where have you bought the items?*

Adding the different tags of the style exponents’ clothes and accessories from the *vox pop* question: 1) *What are you wearing and where have you bought the items?* gives a list of the following top ten stores and brands out of the 78 mentioned: H&M (23), Monki (20), Bik Bok (20), Acne (17), family inheritance/ parents’/ boyfriends’ (13), Dr. Martens (11), Weekday (9), homemade (8), COS (6), Carlings (6), Zara (5) and Flea market (name unspecified) (5). The list thus resembles the ranking found in the fashion magazines of last chapter, albeit excluding the Danish top brands.

Less than surprising, Swedish megabrand H&M enters first closely followed by H&M’s subsidiary Monki. Pleasantly for Norway’s biggest retail group Varner, the young and trend-conscious Bik Bok comes third alongside Acne. Also important to note when reviewing the indicative potential of the *vox pop-list*, is the high frequency of the few top ten brands rather than the apparent heterogeneity of the 78 mentioned; again a feature on a par with the Norwegian magazines showing that the style exponents are in tune with the consecrated beat of the fashion system.

The most significant feature however, is not only the dominance and popularity of a few brands, but the close proximity between the design cultures and the ‘looks’ they represent, i.e., the minimalist ‘casual cool’ championed by our bordering neighbors. In other words, and as the recounting of the 53 survey answers below will illuminate, curiously few brands, and almost none outside of Swedish retail industry, are regarded as viable alternatives when the style exponents are conjuring their personal takes on ‘consecrated cool’. A bit of a
paradox, as the cool, authentic and laidback style of the Danish capital dwellers is much preferred to the hip and strict dress code of those native to trend-instigating Stockholm.  

As for the exact ‘looks’, the photos and the accompanying itemizing (see Appendix 7) show everyday-clad respondents mirroring the idioms underscoring the ‘consecrated cool’ promoted by the magazines. Mathilde recounts the baseline of most style-descriptions, saying about herself: ‘Androgynous feminism. Sporty and laidback city-style with colorful details and second hand elements.’ Or even more to the core, as put by Iselin: ‘Simple, minimalistic (...) black and white, 1990-2005.’ In short, the respondents boast versions of the ‘Neo-90s’ take on minimalism, men’s – and active wear: New Balances or Dr. Martens paired with high waisted jeans, white buttoned up shirts, long, angular coats, monochromatic color-schemes and natural hair makeup.

The favored shops

2) Part 1): In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most?

When comparing the answers to the first question to those of the second: In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most? we find but a few alterations, and a top ten ranking list reading: H&M (33), Weekday (26), Monki (24), COS (15), Zara (15), Fretex (15), Flea markets (names unspecified) (12), Acne (11), Bik Bok (10), vintage (10).

Here, the total amount of brands and shopping locations mentioned has shrunk to almost half (44) with an even heavier targeting of the same, few favorite candidates as seen above. A logic prolongation, perhaps, as the wording asks for the most frequented shops, and not the origin of randomly bought items, yet still notable as the question arguably also opens up to the mentioning of brands cherished, even if worn occasionally. Hence, the two lists display little discrepancy between what the style exponents were wearing when scouted, and what they say to be wearing in general. As the replies in general were meticulous, they give little reason to suspect (in)deliberately downscaled, or otherwise unconsidered answers. Summing up the major findings from the quantitative data gives an overview of the following shopping preferences:

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257 Although relevant, the question concerning Oslo as a ‘style site’ in comparison to Stockholm and Copenhagen is left out of the analyses above to maintain the focus on the respondent’s own styles. Pages 33-39 in the original extended Appendix 9.

258 As argued in the methodology-section, the style exponents were not chosen as carriers of the ultimate ‘consecrated cool’. Rather, they represent the baseline of the increased number of stylish-looking young women.

259 No. 27/ Mathilde, 140.

260 No. 15/ Iselin, 140.

261 See in for instance the answers of Sigrid (Nr. 18), Karoline P. M. (Nr. 39), Mathilde (Nr. 27), Mona (Nr. 46) Therese (Nr. 47) Celine Marie and Tonje (Nr. 45) as a case in point, see pages 128-130.
First, and sitting somewhat alarmingly well with the premise of the thesis, the second list draws an even cleaner chart of the remarkably unison leaning towards one, progressive fistful of Swedish brands: H&M, Weekday, Monki, COS and Acne. Further, and as mentioned in the first chapter, all the brands – except for Acne – are not only closely related nationality- and design culture wise, but also tightly connected commercially as Weekday, Monki and COS all are sub-companies tied to the H&M group. The four H&M-companies together have fourteen stores located in Oslo. Acne has four stores.

Second, apart from the Swedish superbrand H&M and its kicking corporate cousins, only one other international retail-megabrand is frequently mentioned: Zara; the brand notorious for being the original and the fastest copycat on the retail block, and for having a policy of not doing advertising as the high fashion-alluding stores and the minimalistic shopping bags are devised to speak for themselves. Until COS hit the shopping topography in 2013, Zara was the only high street store to offer affordable yet luxury-like shopping experience; interiors miming the smooth exclusive surfaces of high end fashion houses, while keeping prices at a low, mid-price level. Zara has two stores in central Oslo.

The third, yet next biggest shopping preference on the list, if united under one umbrella, are the second hand outlets represented by Fretex (The Norwegian Salvation Army chain store), unspecified flea markets and vintage shops. Subsequently, the dress practice of the style exponents do not only pay tribute to the well-established equation mark between cheap retail and fully-fledged fashion, but to the other crucial mainstay of Western, post-war dress culture: that of the money-saving (for the most part), ‘authenticity-securing’ and fashionable eclecticism found when pairing second hand with new items. A preference further echoing those of Woodward and Lifter’s respondents. Put together, the number of second hand shops in Oslo lists at least twelve popular shopping spaces.


263 COS and Weekday opened a new joint store at in the “Brick Lane” of Oslo – Grønlerdøen – May 2016.

264 The press officer Mark Tungate met when writing his Fashion Brands put it this way: ‘We would rather concentrate on our offering in terms of design, prices, rapid turn-around of stock and store experience. That’s why we have stores in the smartest locations and devote a lot of attention to facades, interiors and window displays. Our stores are our way of communicating.’ Tungate, Fashion Brands, 40.

265 See Chapter 1, x.

266 Fretex (5), UFF (2) and vintage shops, five of them being acclaimed within the Norwegian fashion system. See amongst others http://www.minmote.no/#!/artikkel/23010505/vintage-shopping-i-oslo-guide-til-de-bestebutikkene and http://www.aktivioslo.no/vintage/, accessed February 26, 2015.
The last and least referred to brand on the list is Bik Bok. The Norwegian low price brand effectively borrowing the strategies of other international retailers in having divided their outlets into different shopping spaces and branches: regular shops, flagship stores and the adjacent concept store Never Denim, as well as boasting design-collaborations with the celebrity-likes of Ashley and Mary Kate Olson.²⁶⁷ Bik Bok has 9 shops in central Oslo.

Lastly, a notable absence is worth a remark. Again pondering the narrow scope of eligible shopping alternatives in comparison to the far greater selection of top brands championed by the Norwegian fashion magazines, is the complete absence of ‘credible’ Danish brands like Ganni, Malene Birger and Bruuns Bazaar. Price-wise they all belong to the more expensive midprice range. However, they still represent an absence worth noting as the buying of long lasting items like coats, dresses, scarves and jackets seems to occasionally take student economies²⁶⁸ out of the narrow lane of affordable retail when for instance choosing COS or splurging on an Acne scarf or pair of jeans. However, taking a brief look at the home web pages of the brands, and then panning over the ‘looks’ of the style exponents, Jill might be on to one, important drawback: ‘Malene Birger,’ she says, ‘a bit too feminine.’²⁶⁹ Or perhaps too similar to how the parental generation dresses? I return to this point in the next chapter.

Thus, a preliminary rendering of the favored brands and shopping destinations gives an overview of a collective leaning towards primarily cheap and predominantly Swedish retail shops. And, a preference for mixing retail items with vintage garments; second hand items also preferably being low cost, as Fretex and flea markets are more frequently referred to than pricier vintage shops.²⁷⁰

2) Part 2): and why do you choose exactly these?

Recounting the arguments underlying the popularity of the top ten brands and shopping alternatives listed above, Justine’s answer illustrates the core findings in perfect order. Subsequently, each brand is targeted separately in line with the ranking.


²⁶⁸ Twenty-nine out of the fifty-two respondents were students, seven were doing both, while only fifteen worked full time. See Appendix 4.

²⁶⁹ No.52/ Jill, 136.

²⁷⁰ Throughout Old Clothes, New Looks: Second Hand Fashion, the terms second hand and vintage interchangeably, the editors amongst others stating: ‘The term ‘vintage’ is used to cover a huge spectrum of clothes that are not newly designed.’ Further, second hand, ‘vintage’ and vintage without quotation marks are used. See for instance Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark, “Introduction,” in Old Clothes, New Looks, ed. Palmer and Clark (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 174.
No.3/ Justine:
- H&M: because they have cheap basics that are ok.
- UFF/Fretex: because you find nice jackets/ bags in wool/ leather.
- Weekday (browse (here) mostly): because they have a lot of f*cking nice stuff there.
- Velouria Vintage: Because they have distinct items
- COS: because the cut etc. is good.
- I really don’t shop that much, but (I) describe shops that I brows a lot in.

H&M: As one would anticipate due to H&M's wide selection, low prices and sheer shopping topographical dominance, the megabrand appears to be the one, unavoidable shopping alternative cherished and consumed for three main reasons: 1) For its broad range of different clothes and styles, 2) for its selection of wardrobe basics and 3) for its wallet-friendly prices. Or as Ruth puts it, rolling the most common arguments into one, throwing Monki and Weekday into the lot: ‘They are cheap, have a good and varied selection (and) at the same time it’s possible to find a little more exclusive items there too.’

In short, H&M is both regarded as the primary go to for simple basics, as well as an attractive shopping arena for fashionable and trend-pushing items. Hence, Sweden’s biggest retail brand is generally accepted as the social democratic, ‘all inclusive’ fashion supply store it is conjured to be.

However, and probably due to media exposure, H&M is also the one brand to capture the frequent, guilty-pleasure-ridden ambivalence connected to the consumption of low price retail. An ambivalence appearing young at heart – or simply inconsequent – as many express their regrets regarding the wretched consumer ethics connected with buying items from sweatshops with poor working conditions, or the bad conscience imbedded in the adding fuel to the consuming fire of the Western world. Mona’s otherwise well reflected answer illustrates the frequent blind-spottedness. At the one hand, she chooses UFF, Fretex and flea markets because of the stylistic aspects, yet equally with regards to ‘(...) the ethical reasons, the environmental aspect, and the working conditions that can be poor at cheap chains.’ However, and without regrets, in the next sentence she says that she chooses ‘(...) Monki and H&M because I think they have a nice and wide selection (.).’

271 No.14/ Ruth, 129.
273 Except for Åshild referring to Zara for the same reasons. See Nr.44/ Åshild, 134.
274 See for instance Sunniva’s considered if unresolved answer: ‘To cut out a store like H&M (or similar) because of their low-sustainability profile, and rather purchase big quantities of ecological/ sustainable clothes doesn’t sit right.’ Nr.30/ Sunniva, 134.
275 No.44/ Mona, 130.
other hand expresses the ambivalence head on, if in a cheeky manner, saying: ‘(H&M) has an enormous selection (...) – in general all you need, if you are willing to use ‘unethical clothes’ (and often of poorer quality) in exchange for its availability.’ And like so many others, she is. In short, for better or worse, almost all the respondents refer to H&M, even when sweeping it under the carpet like Amalie, putting it this way: ‘Unfortunately, I stumble through the doors of H&M when I need something quick.’

**Weekday:** H&M’s sub-company Weekday, strategically having placed its only shop in the very nexus of the city and directly adjacent Monki, is recognized for a number of different reasons, of which the appraisal of the cool, different and affordable clothes stands out as the most common replies. Weekday is also acknowledged for having a good selection of cheap, flattering jeans from the sub-brand Cheap Monday; for nice basics, and by a few for their vintage department, their color scheme or simply for being the ‘go to’ for good clothes in general. Karoline P. M. sums up the voices of her fellow aficionados, recounting her Swedish preferences thus:

> At Weekday and Monki I shop things that I ‘need’, for instance shorts, basic tees and tanks, thick sweaters, at times pants, scarves, coats, winter jackets etc. In Oslo, these are the two shops I go to first if I’m deliberately on the lookout for something special. This because I know that their cuts and shapes suit my figure. (A) at times, (t) hey have rather unique outfits.

Worth a note, is the fact that Weekday is the only store apart from Acne attributed the status of being an attractive shopping space in its own right, of having a cool vibe, as Karoline P. M. puts it. Or as Marit says, later responding to the question of whether shops in themselves inform her sartorial choices: ‘Most often, it is the very items, or the style of the shop (for instance Weekday) that inspire my shopping. I see a tendency in the stock of the season, and perhaps adopt it more than I would like to admit.’ A spot on remark as will become evident in the next chapter.

Also noteworthy is Weekday’s positioning as what we might call a ‘fashion meridian’, as it is both referenced alongside H&M and Monki, yet also on a par with Acne and Filippa K. Further, and as accentuated in the Introduction; walking the streets of central Oslo; stopping by Weekday, and then heading back to the streets again, Weekday

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276 No.18/ Sigrid, 128.
277 No.6/ Amalie, 128.
277 This is no longer present as of 2016.
278 See Figure x and replies with brand names set in bold, 2-10.
279 No.39/ Karoline P. M., 131.
280 No.39/ Karoline P. M., 130.
281 No.39/ Marit, response to question 8, 137. See also No.28/ Helene’s answer, 136.
282 No.15/ Iselin’s answer, 137.

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comes across as the one brand whose sartorial culture – both selection-, interior, clientele- and vibe-wise – most accurately reflects the style, not only of the respondents, but of the young and fashionable inhabitants of Oslo at large. In sum, the respondents appear to agree with Justine, in attitude if not phrasing, preferring Weekday ‘(…) because they have a lot of f*cking nice stuff there.’

**Monki:** Often championed in the same breath of air as Weekday and H&M, the cheaper H&M-subsidiary Monki is frequently preferred on a par with the other two; treasured for its wide selection and low prices. Furthermore, and akin to Weekday, it is also regarded as a supplier of *special* items. Karoline P. M. recounts it thus: ‘Monki (has a) lot of nice basics, good prices (and a)t times a unique twist on ‘simple’ basics.’ While Aida cuts it short, saying: ‘Monki has a lot of cool stuff that you don’t see everywhere.’

Now, the phrase *you don’t see everywhere* is worth a remark, and highlights a fun paradox worded by several respondents, amongst others Lise. Much in tune with the other two, she agrees with the general appraisal, saying that: ‘Monki/ Weekday (have) incredibly many cool and different clothes. And further: (I) think it is good to stand out, and (I) don’t wish to wear what others are wearing.’

The paradox is two-fold. First, as she just above has listed the often-referred-to Bik Bok as another favorite shopping space, as they too have *cool and not that expensive clothes*. Thus, she clearly implies that shopping at the omnipresent high street stores is a legitimate way to procure fashionable items. However, in the next sentence she says: ‘(I) try not to buy too many clothes from (Bik Bok), as it often ends up with everyone wearing the same clothes.’ Hence, buying clothes at Monki and Weekday – two of most frequently cherished stores, both by the respondents and a great many other city dwellers by the looks of it – is regarded as antithetical to ending up looking like *everyone else*. Purchasing your wardrobe at Bik Bok, on the other hand, appears to be asking for running into yourself around the next corner, in spite of their dedication to creating timely basics, rather than flagrant pieces. In short, and on a par with Zara, it looks as if the H&M subsidiaries and their different versions of ‘young uniqueness’ work precisely thus: they make customers feel secure about having chosen mainstream buffers and something *different*.

