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Traditional market segmentation

– an evaluating approach

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Abstract

Title:	Traditional market segmentation – an evaluating approach
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Keywords:	Market segmentation Ethnographic study Ikea
Thesis purpose:	The purpose of this research is to evaluate traditional market segmentation variables, as criticism has been directed towards these variables. Based on our problem discussion we find it motivating to undertake investigation in order to understand which connotations an ethnographic approach will provide.
Methodology:	We have applied an ethnographic approach, which has enabled us to attain under the surface knowledge from our respondents.
Theoretical perspective:	As we wanted to evaluate existing traditional segmentation variables, we decided to only include theory regarding these variables.
Empirical data:	In order to collect our data, we observed seven respondents at Ikea and conducted observations and in-depth interviews in their homes.
Conclusion:	We suggest that Ikea should utilize a behavioural segmentation approach. As we were evaluating Ikea's segmentation, our research resulted in three characteristics, which define the Ikea customer, cost aware, practical, and simple. These characteristics can be an appropriate foundation for Ikea to segment the market on.

Preface

This thesis could not have been written without the kind participation of our respondents. Thank you for letting us spend time with you.

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This process has been a journey and the road has not always been straight. We have managed to keep a good mood and we have had a lot of fun. We thank each other for this.

We hope you will find our work as interesting as we found writing it.

Lund, May 2007

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1 Introduction

In this section we offer insights in our area of interest, market segmentation. We will present background to our research area which will be followed by our problem discussion and lastly our research question and purpose is presented.

1.1 The notion of segmentation

As long as companies have been competing for sales, markets have been separated into smaller homogenous markets (Dickson and Ginter 1987). According to the founder of the market segmentation concept, Smith (1956), market segmentation is a brief and temporary phenomenon. Effective use of this tool might result in more official recognition of market segments through seeing groups of customers as individual markets. Market segmentation refers to looking at a heterogeneous market as smaller homogeneous markets, in order to be able to change product preferences to significant market segments' needs (Smith 1956). These segments will be subjected to similar marketing activities in order to create required behaviour (Söderlund 1998). Thus, the underlying principle for segmentation is that the market is fragmented; hence a homogenous market does not exist (Beane and Ennis 1987). Engel *et al* (1972) further contends the notion that consumers are different from each other, and that these differences influence market demand. Serving all consumers is almost like mission impossible; people have different needs and wants and therefore they cannot be targeted in the same manner (Vyncke 2002). To find those consumers a company can satisfy, it is of significant importance to undertake market segmentation.

In marketing literature, segmentation is a central and prevailing concept which offers directives regarding companies marketing strategies. Segmentation constitutes the focal point in marketing strategy and has been extensively adopted by companies for as long as companies have tried to differentiate themselves from competitors (Kamineneni 2005). Hunt and Arnett (2004) continue and argue that one of the most established notions in modern marketing is market segmentation.

According to Engel *et al* (1972), companies adopting segmentation receive a wide range of advantages, especially concerning information that can be obtained. Weinstein (2006) state that companies must gain the consumers' trust and win them over and to accomplish this, companies must understand consumers' needs and wants in the segments where they struggle. Accordingly, by using the obtained information from segmentation, companies can easier understand consumers' wants and needs (Engel *et al* 1972). As one of the aims with advertising and promotion is to inform market segments of the product or service existing on the market, this information can be applied in order to direct companies marketing activities more effectively (Smith 1956). Companies can then better adjust to shifting market demands and plan more distinct offerings to consumers (Engel *et al* 1972).

To gain competitive advantages companies should identify those segments with possibilities for the firm, target the particular group of customers and finally create a certain marketing mix aimed to reach each segment (Hunt and Arnett 2004). Market segmentation often helps companies achieving better profitability than expected Wind (1978), and one of the reasons

why segmentation is such an accepted marketing tool is because it contributes to increased sales compared to mass-marketing approaches Cross (1999).

Since Smith (1956) first introduced the notion of segmentation, numerous ways for segmenting the market has been widely discussed in marketing literature (Mathur *et al* 2006; Vyncke 2002). However, independent of which segmentation classification, they all presume that consumers can be divided into homogenous clusters. Thus companies employ segmentation as a tool to identify desirable markets, and tailor the marketing mix. (McGoldrick 2002)

For a company to successfully target its wanted group, the segmentation strategy has to be completely accurate (Solomon 1994), and if companies have well defined and penetrated market segments the firm will get a deeper position on the market (Smith 1956). However segmenting a market successfully is a difficult task. Consumers operate on several levels, and it is hard to understand how and what consumers act on. (Kamineni 2005) Unfortunately, it is not directly obvious what individual demand thus causing different companies to come to diverse conclusions. This is due to differences in their theoretical and analytical approach, concerning what segment is right. (Dickson and Ginter 1987)

1.2 Problem discussion

Four different traditional market segmentation approaches are frequently being mentioned in marketing research. These segmentation variables are referred to as geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural variables and consumers can be segmented according to them. According to Kotler *et al* (2005) these variables are the major variables in market segmentation. They are further in this research referred to as traditional market segmentation variables. Geographic variables are such variables as country size, city size, and density. Segmenting on demographic variables involves dividing consumers with regard to their age, life cycle, income, and occupation. The psychographic variables cover social class, lifestyle, and personality. The fourth segmentation variable, behavioural consists of benefits sought, usage rate, and purchase occasion. (Kotler *et al* 2005) Each of these variables offers important insights to the understanding of the market. However at the same time, there are constraints with using them. (www.decisionsupportsciences.com) As such, critiques have been directed towards all of these traditional segmentation variables

Geographic segmentation is not appropriate to use, since it has weaknesses in its nature (Haley 1968). Furthermore, Haley (1968) claims that geographic variables are not good predictors of consumer behaviour, as it in today's society does not exist much diversity between rural and urban areas. Thus it is not effective to use this variable, as it cannot predict future buying behaviour within consumers. Moreover, geographic segmentation variables are based on ex-post factor analysis of consumers in different market segments, which rely on explanatory features. (Haley 1968) The capability of geographical variables has also been questioned due to their lack in offering an understanding of target markets (Schoenwald 2001).

Some of the problems with using demographic variables derive from marketers trying to segment whole markets. If there is not a clear segment, the demographic variables will be of no utility since they then cannot describe the segment. (Beane and Ennis 1987) Neither are they capable to predict future buying behaviour (Haley 1968), which are essential for marketers as this is the aim with segmentation; to make the consumers into a customer, meaning to make consumers buy. Marketing managers must know what it is that drive

consumer's behaviour. Based on this argument, demographic variables are not effective to apply, since they are unable to capture the drivers of consumers' behaviour. (Lancioni and Oliva 1995) Neither are demographic variables proficient enough to foresee behaviour (Tynan and Drayton 1987; Schultz 2002). Schultz (2002:5) also argues that segments based on demography are "nice to know but not terrible helpful". Furthermore, these variables do not perform enough; marketers need and want to get more acquainted with their customers in order to effectively segment a market (Wells 1975). Tynan and Drayton (1987) argue that demographic variables are weakly related to product choice. Additionally these variables are not efficient to use due to that even if people share the same age, sex and so forth, they do not inevitably have common values, motivations and beliefs (Morgan *et al* 2003). Accordingly, it is difficult for a company to act on demographics (Winter 1984).

Critique has also been directed towards the psychographic segmentation variables. The theoretical linkage between these segmentation variables and companies' decisions are considered weak and which consequently leads to a lack in validity. Companies that choose to apply psychographic variables due to the belief that they can offer rich descriptions, should not always expect them to accurately forecast consumer' behaviour. This is because the lack of revealing important determinations of the basis for consumers' behaviour. Additionally, the approach has also received critique as it is perceived as being too explorative in its research process. (Lesser and Hughes 1986) Yankelovich and Meer (2006) also claim that the weakness with psychographic variables is that they do not well forecast what consumers will buy. These variables are thus not good at helping marketers to decide which market to enter nor do they focus on one of the most important determining factor; the dissimilarities between different customers' needs (Mitchell 2006). If the aim is to investigate product innovation, companies need other segmentation variables than psychographic since they do not offer the needed information (Yankelovich and Meer 2006).

Behavioural segmentation variables do also have difficulties in understanding consumers' behaviour (Schoenwald 2001). Furthermore, Haley (1968) argues that volume segmentation, part of behavioural segmentation, also has difficulties to predict consumers' behaviour. Not all heavy users are exploiting the same brand since they are not looking for the same product benefits. A withdrawal when segmenting a market based on consumers attitude towards a product, is the use of performance data which do not reveal what the customers actually will do; only what they think about the company (www.decisionsupportsciences.com).

Although traditional market segmentation research has received criticism, there still has not been much investigations undertaken focusing on finding new directions in the doctrine. Much literature on segmentation is very old, even though it is prominent place in marketing. Furthermore there has been a tendency among researchers to have predisposition towards standardization of actions, and consequently little has been done to move outside of their ordinary area. Thus new contributions have been somewhat restricted in their findings. This has contributed with favouring the continuous usage of traditional market segmentation variables. Reluctance in undertaking new methods is though peculiar, since segmentation is such a well established concept and prevailing in marketing literature.

Thus there is need to undertake additional investigations towards these widely discussed segmentation variables, which focus more on innovative methods. It is for instance important to commence research in areas where new variables can be found and in turn used when segmenting a market. Wind (1978) According to Senn (cited in Sausner 2006) awareness about new, potential segment groups can help to enlighten companies when implementing

their marketing strategy. By observing consumers' behaviour, companies can receive advantages concerning what actions to take (Ibid).

In order to comprehend the multifaceted reasons and motives behind consumer's behaviours and actions, we argue there is a need and demand for a method which can capture the meanings individuals have and their consequential behaviour. We furthermore argue that a deeper examination is needed on traditional market segmentation variables, to be able to segment a market properly. Rosenthal and Capper (2006) claim that the boundaries with basing product innovation decisions on listening to consumers' voices have contributed to the use of new research techniques, for example ethnographic studies. According to Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) ethnographic studies are appropriate to use for marketing managers in order to understand the meaning of consumption gatherings in specific market segments. Additionally the use of ethnography can assist when explaining the influence of marketing uncontrollable on specific market segment (Ibid).

Ethnographic studies have thus the ability to capture more profound knowledge of consumers as it focuses on consumers underlying behaviour, thoughts and feelings, instead of listening to what consumers have to say. (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) As current research on traditional market segmentation has focused on descriptive features when developing strategies, an ethnographic study would contribute with a new perspective. Elliot and Jankel-Elliot (2003) furthermore argue that ethnographic studies can obtain significant knowledge, which other research methods are incapable to reach. This means that insight on subtle often tacit requirements of consumers can be conveyed (Rosenthal and Capper 2006).