**COS:** The mid-priced brand COS (Collection Of Style), the last of the H&M subsidiaries to hit the Norwegian market (2013), is a cherished, if not as elaborately

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284 No.3/ Justine, 128.
285 No.42/ Aida, 130.
286 No.20/ Lise, 129.
287 Ibid., 129.
288 The Bik Bok’s located in the inner city nexus have been visited at regular intervals after the collection of data.
discussed shopping preference as the other two. Perhaps because it represents more of a ‘grown up’ and occasional treat due to the slightly higher price point; because it simultaneously does not have the panache and symbolic value of the high end-aspiring Acne, and/or because the store’s more adult and serene layout rubs off on the language used by respondent’s to frame it. Justine for instance simply says: ‘COS, because the cut etc. is good.’ While Ingvild A., a former COS shop assistant puts it thus: ‘I mostly buy clothes abroad or over the Internet. (I) don’t go to shops in Oslo to buy clothes. But if I would, I would have chosen the stores that have the style that I like.’ And then putting only COS in a parenthesis. On account of the language that is used, the style exponents first and foremost regard their clean and simple designs and their cuts and shapes. Words and preferences resonating well with the already highlighted Norwegian and Scandinavian fashion media’s flair for the minimalist branch of the ‘Neo-90s’. However, if not as frequently and explicitly discussed as the other H&M subsidiaries, COS is often referenced alongside brands that cater to similar sartorial needs and wishes. As the love of Acne, as discussed below, shows. COS also ranks third on the list of where they would have liked to shop more.

**Zara:** Now, even if less referred to than the cluster of Swedish brands, Zara opens up to a few noteworthy paradoxes concerning the different shopping experiences connected to buying high street retail. Recording the different respondents preferring Zara, Zara is not only generally rewarded for having items of better quality than other high street stores, but of having better quality than high street stores. I.e., it is by definition and by some, not regarded as a high street store at all. Or as stated by Lise: ‘Zara (h)as a lot of garments that are more classical and of a bit better quality than the chains.’ (My italics). To add further to the personal perception of what is regarded to be of good quality, Maria, amongst other stores, prizes Zara because they don’t mass produce their items. Now, even if the quality-conscious Sunniva rightfully values Zara’s mulberry silk shirts, the different replies again shed light on what appears to be a generally low degree of knowledge – or will to knowledge – concerning the factual quality of garments on the one hand, and the increasingly skillful high end-mimicking strategies of mass manufacture on the other. Hence, Zara’s image of giving the impression of high end- and high quality fashion seems to be viewed and valued precisely thus without the looking twice at the durability of fabrics or the accuracy of seams.

289 No.3/ Justine, 128.
290 No.41/ Ingvild A., 131.
291 See question 10, page 139.
292 No.20/ Lise, 129.
293 No.35/ Maria S., 131.
294 See amongst others No. 30/ Sunniva’s answer page 134.
Even to the extent where the catwalk copycat-originator is not even perceived as a maker of mass produce.

**Acne:** As particularly the response to question number 10 – *are there shops in Oslo where you would have liked to shop more?* – will bare testament to, Acne is still regarded as the game of Oslo’s fashionable hunting ground in spite of its ubiquitous popularity. However, judged as too expensive for many of the exponents, and perhaps precisely thus, Acne is mostly talked about in a subordinate or *implied* language acting to underscore its status as the epitome of ‘consecrated cool’: Monki, Weekday and H&M are the cool best friends that you have a row with while Acne is the aspirational, awe-inspiring big sister. Or in some cases, something akin to a steady life companion. Thus, no one discusses Acne in words similar to Lise’s appraisal: ‘Monki/ Weekday (have) incredibly many cool and different clothes,’ but rather puts it matter-of-factly like Maria: ‘I shop relatively seldom, and am usually on the lookout for neutral items of good quality that I can use a lot. I find (those) in the shops mentioned above (Acne, COS, Filippa K).’ While Johanne simply puts it: ‘Yes, I’m on an eternal hunt for perfect basic garments like white and black t-shirts and I most often find them at Monki or Weekday. However: if I could afford it, I would rather have bought for instance Acne’s (stuff) that (perhaps) has a bit better durability.’

On account of the exact fortes of the brand, the quality is revered by many, the jeans likewise as well as the cut, the fit and the good service. Jill for instance says that apart from COS, Zara and H&M for basics and underwear, she particularly likes Acne’s cut/fit of the clothes *they sit nicely on my body* and the fact that their items have good quality and the shop good customer service. Summing up the ‘self-evident’, admiring tone encompassing Acne, Celine Marie puts it thus: ‘I, like the majority of the city dwellers of Oslo, am very fond of Acne’s leather shoes, jeans, leather jackets.’ Note however, that none of the style exponents are pining to stock up on Acne’s staple selection of daring designs.

**Second hand:** Contained in one phrase, and as already mentioned, shopping second hand clothes – by most referred to as *vintage* – works to secure the expression of ‘the unique’. Thus the answers mirror the ones given by the aforementioned respondents in Woodward’s Fashion Map Project. Branded retail chains are the favorite supply for most sartorial goods, but when it comes to adding the streak of the inalienable *je ne se quoi*, the

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295 No.20/ Lise, 129.
296 No.4/ Maria Q., 130.
297 No.48/ Johanne, 131. See also Helene’s subdued answer same page.
298 No.52/ Jill, 132. See for instance also No.29/ Celine Marie, 138 and No. 53/ Kristin Estrella, 139.
299 No.29/ Celine Marie, 131.
patina of the once worn appears to provide the by now conventional, yet still infallible air of ‘authenticity’.\(^{301}\) Mari puts it thus, choosing: ‘Vintage and flea markets – to find ‘treasures’ that make the outfit personal.’\(^{302}\) While Caroline H. simply says: ‘(almost) everything is unique.’\(^{303}\) Further, and as discussed in the same breadth of air as H&M, sustainability and environmental concerns are the other obvious reasons for buying second hand, like Maria Q. choosing Fretex as it is ‘(...) relatively cheap and because she likes that the items don’t come in stock. + of environmental concerns.’\(^{304}\) For some, purchasing vintage items is also coupled with the awareness of finding better quality at cheap rates.\(^{305}\) Karoline P. M. utters a more rare insight. She first champions the vintage store Robot because of ‘(...) the nice shopping personnel and the unique garments, yet also appreciating it for being good at stocking ‘current’ and trendy items.’\(^{306}\) In short, she recognizes the fact that well curated vintage shops often have their pinnacle quality in stocking goods that are both spot on trendy and ‘unique’, as all pieces have been taken out of the loop of mass produce only to be reintroduced as one-off and first class ‘cool’. Thus, most respondents fit Sandra Palmers description, stating that: ‘Modern vintage wearers seek authenticity in what is rare and cannot be duplicated, in what is old but does not look used. Ideally, wearing vintage positions the vintage whore, not as historical retrograde or subcultural, but as an informed, avant-garde fashion connoisseur.’\(^{307}\)

The Absent: As briefly pointed to above, the almost absent mentioning of Internet shopping is worth a remark. Even if the second question – In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most, and why do you choose exactly these? – specifically asks for shopping favorites located in the capital, the general frankness of the respondents – several for instance drawing attention to the fact that they don’t shop that much anymore\(^{308}\) – could cater for a similar stance towards expressing wants on part of the Oslo shopping topography. Yet, surprisingly few repines the shops at hand,\(^{309}\) or revere the shopping galore offered by the World Wide Web. Only three respondents pinpoint an increase in Internet-shopping over the last five years; however without mentioning major shopping portals like Zalando and Asos; popular retail actors still not on the Norwegian market like American Apparel and Topshop,

\(302\) No.26/ Mari, 131.
\(303\) No.16/ Caroline H., 129.
\(304\) No.8/ Maria Q., 129.
\(305\) No.30/ Sunniva, 130.
\(306\) The vintage store Velouria Vintage is also favored by several respondents, amongst others for their big selection of dresses and the (nice shop personnel. See for instance No.39/ Karoline P. M., 130.
\(308\) See for instance No.3/ Justine’s answer, 128, No.4/ Maria Q., 129 or No.31/ Siri, 130.
\(309\) No.41/ Ingvild A. ‘(...) hates that there are so many chain stores and so very few smaller, more special stores,’ 177. While No.29/ Celine Marie misses individual shopping alternatives. See answer page 138.
or obscure Net-delights reserved those in the subcultural know. Not even the fact that a great deal of the respondents acknowledge websites as an important source of fashion inspiration generated precise or passionate references to shopping-portals, blogs or other social media. Only one respondent states the greater influence of social media on her day-to-day clothing practice.

4) Which factors influence and inspire your shopping choices?

Summing up the major response tendencies, we find the following overview of influencing factors: Blogs (15), friends (13), street style (13), price (12), fashion magazines (10), colour (6), fit/cut/shape/design (6), quality (5), my own feelings/interpretation of my surroundings (5) and finally; it has to be comfortable (5).

As discussed above, the blogosphere gathers the highest preferential score without it appearing to have any significant impact on the demand for brands only obtainable outside of Oslo or over the Internet; the blogs possibly representing inspirational harness rather than inventorrial shopping guidance. As to illustrate the dominant tendencies, the following two replies capture the main tendency: Maria says: ‘Zeitgeist’ exemplified through friends and blogs and magazines probably count a lot regarding what I think looks nice. While Iselin states much the same, adding one of the scattered references to the ‘Neo-90s’ trend, saying: ‘I am very much inspired by friends, people in the street/school, Vogue, old magazines from the 1990s-2009, Instagram.’ Also, and as one would expect due to the fact that 36 out of the 53 respondents are students; price matters to a great many, as the responses to several questions touches upon. However, in the end, a temperate reply like Nora’s best catches the general atmosphere. Explaining what inspires her purchases, she says: ‘That it is comfortable and to a certain extent looks good.’ In short, the familiarity and ‘privacy’ of friends and websites seem to be the overarching inspirational factors in addition to the grounded desire after practicality and comfort. However, and as mentioned above, exactly

310 See answers page, 132-133. No.44/ Åshild is the only one naming a web store, etsy.com, while No. 41/ Ingvild A. and No. 53/ Kristin Estrella’s are amongst the few expressing web-shopping as a major fashion source. See pages 133 and 130. eBay has several references in the vox pop itemizing of clothes, see for instance No.18/ Sigrid and No. 16/ Caroline, 129, but do not reappear when discussing current shopping habits.
311 Mona says: ‘I also gather more inspiration through social media and (from) people on the street now than earlier.’ No.46/ Mona, 133.
312 No.4/ Maria H., 132
313 No.15/ Iselin, 132.
314 Only seven out of the twenty-nine students work part time while studying. See Appendix 4.
315 See for instance responses to question 5, page 132-133.
316 No.13/ Nora, 132.
which blogs, bloggers or Pinterest-users that are perceived as inspirational, and why, remains misty as only one sees it fit to reference specific names.  

5) Have your shopping habits altered during the last five years? Can you exemplify?

The five most frequent answers read: I buy fewer items of better quality rather than a lot of bad quality (11), shop less (10), I’m much more into quality (specified as fabrics and fabric quality) (8), My shopping has become more organized/less impulsive (7), I spend more money per item (7).

Maria H.’s answer mirrors the predominant tendency, saying that ‘I shop second hand more rarely, and less frequently (visit) cheap chain stores like H&M and spend more money per item.’ And finally, that she has ‘(…) become more concerned with fabrics and fabric quality.’ Maria Q. lists almost the same alterations in addition stating that: ‘Shopping’ is no longer an activity or a ‘hobby’. Instead of trotting the streets for hours with girlfriends, I now exclusively buy clothes if there is something I need, or I happen to pass by a shop I like and have (some) time to spare. However, in spite of the oft-emphasized increased awareness of quality and sustainability, and the decrease in the amount of shopping, the reassurances of procuring better quality still rests a bit uneasy with the mass produced body of the preferred shopping locations and the overriding share of student economies. But then again, and as discussed mentioning Zara, quality appears a bit of a butterfly as the ‘looks’ rather than the actual matter seems to be the quality capturing most respondent’s fancy.

6) Do you have examples of shopping locations where you no longer shop clothes? If yes, what makes them less interesting now?

Explaining former shopping preferences, the ruling out of Vero Moda (7), Bik Bok (6), H&M (5), Zara (4), Gina Tricot (3) and Lindex (3) resonates with several. Helene also mentions the Norwegian ‘urban street style’-chains Urban and Carlings and the vintage shop Robot as

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317 No. 28/ Helene is the only one giving several concrete examples. Starting out mentioning the time of year as a possible source of inspiration, she adds ‘(b)loggers (Maria Van Nguyen) and Pintrest users like Amerryshap and A/W +’ 132.

318 No. 4/ Maria H., 132.

319 No. 8/ Maria Q., 132.

320 Note that question 6 was added from respondent No. 25 on to be sure to get as exact references to previous shopping locations as possible, even if question 7 (previously 6) also generated exact brand names.

past shopping alternatives. She says: ‘It just became a bit too much, and lots of colors as well as (a) bit boring cuts and shapes, also adding, that it is very much separated into what works for boys and girls. Especially at Urban and Carlings.’ Similarly Johanne refers to craving simpler, more androgynous styles and thus discards Bik Bok and Zara as they have become too fussy and girly. Again, these are preferences in tune with the fashion magazines’ edicts.

As to the other shops falling from the respondent’s grace, Aida illustrates the general disfavoring of Vero Moda with four words and capital letters: ‘VERO MODA: NEVER AGAIN.’ As to why the Danish brand has lost its popularity, both Julia and Karoline stresses the ‘immaturity’ of the clothes on offer, as they are better suited for girls under twenty. They respectively also rule out the Swedish multi brand jeans store JC. and the Swedish low price chain Gina Tricot. Karoline further ads that she thinks a lot of the clothes look rather cheap. Bik Bok, on the other hand, is again referred to as the brand a cut above the rest when it comes to facilitating looking like everyone else. Kristin Estrella – also using capital letters – throws in Monki with Bik Bok and exclaims: ‘I’m not that big a fan of things that EVERYONE has.’ And further, that the quality is bad and that it is mass produced. Finally, even if H&M is encumbered by mostly positive, if ambivalent feelings, a few also explicitly express downright disdain like Anette: ‘Hennes and Mauritz – too big too messy to exhausting and too much ugly and bad quality, she says, even though I know you can find treasures there, I don’t have the energy (or) desire to go in.’ Conclusively she adds that it does not give a good shopping experience. In short, brands that stylistically or conceptually deviate from the clean cut Swedish favorites are ‘out’.

322 No.28/ Helene, 133.
323 No.48/ Johanne, 134. Deepening her argument, answering question 7, she says: ‘I have become more daring(; rarely wear dresses as opposed to earlier, and like more men’s fits.’ See No.48/ Johanne, 136.
324 No.42/ Aida, 134.
325 No.31/ Karoline H., 134.
326 See No.34/ Julia and No.31/ Karoline H.’s answers, 134.
327 No.31/ Karoline H., 134.
328 However, H&M, Weekday and Zara are still sound options. See No.53/ Kristin Estrella, 130, 132 and 134. Her paradoxical rhetoric mirrors that of another ‘advanced’ consumer: No.29/ Celine Marie, 129, 138.
329 Anette mentions Zara for similar reasons. See No.19/ Anette, 133. No.37/ Andrea M. and No.38/ Marit, 134.
7) Have your style changed much during the same period of time? Can you describe potential alterations?

As the previous section has foreshadowed, the descriptions of changed personal styles are remarkably similar, and again in tune with the trend-scape reported by the fashion magazines. The most common responses read: It has become more grown up and I’m more quality-conscious (9), I wear less colors/ more black (9) and I prefer simpler clothes and styles; fewer different styles and items at the same time/ less colors/ patterns (6). In short, a subduing of all things experienced as ‘visual clutter’. Sigrid’s precocious answer coins the general mood:

Five years ago. I was fifteen and marked by it. I remember noticing not owning one black item except for stockings, now my wardrobe is full of black, dark grey and other dark colors. I still have a lot of colorful items, but they are colorful in a more subdued way, and I never combine them with colorful earrings, hairpins, colored stockings etc. If I use an intensely colored item now, I’m into highlighting the color(s) through small/ anonymous accessories.