Invariably, marketers have used traditional methods as quantitative surveys (Mathur *et al* 2006; Hu and Rau 1995; Lin 2002) and qualitative interviews (Steenkamp and Wedel 1991; Vyncke 2002) when analysing consumers for finding new market segmentation possibilities. Several researchers have conducted research on segmentation in a too narrow minded setting; they have been too focused on their own approach (Wind 1978). This has led to a continuous use of ordinary segmentation variables as studies have been unable to capture new ways of reaching consumers. However, as researchers have contended that traditional segmentation variables have triviality in capturing consumers' behaviour, are there any new, more appropriate ways of segmenting the market? As many of the traditional applied segmentation variables were developed a long time ago, and since critique (e.g. Singleton and Zyman 2004) has been directed towards them, we question whether these still are applicable and arguing for the possibility of finding new segmentation variables. Therefore we assert for the potential of obtaining new knowledge by using unconventional methods. Hence, a new approach can lead to new insights.

1.3 Research questions

With the problem discussion in mind, we have decided to investigate the following:

- Which connotations will an evaluation of the traditional market segmentation render by applying ethnography?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to evaluate traditional market segmentation variables, as criticism has been directed towards these variables. Based on our problem discussion we find it motivating to undertake investigation in order to understand which connotations an ethnographic approach will provide.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The outline of this thesis will be the following. As a starting point, we will present the methodology of how we have approached our research question. Furthermore an explanation of our overall scientific philosophy and research proceedings will be presented, as well as how we collected our empirical material and in what way it was used. This will be followed by our theoretical framework where we present theories on current traditional segmentation variables. The following chapter contains an integration of the empirics and analysis. In the next chapter we will discuss the findings from the empirics and analysis. The last two chapters contain a concluding discussion.

2 Methodological reflection

In this chapter we will present discussions of our scientific philosophy and chosen methodology, in order to understand the basis for our research. Furthermore, the literature reviewing and empirical data collections will be presented.

2.1 An evaluating perspective

As our work with the thesis proceeded, we came to question the notion of segmentation. Even if current segmentation literature is extensive in its range, it has overall been the same for many years. Does this indicate that old segmentation strategy still is valid, or that there is a lack of contemporary segmentation studies? However important to acknowledge, this does not mean any specific criticism against particular researchers within the subject, more a questioning of the lack of more beneath-the-surface studies. Thus we began to see a need for further investigation of current segmentation strategies, and decided to undertake an evaluating perspective.

2.2 The Choice of Theory

After reviewing the landscape of segmentation, we found that the notion of segmentation has been defined by many actors, all pointing out the importance of segmentation. However disturbing, these researcher seemed to share the same views concerning which variables to use when segmenting a market, even though extensive investigation has been taken place. More or less, the landscape could thus be divided into the traditional segmentation variables; geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioural. Arguable, these segmentation variables may still hold ground and is for that reason applied by companies and researchers. It can though be argued that this depends on a lack of evaluating studies. As found, there is criticism against the traditional segmentation variables. Again we found it remarkable that even though the existence of criticism, there is still no valid evaluating studies that have been undertaken. Thus, we argue for a need to assume an evaluating approach towards what may appear to be at first glance, an unquestionable theory.

Applying an evaluating approach towards the traditional segmentation variables, some exclusion have been made in this theory. This was due to no possibility to undertake investigations and thus draw conclusions. Firstly, social class is disregarded since we do not see social class to be obvious in the present society. van Raaij and Verhallen (1994) further this argument and argue that social class no longer have a distinctive segmentation value as purchasing power is noticeable in among all layers of consumers. Secondly, country size and climate are not mentioned in our research because the research is limited to Sweden. Likewise, region is disregarded as all our respondents live in Skåne. Additionally, variables as religion, race, nationality and education are overlooked since there are no differences among our respondents regarding these variables.

2.3 The choice of Ikea

In order to answer our research questions, and accomplish our aim with this research, we needed to select a company for which our research could be applied to. As our aim was to evaluate traditional market segmentation, a requirement was to find a company which have adopted one of the four segmentation variables; geography, demography, psychographic and

behavioural. Otherwise we would not have been able to answer our research question. We had to observe how this company's segmentation was applied today and if this was the appropriate segmentation to use, in order to be able to see possible connotations to traditional market segmentation. Thus this company functions as a link to traditional market segmentation variables, as the company embodied our purpose; which connotations will an evaluating approach render to traditional marketing. Our attained findings would than be applied to notion of traditional segmentation.

Thus we had several criteria for which the case company had to fulfil. We sought after a large company, which needed to adopt a segmentation strategy in order to infiltrate the market by implementing an effective approach.

Our case company became Ikea. Ikea is today perceived as the leading company in the home furnishing industry. We have not found any studies which have investigated Ikea's segmentation strategies applying ethnographic studies. With this in mind, we find it motivating to undertake research in this area. This motivation is strengthened by the fact that Ikea have had the same segmentation strategy for very long period, due to that Ikea adopts the same market investigations year after year (Magnusson 090507). Should innovative measurements not be explored? If safe comes prior to original, new findings can never be discovered. By this we argue for a need to evaluate Ikea's current market investigations and undertake out of the ordinary methods.

Another reason for choosing Ikea as our case company is that they adopt the demographic segmentation variable, part of the traditional segmentation strategies (Magnusson 090507). As we were questioning the landscape of traditional segmentation and searched for more original methods and variables, we contend that by investigating a company which apply a "more traditional" way, we can take an evaluative approach and see whether new suggestions can be found or conclude if Ikea's present strategy is the most appropriate. Hence, this knowledge can then be contributed to the understanding of traditional segmentation.

Due to the time limitation and monetary constraints, we choose to concentrate our research to Ikea Malmö. However, as Ikea is a standardized company we believe that we could obtain information which can be generalized to Ikea Sweden.

2.3.1 Meet Ikea

At Ikea, customers are in focus and the company believe that it is all about understanding the human beings and their lives at home. From the beginning Ikea has chosen another direction from its competitors; they have chosen to side with the many. Thus Ikea's target group is people all over the world, focusing on families that have limited income and small living space. (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006)

"To offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them."

(Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006)

"Most of the time beautifully, functionally and designed home furnishings are created for a small part of the population who can afford to buy them. From the beginning, Ikea has chosen another direction. We have decided to side with the many people. That means responding to the home furnishing need of people throughout the world. People with many different needs,

tastes, dreams, aspirations and wallets. People who want to improve their homes and create better everyday lives.”

(www.ikea.com[2])

Ikea represents traditional segmentation variables and adopt what Kotler *et al* (2005) refers to as demographic segmentation, dividing the many people into three life cycles; “living alone”, “living together” and “living with children” (Magnusson 090507). This strategy has been applied for many years. By this strategy, they aim to cover “the many people”.

Ikea want their customers to feel as if they were at home; it is perfectly fine to lie on a bed or to try out a sofa (www.ikea.com[1]). The Ikea stores have everything that the customers need for their homes under one roof. The Malmö store is arranged with showrooms at the second floor, where the consumer can go into different living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens and get a feeling of actually being in a real room. By displaying Ikea’s wide range of products in the showrooms they want to inspire consumers and also show them clever solutions with tips and ideas for different kinds of living situations. (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006) The idea behind the showrooms is to provide customers with ideas for home furnishing, lightening and decoration (www.ikea.com[1]).

At Ikea Malmö, there are approximately 30 different showrooms including three homes directed to Ikea’s three segmentation strategies. These homes are composed by whatever a household might need; a living room, bedroom, kitchen, and a toilet. While entering the showrooms and the homes, there are always signs announcing the size of them in order for consumers to see what they can have and fit in on this specific space. In general Ikea’s main concept is compact living, thus are all showrooms small in size. Another common aspect in the showrooms is storage, as Ikea want to incorporate all necessities. Magnusson (090507) confirm that one of their main tasks is to portray that people can have good storage solutions, even if they live on a compact space.

According to Jönnerheim (130307), the showrooms at Ikea are changed roughly four times a year and are constantly being developed since Ikea want to try new concepts with different solutions and ideas. The showrooms are Ikea’s strength and have three corner stones; activity, need and solution. By this, they want to demonstrate that families can have everything they need in a room, and also that it is suitable for activities for the entire family. No global competitor is using their stores in the same manner as Ikea, although a few of them to some extent have adopted the idea (Ibid). Therefore, Jönnerheim (130307) further argues, Ikea has managed to become a source of inspiration and a place to go for a whole day out.

According to Magnusson (090507), Ikea also has three different styles they want to communicate; Scandinavian, modern, and traditional, which also are integrated in the showrooms. Through the store, and the different apartments, consumers follow the same families and by doing so, the styles connect the different rooms and departments.

2.4 The overall scientific philosophy

There are many aspects that can influence the design of a research and how it is conducted, however by choosing types ahead it is possible to direct and affect the research’s outcome. In this research we were interested to contribute to the understanding of traditional segmentation, by undertaking unconventional methods to obtain a more profound knowledge of individuals’ behaviours, attitudes and values. This implies an investigation of a complex phenomenon, characterized by complex variables. We are of the belief that social order results

from patterns of action, and are thus created through active individuals as several interrelated interactions where meaning is constructed in and through. (Bryman and Bell 2003)

This argumentation forms ethnomethodological assumptions; namely how people make sense of the world, display this understanding to others and how to produce the mutually shared social order they live in. Thus the meaning of an act are dependent on what context it is used in. (Ibid) By this we mean that the investigated organisation, Ikea, can be seen as a marketing scene, what ethnomethodology refers to as social order, where reality is organised, classified, categorized and made sense of. (Svensson 2004)

The purpose of this study was however to evaluate traditional segmentation variables by developing a deeper understanding towards consumers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour. Therefore our research basically originated from the phenomenology argument that social reality has meaning for individuals and consequently they act on the basis of the meanings which attributed to their own acts and to the acts of others. Thus to receive a deeper understanding, and to grasp the meanings of an individual's behaviour, we attempted to see things from the consumers point of view, (Bryman and Bell 2003) however aware of the fact that we, as observers, is part of what is being observed. (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002)

Important to acknowledge is that even if these paradigms are not research methodology, the perspective a researcher has on these inevitably conveys certain consequences of the chosen research design and methodology. Nevertheless it is difficult to be objective in this task. There may be no way of choosing, more excepting the fact that our culture forms our perception of life, from when we were born to adults constantly being integrated and thus subconsciously accepting the general rules. Thus our pre-understanding, experiences, knowledge, values, and scientific view determine the research direction.