Immediately easy to blow off as a ‘coming-of-age-shift-of-styles’ – the moving from exploratory outfits to Acne’s Needle jeans – most respondents reflect a similar train of thoughts regardless of age. Either, they highlight the paired down present with reference to the simpler style they carry now, or they do it by mentioning the odd bounty of previous styles. Maria H. says: ‘Yes, it has become ‘cleaner’, and probably more typical ‘Scandinavian’. And I’ve stopped wearing things that are not black, white, blue, grey or brown.’ Amalie says: ‘More black, less colors. Partly the trend, partly economy. (I) buy something black and safe.’ Aida votes in, saying: ‘I have always been fond of the bohemian style, but have started to wear fewer colors, unfortunately.’ Aida’s remorseful repressing of colors, now wearing black and white, neatly expressing fashion’s way of ushering in dominant change even when going against the grain of one’s personal wishes. A few also mention a turn, not only to simpler styles, but to more classical ones. Like Mari, interestingly following up saying that: ‘(…) if I wear vintage (now) it is more rarely from before the 90s.’ Therese, born in the 90s, also consciously nods to the currently fashionable decade, noticing that ‘(…) the childish style that I had five years ago has been ‘revived’ in

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330 Note the self-assured tone imbedded in describing past styles as ‘whimsical’ at the age of barely twenty. No.18/ Sigrid, 133. See also Sigrid’s similar response to question 5 page 132.
331 No.4/ Maria H., 134.
332 No.6/ Amalie, 134.
333 No.42/ Aida, 134.
334 No.26/ Mari, 135.
what I commonly wear now.\textsuperscript{335} Representing the reverse way of describing change, Tora expresses previous ‘fuss’ thus: ‘(I) moved to Oslo in 2008 with cute dresses, baggy Levis’ pants, Billabong sweaters and caps. A totally confused style. (I) fussed through several years with frayed tights, white tennis socks and a lot of second hand clothes.\textsuperscript{336} Tonje S. describes it similarly, using her move through different subcultures to highlight the transition: (‘f)rom subcultural (skater/ Stud belt and Fred Perry at Blitz/ Hip hop/ followed by a transition to high end brand bonanza) to Scandinavian (expensive) minimalism, back to subculture or normcore.’\textsuperscript{337} A private road of multifarious trends worth paying attention to given Tonje’s age (34) and status as co-founder of the first, still-running ‘nightlife-blog’ in Norway, Oslonights.no (2007-).\textsuperscript{338} In sum, regardless of the age of the respondents, the downsizing of wearing bright colors, cute dresses, ‘girly’ or ‘fussy’ stuff, including that of indiscriminately wearing a lot of second hand clothes and the combining of items belonging to different stylistic realms (t-shirts with fun quotes\textsuperscript{339} and stockings with patterns\textsuperscript{340}) seems to be a stylistic transition shared by most.

8) In your experience: Does the selection of clothes in retail chains influence your style? If yes, in what way?

Yes (6), yes, the shopping display/ the shop’s profile/ style/ items guides my shopping (5), no (10), pass (9), to a certain extent (6). However not mentioned as a main factor when reviewing which sources influence their style, most respondents acknowledge the stores as a key communicator of style. Two particularly well-reflected answers sum up the general tendencies: Mona says:

(I) usually find clothing inspiration through other places than in the selection of chain stores, but their selection definitely has a lot to say. Two years ago crop tops for instance were rarely to be found in chain stores, something that made it both difficult to find, plus that it could be conceived as a bit more ‘challenging’ to wear. When the chains start to stock items, I experience that it affects the trends and the norms, something that makes it more acceptable to

\textsuperscript{335} Therese mentions items like chokers, hairbands, hairpins and bracelets. In short, popular items around the millennium when she was twelve. See No.47/ Therese, 135.

\textsuperscript{336} No.5/ Tora, 134.

\textsuperscript{337} No.45/ Tonje S., 134. See No.15/ Iselin and No.5/ Tora for a similar stance, 135 and 134

\textsuperscript{338} Given Tonje’s highly knowledgeable and opinionated answers I googled her, only to find her former job identity as described above. The blog has turned into a fashion website. See Inga Semmingsen, “Jakter blinkskudd I fylla,” accessed April 08, 2014, http://www.vg.no/rampelys/jakter-blinkskudd-i-fylla/a/539402/.

\textsuperscript{339} No.47/ Therese, 135.

\textsuperscript{340} Sigrid gives an informative list of discarded objects, No.18/ Sigrid, 132.
wear. But to my mind, the most focal about the store’s selection is that you gain access to items – for instance dresses from H&M that I wouldn’t have used if they didn’t have it(,)\textsuperscript{341}

While Maria H. puts it this way:

When it comes to shop selection, to some extent you trust the taste of the store(s) you already have confidence in. Not all purchases are just as well planned, and then the shops naturally shape your style. Some stores, like Acne, are also heavily participating in the shaping of how people dress, that again influence me (to a certain extent).\textsuperscript{342}

Thus, most experience what Anette describes at the inescapabilty of getting inspired of what exists, particularly if you, like her, don’t pay a lot of attention to fashion media.\textsuperscript{343} Mari votes in, putting it this way: ‘Yes, it so happens. It isn’t only I who think that the 90s are cool for the time being, further elaborating that it probably ‘(…) has a lot to do with the style selection in the high street stores.’\textsuperscript{344} As for the shops actually experienced as inspirational, the previous sections have mentioned Acne, Weekday, Monki and partly H&M. The same goes here, Marit for instance saying about what influences her that ‘(m)ost often, it is the very items, or the style of the shop (for instance Weekday). (I) see a tendency in the stock of the season, and perhaps adopt it more than I would like to admit.\textsuperscript{345} Finally, a few directly address the layout of the store as a key influencer, Hanne uttering: ‘Whichever items are put out on display in a good way; and how the aesthetics of the retail concept is laid out.’\textsuperscript{346}

9) In your experience, is your economy a limitation to your ‘fashion possibilities’? If yes, what can you not afford to get?

Amongst the most frequent answers reads: Yes and no (5), yes; sometimes, when it comes to designer brands/ special high end items (5) and with a tide: Yes, I would have liked to buy more expensive clothes of better quality (3) and: Not really, high street stores meet most my needs (3). Anette’s answer epitomizes the overall bias:

Not really. I would have loved to have had better bags and coats – however, coming to think of it, I think it is a bit too much to spend too much money on clothes, so I like that I can/ must hold back a little. I don’t think a Mulberry bag or a Max Mara coat would have made me much happier. (E)ven though they are very nice, and I would have loved to have them, I get a bad conscience spending that much money on clothes, and there are other nice alternatives. I

\textsuperscript{341} No.46/ Mona, 138.
\textsuperscript{342} No.4/ Maria H., 136.
\textsuperscript{343} No.19/ Anette, 136.
\textsuperscript{344} No.26/ Mari, 136.
\textsuperscript{345} No.38/ Marit, 137.
\textsuperscript{346} No.21/ Hanne, 132. See also No.37/ Andrea’s answer and Karoline P. M.’s, 132, 129.
like to shop second hand – to find things with a little bit more soul to it, and in the spirit of recycling.347

Others like Amalie, Sigrid and Åshild express the urge to buy more sustainable clothes; Iselin and Ruth suggest that it would be nice to exchange what they have now with the (imagined) higher quality versions from the likes of Acne; while Celine Marie, Mathilde, Mona and Therese accent the positive value of being forced into creativity due to the lack of money. Therese says: ‘(…) to shop on a very low budget has made me more creative, and now it has almost become a hobby to ‘revitalize’ boring clothes (.)’348 Thus, although many would have liked to buy clothes of better, more environmental-friendly quality, as well as from more ‘credible’ brands, the overall tendency leans towards a remarkably sensible understanding of fashion as something not needing a high prefix to be legitimate or interesting. On the contrary, several not only explain their low income and slighter chances of buying expensive things, but do it to boast of how the restraint amplifies the creativity. Johanne puts it simpler, and again a tad precociously: ‘From time to time I see a pair of way too expensive shoes, but I quickly get over it and find a cheaper version that looks the same.’349

10) Are there shops in Oslo where you would have liked to shop more?

Hardly a surprise, Acne rules the game of the unfulfilled fashion desires of the style exponents, sixteen respondents uttering their aspiration to shop there more. The other top alternatives read: No (7), COS (5) Filippa K (4) and Eger (4). In short, no other alternative comes even close to Acne. Three statements contain the general urge: Mathilde says: ‘There are no stores where it’s important for me to shop, except for those I already shop in, but I think that if Acne wasn’t that expensive, I would have shopped some things there from time to time. The same probably goes for different stores at Eger, Steen og Strøm, Paleet etc.’350 While Stine says:

(I) dig Acne. I think it is ok to spend a bit extra on the dresses there for a special occasion. I wish I could have bought everything I need there because of the good quality. All basic items, but I can’t afford it. But then again most of their items have to be hand washed, and I can’t be bothered to do that.351 (Again, the burning desire always put next to a fire extinguisher).

347 No.19/ Anette, 138.
348 No.47/ Therese, 138.
349 No.48/ Johanne, 139.
350 No.27/ Mathilde, 139. See also Introduction, 4-5.
351 No.51/ Stine, 139.
Hence, most respondents are united under the surprisingly content notion of wanting to shop more where they already shop, instead of expressing desires for brands and things only obtainable outside the realm of Oslo; Caroline’s catchphrase: ‘I obviously wish I could have shopped more at Acne (…)’\(^{352}\) (my italics), being the most common ‘lofty’ wish.

**Conclusion**

**The style:** The preceding has shown that the style exponents display ‘looks’ and thoughts that clearly mirror the ‘consecrated cool’ advocated by the Norwegian and Scandinavian fashion magazines of last chapter: Styles and modes of assemblage that, even if paired down in comparison to the fashion spreads, visually and verbally embody the same stylistic idioms. Describing the style, the respondents called it *simple, minimalist, relaxed, casual, monochrome, comfortable, androgynous, edgy,* and by a few hitting the mark – as 1990s. Stepping outside the pages of the fashion system revealed no big flairs for bright ethnic patterning, 50s swing skirts or other trends not mentioned by the magazines. Instead the young and ‘fashionable’ prolonged the ‘Neo-90s’ trend, thus reaffirming the magazine’s interest in keeping their promoted fashion close to the version practiced on the street.

**Swedish leanings/ Norwegian attitudes:** In perfect conjunction with the hypothesis, the consecrated styles carried out by the respondents appeared to be Swedish in all but the mass produced making: H&M, Weekday, Monki and COS (and the ‘unobtainable’ Acne), being the top picks across all survey sheets regardless of the respondent’s style or verbalization of it. As to the important question of why these brands instead of others, they are said to furnish the owners with *nice* and *affordable basics* (H&M) and more importantly, with clothes that are *cool, special and different,* and that *you don’t see everywhere* (particularly Weekday and Monki). A bit of a paradox, as will be elaborated on shortly, as all fifty-three of them share the same sartorial recipe for how to stand out. Further, Acne is hailed as the go-to for the occasional treat of ‘paramount’ quality, while vintage clothes add the foolproof streak of ‘authenticity’ and the comfort of sustainable consumption. Thus, the style exponent’s branded preferences both resonate with those of the Norwegian ‘glossies’, while fitting the restriction of student economies. However, and as the previous has shown, most respondents stress the fact that expensive designer gear would not have made them much happier. And further, that affordable fashion covers most sartorial wishes and that economic restraints foster, rather than fight fashion. I.e., the choices they make do not,

\(^{352}\) No.6/ Caroline, 139.
according to themselves, stem from ‘fashionably repressed’ youngsters, but from ‘fashionables’ with sensible if somewhat sturdy desires of wanting to shop more where they already shop.\textsuperscript{353}

These attitudes are in themselves significant, if calling to mind the more ambivalent accounts sampled by Woodward and Lifter, as they express the buying and wearing of high street fashion as a naturalized part of the respondents’ creation of style. And furthermore, as buying items from high status brands like Weekday now generates an as fervent appraisal (\textit{special, different}) as the one previously reserved vintage. A casual fact to them, it seems, yet a novelty within the scholarly history of young fashion consumption.\textsuperscript{354} So, it seems apt to give the H&M Group credit for amplifying the status of high street fashion. At least in Oslo. Apart from a greater appreciation of retail fashion, the respondents continue the ‘clever consumer play’ as introduced in Chapter 1: new mixed with old, and high with low.

\textbf{The cast offs:} Third, and not to forget, the great favoring of a few brands entails the \textit{dis}-favoring of others. Heralded with an equally unison voice, the discarded are those promoting clothes and styles specked with what I have called ‘visual clutter’. Such as Vero Moda and Gina Tricot, (also on a par with the fashion magazines), that are \textit{too much, young, girly, fussy or colorful}. And that, as particularly argued regarding Bik Bok, carry clothes that look ‘cheap’ or make you look like \textit{everyone else}. In short: most shops that do not cohere with the Swedes’ ‘unique’ vision of the casual simplicity currently needed to make you \textit{stand out} while seamlessly lending your body to the zeitgeist. A doable paradox, as we shall see.

\textbf{The fashion capital:} On the one hand, the respondent’s answers are slightly cluttered by a few ambivalences and paradoxes: the great care for sustainability while shopping at H&M; the search for better quality while still picking high street brands; Zara as an antidote to mass produce and the ‘bound-to-look-like-everyone-else’ if dressing in Bik Bok-clothes while not if choosing Weekday’s. Yet on the other, the answers also show noteworthy levels of fashion capital: partly as interlaced with the language, and particularly as reflected through ideas surrounding their own sartorial preferences. For instance, a great many – and particularly those barely twenty – refer to having found \textit{their style} and having a stylistic

\textsuperscript{353} The style exponents thus represent a consumer morality still running parallel to the history of fashion and clothing- consumption in Norway, regardless of the nation’s steep increase in BNP. See for instance Torbjørn Eika and Øystein Olsen, “Norsk økonomi og olje gjennom 100 år,” and \textit{Samfunnsøkonomen}, NR. 8, 2008 and Anne Kjellberg, \textit{Mote: trendere og designere i Oslo: 1900-2000}, (Oslo: Huitfeldt Forlag, 2000), 104. In other words, being ‘fashionable’ is not thought to be something primarily linked to a high income; the apparent look of money or to internationally admired high end fashion brands; Acne being the one exception. Instead, it is rooted in a grounded consumer moral putting great value on the ‘reasonable’ purchase.

\textsuperscript{354} See Introduction, 12-15 and Chapter 1, 28-29.
confidence as opposed to previous confused periods. As if not being secure of one’s own style pre twenty is something to be ashamed of. Here, the answers do not only display a visual and verbal confidence deserving the label of fashion capital, they also express sartorial tastes marked by stylistic rigor and notable homogenous ideals. This has likely to do with the increasingly ubiquitous access to digital media and the global mainstreaming of trends, yet, arguably also with a current dress code signified by its mono-cultured bearing and clever didactics. As we shall see in the next chapter.

**One style fits all:** This chapter has offered an answer to two of the thesis’ core research questions: First, it has established that there is a clear link between the Swedish newcomers as spearheaded by the H&M firms, and the increasingly ‘fashionable’ dress practice of the young, female citizens of Oslo. Further, it has offered thick descriptions of what it is that make these brands appealing above others, while simultaneously discussing the respondents’ level of fashion capital. Thus, the findings have moved the thesis in the direction proposed: that the recent implementation of the design intensive and concept conscious H&M-subsidies are the major driving force when Oslo has undergone a notable ‘style upgrading’ within the brief time span of 2010 to the present.

In the next and last chapter I will argue that Weekday, Monki and COS are the multi-headed stylist that facilitates the increasingly easy access to ‘consecrated cool’ fashion. And further, that one size does not fit all, but sometimes one style does.
Chapter 5: Same, same but different: The H&Mification of Oslo

‘It’s hard to imagine how the contemporary wardrobe would function if it weren’t for Scandinavian design and ingenuity.’