How a research is carried out can additionally be affected by the assumptions a researcher constructs of the world, meaning assumptions we make about the nature of reality, referred to as ontology, and our general assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world, referred to as epistemology. The ontological assumption taken in this research is that reality as it appears to us is inter-subjectively formed and/or created in every day life. Thus we argue that reality is not something that is external and objective, existing on its own. Rather we see the reality as something socially constructed and subsequently determined by interactions between people. (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002) Thus we view the world as social a phenomenon, which is given meaning by people. However, we believe that actors can influence their reality, which imply that social phenomenon not only are created through social interaction, but also are in a constant state of change. This view is closely linked to social constructionism, which implies that collective properties are outcomes of interactions between individuals. More specifically this means that social phenomenon and their meanings are continuously being accomplished by individuals. (Bryman and Bell 2003) By sharing experiences and communicating with individuals, both verbally and non-verbally, the world makes sense to us. Accordingly, the imperative aspect of social constructionism is the belief to value the different meanings people place on their experiences with other individuals (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002). This is useful for our research since we are interested in understanding people's individually meaning of their life.

The epistemological standpoint in this research is that we see the social world and its science as fundamental different from the natural science and therefore we argue that the social world cannot be researched in the same matter as the nature (Bryman and Bell 2003). We view ourselves as researchers who want to understand and interpret our society and thus are

interpretivism close to our opinions on how to study the social world. The interpretivism stresses that social actions are meaningful for actors and consequently must the actions be interpreted on the basis of their perspective. (Ibid)

2.5 Research approach

Since social constructionism is about invention and derives from the meanings accomplished by individuals (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002) the methodological research approach may be regarded as inductive. Inductive methodology makes it possible for a research to have the same characteristics which are significant for social constructionism; namely to explore the research area with the aim of making sense and understand possible outcomes (Ibid). By applying an inductive approach, data collection comes prior to the construction of theories, rather than hypothesizing before the findings, which are the characteristics of a deductive approach (Bryman and Bell 2003). The reason for adopting an inductive approach was the belief of attaining a deeper understanding to the many multifaceted meanings individuals have and how these can take form. Embracing this complexity means that there are no correct and possible ways to make hypothesis and assumptions prior to the observations.

At the same time, we needed information about previous knowledge in this subject in order to fully understand the phenomenon we were to investigate. We had to investigate the contemporary landscape of segmentation, which consequently contributed to the purpose of undertaking an evaluating study of traditional segmentation variables. This forms a deductive argument; we have to regard existing theories to make a contribution with our research. (Bryman and Bell 2003) Important to reflect upon is that since we all have personal pre-understandings of the world, our research was subjected and limited to subjective practice. Thus, what cannot be understood is excluded, meaning that things that we cannot relate to are lost. (Ibid) It is therefore only possible to acknowledge what our pre-understandings allow us to grasp. As so we argue for both directions and contend that by embracing these two approaches, we can obtain relevant results.

With regard to these arguments, a more suitable approach for this research was the abductive approach. Instead of explaining, this approach intends to attain and comprehend an understanding of a phenomenon. Equal to the inductive approach, it progress from empirical data, however recognising that pre-understandings (can) have impact on us as researchers. Abduction entails to uncover invisible meanings in the pattern of interpretation and employ it, in order to make sense of the empirical material. (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 1998) As such, we mean that it is in our empirical data were we can find the underlying meanings; the hidden patterns.

Referred to our social constructionism and interpretivism, we find that a qualitative approach for this research was the appropriate method to apply (Bryman and Bell 2003). This approach was chosen because it enables our research to be based upon interpretative techniques. As we wanted to obtain a deeper understanding of the many meanings individuals have in order to evaluate traditional market segmentation, we were unconditionally subjected to our own interpretations of the social world. Embracing this interpretation, we needed to adopt a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods can furthermore be seen as a complement to our social constructionism arguments, enabling us to comprehend the many meaning individuals have. In combination these two concepts have strengths in their ability to attempt to understand people's meanings, however adjust where needed and be able to change as new ideas emerges during the course of the research. (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002) Furthermore, the qualitative approach emphasises on trying to understand behaviour and values in context

(Bryman and Bell, 2003). With regard to the above discussion, a qualitative approach provides the possibility to obtain a more profound understanding towards the complexity of consumers' inner thoughts.

2.6 Empirical study

As we began to investigate the scene of contemporary segmentation, the traditional segmentation variables constantly appeared in front of us, heavily cited and used by leading marketing professionals. There was no way to escape these. By questioning current segmentation, it was thus a natural choice to evaluate traditional segmentation doctrine. But how could we move a way from the masses of investigations that have already taken place? An opening was in the methods applied. Many researchers have applied more traditional methods, for example using pre-determined quantitative processes. As such we wanted to go in a completely other direction, in order to attain new information. We believed that this was necessary. If we would have applied traditional methods, the findings would probably be the same as prior investigations. As segmentation means to understand one's consumers, our research originated from this belief. We wanted to understand consumers, to attain beneath the surface knowledge. We decided on ethnography.

2.6.1 Ethnography

Market orientated ethnographies has today a long-standing theory role building in social science, applied to a variety of contexts including agriculture, education, health care and public policy. However, market orientated ethnographies can also be used to develop strategic recommendations for marketing practitioners. Ethnography is more common when developing strategic recommendations, rather than when building theory. (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) In this research, our aim was not to build theory, it was to evaluate and possibly come to strategic recommendations, hence our aspiration to find other segmentation variables.

One of the reasons for applying ethnography is that it can provide a deeper understanding towards the many implicit levels of consumer meanings implanted in behavioural constellations. This is especially relevant when the consumption experience derives from taken-for-granted socio-cultural understandings and when customer satisfaction is not exclusively originated from cognitive product attributes. By the use of ethnographic studies, marketing practitioners can understand socio-cultural meanings which consumers act on, however which are hard to communicate. Ethnography thus aims to explain how culture is concurrently created and originated from people's behaviour and experiences, and clarify patterns of actions which are culturally and/or socially grounded. (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994)

As we experienced a need to look at segmentation from another angle, a need to apply new methods, we argue that an ethnographic research was a suitable method for our research. This enabled us to obtain extensive information from few respondents, in order to see and understand individuals' behaviours from another angle, which does not focus on predetermined variables. Additional argument for using this approach is that it is a research style where the researcher concentrates on understanding the meanings people put on their behaviour of themselves and behaviours of others (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002). To evaluate traditional segmentation variables from a customer perspective, we needed to attain a deeper understanding to the multifaceted individual in order to broaden the scope of the many meanings individuals have. Engaging in ethnography made it possible to explore and discover

“beneath the surface appearances” and hidden contexts applied to individuals experiences. (Bryman and Bell 2003)

2.6.2 Research design

Based on our ethnographic study, we decided to undertake a variety of methods for the collection of data. Multiple methods of data collection are often used in ethnographic research, as it provides the possibility to assess different areas of experiences that may differ from each other. (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994)

Observations

Since we were evaluating traditional segmentation strategy by using Ikea, however from a customer perspective, we decided to undertake observations of few respondents at the Ikea store. This meaning that we followed few respondents through Ikea’s showrooms, observing their actions. However, observational data undertaken alone have many limitations, due to that it does not provide access to individuals’ perceptions, values and beliefs and the individuals’ internal state. Thus by combining the observations with “speech in action”, more profound knowledge can be obtained. Therefore we encouraged the respondents to speak during the observations on whatever entered their minds.

As market orientated ethnography not only study the purchase or specific use of a product, this method enabled us to observe the full set of behaviours which normally co-occur while purchasing or using a product. We were interested in how consumers behaved in Ikea’s showrooms and what the basis were for this behaviour. Did the respondents have a specific behaviour or attitude to a room? Could any special interest be observed? Did Ikea’s present segmentation affect the respondents in some way? Thus our observations provided a contextual understanding towards the many meanings of product use, which goes beyond the individual brand or product (hence Ikea and Ikea’s products). By studying the meaningful behavioural constellations where product use is embedded, we attempted to observe customers meanings associated with Ikea. By these observations, we could be able to notice what the basis were for customer behaviour at Ikea, meaning how a customer behaved could function as a basis for segmentation variables. Furthermore, these observations allowed us to evaluate Ikea’s present segmentation. If this segmentation were effective, the Ikea customer (hence our respondents) would been affected by them, either that they experienced an interest or an intention for purchase. If this was not the case, the observations would (hopefully) give us other variables which the respondents’ action were based on. Thus our observations would make it possible to both evaluate traditional segmentation and see if any other segmentation variables could be found that would be more effective. However important to acknowledge is that based on our ethnography, we did not know what to look for prior to the observations. This was because we did not restrain ourselves to pre-determined hypothesis of were to look for segmentation variables, as this would have mean that our study would be directed on the basis of our beliefs of what segmentation variable should/would be most appropriate. Thus we captured (or at least what could be captured) the entire behaviour of the respondents in order to derive meaning in the sense making process.

We furthermore undertook observations in the respondents’ household. By this we aimed to attain a deeper understanding towards our respondents and also strengthen our data collection at the Ikea store. This was to make sure that the respondents’ behaviour at the Ikea store was correct, as it can be differences between what we think of ourselves, the actions we make and our real self. This meaning that we may have a specific behaviour towards for example a

showroom, whilst this behaviour does not postulate in our real life. Thus we act on our ideal self, which however not is our real self. The observation at the respondents' home therefore enabled us to attain "accurate" knowledge towards who the person (respondent) was.

At last we undertook observations of the Ikea catalogue at the respondents' home. Our initial thought was that the behaviour of the respondents might differ if they were subject to something in their "safe" place, in their own home. By this we mean that the observations at Ikea could cause the respondents in a negative way, as the environment can be rather stressful, and thus impact on their answer or behaviour. However, if they were faced with photographs on showrooms in the Ikea catalogue at their own house, they could calmly observe the picture and see what came into their minds.

Qualitative interviews

In an ethnographic study it is also common to use interviews and document studies in order to gather data (Bryman and Bell 2003). Interviews were selected as means to offer a different perspective and understanding of the individuals. To fully capture underlying meanings and to capture the respondent perceptions, values, beliefs, and background, we conducted deep interviews at the respondents' home. This enabled us to get a full picture of the respondents, derive meaning from constructed context occurring in the individual's personal life and come to relevant conclusions.

These interviews were carried out in conjunction with the observations of the respondents' home, in order to attain knowledge to what induced the respondents. As such we obtained knowledge to who the person was (at least to what the person believed). This method was important as we aimed to evaluate traditional segmentation variables. Thus this information gave us extensive background to who the person was, in order to later on derive meaning from this in combination with our observations. As such we combined the person's personality, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, history and present occupation, to the patterns of behaviour found during the observations. We needed to understand if for example a person had a special liking to flowers, and what this was dependent on. Maybe she got flowers from a loving boyfriend and in turn liked to be surrounded by flowers as this brought positive feelings into her life. An additional example for undertaking face to face interviews is that a "no" does not always explicitly mean a no. Other underlying behaviours, unable to capture if not present with the respondent, can be the cause of a "no". Furthermore we argue that we achieved a more complete image of the respondents by conducting interviews at their own home, were they could feel secure. Prior to the interviews we chose our respondents, thus meaning that during the interviews only one of us was present.