Stephen Doig

The opening of journalist Stephen Doig’s article in the international retail magazine *Global Blue* from 2013, goes on as follows: ‘Far beyond Stockholm – from Tokyo to London – Swedish fashion has been one of the biggest sartorial stories of the past decade.’ The natural follow up question being why? What have the Swedes been doing so admirably right over the past decade? Why is Acne universally praised across all strata of the fashion system? Why is COS hailed as a fashion advent within the high street stronghold of London? And above all: why do the ‘cool’ and ‘fashionable’ young women of last chapter exclude most shopping alternatives on offer, instead choosing one narrow fistful of Swedish brands, brands stemming from the same mother company?

Gathering and summing up the findings of the thesis, this last chapter expands the style exponent’s own accounts into an analysis of the style hegemony created by H&M and its subsidiaries, asking the thesis’ last question: What make these brands appealing in light of relevant diffusion/ consumer theory? Or as amplified by the paradoxical findings: How has a mass producing mega company managed to position itself as the one, trustworthy broadcaster of ‘unique’ and ‘different’ fashion?

Providing one answer to the question, I use Tod Hartman’s “The Ikeaization of France” as a counterpoint, taking a stand from three core themes embodied in the opening lines of his essay. Having introduced his viewpoints on Ikea’s dominion over the French furniture market, I then hold them up as a mirror to discuss the diffusion of the H&M firms in Oslo: The first two as a means of theorizing the term H&Mification, and the last as a corrective to counterbalance my findings.

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, both COS, Monki and Weekday channel the main international trends of 2013-2015: the minimalism, the masculinity, the active wear-impulse

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356 Ibid.,
357 As seen in *ELLE, Costume* and *Stylemag*, Acne is the one brand constantly on display across all three titles, sections; found on Rihanna, incognito street-style-stars and Norwegian magazine editors and Oslo-inhabitants.
and the overarching harking back to the 90s. Yet even if offering similar, trendy styles and garments, and even if firmly anchored in the same institutional and geographic environment, and the same set of Scandinavian socio-cultural beliefs, they still produce designs and apply brand building-strategies that are different enough to set the one distinctly apart from the other. Or do they?

**Ikea and H&M: Creating real illusions of choice, agency and difference**

Introducing the *Ikeaization* of France, Tod Harman opens thus:

‘Faites le plein d’idées!’ the French arm of the Swedish home superstore Ikea’s enormous product range enthusiastically encourages the consumer. As one proceeds through the (Ikea) store, one is confronted by a series of stagelike tableaux suggesting different productive activities carried out in the home: writing, gourmet cooking, serious reading, and artistic pursuits. These are not the impossibly tidy, unattainably beautiful montages of highbrow interior decorating magazines. Rather, they are eminently democratic — attainable, unpretentious, and inexpensive. Now, there is no longer any need to actually be a painter, a sculptor, or an architect, when one can acquire the material rudiments at cost price (…) and put them together in a pleasing configuration in one’s home.\(^{359}\)

As stated above, Tod Hartman’s quote embodies three central points of discussion:

First, he makes manifest the ability of one corporation to produce different and attractive lifestyle concepts that, given Ikea’s vast popularity, are successfully perceived so.

Second, the quote shows that these lifestyle concepts, or identities, are not only attractive because ‘they are eminently democratic — attainable, unpretentious, and inexpensive’, but because they present customers with a plethora of advanced identity choices, (‘a painter, a sculptor or an architect’), and furthermore, with the agency to choose among these. Agency, following Patrik Aspers, meaning: ‘(…) that actors have the power to act, to try to change structures or values, to understand the environment they operate in, by reflecting and acting on the different options they perceive.’\(^{360}\) Hartman explains: ‘Ikea is enjoyable because it endows one with the agency to make choices liberally and freely from a huge range of products and identities that are economically unobtainable elsewhere.’\(^{361}\) And summing up: ‘What goes on at Ikea is this ostensible creation of agency through the democratization of choice and self-assembly.’\(^{362}\)

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361 Ibid., 489.
362 Ibid., 488.
Third, having introduced his essay with mildly ironic panache, musing the democratic and unpretentious spirit of Ikea and the megastore’s ability to provide customers with diversity, choice and agency, Hartman states his agenda: ‘Now, there is no longer any need to actually be a painter, a sculptor, or an architect, when one can acquire the material rudiments at cost price.’ Thus, following Hartman, the goods and the cultural capital to be had at Ikea are bound to be ‘false’ as they are founded on the capitalist prerequisite to emulate rather than the will to ‘be’ (‘a painter, a sculptor, or an architect’). And, as Ikea’s ‘freedom of choice’ means choosing between the different edicts of one imperialist super-power, ‘In France, what the Ikea tableau presents is the spectacle of pure, attemptless accomplishment, and “the Ikeaization of France” is accomplishment without attempt, without meaning or substantiation.’

Hence, Hartman deprives the Ikea-customer of the opportunity to experience consumption as ‘meaningful’ and self-monitored as soon as it was given, while uttering a critique that runs counter to most late-capitalist consumer theory. Detracting the customer’s agency, he simultaneously disavows the megastore’s function as a valuable, if ambivalent, space of learning, or what Ursula Lindqvist calls a ‘space of acculturation’.

Monoculture in camouflage

Unlike Ikea, the H&M Group consists of the original company H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB (originally Hennes, est. 1947), and five subsidiaries: H&M, COS, Monki, Weekday, Cheap Monday and & Other Stories. Cheap Monday, Monki and Weekday were acquired from FaBrik Scandinavien AB in 2008, while COS and & Other Stories were created and launched respectively in 2007 and 2013: Six different brands, 148.000 employees and over 4000 stores worldwide matching up to Ikea’s 123.000 co-workers and 267 stores. Thus, whereas Ikea sells ‘democracy as furniture’, H&M sells democracy as fashion. Currently,
H&M is the biggest fashion retailer in the world next to Spanish Intidex, the owner of Zara.\textsuperscript{371}

Even if Ikea manages to offer a broad variety of different lifestyle concepts and identities, their total content still unmistakably reads \textit{IKEA}; in the capacity of being propped up and united under one physical and symbolic roof, but equally as hinged on the grand narrative of \textit{Sweden}: on ‘köttbullar’, ‘Billy’ book cases, the Swedish flag-coloured logo and the (social) democratic prices; what Lindqvist describes as ‘(…) this idea of the proud, benevolent, and humble little nation.’\textsuperscript{372} Sara Kristofferson expands further, writing: ‘(Ikea) sells Sweden and indeed Scandinavia too. Few international brands have such an explicitly national profile. Ikea has made “Swedishness” a virtue in itself, as well as an essential aspect of its strategy for the brand.’\textsuperscript{373}

In contrast, the H&M Group offers its style emporium through a far less invasive, and at first glance less immersive formula, packaging the different identities/concepts as physically and visually separate stores without any overriding narrative reading ‘national anthem’ (or a ‘powered by H&M’). An effective model, as the previous chapter has shown, as the brand concepts of the H&M firms are not only conceived to be different – and superiorly so – but \textit{perceived as such}; both in relation to each other as well as to other shopping alternatives.

Yet, even if not consolidated under a national narrative like Ikea, Swedish fashion being \textit{Swedish} (or Scandinavian, as argued in Chapter 3), is no less of a vital branding tool to H&M’s daughter firms than it is to Ikea. Both Gråbacke and Hauge, Malmberg and Power claim that place of origin \textit{do} matter in the production and diffusion of fashion. Summing up their findings of their study of the Swedish fashion industry, the latter write:

> It is not unreasonable to say that the production of “Swedish” fashion garments occurs in a widely dispersed but integrated network of units in both developed and developing countries. At the same time, we found considerable evidence to suggest that the aesthetic and design-based innovations that are imperative to the production of fashion tend to cluster around certain hotspots, and that Sweden in general and Stockholm in particular display some characteristics to qualify as one such hotspot.\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{371} Gråbacke, \textit{Kläder, shopping och flärd}, 212.
\textsuperscript{372} Lindqvist, “The Cultural Archive of the Ikea Store,” 44.
\textsuperscript{373} Kristofferson, \textit{Design by Ikea}, 1. For critical discussions on Ikea’s mediation between ‘real’ and fictional narratives, see both Lindqvist and Kristofferson.
\textsuperscript{374} Description used to frame advanced contemporary retail in Sweden. See Hauge, Malmberg and Power, 534.
Or as summed up, they argue ‘place does play a distinct role in processes of fashion branding and more generally in the creation of immaterial value.’ Thus, in spite of the fact that the head office of COS is located in London while Monki’s headquarters are in Gothenburg and Weekday in Stockholm, most of Sweden’s retail and design culture is still hatched and nurtured in Stockholm: Beckmans is regarded as the foremost design education; the H&M head office is deemed ‘the university of fashion design’ by fashion insiders, and its ‘students’ often venture into setting up their own brands post H&M, all the while remaining imbedded in what Hauge, Malmberg and Power call ‘the close-knit, socio-institutional milieu’ of Stockholm.

Still, and interestingly, the tight cultural and commercial connections between the brands appear to be going under the radar of the otherwise well-informed style exponents. The Swedish retail’s impact on Norwegian styles and shopping habits are bemusedly remarked, yet none of them cuts to the chase, commenting on their buying into the sartorial edicts of one socio-institutional milieu or pondering the wider implications of sustaining of one retail culture. Instead, the firms are perceived as autonomous sources of fashion. Thus, the looming power of a ‘style-dictating empire’, or the awareness of its existence, seems pleasantly absent – even to the clever and aware customer. A highly interesting paradox, as many of the respondents describe Oslo as steered by ‘sheep flock mentality’, and as very much informed by an easily recognizable Swedish style-idiom. I will return to this point in the last section.

This then is the first, essential component of what I, in paraphrasing Hartman’s term Ikeaization, have called H&Mification: the unfolding of a powerful, unassuming monoculture as it is successfully dressed in the camouflage of distinctly different brand identities while simultaneously abiding by the same commercial structure, design ethos and the same socio-cultural believes. Choices, moreover, imbued with the promise of a stronger agency than that of the Ikea-customer, as the H&M-controlled brand stores are pleasantly installed in separate buildings, with different facades, to be visited when ‘freely’ wandering about in the open-air scenario of a city, as opposed to the enclosed blue-and-yellow labelled labyrinth of Ikea. H&Mification is monoculture in camouflage.

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375 Ibid., 527.
**Similarity dressed as difference**

Further legitimizing the minting of the term H&Mification, another paradox feeds into the clockworks of H&M’s camouflaged influence: If Weekday, COS and Monki manage to offer distinctly different clothes and concepts – why has ‘the fashionable upgrade’ but one, uniform ‘look’?

Whereas IKEA offers a whole host of dissimilar identities – the rustic gourmet cook, the mindful minimalist, the bohemian artist, the Tupperware-smitten super-parent – the H&M subsidiaries, even if wrapped in different clothes, interior concepts and identity-framing ad-campaigns, are addressed to a far more homogenous body of customers,\(^{378}\) or what is commonly referred to as an ‘ideal-type consumer’. Aspers exemplifies: ‘BGR’s (Branded Garment Retailers) make use of different ideal-type consumers, such as “young professionals” and “urban women”, or “fashion for young and old, that fits every occasion and suits every “” and even groups that are “style conscious, independent and addicted to fashion”.’\(^{379}\)

Slightly customizing Aspers’ categories, and taking a quick glance at the branding of the different firms, they denote: ‘urban professional women’ (COS), ‘Young creative professional’ (Weekday) and ‘Curious, fashion-loving youngster’ (Monki). And further, stepping into the different shops, something like: ‘relaxed high fashion at unpretentious prices’, ‘sober designs for culture-savvy citizens’ and ‘daring expressions for the culture-curious’. COS uses Nordic ‘whites’ and tactile Scandinavian woods to create an ambience of a fully-fledged shopping experience regardless of fashion strata; Weekday applies monochrome concrete surfaces and ‘furniture (…) treated like a delivery platform’ to give the minimalist designs a ‘raw’ wrapping, while Monki resembles the 60s pop-psychedelica with an interior concept based on the home turf of the fictive creature Monki: a cartoonish reverie dressed in glitter curtains, quirky shapes and complementary colours.\(^{380}\)

Yet, if looking past the obviously different visual wrappings, and the striking ability to create autonomous brand identities, the firm’s essential components – the clothes, the styling modality and the ‘close-
knit geographic and socio-institutional milieu’ that compounds the brands – are strikingly kindred and homogenous.

Unlike Ikea, offering the life style/identity of both the ‘urban farmer-cum-“serious chef”’ and the ‘productive, self-fulfilling’ minimalist,381 the H&M firms orderly offer clothes and concepts geared towards the urban, art-, design- and culture-conscious consumer; clothes that denote cultural capital, Scandinavian practicality, social equality and not to forget – just the right breed of ‘consecrated cool’. The brands might represent different ‘temperaments’ and character traits and different life phases, yet – if looking at the style exponent’s answers, the firms still manage to project items and aesthetics similar enough for all brands to be simultaneously present in a young woman’s wardrobe. Thus, even if successfully imbuing consumers with an apparently stronger sense of agency than the one to be had at Ikea; once having entered the shopping gates of COS, Monki or Weekday – and having come to take a shine to their style idiom – the opportunity to hold on to your own agency appear to be diminishing when confronted with one, carefully conceived ‘look’ and the blissful choice of variations over one identity, instead of the loud, heterogeneous styles and identity-choices to be had at Zara, Topshop or the mother ship H&M.382 As in the case of Weekday, you may choose amongst the limited edition of the latest design collaboration, the staple jeans from Cheap Monday, the ever-changing roundabout of sales-items or the carefully curated vintage section. Still, the careful monochromatic colour scheme is impossible to miss; the main silhouettes and styling modalities are but a few, and the ‘cool’ shop assistant’s ‘looks’ difficult not to experience as copy. Not the least as they usually are Swedish – the one ‘real’ (design) quality impossible to pluck off the shelves. Thus, the Weekday shopping spaces and their content, akin to the conceptual outlines of the other brands, are ‘superiorly cool’ but also masterfully didactic, different but inherently same: A few colours, a few silhouettes and a few selected typologies and accessories. This is the compelling logic of entering the walk-in-closet of the style-savvy, trusted friend: of being casually guided to increased levels of fashion capital within the coherent frames of a familiar, yet impressive ‘style site’. And moreover, one that is disarmingly inexpensive as opposed to the other brands trusted by the respondents, like Acne and Filippa K. Asked whether a store might inform their styles, the respondent Marit said: ‘Yes. Most often, it is the very items, or the style of the shop (for

381 Hartman, “The Ikeaization of France,” 484.
instance Weekday). (I) see a tendency in the stock of the season, and perhaps adopt it more than I would like to admit.\textsuperscript{383}

Thus, as the styles and the fashions of COS and Monki feed into the same logic, I restate the argument outlined in the introduction: belonging to the same commercial and socio-institutional milieu, and adhering to much the same design ethos, the firms offer parts and parcel of whole identities, and the content of a complete wardrobe. Not because the firms are distinctly different, but because they are just similar enough. Or to re-phrase with the heading of the chapter, they are same, same but different – or rather different, different but same.

In that capacity, the success of the subsidiaries of H&M is not only hinged on the ability to make it easier to be ‘fashionable’, but of making it harder not to be, as their stores, unlike Ikea (and H&M itself) offer one shopping space and one identity at the time, and but a few well-conjured variations over the same styling modality. Thus, the section above has argued that H&Mification is not only monoculture in camouflage, but similarity dressed as difference.

**Conclusion: The upside of (too) effective didactics**

In the preceding chapter, I have argued that the H&Mification of Oslo moves along similar lines to Hartman’s Ikeaization of France, albeit upping the game in terms of imperialist sophistication: the camouflaged offering of related brands and identities that are just different enough to be perceived as such; the ability to blur the boundaries between brand- and consumer agencies through the supremely ‘cool’ and disarmingly didactic store concepts.

Now, even if the thesis’ scope was created without the intent to explore the interaction between the H&M subsidiaries and their consumers, or the store’s exact ability to provide fashion knowledge, I still return to the punchline of Hartman’s quote, as it highlights a few features deserving a final remark. He said: ‘Now, there is no longer any need to actually be a painter, a sculptor, or an architect, when one can acquire the material rudiments at cost price.’ And thus: ‘the Ikeaization of France is accomplishment without attempt, without meaning or substantiation.’\textsuperscript{384}

First, even if Hartman’s debunking of Ikea is duly entrenched in the critique-worthy hierarchy sustaining its organization, deeming their goods and cultural capital as ‘false’ is empirically unviable, as he bases his consumer-observations on those had by himself and his

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\textsuperscript{383} No. 38/ Marit, 22.
\textsuperscript{384} Hartman, “The Ikeaization of France,” 483.

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friends (the ‘impossibility’ of fitting an advanced architect-tableaux into a living room of heirlooms; the bonkers quality of the ‘Billy’ book case). Further and as already stated, his theoretical underpinnings are morally sound, but oddly idiosyncratic. Kawamura writes: ‘(D)iffusion is not limited to voluntary imitation: “some values are imposed, some others penetrate before a population even has an idea of these values”’. Yet, ‘(i)n modern and postmodern societies, consumption and production are complementary and, therefore, production does not take place within a completely separate sphere in relation to the broader social context of consumption.’

Or as rendered by Aspers: ‘Most researchers today accept the following statement: “Persons confront moments of consumption neither as sovereigns, nor as dupes.”’

Secondly, Hartman’s elitism is worth mentioning, as it echoes the academic slighting of the high street as discussed in the Introduction: the lesser interest granted the ‘lesser’ cultural expressions; the cheap retail ‘known’ to copy the rich and give to the poor, while simultaneously monopolizing on the ‘genuine’ subcultures of the young and creative. Still, even as I have amassed a case to ‘rectify’ the slighted chain stores, keen to direct critical attention towards their steadily increasing influence, their design-savvy concepts and their celebrated endeavors, I have admittedly found myself arguing along lines similar to Hartman’s top-down rhetoric.

However, Kawamura and Aspers argue, brands do not control their own identities. And as much as the H&M subsidiaries have managed to create accurate ‘ideal-type consumers’, even to the point where Oslo citizens look like Weekday-advertorials in motion, we might do well remembering Hauge, Malmberg and Power’s stressing the close-knit character of the Swedish retail industry. And further, how the industry’s knowledge arguably stems from the very close interaction with its target group: young designers merging with the Stockholmian band of real-type-consumers; consumers they not only wish to please but need to impress – or even emulate. As primed in Chapter 1, modern day consumption is arguably top-heavy with a few high status actors running the orders. However, to stay afloat, the fashion system is no longer trickle-down, but based on surveys, inventory tracking, cool hunting and focus groups.

In conclusion: although having argued the case of the H&Mification of Oslo, the upgrading of fashion capital through micro cultural imperialism dressed in camouflage, I

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385 Kawamura refers to Pitirim Sorokin, Social and Cultural Mobility. See Kawamura, Fashion-ology, 77.
386 Aspers, Orderly Fashion, 44.
387 Aspers, Orderly Fashion, 36.
388 See Chapter 1, page 26.
have strived to pinpoint that the firms’ popularity is not merely rooted in their capability as commercial colonizers, but rather in their capacity to be the most didactic facilitators of fashion. Therefore, and as opposed to Hartman, I do not deem the learning outcomes to be had at Weekday, Monki and COS as ‘accomplishment(s) without meaning or substantiation’, even if the curriculum has proved highly uniform, and thus easy to follow. Instead, I have made the case that it is the very monoculture of the H&M Group that has put the swift upgrade of fashion capital into motion.

‘Is learning really on the menu of monoculture?’ Hartman might ask. For better or worse, my answer is ‘yes’.
Conclusion: Being branded doesn’t hurt (does it?)

At the core of this thesis stands the personal experience of a remarkably swift and ‘general style upgrading’ unfolding in Oslo from 2010 to the present, and the spread of one homogeneous ‘look’ increasingly in tune with the consecrated ideals of the international fashion system. Yet, however international the ‘looks’ of the young and ‘fashionable’ – and however diverse and multifaceted the Oslo shopping scenario had become – the exponents of the new style still looked like Weekday advertorials in motion, rather than reflections of Oslo’s constantly expanding body of shopping alternatives. Testing the subjective notion up against the recent changes within the Oslo shopping topography, I found Swedish retailers to be taking the lead, and in particular those proudly parading under the canopy of the H&M Group: the affordable, design savvy and above all concept conscious brands Weekday, Monki and COS. I thus posed the following main research question: Have the recent implementation of the new Swedish retail brands helped facilitate a ‘style upgrading’ through the offering of affordable and trend conscious, yet similar designs? And subsequently: If finding that the young and ‘fashionable’ did embrace the Swedish newcomers, as spearheaded by the H&M subsidiaries, exactly what make these brands appealing? According to the young and ‘fashionable’? In light of relevant diffusion/consumer theory? Putting thoughts into play, I asked two further questions: How to objectively define the ‘fashionable’? And further, how to methodologically and theoretically link the emergence of a more ‘fashionable’ demography to the simultaneous emergence of new Swedish retail stores?

Answering the last two questions, I created a tripartite thesis design to obtain as rich analyses as possible, exploring if and how a popular fashion formation might be ascribed to the historically slighted high street. Doing so, I reversed Lees-Maffei’s production-consumption-mediation paradigm, dividing the research topic into a line of interconnected objects of analysis, reading: Selected Norwegian fashion magazines used to define the internationally ‘consecrated’ dress practice; this practice relocated on street level as a performed dress code; these practitioners given survey questionnaires to gain knowledge of what they wear and where they shop and why, and the descriptions of these shops moving the thesis into the final analyses of the styles, the commercial infrastructure and the brand building techniques making the preferred brands able to diffuse broadly and possibly dictate
style. Summing up the most important findings from the each stage of the analyses, I found the following:

Chapter 3 showed that the Norwegian fashion magazines *ELLE, Costume* and *Stylemag* univocally advocated the ‘look’ of the ‘Neo 90s’ with *minimalism, men’s wear* and *active wear* as its most pronounced sub-styles. Further, based on the meticulous counting of all the goods and brands displayed across all three titles, I found them to promote the ‘clever’ mixing of high end brands with affordable fashion: Prada, Stella McCartney and Acne rubbing shoulders with H&M, COS and Zara. In short, affordable brands – many of them Swedish – were welcomed into the realm of the (high) fashion system.

Chapter 4 presented the results from the survey questionnaires of the fifty-three style exponents in the shape of a collective interview; a structure chosen to give full-bodied answers to the thesis’ second research question: *what make these brands appealing according to the young and ‘fashionable’?* Mirroring the ‘looks’ promoted by the Norwegian ‘glossies’, the analyses showed a remarkably unison leaning towards one fistful of Swedish brands in tune with the thesis’ hypothesis: Weekday, Monki and COS with H&M as the ambivalent all-supply alternative. Explaining the appeal of these brands above all others, the style exponents used superlatives like ‘special’ and ‘different’; stressing the brand’s ability to make its wearers stand out as well as pointing to the inherent ‘coolness’ of the stores.

These findings are not only vital as they helped push the thesis in the proposed direction of a Swedish style hegemony, but as they show how attitudes towards affordable fashion are no longer ambivalent – as was the case with Woodward’s findings – but separated into the categories of high and low status. Also worth a remark, and dissimilar to both Woodward and Lifter’s research, the rhetoric currently underscoring the favored retail brands echoes the language formerly reserved the ‘unique’ realm of vintage. In other words: brands conceived to be not only trendy and design intensive, but conceptually ‘unique’, are perceived precisely thus. Subsequently, bringing new consumer attitudes to the fore, the thesis’ data further pushes the high street into a position of scholarly recognition through the rich and fastidious answers given by the style exponents. Rich – and paradoxical, as to be revisited shortly

Gazing at the bottom line of Chapter 4, I was invigorated and slightly alarmed. In perfect tune with my boastful suspicion, I was looking at preferences baring the imprint of micro cultural imperialism: Not only was the collective leaning unmistakably Swedish, it had the H&M brand sprawling all over it. Gathering and summing up the findings of the thesis, the last chapter expanded the style exponent’s own accounts into an analysis of the style.
hegemony created by H&M and its subsidiaries, asking the thesis’ last question: *What make these brands appealing in light of relevant diffusion/consumer theory?* Or as amplified by the paradoxical findings: How had a mass producing mega company managed to position itself as the *one*, trustworthy broadcaster of ‘unique’ and ‘different’ fashion?

Providing one answer to the question, I used Tod Hartman’s “The Ikeaization of France” as a counterpoint, applying three of his central viewpoints on Ikea’s dominion over the French furniture market as a mirror to discuss the diffusion of the H&M firms in Oslo: the first two as a means of theorizing the term H&Mification, and the last as a corrective to counterbalance my findings. Through the mechanisms of ‘monoculture in camouflage’ and ‘similarity dressed as difference’, I argued that the H&Mification of Oslo moves along similar lines to Hartman’s Ikeaization of France, albeit upping the game in terms of imperialist sophistication: the camouflaged offering of related brands and identities that are *just* different enough to be perceived as such, and the ability to blur the boundaries between brand- and consumer agencies through the ‘cool’, yet above all disarmingly didactic store concepts. This, I argue, is the key quality when the H&M-subsidiaries have implemented a style hegemony in Oslo: their ability to make it easier to be ‘fashionable’, but more importantly, of making it harder *not to be*. The offering of one conceptually advanced toolbox accompanied with a style manual as easily red as the one attached to Ikea goods without the simplicity of the message deriding its appeal, or the level of fashion capital attached to the curriculum. Or at least the ‘look’ of fashion capital.

Turning to the thesis’ left out- and future research trajectories, apart from the list given in Chapter 2, a more extensive scope might have included interviews with the CEO’s at the H&M Group in Oslo and Stockholm to discuss the level of intentionality behind the Groups’ settling process. Furthermore, it could have opened up to a survey of how the brand’s designers target and interact with their customers. Another valuable research project could be investigating if and how the H&M Group’s (mono)culture influences the other actors in the market, and particularly how brands like COS might raise the bar for how fashion in general is conceived and purchased: the relaxed allure of high fashion at cost price.

Summing up, a thesis of these proportions can be no more than a tentative trial to catch a piece of the whole picture. None the less, my aim has been to encompass an as rich line of diffusion as possible to frame a whole analyses of a popular fashion formation before its slipping back into history. Hence, even though created as a means of theorizing a locally produced and experienced mechanism, I have conceptualized H&Mification as a means of transfer-value to similar cases. Or, as a steppingstone for later explorations of the style
diffusing power of retail fashion. Last but not least, I have advocated a heightened status to
be ascribed to the historically slighted high street, while putting Oslo, Norway on the map of
fashion scholarly production. It’s never too late to be fashionably late, and our neighbours
were the ones to take us to the ball.
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**Media**

*Diana Vreeland: The eye has to travel*, documentary, DVD, Epix Pictures, USA, 2011.


**Lectures**

Appendix 1: Illustrations chapter 3

Norwegian it-girls and editors

Clockwise from left:

Figure 1: “Costume Awards,” Kjendis.no, accessed September 18, 2014.
Figure 2: ‘Pia Tjelta ByTimo’, Costume.no. Foto Jørgen Gomnæs, Styling Vanessa Rudjord, accessed September 18, 2014.
Figure 3: “Jennys brennheite bikinikolleksjon,” Costume.no. Foto Jørgen Gomnæs, Styling Vanessa Rudjord, accessed September 25, 2014.
Figure 4: Holiday Instagram accompanying “Klager Costume inn for PFU,” Nrk.kultur.no, accessed September 18, 2014.
Figure 1 (top): “A hint of punk”, ELLE Norge, NR. 08 August 2013, 29.
Figure 2 (bottom): Stylemag cover featuring editor-in-chief, Celine Aagard, Stylemag, NR. 05, 2014.
The style of the 1980s and the 90s not revived in the current ‘Neo-1990s’.

The fashions of the 1980s and the early 90s not revived in the current ‘Neo-1990s’. Table of figures at the back of the page.
Clockwise from left:

**Figure 1:** Pop icon Kim Wilde, displaying the high hair of the day. Mid 1980s. “Long live the 80s”, accessed September 16, 2014, http://longlivethe80s.tumblr.com/post/20497052195/fuckyeah1980s-kim-wilde.


**Figure 3:** Girl power got fresh faces and fashions: Spice Girls anno 1994, accessed September 16, 2014, http://www.posh24.com/emma_bunton/then_now_spice_girls.

**Figure 4:** Popular surf pants, accessed September 16, 2014, http://s92.photobucket.com/user/Gorantherobot/media/socal-surf-wear-1.jpg.html.


**Figure 7:** Royal leading lady, ‘it’-girl and style icon, Lady Diana, mid 1980s, accessed September 16, 2014, http://www.pinterest.com/pin/381820874627917608/.

The revived fashions of the 1980s and early 1990. Table of figures at the back of the page.
Clockwise from left:

**Figure 1:** Movie still of Lara Flynn Boyle as Donna Hayward. David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* (1990-91), accessed September 08, 2014. http://twinpeaksfashion.tumblr.com/image/878245972.

**Figure 2:** Diane Keaton sporting relaxed power dressing opposite Alan Alda in Woody Allen’s *Midnight Murder Mystery*, 1993, accessed September 08, 2014. http://www.imdb.com/media/rm2302316032/tt0107507#.


**Figure 5:** Richard Gere literally dressing the part of Julian in Paul Schrader’s *American Gigolo* (1980). Gere’s costumes by Armani, accessed September 08, 2014, http://www.vogue.it/trends/il-trend-del-giorno/2012/02/stile-maschile#ad-image167336.


**Figure 7:** Debbie Harry on the front cover of Blondie’s album, “In the flesh” (1981), accessed September 08, 2014, http://www.45cat.com/record/103817n1l.


The look of the revival, the ‘Neo-90s’ 2013-2014

The look of the revival, the ‘Neo-90s’, 2013-2014. Table of figures at the back of the page.
Clockwise from left:

Figure 1: Costume NR. 08 August 2013,

Figure 2: Costume NR. 03 March 2013,

Figure 3: Photo of survey respondent sporting an updated version of the masculine power dressing of the 80s and early 90s. Åse, Blindern, November 13, 2013. Photograph Ragnhild Brochmann.

Figure 4: Informal fashion garments styled with sports bra and bedhead hair. Photo style and casual styling paying tribute to the style magazines of the 80s and 90s, The Face and I’d. Costume NR. 03, 2014.

Figure 5: Grunge as tidied up by present day ‘it-girl’, posted by Stela, March 27, 2013, at http://streetstylebystela.com/2013/03/street-style-by-stela-in-plaid-3.html

Figure 6: Mannish oversized camel coat on model Miranda Kerr. Photograph by Alasdair McClellan, styling by Kathe Phelan, British Vogue September 2013, http://thefashionography.com/miranda-kerr-for-vogue-uk-september-2013-by-alasdair-mccellan/2/

Figure 7: Clean cut street vibes reminiscent of the “undone” styling of the 1990s. Costume NR. 3, 2013.

Figure 8: Picture from the same series as above; focus shifting from street wear to asymmetrical minimalism. Costume NR. 3, 2013.

Figure 9: Debbie Harry’s blond mane, red lips and statement T-shirt gaining current momentum in the hands of Stylemag. Stylemag NR. 3, 2013, 67.

Figure 10: Punk revisited. Stylemag, December/ January 2013.

Figure 11: Californian brand American Apparel updating the casual preppy vocabulary as championed by TV-series such as Beverly Hills 90210. Ad, http://store.americanapparel.net/en/bts-women-s-lookbook_cat1720040

Magazine copies: The ‘Neo-90s’

Headings heralding the tidings of the 80s and the 90s under various banners: The 90s, the Minimalism, the Punk, the Grunge and simply – So 90s!