2.6.3 Our role as observers

As researchers we assumed an overt role, due to the limited time frame of this research. There was no possibility to act as a covert researcher, as this role means to not reveal the fact that you are a researcher. A necessity was to be able to take notes during the observations as well as be flexible. Due to the ethical problems associated with covert roles, such as not providing participants with the opportunity to agree to take part of the research and the principle of privacy, an overt role seemed more appropriate to adopt concerning the goal of this research. (Bryman and Bell 2003)

The degree of involvement was, according to Bryman and Bell (2003) who refers to Gans (1968) classification, researcher-participant. There was no intention to fully participate in

daily activities of the individuals or to merely observe them as an outsider of unobtrusive character. Instead, there was a need to be more flexible, allowing us to take the form of a participant, however constrained by semi-involvement, as well as function as an observer. However, this role can also be seen as an observer-as-participant, which is characterized foremost of the role as an interviewer but also as an observer. (Ibid) By participating in the setting of the research, are furthermore recognized by the social constructionism view taken in this research. The acknowledgment that an observer can never be separated from the sense-making process in an observation, (Esterby-Smith *et al* 2002) postulates another motive for the selected ethnographic approach.

2.6.4 The choice of respondents

To get access is one of the key as well as the most difficult aspects of ethnographic studies (Bryman and Bell 2003). Since our data collection was extensive, it was hard to find respondents that were willing to help us with our research, due to the many hours that was necessary for the respondents to sacrifice. Thus, we approached our friends asking them if they in turn had friends that could take part of our study. Aware of the fact that close friends could bias the research, we chose respondents with regard to what relation we had with them. However, as we were three researchers, we were able to choose a respondent which we had had no connection to prior to the research. Before the ethnography took place, we explained our intentions with the research and its methods and offered them to take part of the results, which according to Bryman and Bell (2003) is way to create trustworthiness.

To decide respondents, we had few criteria. The first criterion was that they had to know what Ikea was, and that they had bought something from Ikea, making them a customer. This was necessary in order to understand that the respondents comprehend what Ikea is and what sort of products they offer consumers. Our respondents were also chosen with regard to Ikea's present segmentation strategies; "living alone", "living together" and "living with children" (Magnusson 090507). We chose to have two individuals from each category to gain accurate and sufficient knowledge. Additional respondent were chosen since she lives alone in a small apartment, thereby utilize compact living. If we had only chosen respondents from one category, we would have missed significant information from the other two, which had then bias the research. Another criterion was that the respondents should be women. Even if Ikea's target group is "the many people", focus is on women as they in general shop the most (Ibid). Based on this argument, we decided to only include women in our study.

The reason why we decided to have one researcher at each respondent was the belief of obtaining a more profound knowledge if the respondents were not subject do several researchers. This could affect the respondents in a negative way, causing disturbance when several people were observing and/or asking her questions. Also we believe that we could create a more pleasant atmosphere, enabling us to bond with the respondent and attain useful data.

2.6.5 Meet our respondents

To follow the request of our respondents to be anonymous, some names have been changed.

Maria

Maria is 24 years old and is a student. She lives alone in an apartment Lund. Before she moved to Lund Maria lived in Gothenburg with her mother and younger sister, however Maria lived in Poland until she was eight years old. Maria explains herself as a person who is nothing out of the ordinary. At her spare time she enjoys spending time with her friends, party

and going to the gym and as a person she is analytical, creative and loyal. However, Maria states that she thinks it is hard to describe herself. Maria have travelled a lot in her life, visited places in different parts of the world. Travelling is one of her passions. Her goal in life is, at the moment, to find a job.

Linda

Linda is 23 years old and is a student. She lives alone in an apartment in Malmö. Linda, the youngest of our respondents, lives by the motto “take the day as it comes”. She has a playful personality and she has no fixed plans for her future; however that does not seem to be a huge matter to her. Linda describes herself as a stubborn, open minded, outgoing and spontaneous person. During a normal week Linda meets friends for drinking beer or having a cup of coffee and when she has time, she study. The weekends look pretty much the same but she party more, she likes to go out dancing. Linda have not travelled that much, but she get pleasure from it. In the future Linda hopes to stay healthy and get on well with herself.

Karin

Karin is 30 years old and works as a consultant. She lives alone in an apartment in Malmö. She comes from New Zealand and has lived in Sweden for three years. The reason for moving to Sweden was her boyfriend, however, this relationship ended two years ago. Karin has a bubbling personality and likes to talk. She spends much time with her friends, loves to shop and cook food and going to the gym. As she works as a consultant, one week she can be in Paris, and next week she can be in London. Thus she wants to socialize with her friends when she comes home during the weekends.

Helena

Helena is 26 years old and works as a preschool teacher. She lives together with her boyfriend Joel in an apartment in the centre of Malmö. Helena work out two to three times during a week, visit friends and work full-time. That is pretty much her week, she is always booked with something. During the weekends she loves to ride the motorbike with her boyfriend. Helena wishes for a house in a small village in the country side, at the moment they are looking for their dream house and home to move during the next couple of years. As a person Helena is cheerful, positive and social. She believes she have no difficulties meeting new people. When bad things happen, Helena always tries to see the positive. Helena has not been travelling much, however she likes to go on charter trips. If she had more money she would definitely travel more.

Jenny

Jenny is 25 years old and works as a teacher. She lives together with her boyfriend Jon in the middle of Malmö. Jenny is an active person who does a little bit of everything. She enjoys meeting friends and going to the gym. During the weekends she is usually booked, however she meets her friends as often as she can. Jenny, who today work as a teacher, wants to become a form teacher, a goal which she intend to fulfil within a couple of years. She also long for a house in a small village. Jenny thinks of herself as a happy, positive, spontaneous and outgoing person. However, she also states that it is hard to describe herself as a person. Jenny likes to travel, one a year they try to get away. In the future she hopes to travel much more.

Eva

Eva is 45 years old and works as a hairdresser. She lives together with her son Mattias, who is 11 years old, in Malmö. Eva sees herself as a social person who likes people. She is a strong

mindful individual, who usually get what she want. During a normal week she works during the days and in the evenings she likes to go to the sauna or to the gym. Meeting friends and going for long walks along the seashore is what Eva prefers during the weekends. She also spends much time with Mattias. Whenever Eva has time she travels. In the future she hopes that Mattias and she get to stay healthy.

Ingrid

Ingrid is 43 years old and works as a headmaster. She is married to Bengt, 44 years old. Together they have two children; Patrik 12 years old and Alexander 8 years old. Ingrid works a lot and do not really have time for something else than work related issues during the weeks. When she gets the time she likes to work out or read a book. During the weekend she and her husband play golf when the weather is right, meet friends, and go to theatre or cinema. They both enjoy taking care of their big garden. At least once a year they travel a week for skiing, but they also travel to different cities in Europe to enjoy the atmosphere. She sees herself as a considerate, positive and happy person. She knows what she wants; she is really goal-oriented.

2.7 The Collection of Data

2.7.1 Observations

At Ikea

Our observations took place at Ikea Malmö, and took approximately two hours to conduct. During the fieldwork, we observed behaviours, listened to what was said and at the same time taking notes. We were interested in what feelings the respondents had, if they seemed to like the room or a specific product, how they acted when they were faced to a specific room, what their body language was, if their behaviour differed from room to room, if they stayed longer in one room, as such their entire behaviour. Throughout the observations, we took immediate field notes and paid attention to the underlying messages, such as if arms were crossed, their facial expressions, how they moved around, if they touched anything etcetera.

Important to acknowledge is that our ethnographic approach constraints us to not under any circumstances guide or lead the respondents during the observations, as this would have bias the research. Before entering Ikea, we thus encouraged the respondents to speak out loud whatever came to their minds when walking through the store. Throughout the observations we therefore only showed the respondents which rooms to enter. These rooms had been priorly selected by us. This was because Ikea had over 30 showrooms, many of them very similar. By carefully examining the different showrooms, we choose 20 showrooms; eight living rooms, five bedrooms, and seven kitchen rooms, and Ikea three “homes”. We felt that these rooms would give us enough information needed to draw conclusions. Additionally we chose to neglect Ikea’s showrooms for children, as we felt that this would not give us any useful information. An additional argument for not observing the children rooms was that these are not directed to any specific group of people, only to girls and boys. Ikea has also not attempted to design the children rooms after their three specific styles.

Our role as researcher-participants postulated in that the respondents were aware of our presence during the observations. Additionally, to make our respondents feel secure in the situation, we followed them closely, thus enabling them to speak to us whenever they wanted to. However, we did not undertake any conversations with them, only giving them the response that we listened to them. This was necessary as the observations took place at Ikea,

which is always occupied by customers. If we had not given any attention, it would have been awkward for them to speak by themselves, especially when they were surrounded by other customers.

At home

To fully comprehend our respondents, we furthermore conducted observations at their own home. These were undertaken during the in-depth interviews, which will be explained in the following section. The reason for undertaking observations of the respondents' home was that we were interested in how the respondents had incorporated Ikea's products in their interior decoration as well as how their home was arranged and decorated. The observations were made through photographing the respondents' home, as well as observing how the home look liked. Since we were three researchers, another reason for photographing was to ease the explanation of the respondents' home to the researchers who were not present. Additional argument was to be certain that no detail was left out or forgotten about the respondents' home. These photographs were later on analysed by us all. As so, we could attain additional knowledge of the respondents which strengthened our research.

Catalogue observations

As a complement to our observations at the Ikea store, we chose to undertake observations of the Ikea catalogue, from a number of predetermined pictures by us. This was done in order to receive another perspective on Ikea's showrooms. Our initial contemplation was that if the respondents were subject to these photos at their own home, they could see how Ikea's solutions could function in their own home. Furthermore, we considered that they could get a different reaction when they were in their own house, instead of at Ikea where the many people could have easily stressed them to some answers or behaviours. However, as the information was obtained and analyzed, there were no obvious differences between the observations at Ikea and from the catalogue. Thus we argue that this has only strengthened our research.