Clockwise from left:

Figure 1: Costume, NR. 05 May 2013, 92.
Figure 2: Costume NR. 03 March 2014, 53.
Figure 3: ELLE, NR. 08, August 2013, 29.
Figure 4: Stylemag: NR. 01, 2014, 38.
Figure 5: Costume, NR. 04, April 2014, 54.
The other major trends: Minimalism, Men’s wear and Activewear

The other major trends found in tandem with the neo-90s: Minimalism, masculine styles, active wear and, the ubiquitous denim befitting all styles.

**Clockwise from left:** Figure 1: *Costume*, NR. 05 May 2013, 29. Figure 2: *Costume*, NR. 09 September 2013, 246. Figure 3: *Stylemag*, NR. 10, 2013, 114. Figure 4: *Costume*, NR. 09, 122.
The hair- and makeup-ideals promoted by the magazines

Excerpts from fashion editorials exemplifying how the models and styling favored by Costume closely resemble the look and attitude of the young, female and ‘fashionable’ citizens of Oslo.

Clockwise from left: Figure 1: Costume NR. 3, 2013, Figure 2: Costume NR. 5, 2013, Figure 3: Costume NR. 3, 2013, Figure 4: Costume NR. 8, 2013, Figure 5: Costume NR. 8, 2013
Appendix 2: Lars Midtsjø and Kjell Ruben Strøm’s interviewing schedules

Lars Midtsjø: fashion journalist and then showroom manager at Patriksson Communication Oslo

1. Do any Norwegian fashion magazines, or people affiliated – photographs, stylists, bloggers – have credit outside of Norway? If yes, who?

2. Which of the fashion insiders based in Norway have the most cred?

3. Which ‘assets’ are the most highly evaluated within the circuit of fashion magazines? Having the best fashion series? Having the most blog-wise most reputed editor internationally?

4. Do Norwegian fashion editorials ever get purchased and run by international magazines? Like Peter Dundas’ (celebrated Norwegian designer for Pucci) ELLE-series with Poppy Delivigne (international ‘it-girl’)?

5. Hege Badendyck (at the time of the interview fashion editor, now editor at large of Costume) is listed by Vogue as a blogger to watch? Is there other means of defining her power or influence? The number of followers on her Costume-blog?

6. Is Costume the magazine most Norwegian fashion insider wants to work with since they most frequently work with renowned photographers like Jørgen G, Dennis Stenild og Camilla Åkrans. Is there a loyalty culture at work here, or has it to do with Costume having the biggest funds?

7. How does advertorials work? ELLE and Costume have almost the same advertorials (fashion campaigns/commercial). Does that mean that big brands put their commercials and money wherever eligible, and the difference in publishing house does not matter?

8. Working within the Norwegian ‘fashion system’, who has the most ‘consecrating power’ according to you?

Kjell Ruben Strøm: portrait- and former fashion photographer with the photographer agency Palookaville

1. Do any Norwegian fashion magazines, or people affiliated – photographs, stylists, bloggers – have credit outside of Norway? If yes, who?

2. Which of the fashion insiders based in Norway have the most cred?

3. Is Costume the magazine most Norwegian fashion insider wants to work with since they most frequently work with renowned photographers like Jørgen G, Dennis Stenild and Camilla Åkrans. Is there a loyalty culture at work here, or has it to do with Costume having the biggest funds?

4. Working within the Norwegian ‘fashion system’, who has the most ‘consecrating power’ according to you?
## Appendix 3: Complete list of brands/items featured in *Elle, Costume* and *Stylemag* March editions 2013/2014

### Brands Featured: March 2013

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## Appendix 4: Personal data: style exponents

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<td>53</td>
<td>Karaguba</td>
<td>Dancer (educated at KhiO)</td>
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<td>Oslo</td>
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</table>
Appendix 5: Survey questionnaire: Norwegian language

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO BE FASHIONABLY LATE
– The H&Mification of Oslo

Spørreskjema, stileksponenter

Navn: Alder: Bosted: Yrke: (Hvis student, fint om du spesifiserer hva) Annen jobb:

1. Hva har du på deg og hvor er plaggene kjøpt?

2. Hvilke klesbutikker i Oslo handler du mest i og hvorfor velger du akkurat denne?

3. Velger du bevisst butikk ettersom hva slags plagg/ (stil) du er ute etter?
   - Hvis ja, hvor handler du hvilke plagg? Eksemplifiser:

4. Hvilke faktorer påvirker og inspirerer handlevalgene dine?

5. Har handlevanene dine endret seg i løpet av de siste fem årene? Kan du eksemplifisere?

6. Har du eksempler på butikker hvor du handlet før, hvor de ikke handler lenger?
   - Hvis ja, hva gjør dem mindre interessante nå?

7. Har stilen din endret seg mye i løpet av den samme tiden? Eventuelt hva har endret seg?

8. Opplever du at kjedebutikkenes vareutvalg har betydning for stilen din?
   - Hvis ja, på hvilken måte? (plaggene i seg selv/ butikkens stil/ pris etc.)

9. Opplever du din økonomi som en begrensning på dine «motemuligheter»?
   - Hvis ja, hva har du ikke mulighet til å skaffe deg?

10. Er det butikker i Oslo hvor du gjerne skulle ha hatt mulighet til å handle mer?

11. Opplevelser fra Oslo/ Norge som trendbevisst?
    - Hvis ja, på hvilken måte?

    Eksemplifiser.

13. Hvordan vil du beskrive din egen stil?

Jeg gir mitt samtykke til at informasjonen i dette spørreskjemaet, samt bildet tatt av meg, kan brukes i forskningsøyemed som eksemplifisert under:

Mastertese Estetikk, Universitetet Oslo:
Akademisk publikasjon,
Andre autoriserte publikasjoner:

Underskrift/ Dato:
Sted:
Appendix 6: Survey questionnaire: English translation

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO BE FASHIONABLY LATE
– The H&Mification of Oslo

Questionnaire, style exponents

Name: Age: Place of residence: Profession: (If student, please specify line of study)

1. What are you wearing and where have you bought the items?

2. In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most, and why do you choose exactly these?

3. Do you deliberately choose shopping location according to the item/ style you are looking for?

4. Which factors influence and inspire your shopping your shopping choices?

5. Have your shopping habits altered during the last five years? Can you exemplify?

6. Do you have examples of shopping locations where you no longer shop clothes?
   - If yes, what makes them less interesting now?

7. Have your style changed much during the same period of time?
   - Can you describe potential alterations?

8. In your experience: Does the selection of clothes in retail chains influence your style?
   - If yes, in what way? (the items in themselves/ the style of the shop/ price etc.)

9. In your experience, is your economy a limitation to your ‘fashion possibilities’?
   - If yes, what can you not afford to get?

10. Are there shops in Oslo where you would have liked to shop more?

11. Do you experience Oslo/ Norway as trend conscious?
    - If yes, in what way?


13. How would you describe your own style?

I hereby give my consent that the information in this questionnaire, as well as the picture that has been taken of me, can be used for scientific purposes as exemplified below:

Master thesis Aesthetics (Estetikk), University of Oslo
Academic publication:
Other authorized publications:

Signature/ Date:
Place
Appendix 7: Photographs of style exponents: vox pop encounter extract

No.1/ Josephine
No.2/ Inga
No.3/ Justine
No.4/ Maria
No.5/ Tora
No.6/ Caroline
No.7/ Amalie
No.8/ Maria Q.
No.14/ Ruth
No.38 / Marit
No. 41/ Ingvild A.
No.42/ Aida

No.45/ Tonje S.
No.46/ Mona
No. 51/ Stine L. P

No.48/ Johanne
No.52/ Kristin Estrella
No.53/ Jill
Appendix 8: Brands/stores/ items

FROM VOX POP ENCOUNTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand/Store</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Bik Bok</strong></td>
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<td>Bijoux Brigitte</td>
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<td>Boy London</td>
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<td>Bruns Bazaar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cala and Jade</td>
<td>II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carin Wester</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carhartt/ (urban)</td>
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<td><strong>Carlings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Casio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charity shop, unspecified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheap Monday/ (Weekday)</td>
<td>III</td>
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<tr>
<td>Converse</td>
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<td><strong>COS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cubus</td>
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<td>Cutler and Cross (glasses)</td>
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<td>Designer's remix</td>
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<td>Dianas Salonger (Vintage)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Eger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fjällräven</td>
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<td>Filippa K</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forever 21 (NY)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fretex</td>
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CURRENTLY PREFERRED BRANDS/ STORES/

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<tr>
<td>Fretex</td>
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Freudian Kicks
FWSS
Høyer
Gift
Gina Tricot
Grændesn
Skotøimagasin
G-Sport

H&M

Home made

Høyer
Inrenet, unspecified
Kaphal
Keds/ Nilsson Shoes
Kemt
Lindex
Lacoste
Longchamp
Louis Vuitton
Mango
Marc by Marc Jacobs
Mardou & Dean
Massimo Dutti
Monki

Lille Vinkel (2. Sendra)
Nelly.com (Nowhere)
New Balance
Nike
Nilson Shoes
Nr. 9 (Vintage)
Office
Only
Personal vintage
Philip Lim
Ralph Lauren
Ray Ban
Reebok
Robot
Roots
Samsøe & Samsøe
Second Female
Skopunkten

Freudian Kicks
FWSS
Høyer
Gift
Gina Tricot
Grændesn
Skotøimagasin
G-Sport

H&M

Home made

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Second Female
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<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
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Appendix 9: Main response tendencies from the survey questionnaire

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO BE FASHIONABLY LATE
– The H&Mification of Oslo

Questionnaire, style exponents

Name/ Age/ Place of residence/ Profession
The personal data is found in Appendix 4.
Total number of recipients: 53  Students: 29  Working: 15  Studying/ Working: 7  None/ Year off: 2

Representative quotes:

1. What are you wearing and where have you bought the items?

No.15/ Iselin
- Skinny jeans/ grey/ Bik Bok/ three years old
- Underwear H&M/ this year
- Top/ Lindex/ 90s
- Shoes/ Rebook/ this year (2013)
- Jacket/ Weekday/ this year (2013)

No.16/ Caroline H.
- Sleeveless hi-lo shirt, Topshop
- Black jeans, American Apparel
- Sunglasses, Bijoux Brigitte
- Sweater, Gina Tricot
- Bag, vintage YSL
- Shoes, Dr. Martens

No.18/ Sigrid
- Jacket, Monki
- Scarf, COS
- Handbag, Louis Vuitton, eBay
- Shoes, H&M
- Pants, H&M
- Sunglasses, eBay

No.27/ Mathilde
- Grey-brown patterned outer jacket in androgynous men’s jacket style, from Zara
- Sweater I grey jersey fabric with multi colored, abstract spotted silk fabric on the chest
- Black gentlemen’s pants with little glitter particles on them that shows in the light, From Monki.
- Red scarf in wool with fringes, from Agora Paris. Inherited from my grandmother.
- Dark grey cloth-tote, self-made
- Black plimsolls, from Vans

No. 31/ Karoline
- Acne long cardigan
- Acne scarf
- FWSS beanie
- Acne T-shirt
- Din Sko-shoes

2. In which shops in Oslo do you shop the most, and why do you choose exactly these?

For chart, see Appendix 8.

No.3/ Justine:
- H&M: because they have cheap basics that are ok.
- UFF/Fretex: because you find nice jackets/ bags in wool/ leather.
- Weekday (browse (here) mostly): because they have a lot of fucking nice stuff there.
Velouria Vintage: Because they have distinct items.
COS: because the cut etc. is good.
I really don’t shop that much, but (I) describe shops that I browse a lot in.

No.4/ Maria H.
Acne, COS, Filippa K. In common for all: High textile quality, good fitting and often a type of garment you can have for a while without tiring. And, the price is affordable, but not so high that you buy things that you don’t need.

No.6/ Amalie
Monki (and) second hand because of price/ idealistic reasons (UFF/ Fretex).
Unfortunately, I stumble through the doors of H&M when I need something quick.

No.14/ Ruth
Monki, Cheap Monday and H&M. They are cheap, have a good and varied selection, at the same time it is possible to find a little more exclusive items there too. SALES are also an important key word for me.

No.18/ Sigrid
H&M, they both have basic items and clothes with a distinct flair for special occasions. They have an enormous selection(;) clothes for parties, the everyday, underwear etc. – in general all you need, if you are willing to use ‘unethical clothes’ (and often of poorer quality) in exchange for its availability.
Apart from that I mostly shop at sales in all kinds of random shops. Except for my bag (that I bought from eBay (Louis Vuitton)), none of the clothes in the photograph cost more than 400, - (NOK), the scarf is the most expensive and cost 399,-.

No.8/ Maria Q.
Fretex, its relatively cheap and I like that the items don’t come in stock. + of environmental concerns.
H&M, it’s cheap.
Weekday, they have some items of finer quality in a color palette that I like at a fairly affordable price.
Strictly speaking, I shop most my clothes in flea markets

No.16/ Caroline H.
Eger, they have everything.
Acne Studios, I am very fond of Scandinavian design, so I feel that I have to support them a bit.
Story, they carry most of the brands I care about.
Weekday, I am very fond of the collaborations they have with other designers.
Fretex, (almost) everything is unique.
H&M, Bik Bok Gina Tricot… They sometimes have interesting stuff.

No.20/ Lise
(I) don’t care much about what stores (I shop in) as long as I like (the clothes) and think (they) look cool. And since I’ve just finished three years of education; I haven’t had the money to buy that expensive clothes.
Often H&M when I’m looking for basics
Bik Bok – both cool and not that expensive clothes. Try not to by too many clothes from (Bik Bok), as it often ends up with everyone wearing the same clothes.
Zara – Has a lot of garments that are more classical and of a bit better quality than the chains.
Monki/ Weekday – incredibly many cool and different clothes. (I) think it is good to stand out, and (I) don’t wish to wear what others are wearing. (Fun paradox).

No.28/ Helene
Acne
COS
Weekday
Because they all have clean, simple items. (I) (m)ostly use masculine garments. Preferably black.

No.29/ Celine Marie
Freudian Kicks (Incredibly many nice, unique items. And then I would really like to support one of the few independent fashion stores we have in Oslo).
Acne + Acne Archive (I, like the majority of the city dwellers of Oslo, am very fond of Acne’s leather shoes, jeans, leather jackets. They offer a nice selection of classic & cool garments).
Mardou & Dean (Good on jeans + support Norwegian fashion).
Zara (classical items of relatively good quality).
Weekday (combination of basics and special treasures).
H&M Trend (classical and quirky price friendly items).
No.30/ Sunniva
- In addition to Benetton (part time job) for high quality wool garments and simple and clean designs; the exclusive vintage shop No. 9 for uniqueness and quality, and second hand from UFF and Fretex – also because of high quality fabrics.
- Some H&M, Zara and Weekday. At Zara they have some trend items, but also garments with a higher focus on simplicity of design and fabrics (though not necessarily seam-quality, unfortunately). The other chains are stores that I don’t really vouch for shopping at, but as I don’t purchase many clothes there – or often – I think it is relatively ok to shop in these stores if there is something I ‘fall for’.

No.31/ Siri
- Fretex + UFF – buy few (very!) clothes, think the generic H&M-garments are uninteresting. Buy few, but decent clothes.
- Weekday – often like the cuts, + a lot black and white.

No.39/ Karoline P. M
- Weekday: A lot of nice basics. Nice prices and a cool vibe in the store. Good variation between cheap and a bit more expensive items. At times good vintage department.
- Monki: A lot of nice basics, good prices. At times a unique twist on ‘simple’ basics.
- Robot: (A) (v)intage shop that is good at stocking ‘current’ and trendy items, nice people working there, unique garments.
- H&M: (I) like the H&M-trend department. Ok quality, at times unique items.
- Bik Bok: (I) shop pants here, actually wretched quality, but they are skinny on my skinny ankles, while also fitting my broad hips.

No.42/ Aida
- Monki has a lot of cool stuff that you don’t see everywhere

No.43/ Henriette
- Høyer, Zara, Monki, Gina Tricot, Louis Vuitton. I shop at these in particular because I like to mix both cheap and expensive, and (also) somewhat different styles according to how I feel.

No.44/ Mona
- UFF, Fretex, Monki and H&M, or flea markets
- I choose to shop a lot at UFF, Fretex and flea markets both out of stylistic and ethical reasons. Second hand shops and flea markets usually have a bit older garments with cuts and patterns that I like and that are not that easy to find in the chain stores. On account of the ethical reasons, both the environmental aspect and the working conditions that can be poor at cheap chains, play a part.
- (I) choose Monki and H&M because I think they have a nice and wide selection, especially when it comes to basic items and dresses.

No.53/ Kristin Estrella
- I actually shop mostly over the Internet. eBay and various other net sites. If I shop in Oslo it’s in the shops mentioned (Freudian Kicks, Acne, Weekday, Høyer, Story, H&M, Zara). I mostly shop at Acne, FK and Story because of the quality and the design of their clothes. (In) chain stores because of the price. I like to mix expensive and affordable clothes.

3. Do you deliberately choose shopping location according to the item/ style you are looking for?
   - If yes, where do you shop what items? Exemplify.

No.4/ Maria H.:
- I shop relatively seldom, and am usually on the lookout for neutral items of good quality that I can use a lot. I find (those) in the shops mentioned above (Acne, COS, Filippa K). The exception is jeans that I wear out quickly. Because of that, I buy them cheaply at Cheap Monday (Another Swedish brand found in Weekday stores).

No.7/ Amalie:
- Well, I don’t like feeling too dressed up. (B)uying second hand, you avoid that perhaps. Love black, that’s why (I shop at) Monki (and H&M).

No.8/ Maria Q.:
- I shop basics like T-shirts and socks at H&M, wool sweaters and jeans at Weekday. More rare items, I buy second hand at Fretex or other vintage-shops.
No.21/ Hanne  
- Hennes & Mauritiz, Carlings and Monki. And Vintage shops. They are cheap and catch up on trends quickly.

No.22/ Martine  
- I buy stylistically clean and special clothes at Weekday and Acne. At Bik Bok and H&M, it’s mostly basics and underwear.

No.26/ Mari  
- (In addition to Filippa K, COS, Samsøe Samsøe and Weekday); ‘Vintage and flea markets – to find ‘treasures’ that make the outfit personal.’

No.27/ Mathilde  
- Each of the high street stores has their own distinct style, and that’s why I’m not that fond of going to Weekday, Monki and Zara. I rather go to their Internet shops to check out the selection, only to buy the one item I liked (if I don’t go looking at the items on display). H&M I consider different. With its many different collections that refer to different age groups and styles; I can find a lot of interesting items. When it comes to style I can also swing by Acne and Samsøe and Samsøe to get inspiration, but normally, this is too expensive for me.

No.28/ Helene  
- I’m a bit unsure. Actually no. I go to the three stores mentioned above consciously of course. (I) (k)now that if I need pants, I will get good service and precisely what I’m looking for especially at Acne.

No.30/ Sunniva  
- (I do) not necessarily shop according to style. But I have a very clear idea of what I want. I have a list in my head of what’s missing in my wardrobe, (items) that I like and that I will wear a lot. And I have figured out where I can get hold of some of these things. Like the classical lambs-wool sweaters from Benetton, Acne Needle (jeans) or Cheap Monday-jeans that are high waisted, and shirt from Zara in Mulberry silk.

No.31/ Karoline  
- I primarily shop inexpensive clothes, but I sometimes choose to pay a little extra for basics, wool etc. Concerning the high street stores I choose them because they have great stock selection, a lot of variation. I particularly think that H&M and Zara’s clothes can look pretty exclusive.

No.35/ Maria S.  
- NB! Zara - Because they don’t mass produce their items.

No.39/ Karoline P. M  
- I do all my spontaneous shopping at Robot and Velouria (Vintage). I go here if I’m just going for a quick ‘browse’, most often resulting in a purchase in spite of a tight budget, and a bit stiff prices (it) being vintage (if you compare it to London).
- At Weekday and Monki I shop things that I ‘need’, for instance shorts, basic tees and tanks, thick sweaters, at times pants, scarves, coats, winter jackets etc. In Oslo, these are the two shops I go to first if I’m deliberately on the lookout for something special. This because I know that their cuts and shapes suit my figure. (T)hey have at times rather unique outfits.
- At Bik Bok I buy jeans, like I said. The quality of their pants is rather poor, (they) get worn out real quick (color and stretch)

No.41/ Ingvild A.  
- I mostly buy clothes abroad or over The Internet. (I) don’t go to shops in Oslo to buy clothes. But if I would, I would have chosen the stores that have the style that I Like. (COS).

No.42/ Aida  
- No, not really. (I) use to swing buy many different shops.

No.43/ Henriette  
- To a high degree, I would say so. If I’m looking for something classical I often go to the more ‘expensive’ stores than if I’m looking for something a bit more laidback. Accessories and bags are also often purchased at brand stores.

No.48/ Johanne  
- Yes, I’m on an eternal hunt for perfect basic garments like white and black t-shirts, and (I) most often find them at Monki or Weekday. If I could afford it, I would rather have bought for instance Acne’s that (perhaps) has a bit better durability.
No.52/ Jill
  o  (Apart from COS, ZARA and H&M for basics and underwear) (I) particularly like Acne. That’s because I like the cut/ fit of the clothes (they sit nicely on my body), they have good quality and good customer service.

No.53/ Kristin Estrella
  o  Yes, I have my ‘regular’ shops that offer the brands that I like. That’s why I shop there. For instance Story has a nice selection of Alexander Wang, FK (Freudian Kicks has Carven). These are designers I like. (Other examples: Freudian Kicks, Acne, Weekday, Høyer, Story, H&M, Zara).

4. Which factors influence and inspire your shopping your shopping choices?

No.4/ Maria H.
  o  ‘Zeitgeist’ exemplified through friends and blogs and magazines probably count a lot regarding what I think looks nice. But I’m extremely unreceptive when it comes to strong colors, no matter what.

No.13/ Nora
  o  That it is comfortable and to a certain extent looks good.

No.15/ Iselin
  o  I am very much inspired by friends, people in the street/school, Vogue, old magazines from the 1990s-2009, Instagram.

No.21/ Hanne
  o  Whichever items are put out on display in a good way; and how the aesthetics of the retail concept is laid out.

No.28/ Helene
  o  Time of year? Bloggers (Maria Van Nguyen) and Pintrest users like Amerryshap and A/W +plus.

No.37/ Andrea M.
  o  For me, shopping clothes isn’t just about who’s selling the clothes, but rather a focus on color, texture and quality. The buying environment/ambience also influence whether or not I return to the shop, and also if I find the clothes (there) interesting style wise.

No.39/ Karoline P. M.
  o  The shop personnel, blogs (preferably simple tumblr-blogs with pictures only)(;) if the garments are practical and versatile(;) prices.

5. Have your shopping habits altered during the last five years? Can you exemplify?

No.4/ Maria H.
  o  I shop second hand more rarely, and less frequently (visit) cheap chain stores like H&M. (I) spend more money per item, and have become more concerned with fabrics and fabric quality.

No.5/ Tora
  o  I shop less, more rarely and more expensive items.

No.8/ Maria Q.
  o  I buy fewer clothes, fewer branded clothes, spend less money per item. I have become more aware of the quality of the clothes that I buy. ‘Shopping’ is no longer an activity or a ‘hobby’. Instead of trotting the streets for hours with girlfriends, I now exclusively buy clothes if there is something I need, or I happen to pass by a shop I like and have (some) time to spare.

No.15/ Iselin
  o  Yes, previously I shopped a lot at Carlings and H&M. Back then, I didn’t have any ‘concrete’ style. Now that I have ‘found’ my style, I shop more rarely and go for quality.

No.18/ Sigrid
  o  Yes, most definitely. Three years ago I never wore pants, now I often wear pants. Things I bought then, that I don’t buy now: Multi patterned and multi colored clothes, tutu skirts, colored scarves, stockings with patterns ++

No.19/ Anette
- Hennes & Mauritz – too big and too tiring, and too much ugly and of bad quality – even though I know you can find treasures there; I don’t have the energy to walk in. (It) doesn’t give a good ‘shopping experience’. Zara – for the same reasons.

No.26/ Mari
- I have also become older and have started in a job that demands that I think more about which clothes I wear on what occasions. I don’t wish to look like a ‘vintage Christmas tree’ if I’m off on freelance assignments. At the same time I want to look like someone with a good sense of dress and that demands that you stand out. There is always a balance between having a bit of edge, but not too much.

No.30/ Sunniva
- Absolutely. I started working at a very young age, and thus had a lot of money to spend on whatever I wanted. It often turned out to be clothes. Now that I, like most other people, have to divide my money on several different expenses, the share to spend on clothes has declined. Thus, I’ve become much more attuned to that what I buy (should be) something that I will use a lot for sure. In addition, my sewing education and the increased focus on ecology and sustainability have made me pickier as the years have passed by. And also, I don’t swing by clothes shops as often as before. (In addition) the shopping urge that I could have earlier, is gone.

No.44/ Åshild
- Yes, I have started to shop a bit more over the Internet, for instance from etsy.com.

No.46/ Mona
- Yes, they have altered a bit. In general (I) buy fewer items from chain stores and more second hand. I also gather more inspiration through social media and (from) people on the street now than earlier.

6. Do you have examples of shopping locations where you no longer shop clothes?
   - If yes, what makes them less interesting now?

No.18/ Sigrid
- Five years ago I was fifteen and marked by it. I remember noticing not owning one black item except for stockings, now my wardrobe is full of black, dark grey and other dark colors. I still have a lot of colorful items, but they are colorful in a more subdued way, and I never combine them with colorful earrings, hairpins, colored stockings etc. If I use an intensely colored item now, I’m into highlighting the color(s) through small/ anonymous accessories.

No.19/ Anette
- Hennes and Mauritz – too big too messy to exhausting and too much ugly and bad quality – even though I know you can find treasures there, I don’t have the energy (or) desire to go inn. Does not give a good shopping experience.

No.22/ Martine
- Monki, (I) rarely find anything I like there anymore. I also think the quality is poor. Zara is another example.

No.25/ Tonje K. G.
- Vero Moda, boring stock selection.

No.27/ Mathilde
- I never enter shops like Mango, Lindex, Kapphal, Vero Moda and Noa Noa anymore. It is the style, the design and the quality of the items that inform my choice. There are also too many ‘basic’-items that I don’t find interesting enough, and too many strict and grown up clothes. I want clothes that are distinguished by less seriousness that has more colors and life about them.

No.28/ Helene
- Urban, Robot (vintage), Carlings. It just became a bit too much. And lots of colors. A bit boring cuts and shapes, and very much separated into what works for boys and girls. Especially at Urban and Carlings.

No.29/ Celine Marie
- I used to shop in chain stores like Gina Tricot, Bik Bok and Vero Moda. Good quality items become more and more important to me. I would rather have fewer, nice and decent items that I really cherish, than many items that quickly fall apart, and that loose its shape. In addition, high street stores follow trend rather slavishly, and you quickly wind up wearing the same clothes as your neighbor if you purchase a lot of clothes in these chains.
No.30/ Sunniva
  ○ There are no shops that I cannot shop in. I think that as long as I don’t by big quantities of clothes I can in principle shop wherever I like. To cut out a store like H&M (or similar) because of their low-sustainability profile, and rather purchase big quantities of ecological/ sustainable clothes doesn’t sit right. Therefore; no.

No.31/ Karoline
  ○ Vero Moda, Gina (Tricot) etc. I think a lot of the clothes are better suited for girls under twenty. I also think a lot of the clothes look rather cheap.

No.34/ Julia
  ○ Vero Moda, JC. – It fit me when I was younger.

No.35/ Maria S.
  ○ Lindex because it becomes too traditional and boring

No.37/ Andrea M.
  ○ H&M – that they have such awful quality on textiles (,) that I choose to shop elsewhere

No.38/ Marit
  ○ I shopped more in big chain stores like for instance H&M. (H)ere I miss that the clothes have that little extra. It is also a bore if you find something extra nice, that later becomes common property.

No.42/ Aida
  ○ VERO MODA: NEVER AGAIN.

No.44/ Åshild
  ○ I shop less at Zara because of the revelation of the bad working conditions there.

No.47/ Therese
  ○ Yes, absolutely! Five years ago my style was primarily about colorful, big and above all comfortable clothes. At that time I was also very fond of t-shirts in bright colors, perhaps also with a ‘fun’ quote or an image on it. Now I rather choose simple and plain tops, often mono colored, and I rather make the outfit a bit more exiting by combining it with jackets, caps, headbands and other accessories.

No.53/ Kristin Estrella
  ○ Bik Bok (and) Monki for instance. I don’t shop there anymore because I think the quality on their clothes are bad. That it is mass produced, I’m not that big a fan of things that EVERYONE has.

No.48/ Johanne
  ○ Bik Bok and Zara (.) (T) hey have become too fussy and girly.

7. Have your style changed much during the same period of time? Can you describe potential alterations?

No.3/ Justine
  ○ I care less about following trends. (I) was fourteen years five years ago so I was concerned with what other people thought (even if I wanted to have my own style).

No.4/ Maria H.
  ○ Yes, it has become ‘cleaner’, and probably more typical ‘Scandinavian’. And I’ve stopped wearing things that are not black, white, blue, grey or brown.

No.5/ Tora
  ○ It is probably during the last five years that my style has undergone the greatest changes until now. (I) moved to Oslo in 2008 with cute dresses, baggy Levis’ pants, Billabong sweaters and caps. A totally confused style. (I) fussed through several years with frayed tights, white tennis socks and a lot of second hand clothes.

No.6/ Amalie
  ○ (m)ore black, less colours. Partly the trend, partly economy. (I) buy something black and safe.
No.8/ Maria Q.
- I am no longer ‘consciously’ concerned with fashion and trends. Even if you can’t avoid being affected to some extent, this is no longer something I’m paying attention to and spend time on. I still dress thinking about how I look, but rather stressing that the clothes are practical/ fit for what I’m doing. For instance, that they are warm enough.

No.15/ Iselin:
- Yes, I had to be as tumblr (blog-like) as possible with a grunge feel. Dark lips, dip dye, cat eyes, Levis shorts and Urban Outfitters

No.17/ Frida
- Yes, I felt that I ‘expressed myself’ much more through clothes earlier. (I) always had to have something new and exciting. Was going out a lot as well, so it was important to have a new outfit every time =) Now I feel that a different lipstick can change the outfit, (I) play with what I have.

No.20/ Lise
- Earlier, I could use all kinds of things I thought was cool, but now I go for the style that I like and stick to that.

No.21/ Hanne
- I wear less bold colors, and more black and denim.

No.26/ Mari
- My style has become more classical, and if I wear vintage it is more rarely from before the 90s. I wear less color and have almost stopped wearing earrings.

No.27/ Mathilde
- In my youth I was almost only wearing black and dark colors, something that has become a little too stiff and serious for me today. My stance towards clothing, fashion and style has changed a whole lot in this respect. I perceive fashion as something that is supposed to be fun(;) where life can meet art in one’s own creation of oneself. It is for me something that can make existence more fun and more beautiful.

No.30/ Sunniva
- Yes, a whole lot. I think that everyone changes enormously, on all levels, in the years between sixteen and twenty-one. Also style-wise. A lot of my style is about what I have described above. I care about quality, and have also ended up caring about ‘the look of quality’. Earlier I had a much bigger amount of clothes and therefore (also) the opportunity to have a much more versatile style.

No.32/ Siri

No.41/ Ingvild A.
- Less into fashion and trend. (I) use what I find nice and comfortable.

No.42/ Aida
- I have always been fond of the bohemian style, but have started to wear fewer colours, unfortunately. (I) wear a lot of black and white. (NB. Note the comment of the ‘unfortunate’).