2.7.2 Qualitative interviews

Each interview took approximately two hours to conduct. During the course of the interviews, a recorder was used to make sure nothing was missed later on in the analysis. The approach of the interviews was semi-structured. This was necessary due to the complex nature of the research area, which demanded us to be flexible and explain were needed, in order to fully understand patterns and behaviour. To be certain that relevant and useful information was obtained, a list of general questions was written prior to the interviews; a so called interview guide. However this guide was not specifically adopted, allowing us to adjust when necessary and have the opportunity to ask additional questions when appropriate situations aroused. (Bryman and Bell 2003)

2.7.3 Other empirical data

Interviews

To receive information about Ikea, we undertook one telephone interview with an interior designer at Ikea. Prior to the telephone interview, we wrote an interview guide in order to attain the needed information. The information obtained concerned primarily how the rooms were decorated, how Ikea's segmentation variables were incorporated into the showrooms and

catalogue as well as their focus and target group. This interview was furthermore recorded. This interview was carried out in order to give additional information to our study.

Secondary data

Secondary data, such as double-peer journal articles and relevant literature, was used as a complement to the micro-ethnography and interviews. This provided a deeper understanding towards current segmentation literature in order to completely cover the landscape. Prior to the collection of empirical data, we examined literature on consumer behaviour, observation- and interview techniques, enabling us to attain knowledge in our research area and thus feel more secure when undertaking the observations and interviews. As we all were new to our method, this was necessary to strengthen our research credibility. These secondary data sources give the research additional breadth and make it possible to incorporate other views and opinions in the research.

2.8 The sense making process

As mentioned above, during the observations we immediately took field notes, and paid attention to details. Throughout the observations at Ikea, we observed the respondents behaviour, attitude, feelings, and tried to see if any underlying messages could be found. At the respondents household we observed how the apartment/house was furnished, and took pictures in order to not miss out on any significant details. Furthermore, we observed the respondents behaviour during our catalogue observation. The variety of methods applied to record details was our strength in this research. Even though these did not seem to make sense at the beginning of this research, its outcome was a richly textured interpretation.

Based on our epistemological standpoint, that we see ourselves as researcher who wants to understand and interpret our society, we took the form of interpreters and were forced to read between the lines. Thus we could not be separated from the sense-making process. We are part of what is being observed, thus meaning that we as observers are both modified and influenced of what we observe (Schwartz and Green Schwartz 1955). Thus, we had to be aware of the possibility that we, as three researchers, observed different behaviours. However, we all tried to observe what could be observed, meaning we took notes of everything that happened during the observation.

Moving from our data collection to our interpretation

Our data collection resulted in lots of hours of verbal recordings, as well as hand written texts from the observations of the respondents' behaviour. We decided to fully replicate all material we had to readable computer written transcripts. This was to ease our interpretation of the material.

After we had transcript the data, we presented and discussed our findings and interpretations to one another. When evaluating and interpreting our data, we attempted to be as consistent as possible. Furthermore, interpretations were checked and rechecked to other observations, before any conclusions were drawn. The primarily interpretation one researcher had, was verified by the two other researchers interpretations. By comparing the observations with one another, we tried to find common denominators in our data. Rather by asking what data would give our research the greatest validity, we used each data to give voice to a particular perspective on behaviour. However, a general problem with ethnography and observations is that we as researchers might see and hear what we want. According to Schwartz and Green Schwartz (1955), the researcher is affected by his/her own social and psychological values, so therefore is the way s/he operates crucial when turning reality into data. Aware of this reality, we attempted to be as consistent when evaluating and interpreting the obtained data.

“Ethnographic interpretation building is sometimes described as demanding sufficient data to identify the themes that summarize recurrent emic understandings and behaviours.”(Arnould and Wallendorf 1994:494) We were faced with an extensive range of material, which needed to be reduced. Important to acknowledge is that ethnographic data (can) include statements which however can be over generalized. (Ibid) Due to the complexity of our collections, we feared to generalize too much and thus loose relevant information in these abstractions. Our attempt to generalize our findings became our major obstacle in this study.

The first step in our interpretation building was to note phenomena, that are words, complex behaviour sequences, phrases, and meanings, which recurred among our respondents. Though we did not yet understood the culture importance of the recurrences. Not yet aware of what the recurrence meant, we used these *codes* to mark similar passages. As such, the codes were developed when we read our obtained material. These codes were furthermore seen as representations of our abstraction, as it was necessary to exclude materials which were not useful to us. To go beyond these codes, we waved back and forth between our verbal reports and recorded behavioural observations, in order to check for disjuncture and convergence and conceptualize and explicate cultural significance. Even if our comparisons between verbal reports and recorded behavioural observations indicated that generalizations accurately report behavioural regularity, we questioned the reason for their inclusion in the verbal report. For example; why did the respondents keep on using a specific word, phrase (our absolutes)? What did these absolutes mean to them? What culture values can be represented in these absolutes? In our interpretation building we followed the assumption that important culture values are expressed through the recurrence of behaviour in more than one setting; that is constructs which represents culture meaning resonate across behaviour which may first appear to be dissimilar (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Additional basis for our interpretation was to account for the respondents’ claims for idiosyncrasy. Many respondents described behaviours which recurred among respondents, even if they to some degree moderately varied between our respondents. This unconventional behaviour was seen as meaningful and culturally significant. Thus our comparisons were used to build symbolic meaningful links between behaviours and verbal statements recorded during both observations and interviews.

As such, we used each data in order to piece the puzzle together. The presence of wide-ranging, unfocused and all-inclusive field notes was essential to our research, as it enabled us to come to our conclusions. Even though our sense making process was difficult, the heart of our research was our extensive data collection.

2.9 Critical discussion and reflections

This research was subjected to constraints in both time and financial capital, limiting the possibility to undertake additional investigations of respondents. As an outcome of the limited time frame, a micro ethnography was chosen for this research. To be able to understand another individual we needed to have sympathy, empathy and build trust. Consciousness of this fact, the research may not unfold significant knowledge towards the complexity of individuals, as we hade little time to undertake our observations and interviews. However we believe we have captured the respondents “real self”, thus enabling us to come to accurate conclusions.

Another limitation is that few objects were studied, which mean that no repetitive results were obtained. However aware of this detail, the research did not aim to draw conclusions of a repetitive form, rather give extensive knowledge to existing theories and models and function as a departure for further analysis. The small amount of studied objects thus affected the

research generalizability. The ideal would have been to meet with the respondents on several occasions, to attain a larger sample of data and to get to know them better.

Furthermore, a limitation to our research is that we met our respondents at their home on a predetermined time. Probably our respondents had prior to our arrival at their home, carefully arranged and clean their apartment. Thus it is possible that the respondents' home could have looked different if we showed up unannounced. However there was no way to arrive spontaneously, as the interviews/observations took up several hours. We had to adjust towards the respondents requests.

Furthermore, we were not able to cover a large region, and chose therefore respondents living in Malmö, Lund and Skurup. It is possible that we would have obtained a richer data if we would have respondents from the entire Sweden. However, since our respondents had lived at other places before, we do not think that this will cause much limitation in our research. Additionally, the ethnographic studies were conducted at the IKEA store in Malmö. However, as Ikea showrooms are to some extent standardized, we believe that the choice to only carry out observations at Ikea Malmö will not affect the results. Thus, we assume that obtained results can be applicable for Ikea Sweden.

2.9.1 Validity

Relevant to this study is the notion of internal validity. (Bryman and Bell 2003) Taking a critical stance towards the sources of information we have used in this research, a conclusion is that we have gained true information since a major part of the empirical data was collected through primary data. By being close to the investigated phenomena, as such our face-to-face relationship with the observed increased the information reliance of this research. Furthermore, by participating in our respondents' natural life, we argue that we have obtained valid data.

Even if being close increases the reliance, it is important to also reflect upon the ecological validity (Bryman and Bell 2003), that is whether the respondents showed their real self. Were their any changes in their behaviour due to the fact that they knew they were being observed? One can only hope that the observations captured their true essence. However, since we interpreted the conducted interviews and observations, the analysis can be more or less valid. Though there are no correct ways to interpret, hence there can never be a guarantee that our interpretations are true.

Considering the external validity, the aim of this study is not to be representative for all organizations. Thus meaning that this study do not attempt to be statistical representative. (Bryman and Bell 2003) Instead we only intend to contribute in a practical sense to Ikea.

2.9.2 Reliability

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), reliability is concerned with whether the research can be repeated or not. Our intention with this research is to show great transparency in order for another researcher to replicate it. However, it is possible that what we regard as transparent, others may not. A further limitation to our research is that we have chosen to not include all recorded observational behaviour and verbal reports. However, there was no possibility to include our extensive data collection in this research. Much of our obtained material was not useful since we undertook several methods which for most cases only strengthen what had prior been said or observed. Furthermore it would have been difficult to portray this data collection in an interesting and understandable way. Thus we were faced with our own

interpretations, which of course was hard to fully replicate. However, we have tried to explain as much as possible of our sense making process, that it our evaluations and interpretations, in order to increase our external validity (Bryman and Bell 2003).

An additional aspect to discuss is the notion of internal validity (Bryman and Bell 2003). We have attempted to be as consistent as possible in our evaluations and interpretations. Despite our efforts in the sense making process, we do not state that we have managed to create a total consistency. To create trustworthiness, we have included some actual statements and observations in our research, to offer some transparency into our interpretations and bases for analysis.

Inevitably observations are concerned with subjective judgement, as we as researcher have subjectively interpreted our data. As we took the form of subjective interpreters, it exist a lack of objectivity which affect our research in a negative way. Due to this, it is impossible for another researcher to carry out the exactly same research and come to the exact same results, since this would have demanded for the other researcher to adopt our specific social role as researchers.

Important to reflect upon is the notion that we as observers are part of what is being observed. Thus meaning that our pre-understandings could have affected what we heard and observed. However, after reviewing our data collection we found that similar observations had been obtained from all of us. The differences in our data were more dependent on the respondent at hand. Additionally, since we chose to only be one researcher at each respondent, it is possible that some information could have been missed due to that it is difficult to cover everything that happens during an observation. However, we felt that positive associations by being one researcher outweighed the difficulties we had encountered if we had been several researchers at each respondent. As we believe, several researchers would cause disturbance and stress within the respondents, and thus not made it possible to bond with respondent. It was important that we created a friendly atmosphere as we talked about the respondents' background which could have brought up sensitive subjects. We furthermore feel that if we missed anything during our observations, it was not meant for us to notice it.

3 Theory

In this chapter we will present our theoretical framework for our research. We begin with describing definitions of market segmentation which is followed by a description of the different levels of market segmentation. Additionally, we present categories of market segmentation and finish with describing the traditional market segmentation variables.

3.1 Definitions of market segmentation

According to Kotler *et al* (2005) market segmentation can be defined as:

“Dividing the market into distinct groups of buyers with different needs, characteristics or behaviour, who might require separate products or marketing mixes.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:391)

Arndt (1974) define the approach to market segmentation as:

“Grouping individual customers into segments that are relatively homogeneous with regard to responsiveness to elements of the marketing mix or the marketing mix as a whole, in order to increase profits by developing separate marketing programs for selected segments(s) on the unique requirements within each target segment.”

(Arndt 1974:5)

Markets consist of many different consumers with different needs, wants, resources, attitudes and purchasing behaviour. Large heterogeneous markets can with use of market segmentation be separated into smaller groups of customers, which can assist companies to get in contact with the particular segment more effectively and efficiently with products and services equal to their specific needs and wants. (Kotler *et al* 2005; Furse and Greenberg 1975) Smith (1995) continues and argues that, with the use of successful market segmentation companies get a deeper position in the segments that the firms identify and enter.

3.2 Levels of market segmentation

Companies do not always consider individual marketing to be appropriate, since they have many customers. Instead, they search for larger groups of consumers who respond equally to the companies' offers. Market segmentation can thus be undertaken in a variety of ways. Mass marketing and micro marketing can be seen as two end-points at the segmentation scale, where segment marketing and niche marketing are to be found in the middle of these two extremes. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

Mass marketing

“Using almost the same product, promotion and distribution for all consumers.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:392)

Kotler *et al* (2005) state that the established argument for using mass marketing is that it generate the biggest market possible, resulting in lower costs and can consequently lead to lower prices or higher margins. Mass marketing is however difficult to apply because markets consist of many different consumers. Creating a product which will satisfy different consumers' needs and wants can be seen as a mission impossible. Kotler *et al* (2005) further claim mass marketing to be dying, companies rather use market segmentation.

Segmenting markets

“Adopting a company’s offerings so they more closely match the needs of one or more segments.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:393)

Those companies using segment marketing have, according to Kotler *et al* (2005), realized that consumers are different. Products which appeal to one consumer may not inevitably appeal to other consumers, meaning consumers have different needs, wants and purchasing behaviour. Because of this, companies adjust their products to fulfil the needs and wants of one or more segmentation groups. Kotler *et al* (2005) claim the advantages of segmenting markets is the possibility to focus more on the segment of customers which the company can satisfy the best. In segmented markets, competition may furthermore be less aggressive if smaller amount of competitors target the specific segment. (Ibid)

Niche marketing

“Adopting a company’s offerings to more closely match the needs of one or more segments where there is often little competition.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:393)

Kotler *et al* (2005) state that niche marketing’s focal point is to find subgroups of customers. The aim is to catch those consumers with distinguishing characters who might look for specific benefits. Niche marketing often suits smaller companies since they can use their restricted resources satisfying niches which larger companies are not interested in. (Ibid)

Micro marketing

“A form of target marketing in which companies tailor their marketing programmes to the needs and wants of narrowly defined geographic, demographic, psychographic or behavioural segments.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:394)

According to Kotler *et al* (2005) micromarketing can be either local marketing or individual marketing. Local marketing is marketing directed towards the needs and preferences of local customer segments, while individual marketing is referred to as the adoption of products and marketing to suit needs and wants of individual consumers (Ibid).

3.3 Market segmentation categories

Gunter and Furnham (1992) (cited in Vyncke 2002) group segmentation variables into three broad categories. Firstly, the authors mention *product-specific, behavioural attribute* segmentation which focus on consumers buying behaviour and the benefits which the customer look for in a specific product category. Secondly, Gunter and Furnham (1992)

(referred to in Vyncke 2002) bring up *general, physical attribute* segmentations of customers which refer to geographic, demographic and socioeconomic variables when defining target markets. Lastly mentioned is *general, psychological attribute* segmentations which group customers into homogeneous markets based on standardized personality characteristics or lifestyle analyses. This third group is often referred to as psychographics. (Gunter and Furnham 1992 referred to in Vyncke 2002)

3.4 Traditional market segmentation variables

Kotler *et al* (2005) mean that there are many different ways to separate a market into smaller segments. Companies can undertake different segmentation variables, together or alone, to discover the most appropriate way to do their segmentation of a market with heterogeneous consumers. (Ibid)

3.4.1 Geographic segmentation

“Dividing a market into different geographical units such as nations, states, regions, counties, cities or neighbourhoods.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:398)

According to Haley (1968) geographic segmentation was the first segmentation variable applied by companies. Geography is the state that geography is the most uncomplicated market segmentation variable (Beane and Ennis 1987), and has been applied due to the belief that cultural influence on consumption and values which vary among geographic areas. (Kahle 1986; Fill 2002) Companies can decide to function in all geographical areas but with attention directed towards geographical dissimilarities in needs and preferences of the customers. They can also choose to be active in only one or a small number of areas. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

When companies apply *density* segmentation they separate the consumer market based on urban, suburban and rural aspects. *City size* is further a geographic segmentation variable mentioned by Kotler *et al* (2005). When using city size as a segmentation variable, companies segment the market in accordance to the number of inhabitants living in the city. (Ibid)

3.4.2 Demographic segmentation

“Dividing the market into groups based on demographic variables such as age, sex, family size, family life-cycle, income, occupation, education, religion, race and nationality.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:400)

When segmenting a market, demographic variables are, according to Kotler *et al* (2005), the most popular. Furthermore, demographic segmentation is most the established among the existing segmentation variables (Fill 2002; Cross 1999; Beane and Ennis 1987; Wells 1975). This is because these demographic variables often match customers’ needs, wants and usage behaviour, and as well as customer characteristics are easier to determine and understand compared to other segmentation variables. (Kotler *et al* 2005; Beane and Ennis 1987) Tynan and Drayton (1987) further this argument and claim that demographic variables can identify consumers’ important characteristics which determine their buying desires.

Life-cycle segmentation is a segmentation tool adopted by companies, since consumers’ needs and wants often adjusts according to their *age* (Kotler *et al* 2005; Tynan and Drayton 1987). It is of significant importance that companies focus on consumers’ changing needs and

preferences at different stages during their life in order to not fail to benefit from their customers. When applying life-cycle segmentation companies offer different products to customers in different age and life-cycle groups. (Kotler *et al* 2005) Mathur *et al* (2006) further claim that life course research postulates that consumer behaviour are subjected to changing life conditions, as well as how consumers adapt to social and environmental conditions.

Gender is another demographic segmentation variable companies can use when segmenting a market. According to Kotler *et al* (2005), this segmentation tool involves separating a market into smaller segments based on their sex. Tynan and Drayton (1987) claim that when consumers decide which product s/he will purchase the consumers' sex is a conclusive factor.

A third demographic segmentation variable is the so called *income* segmentation variable, which involves separating a market according to different income groups. Some companies choose to target top-income segments whereas others choose to focus on lower-income groups, depending on what the company has to offer. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

Kotler *et al* (2005) state that when companies apply *occupation* segmentation they divide the market based on which occupation the consumers have. Occupation varies from professionals and managers to foremen and farmers and further to students and unemployed (Ibid).

3.4.3 Psychographic segmentation

“Dividing a market into different groups based on social class, lifestyle or personality characteristics.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:403)

“The psychographic description looks at the inner person rather than the outward expression of the person”

(Beane and Ennis 1987:22)

Beane and Ennis (1987) state that if demographic segmentation is not applicable for companies, the next step to consider is psychographic segmentation. Psychographic segmentation goes one step further than looking at variables as age and gender, and attempt to understand the market based on consumers' personality and lifestyle (Beane and Ennis 1987). Paromita (2007) claims that psychographic assist companies in their attempt to understand consumers' behaviour which is useful for companies when they target and position their products. Morgan *et al* (2003) agree and argue that psychographic identify why consumers behave in a certain way.

Lifestyle is another variable influencing consumers' interest in products. Gunter and Furnham (1992), (cited to in Vyncke 2002:449), define lifestyle as:

“[...] patterns in which people live and spend their money. They are primarily functions of consumers' values.”

Consumers convey their lifestyle through the products they purchase and consume (Kotler *et al* 2005; Lin 2002). Steenkamp and Hofstede (2002) continue this argument and state that consumers' lifestyle also determine how they communicate their values and personalities through different activities, interests and opinions. Thus consumers' purchasing behaviour is an expression of a person's activities, interests and opinions (Fill 2002). Lifestyle might be most obvious in clothing, cars, houses and house interiors categories. (Vyncke 2002)

Another way to segment a market using psychographic segmentation is to divide consumers according to their *personality*. This means that companies add attributes to their products which match the personalities of the consumers. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

3.4.4 Behavioural segmentation

“Dividing a market into groups based on consumer knowledge, attitude, use or response to a product.”

(Kotler *et al* 2005:405)

Behavioural segmentation can be used in order to understand the complexity of consumers' behaviours (Birkhead 2001). One variable within behavioural segmentation is *occasion* segmentation, which mean that consumers are segmented based on when they first received the idea to purchase an item, when they do their purchase or when they use the product bought (Kotler *et al* 2005; Beane and Ennis 1987). This type of segmentation can help companies to get a higher usage of their products as they try to make their products more than a one-occasion-bought-product through various marketing. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

Companies can also choose to segment a market after different *product benefits* that customers search for in products, referred to as benefit segmentation (Kotler *et al* 2005; Haley 1968; Bock and Uncles 2002; Tynan and Drayton 1987; Fill 2002). According to Kotler *et al* (2005) it is of great importance to find the benefits that consumers seek in a product and who these people are. When companies have segmented a market based on these benefits, each of these segments does in turn consist of customers who differ in terms of segmentation variables as demography, consumption volume and lifestyle. (Kotler *et al* 2005) Consequently, companies get an insightful understanding of those individuals who constitute the segment (Haley 1968). Benefit segmentation is a good segmentation tool to use when segmenting a market as it reveals useful knowledge on the customers (Kotler *et al* 2005).

User status as non-users, ex-users, potential users, first-time users and habitual users of a product is a further way of segmenting a market using behavioural segmentation (Kotler *et al* 2005). Companies can additionally choose to divide a market according to the *usage rate* of the customers, which can be light-, medium- or heavy-user. Heavy users often purchase a lot and consequently account for a high percentage of the total sales, but these customer groups are usually fairly small. (Ibid) Separating the market according to usage is useful since it is often a small percentage of the consumers who purchase a large percentage of a company's products and services (Hu and Rau 1995).

Many companies are attempting to divide a market by focusing on consumers' *loyalty*. These companies believe that customers are either truly loyal, to some extent loyal or on-loyal. Consumers who frequently purchase different products or switch companies are considered to show no loyalty to a certain product or company. In most of the cases regarding loyalty and segmentation, companies choose to focus on those customers who are both loyal and profitable. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

Kotler *et al* (2005) claim that consumers' willingness to purchase a product or service differ throughout a market, meaning consumers' *buyer-readiness stages* differ. Some consumers might not even know that a product exist on the market while others are well aware of the products existence (Ibid).