No.45/ Tonje S.
- From subcultural (skater/ Stud belt and Fred Perry at Blitz/ Hip hop/ followed by a transition to high end brand bonanza) to Scandinavian (expensive) minimalism, back to subculture or normcore.

No.46/ Mona
- From subcultural (skater/ Stud belt and Fred Perry at Blitz/ Hip hop/ followed by a transition to high end brand bonanza) to Scandinavian (expensive) minimalism, back to subculture or normcore.

No.46/ Mona
- Yes, it has altered a bit. I use more dresses and clothes with completely different cuts and fits (now) than I did five years ago. (I) have for instance become very fond of mommy-jeans and pants with wider legs, and I like turtle necks and tops with a higher collar that I didn’t use to like very much.

No.47/ Therese
- I notice that the childish style that I had five years ago has been ‘revived’ in what I commonly wear now. This especially goes for accessories like chokers, hairbands, hairpins and bracelets, but it can also be particular items like for instance a denim skirt. At the same time there are a lot of garments that wasn’t imaginable to wear when I was younger, for instance turtlenecks and mom jeans, that I love wearing now.
No.52/ Jill
- Yes. Earlier I shopped a lot of the same things as my friends, and such items like the typical ‘Bik Bok’ girl dresses. It was probably to feel that I fit in. No I don’t give a shit about what people think about what I’m wearing, I like to be able to stand out, while at the same time also fitting in. To accomplish that, I no longer buy my clothes at like Bik Bok, Carlings, Vero Moda etc.

No.48/ Johanne
- I have become more daring(; rarely wear dresses as opposed to earlier, and like more men’s fits as opposed to earlier.

8. In your experience: Does the selection of clothes in retail chains influence your style?
   - If yes, in what way? (the items in themselves/ the style of the shop/ price etc.)

No.2/ Inga:
- Definitely, I usually postpone buying an item until it’s on sale.

No.4/ Maria H.
- When it comes to shop selection, to some extent you trust the taste of the store(s) you already have confidence in. Not all purchases are just as well planned, and then the shops naturally shape your style. Some stores, like Acne, are also heavily participating in the shaping of how people dress, that again influence me (to a certain extent).

No.14/ Ruth
- Retail shops are to a certain extent playing a part in the deciding of the style people are wearing.

No.17/ Frida
- I don’t spend much money on clothes, so I tend to shop in high street stores, in that respect, it matters a bit what they have. But I don’t buy items because they are cheap. (NB. Good quote because it simply touches baseline).

No.18/ Sigrid
- Yes, given the fact that they sell what I buy (with the exception of the clothes I make myself). Still I never buy a complete outfit in one store that is why it is up to me if I combine the item with something that is trend at that moment, or with something I like better. Often I stop wearing things when it becomes (the) trend. Burgundy for instance, I can’t stand the color after it got trendy. And all the white. This is probably because I would rather represent myself than what stands in the magazines, it is after all I who am wearing the clothes.

No.19/ Anette
- Yes. It is inescapable. (I) (d)o get inspired by what exists – and what others are wearing, even though I don’t particularly pay attention to what is fashionable or read magazines or ads and the likes of it, so probably the shop selection and what they highlight help inspire (me).

No.21/ Hanne
- No (I) think they have a big enough offer for you to pull off about any style. (NB. Counter argument).

No.25/ Tonje K. G.
- Price matters a great deal to my style. I prefer quantity to quality. Rather a lot of cheap items to choose between in my wardrobe, than a few exclusive ones.

No.26/ Mari
- Yes, it so happens. It isn’t only I who think that the 90s are cool for the time being, to put it that way, and that probably has a lot to do with the style selection in the high street stores.

No.27/ Mathilde
- Yes, because that’s what I can find. (The clothes) being (in) those few stores where I like to shop in Oslo(;) the style they promote informs my own style all the more. That said; I don’t buy clothes that I don’t like, or that are too expensive. What’s good about chain stores is that they often copy or, and even better, make their own version of items and styles from bigger fashion houses/ haute couture.

No.28/ Helene
- Yes. Especially Weekday is laid out to inform you of where to find the ‘cheap’ items or the more exclusive and decent items. (I) can often omit going down to the far end of the store (sales department).
No.33/ Hanne I. C.
- Some. Store availability. (I) usually know what I’m looking for on beforehand.

No.38/ Marit
- Yes. Most often, it is the very items, or the style of the shop (for instance Weekday). (I) see a tendency in the stock of the season, and perhaps adopt it more than I would like to admit.

No.39/ Karoline P. M
- If I go looking for something that deviates from my own style, this is most commonly items that I’ve previously seen at blogs/ in magazines etc. Sometimes the shop personnel might also inspire me to a great extent.

No.40/ Marie K.
- For instance, I buy more basic items at for instance H&M. But I think Monki and Weekday have fun stuff that contributes to the (my) style.

No.41/ Ingvild A.
- Generally speaking I hate that there are so many chain stores and so very few smaller, more special stores.

No.44/ Åshild
- Yes, as I choose shops based on style/ price, and thus naturally become affected by the store selection. At times I think the selection can be very similar in a lot of Norwegian shops (meaning shops in Norway), and then I venture to the Internet to shop clothes from abroad to find something new or different.

No.46/ Mona
- Yes, to a certain extent. (I) usually find clothing inspiration through other places than in the selection of chain stores, but their stock definitely has a lot to say. Two years ago crop tops for instance were rarely to be found in chain stores, something that made it both difficult to find, plus that it could be conceived as a bit more ‘challenging’ to wear. When the chains start to stock items, I experience that it affects the trends and the norms, something that makes it more acceptable to wear. But to my mind, the most focal about the store’s selection is that you gain access to items – for instance dresses from H&M that I wouldn’t have used if they didn’t have it in their selection.

No.47/ Therese
- Yes, I think that the best places to gain inspiration are at the different clothing stores. I often swing by Monki and Weekday just to get a look at the selection instead of actually buying.

9. In your experience, is your economy a limitation to your ‘fashion possibilities’?
- If yes, what can you not afford to get?

No.4/ Maria H.
- Expensive outerwear is often tricky. That said, I would probably have bought more items if (my) economy had been better, rather than buying other items. Or coming to think of it: I would perhaps have bought more, expensive ‘special’ items, without pondering how many times I would use it.

No.6/ Amalie
- Yes. As mentioned, I have a desire to always buy clothes of good quality and from ethically responsible producers. I can’t afford that, and end up buying cheap shit from H&M.

No.14/ Ruth
- To a certain extent, it has. I would of course have liked to buy myself a ‘real’ wool sweater (like the one I am wearing now) from Acne, but then I would have had to live on oat porridge for a month. Then, it’s more tempting to buy a cheap copy.

No.15/ Iselin
- Yes and no. If I really want it, I buy it, but a lot of stuff is way too expensive. For instance shoes, sweaters made of nice fabrics, jackets and design pants can cost a lot and prevent my buying it. Stores like Acne, Weekday, Filippa K and Kemt are way too expensive.

No.18/ Sigrid
- To a certain extent, yes. (I) would have loved to shop more ethically correct, on the other hand there is almost no one in Oslo that make good everyday fashion in ecological quality… The things I can’t afford (a bunch of costly shoes and especially bags) I don’t really need anyway, so it is probably for the best that it costs that much.
No.19/ Anette
- Not really. I would have loved to have had better bags and coats – however, coming to think of it, I think it is a bit too much to spend too much money on clothes, so I like that I can/ must hold back a little. I don’t think a Mulberry bag or a Max Mara coat would have made me much happier. (E)ven though they are very nice, and I would have loved to have them, I get a bad conscience spending that much money on clothes, and there are other nice alternatives. I like to shop second hand – to find things with a little bit more soul to it, and in the spirit of recycling.

No.23/ Kari
- Things I don’t need to begin with, that I still want.

No.27/ Mathilde
- The economy does limit in the sense that I’m not rich, but it is actually quite rare that I wish for something that is expensive, since my style doesn’t depend upon it. I’m really pleased with finding nice garments (...) to a normal price. It wouldn’t be as much fun with fashion if there had to be particular stores, or clothes that I wanted to wear instead of just looking for random finds here and there.

No.29/ Celine Marie
- The money obviously doesn’t always go as far as that when you want quality items with unique design, but that also pushes forward a creative stands towards clothing. Then again, economy isn’t necessarily the decisive factor – in Oslo, there is a very limited range of fashion shops that offer low price design of good quality – especially in comparison to other countries. It definitely would have been nice to see more individual fashion shops amongst the big giants((): H&M, Zara, Monki, Bik Bok etc. in Oslo.

No. 42/ Aida
- If I am to be superficial, then yes: I have enough clothes, but one always wants something new (especially every season).

No.44/ Åshild
- Well, I probably could have bought more things, and more sustainable things, if my economy was better. At the same time, I’m not that into ‘branded clothes’. It sort of topped itself when everyone had to have Miss Sixty-pants and Buffalo shoes in secondary school.

No.46/ Mona
- I see my economy as a limitation as to what clothes I can buy, however I don’t see this as too big a limitation of (my) fashion possibilities. Even if my economy limits how much money I’m able spend on clothes, I rather look at this as something that can develop my style, my shopping and using clothes more creatively. This leads to that I use the clothes that I already have more creatively (for instance by using dresses back forward, so that they gain a high collar and a lower back), (I) cut and sew (remake) old clothes, seek out different second hand shops and look for things both in the children- and men’s wear departments. If I find clothes I can’t afford I rather look at the clothes for inspiration, and (then) browse at similar places, or make something similar myself.

No.47/ Therese
- No, absolutely not. I have always been a person who rather spend money on food and experiences above clothes, which has resulted in a wardrobe with few branded clothes and a lot of second hand. Moreover, to shop on a very low budget has made me more creative, and now it has almost become a hobby to ‘revitalize’ boring clothes by cutting, sewing, turning inside-out, embroider or make batik.

No.51/ Stine
- Well, there is a lot of stuff that I can only buy if I save for a long time, but it isn’t that important to me. I think it is silly to spend 10 000,- (NOK) on bags and such. (T)hen I would have to wear it ever so often for it to be worth it, and it is awkward to wear the same accessories to everything. Then I rather buy five 3000,- bags (NOK) so that I can vary a bit.

No.53/ Kristin Estrella
- Yes, I’m not rich. I guess I am more into clothes than most. I am that kind of person who will rather buy a bag or a garment than to go on a holiday. However, my economy is definitely a hindrance. There are so many nice clothes and shoes. That said, I don’t think style can be bought. The clothes from high street stores can look just as good as the most expensive designer items. In my opinion it is all about how you carry the clothes.
10. Are there shops in Oslo where you would have liked to shop more?

No.3/ Justine
- Acne has a lot of nice stuff, and I would have liked to shop there more. (T)hen COS is a good alternative

No.6/ Caroline
- I obviously wished I could have shopped more at Acne, and other shops with brands in the same price category.

No.14/ Ruth
- At the same time, I don’t really see the point in spending a lot of money on something I can buy cheaply.

No.27/ Mathilde
- There are no stores where it’s important for me to shop, except for those I already shop in, but I think that if Acne wasn’t that expensive, I would have shopped some things there from time to time. The same probably goes for different stores at Eger, Steen og Strøm, Paleet etc. (the three, more exclusive department stores in the city center of Oslo). It probably would have been fun to have something that almost no one else has, but my point is that it really doesn’t matter to me because I can find the style that I like in the stores where I already shop.

No.29/ Celine Marie
- I really would have liked to shop more in the smaller niche shops, like Den Dama in Frogner. In addition I really would have liked to have the sewing skills to turn everything at UFF and Fretex into the world’s coolest dream-garments.

No.42/ Aida
- Hmm.. not really. To me, the style is the most important thing, not the brand/ price that I assume is important to some.

No.44/ Åshild
- No, but if I had a bit more money, I would certainly have explored more shops of different kinds and of different price point categories.

No.45/ Tonje S.
- No, I think clothes are extremely out these days (lol).

No.51/ Stine
- (I) dig Acne. I think it is ok to spend a bit extra on the dresses there for a special occasion. I wish I could have bought everything I need there because of the good quality. All basic items, but I can’t afford it. But then again most of their items have to be hand washed, and I can’t be bothered to do that.

11. Do you experience Oslo/ Norway as trend conscious?  
- If yes, in what way?

No.3/ Justine
- Norwegians have a tendency of wearing the items that everyone else is wearing. Trend conscious, yes. Style as something individual. It depends on who you compare (us) with. We are Nordic and dress accordingly. Both weather and Janteloven-wise.

No.19/ Anette
- Oslo yes, but a very homogenous ‘flock of cheap’ at that. (W)ithin the different milieus, (people are) not very experimental, but (I) think most are pretty aware of what they wear and express their social belonging through what they put on. The fact that a lot of people are wearing the same clothes perhaps has to do with everyone shopping in the same stores that by and large have the same clothes? My impression is that most stores have much the same – so that it perhaps isn’t too easy to have your ‘own style’? (Have) the differences in stock selection become smaller and smaller in the different shops? (Or am I only seeing what I want to see?)

No.23/ Kari
- In Oslo, there are a lot of trend conscious people. All wear the same clothes (hipster).
12. How would you describe your own style?

No.2/ Inga:
- Just now, I like simple garments with different textures and patterns. I’m very inspired by the 90s and early 2000s. I unusually buy what my friends find ugly, and never would have purchased.

No.4/ Maria
- Simple, Scandinavian, more into looking decent than crying out for attention.

No.7/ Amalie
- Black, big clothes. Rarely pants, but stockings and skirt. Shirts. Androgynous. But not all the Acne-way. Straight, classical, with quirky additions that have popped into my head.

No.14/ Ruth
- Hard to say. (I) like to mix new and old. Am very fond of black, but try to use a little color as well to liven up the outfit. I don’t want it to seem as if I’ve dressed up, or spent long time getting dressed. Some say I’m a bit of a hipster.

No.15/ Iselin
- Simple, minimalistic, unflattering to my own body shape (big sweaters, baggy pants), black and white, 1990-2005.

No.16/ Caroline H.
- Minimalist, monochrome, uniform. I always consider how my silhouette looks will look with an item before I buy it. I think I scare people with how I dress sometimes because I’m sure. ((T)he outfit I wore that day (of our encounter) wasn’t the best at all).

No.17/ Frida
- I like to play with clothes and create a mood. Play with contrasts. (from 70s style to classical menswear).

No.27/ Mathilde
- Androgynous feminism. Sporty and laidback city-style with colorful details and second hand elements.

No.30/ Sunniva
- I’m into simplicity and quality. All potential details should have a function, or a considered reason. I am not particularly fond of colors. I use navy blue, nude (without trans), grey, black, white, light blue, and some pink and red/ burgundy (…). I prefer relatively masculine items like jeans, wool sweaters and shirts. Yet with cuts that highlight femininity/ a female body.

No.38/ Marit
- Have been described as androgynous, which perhaps is right at times.

No.45/ Tonje S.
- (From subcultural (skater/ Stud belt and Fred Perry at Blitz/ Hip hop/ followed by a transition to high end brand bonanza) to Scandinavian (expensive) minimalism, back to subculture or normcore). Ref the subcultural thing: my style is most often an expression of what I want to define myself away from/ renounce, as much as what I wish to signal an affiliation with.

No.46/ Mona
- A sort of indecisive mash-up between floral dresses-and-bows/ 90s/ a-bit-of-everything.

No.47/ Therese
- My style is in constant change. But for the moment it consists of simple, mono- colored and comfortable items. I would describe my style as pretty childish too, thinking about me being this fond of making my outfits more exiting by using caps, headbands, hairpins and chokers. So maybe my style hasn’t changed that much for five years after all;)

No.29/ Celine Marie
- Aware of looking good, yes, however not style conscious to the same extent. In comparison to other countries we dress very homogenously. People take few risks, normally there is a lot of ‘uniform dressing’. On the other hand, it must be said that there has been a positive progress over the last few years – Oslo-people are dressing increasingly better, and I think that the influence from social media, more traveling and access to foreign shops via The Internet have contributed to strengthen the fashion on the streets.