Another behavioural segmentation variable is attitude towards a product. Consumers have different thoughts and feelings regarding products on the market, and can be enthusiastic, positive, indifferent, negative, or hostile toward a product. (Kotler *et al* 2005)

4 Customers' perceptions

In this chapter we present a discussion of our findings, applied to the four traditional segmentation variables; geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural. This is to ease the understanding towards our findings and our research question. Ikea is thus representative for the ideology of traditional segmentation; adopting demographic variables.

4.1 Geographic

All of our respondents live in Sweden, in Skåne. Two of them are born abroad whereas Maria came to Sweden from Poland when she was eight years old and Karin moved from New Zealand to Sweden three years ago. Five of our respondents live in Malmö today. The other two live in Lund and Skurup. Of the respondents living in Malmö four of them have only lived there for between one and three years, while one of them has been living there for more than 20 years.'

"I am born and brought up in Vallby, a small village outside Simrishamn in Skåne. There I lived with my father, mother, and younger sister on a farm with animals, close to the nature."

(Interview Jenny)

"I was born in Poland, where I lived until I was eight years old with my mom and dad. Then I moved to Gothenburg with my mother. For four years I have been living in Lund."

(Interview Maria)

"I am brought up in the country side. I had a really good childhood. We lived with many different animals. I had the sea and forest close to my home."

(Interview Ingrid)

Our respondents have thus different backgrounds, and are brought up at dissimilar locations, thus meaning that the respondents' *urban/rural* areas differ. Two are born and raised in the countryside and the other raised in a bigger city. Do their geographic locations reveal something about their taste, behaviour and attitude towards Ikea?

"I like Ikea![...] The showrooms are also good. It is nice to see how you can mix products and how they match."

(Interview Maria)

"I like the [Ikea] stores: they have these small rooms that are good. You can see all the things in them. [...] it is easy to see things and find something you like."

(Interview Jenny)

Our data entails that Maria, born in Gothenburg, and Jenny who is raised at farm in a small village, have similar behaviour and attitude towards Ikea. Both of them have bought a lot from Ikea, especially when they first moved to live on their own. During the observations and interview Maria was rather calm all the time and it was hard to distinguish from her facial expression and body language whether she liked something or not. This behaviour can be seen as consistent with whom she is as a person. She expresses her thoughts through speech,

rather than through body language and did frequently articulate what she liked and disliked throughout both the interview and observations accordingly. Jenny also expressed most of her feelings about Ikea through speech and did only use body language when she truly liked something. Thus both expressed their feelings about Ikea through speech. All together, these two respondents had the same behaviour at Ikea and expressed the same attitudes towards Ikea. Additionally, Jenny and Maria had similar styles and preferences.

“I like light colours, for example light brown. The people who have these colours [strong colours like red or orange or bad combinations of blue and green...] are those who do not know what they want in life and who have not reach very far.”

(Interview Jenny)

“[...] I like more the Scandinavian style, more calm colours, and more light. I do not like high-tech stuff, shiny black and so on. [...] I like more natural materials and calm colours.”

(Interview Maria)

Both Jenny and Maria have thus the same taste in home furnishing. Both favoured the Scandinavian style with light wood, light and calm colours and simplicity as a common point. Even though their geographic situation/background differs, their style does not. They are born and raised in different settings and still like and have the same taste. Both have for example the same couch in the same beige colour and both of them express similar thoughts regarding what they do not like.

To further this discussion, Ingrid and Jenny could be seen as two contrasts; what one of them liked the other disliked. When Jenny was in the room best described as postulating a Scandinavian style, she felt as she was home, while Ingrid on the other hand felt that the room was lacking personality, the persons who lived there did not do what their style was. Thus Ingrid thought the Scandinavian style was rather blunt. Additionally, when Jenny was in a colourful room with a modern touch she neither could nor imagine herself having this kind of interiors while Ingrid favoured this style. This is emphasized by the below observations, when Jenny and Ingrid were either in rooms they liked or disliked.

“This looks really boring. It looks cheap too. The colours are all the same and it says nothing about the person living here at all. I do not like it at all.”

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

“This I think is cool! Another style than rest of the rooms, it is something else. I like it!”

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

“This looks cosy, looks like my home actually. It is exactly my colours, the white, beige, and brown. We even have the same bookshelves.”

(Observation Ikea, Jenny)

4.2 Demographic

No matter what age?

Everyone experience they are part of Ikea's target group. But are they missing someone with this broad group? Attempting to cover the whole population is a tough mission to accomplish. According to our respondents, Ikea have not been able to target old people.

“Ikea do not reach out to very old people.”

(Interview Maria)

“I get the impression Ikea has missed old people in the showrooms. I think older people around 70 think Ikea is too much.”

(Interview Ingrid)

Their three life courses does not postulate older people, they are left out – even though they are part of “the many people”. Models in the catalogue and in commercials are composed by younger people, and there is no sign of showrooms directed to elderly people. During the observations, none of the respondents spoke about elderly people. As so, maybe we are not all part of “the many people”?

Age had no further implications on attitude, preference or behaviour. Similar performances between respondents which were not of the same age could be observed during the observations. Ingrid and Karin, with an age difference of 13 years, could be characterized by having a modern style, thus they had similar preferences towards the same showrooms. This can be exemplified through the following observations conducted in the same room.

“A really nice room; clean and bright. But white sofas are nothing for me; it would not be practical since I have children. I like the sofas standing opposite one another. The room really appeals to me.”

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

“This looks more stylish. I like sofas, they look cool. Nice matching colours too.”

(Observation Ikea, Karin)

Money makes no difference?

As Ikea state, they offer the many people low-priced furniture (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006). They consider that people who are not that well off, should still afford to buy furniture in order to create a better everyday life; as such they should have the same opportunities as people with a higher *income*. This implies a direction towards people with lesser *income*, instead of covering the whole population.

During both interviews and observations the respondents mentioned Ikea’s inexpensive items and that it is practical to purchase at Ikea as you can buy many things for a small amount of money. Ikea has thus created the impression that they are a low priced store, not suitable for people with more money.

“Cheap, bad material. Think it is supposed to fit me, as I am a student and do not have much money. But this does not appeal to me. You can get nicer things that are equally cheap.” Maria leaves the room quickly.

(Observation Ikea, Maria)

“Of course I have things that I would not buy today. Instead I would have bought more qualitative products, spent more money and not bought everything at Ikea.”

(Interview Maria)

These statements can be seen as an expression of that Ikea is a place appealing to consumers who have a limited financial *income*. When you start to earn more money, you have more opportunities to buy furniture from other stores than Ikea. Thus you seek furniture that the entire Sweden does not have. The last statement from Maria is a common expression when talking about Ikea; their furnishing are inexpensive and something you do not keep for the rest of your life. Most of our respondents claimed that the reason for not shopping at Ikea is their bad quality products. However, what quality can you expect at the prices Ikea is offering? Even if Maria regards Ikea to have bad quality products and is meant for people who have limited financial *income*, she still bought most of her furnishing at Ikea. However, she argues that the only reason why she bought everything at Ikea was due to limited time, not actually her limited *income* as she is a student. But if you regard a company to have low quality, do you really go there to buy a complete set of furnishing? Is this not a bad affair?

Many of our respondents bought their first furniture at Ikea; it was practical; it was cheap and you can easily buy new furnishing. Still, many of our respondents have kept their Ikea products. As such, the common expression that Ikea offer low quality, seems to be inaccurate. It appears to be a statement from some of our respondents that does not ring true. Instead it is deeply rooted in our minds that Ikea is combined with bad quality. This is strengthened by one respondent who recently threw away her bookshelves, used for over 15 years. Thus this bookshelf had to have good quality in order to last that long; as such Ikea's statement that they offer high quality at low prices is correct.

On the contrary, Jenny who has bought most of her furnishing, together with her cohabitant, at Ikea was more pleased. Even though most of our respondents have bought their first furniture at Ikea, the others express a will or desire to change it. This can be explained as Ikea have inexpensive items, which contribute to the willingness of throwing them away. Furthermore, as they are cheap, this creates the possibility of purchasing new products that will not force you to sacrifice any other aspirations. Jenny however thinks Ikea offers good and nice furniture which are affordable and has no plans replacing them. Additionally, she does not defend their choice and do not say anything about Ikea products being present in everyone's home. In contrary to Jenny, Karin experiences a need to explain her choice of products from Ikea. Even if she additionally has low priced furniture from other (low price) stores, these are not at all defended. As such, there seems to be her attitude towards Ikea that makes her defend those products. As she stated:

“My paintings are from Bolagret¹ I bought those two months ago. Do you think they look nice? I think they give the room some character. Before, it really was too white.” Above the couch three large paintings hang. The background of the paintings is black, and picture flowers in bright green.

(Interview and observation Karin)

Attitude towards Ikea seem to be determined by what *income* one has. Ingrid and Karin had both a higher *income* than rest of the respondents. It was furthermore these who were most negative towards Ikea's products, even if they overall had a positive attitude toward Ikea as a company, and more reluctant during the observations of Ikea's showrooms.

I think the “Klippan” couch is a perfect way to describe Ikea; cheap and not innovative.”

(Observation Ikea, Karin)

¹ Bolagret offer low priced home furnishing products.

“It is boring that they make so many things look cheap. This is exactly what I mean; the wheels on the cupboard. Looks so cheap and it is not nice at all. Ok, can imagine that it is very practical however.” She says while looking at a room in the catalogue.

(Observation catalogue p. 172-173, Karin)

This was also mentioned by Maria to be a significant issue. As she stated:

“Ikea’s target group is everybody; however not very rich people. If you have money, you do not go to Ikea; you want other stuff that not the entire Sweden is in possession of.”

(Interview Maria)

What do you do for a living?

Ikea target people who can be perceived as having limited resources in terms of money. Implicitly stated, Ikea thus target “workers”. However, we have not found *occupation* to be a determining factor. Maria, who is a student, and Jenny, who works as a teacher, both have the same style and preferences. This is also true for Karin, who works as a consultant, and Ingrid, who is a headmaster. Thus no obvious correlation can be observed between *occupation* and attitude towards Ikea

To the many people

Ikea has divided their stores according to three living situations; “living alone”, “living together” and “living with children” (Magnusson 090507). As they target the many people, they assume that everyone can be inserted into a specific phase; their three different *life cycles*. Though, these are not obviously portrayed in their showrooms. Our respondents could not observe whether a room was directed to a specific *life cycle* variable. This varied from respondent to respondent and can be illustrated by the following observations.

Observations in the same room

“This is nice and stylish, fits me perfectly. However, I think this is more targeted to people over 40 years. But this is how I want my home to look like.” Says Maria and sits down on the white sofa, and looks harmonic. She is smiling.

(Observation Ikea, Maria)

“This is modern. Think a young couple with no children lives here.” Eva walks around, touch the bookshelf and sits down on the sofa. She observes the room for a long time; it is almost as she wants to stay in it.

(Observation Ikea, Eva)

Even though the above room could be seen as directed to children (toys were located at several places) there were differences in our responses. Maria, part of living alone, was very fond of this particularly room; it matched her own style. Even though she experienced that the room was not targeted to her, she still could see herself living like this when she moved to a bigger apartment. Eva, who lives with her child, received another reaction from the same room. Even though she did not dislike the room, she felt it was not suitable for her; it was too modern and directed to young couples.

These diverse responses can be further emphasized by the observations of Ikea's three specific homes. In the showrooms there were three homes targeted to a specific *life course*; either singles, couples or families with children. Before entering a home, Ikea has posted a description letting customers know who lives in this specific apartment and how big the apartment is. Thus, customers can experience a relation to the home if they are part of the category it is directed to.

Eva, who was rather reluctant to almost every showroom, was very fond of the home which was directed to singles. She immediately entered the room to explore it, positively mentioning how bright, homey and nice it was. She pulled out a number of drawers in order to see the possibilities for storage. This was her favourite room. On the other hand, Maria did not like this home. She experienced it very constricted and pointed out that her room on 18 m² felt bigger. She also stated:

“Typical Ikea – storage everywhere, and chairs on the walls; who lives like this?”

(Observation Ikea, Maria)

Contrary, Maria was very fond of the home directed towards couples. As she stated;

“This is perfect for me! This is how I want to live. It is not as much plastic materials, as there is in the other rooms, more natural. It is a perfect combination of things. However, I would have chosen another colour on the kitchen cabinets.” She walks around in the “apartment”, sits down on the sofa. She looks at peace, not smiling, but yet she looks happy.

(Observation Ikea, Maria)

During our interviews, all of our respondents were aware of the direction Ikea has to families with children. This was emphasized when the respondents were asked to talk about Ikea.

“Ikea's target group is families with children.”

(Interview Linda)

“They focus very much on families with children.”

(Interview Maria)

“Ikea really focus on families and young people starting their new home and they are really good at that. For young people without much money, moving to their first apartment Ikea has really good and creative ideas.”

(Interview Ingrid)

It is obvious that children play an important part for Ikea. The store is filled with toys and rooms especially designated for children. As you enter the Ikea store, you are welcomed by a colourful children's ballroom, full with happy children. The first thing that comes to your mind is activity, it infuse the entire store in combination with a sense of playfulness. By taking this direction towards families, Ikea has created a perfect way enabling parents to go to Ikea with their entire family, and also continue shopping, as such; a fun day out.

Nevertheless, the direction towards families with children was not as obviously displayed in the showrooms. None of the respondent noticed any rooms that were directed to families with children. A technique Ikea has applied to direct a specific room to families with children, is to decorate it with toys. Those rooms that had been strategically decorated with toys were not

even mentioned by the respondents as rooms for families with children. Neither did they appeal to them. The respondents were more concerned with whether this room matched their own style. It was also noticed that these respondents did not find them appropriate for families with children. They believed Ikea had not realistically captured what it is like to have children, as no rooms were practical enough for families' with children. Even Maria noticed the lack of logic in these rooms and made often comments on for example; "a white sofa is not practical for families with children", and "a glass table has sharp edges, children can be hurt". The same responses were pointed out by the other respondents as well.

Observations in the same room

"It looks messy, too many things. When you live with two kids, you definitely need a bigger sofa. Older people live here, people who want many things around them. I can't see myself living here." Ingrid shake her head, arms crossed and leaves the room rather quickly. It is obvious she doesn't like it.

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

"This is nothing for me. Small place, maybe only one person lives here. Rather popish." Eva was passive, had her arms crossed and did not speak very much.

(Observation Ikea, Eva)

Other reactions can be found towards the kitchen showrooms. During the observations in the living rooms at Ikea, none of the respondents from living with children mentioned that this is a room for a family. Ingrid stated during the observation:

"This room appeals to me but white sofas are nothing for families with children, not practical."

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

Contrary, while in the kitchen area Eva stated:

"Here lives a family. It is a big kitchen where the whole family can socialize."

(Observation Ikea, Eva)

Even though the respondents liked a certain living room at Ikea, they have never stated that it is a room suitable for families. According to Magnusson (090507), Ikea focus a lot on families with children. The fact that none of the mothers actually experienced the living rooms, aimed at families, as suitable for them, might be a sign of Ikea missing out on one of their biggest target group.

Male versus female

Gender is an important subject to acknowledge since, according to Ikea, their main customers are women (Magnusson 090507). This is strengthened by our data. Our respondents from both living together and living with children stated that they had the largest impact on what was bought to the household. Consequently, it is often the women who purchase furnish items to the household.

“It is me that has the most to say about how our home should look like.”
(Interview Ingrid)

“I have the greatest impact regarding home furnishing at our place. I nag till I get it my way.”
(Interview Helena)

“We are pretty united when it comes to home furnishing and how our home should look like. It is all about compromises, give and take. However, when I think about it, maybe it is me who has the greatest impact about how our apartment looks.”
(Interview Jenny)

4.3 Psychographic

My home – my castle

My home is my castle. The fact that there exists such a saying in Sweden argues for the home to be of significant importance. Jönsson (2007), claims that the home today goes beyond the need of shelter and protection, and is consequently seen as more of a status symbol. In our modern society the home is a place where we invite good friends, have nice dinner parties and socialize in. Thus it is important to have furniture that are individualistic and reflect one’s personality and style. (Jönsson 2007) During the interviews all respondents claimed that they thought it was significantly important that the home reflects the person who lives in it. You do not buy things because others like it, you buy it because *you* like it.

“It is important that you have your own stuff. You can make your apartment more personal, your own home.”
(Interview Maria)

“It is important for me how my home looks like, so I can enjoy it. However, it is not important that the apartment reflect yourself but it often does anyway. When a person buys something, it is because s/he likes it and therefore it reflects the person.”
(Interview Linda)

“There is nothing more important than that your home reflects yourself! I cannot imagine myself living in an apartment that does not portray who I am.”
(Interview Karin)

All respondents express a desire for individuality. They all strive to modify their interiors in order to match their own *personality*. This was illustrated when Maria used pillows from Ikea to decorate her couch, whereas Linda had placed the same pillows on the floor in order for extra seating place. As such, these Ikea products gave the impression of being very dissimilar depending on which context it was implemented in; even to the degree that it was difficult to notice it was the same pillows. This was further accentuated by the different solutions Maria and Linda had applied to an Ikea bench. When Maria used it as a bookshelf, Linda used it as a TV bench. Again the respondents had been able to personalize a simple product from Ikea; to make it their own. The modification of Ikea products was furthermore obvious when the respondents combined them with personal belongings, such as photographs. The respondents

have thus succeeded to create their own personal touch on Ikea's standardized and neutral products, which furthermore seemed very important for all the respondents.

All respondents had furniture from Ikea, some more some less. However some furnishings were more obviously observed than others, as they had a more significant place in the respondents' home. Those who had a more positive attitude towards Ikea had placed their Ikea products in a more prominent way. This was further emphasized when these respondents were asked to talk about their own home decorating. Maria did only mention the products she had which came from Ikea. Furthermore she did not give any information of the "little things", for example her candles, photo frames, and other small decorating items (which came from Indiska). Jenny also had a more positive attitude towards Ikea and had her Ikea furniture outstandingly displayed in her apartment. In her living room, which was the most important room to her, she had several bookshelves and a couch from Ikea. It was obvious that the couch was significant for her; this was where she spends her time when she is at home. As such, she felt a need to make the room nice and welcoming, and she felt that this could be accomplished with Ikea products. The above discussion was illustrated by the following observations.

The "Ektorp" couch was situated nearly the entrance, to the right, and decorated with pillows from Ikea to give a cosy and welcoming feeling. Above the couch there were two wooden panels from Ikea that functioned as bookshelves. At the opposite side to the right, three small tables from Ikea were placed holding candles and a lamp. To the left a bed (Ikea) was situated, showing the huge painting (Ikea) of light purple flowers.

(Observation Maria)

When first entering the apartment you come across a small hallway leading to a corridor. Here were several bookshelves from Ikea located, and an additional cabinet (Ikea) for shoes. At the end of the corridor, to the left, the living room was placed. Here stood two different bookshelves from Ikea located on three different walls. The "Ektorp" couch was also prominently displayed.

(Observation Jenny)

On the contrary, Ingrid who was moderately positive to Ikea as a company could not imagine herself to have a home completely furnished by Ikea products. The products she had from Ikea were not those products which normally are associated with Ikea (for example "Klippan couch", "Ektorp couch", and "Billy bookshelf"), nor were these obviously portrayed in the apartment.

Entering the living room, you are faced with two leather couches located on the opposite side of one another (not from Ikea). In between these two a small table, holding candles, was placed. To the left two Ikea armchairs were situated, not obviously seen when you first scrutinize the room.

(Observation Ingrid)

It was obvious that all respondents had attempted to demonstrate their own *personality* in their homes. Several of them did however not live by themselves; either they lived with their boyfriend, children or children and husband. Thus, they were not independently in charge of decorating their apartment/house according to their own taste and *personality*. Both Helena and Jenny had made adjustment to their other significant half. Furthermore Eva, who lives

with a child, stated that she had made adjustments in her home to her son, while the other respondent, Ingrid, claimed the opposite.

“I have adjusted my home furnishing in some manner to Mattias. I really want a white sofa but with a child in the home it is not possible. It is of great importance to have practical furniture when you have children that is growing fast.”

(Interview Eva)

“Some parts of the home have been adjusted for our children but not the whole house. We believe that children should be able to spend time in the home without touching everything. I think it is important for children to have their own room to play in.”

(Interview Ingrid)

Originality

“It is fun to shop at Ikea, but the rest of Sweden also thinks so. *Therefore I like to have small things that differ from everybody else’s home furnishing.* Those who want to be original and do their own thing should not shop at Ikea since so many people purchase there. But I think every one has something from Ikea in their home.”

(Interview Helena)

As stated above, many people do purchase at Ikea, the 14 Ikea stores in Sweden have on a yearly basis approximately 25 millions visitors (www.ikea.com [3]). It is Ikea’s intention that the many people should afford to shop there as well. By taking such a standpoint it will probably scare some customers from purchasing there. During the observation with Ingrid she stated that she would probably never buy something big, for example a couch, which gave the impression of being an Ikea couch. Overall Ingrid thought Ikea was boring; a place where people-who-do-not-dare-to-do something, purchase their furnishes. She thought most of the living rooms and bedrooms almost looked the same, only few differed from one another’s. As expressed by Helena:

“I do not know what it is, but you can see if an item is from Ikea”.

(Observation Ikea, Helena)

If everybody has the same furnishing it might be hard expressing your self, your identity and your *personality*. People who want to express their individuality might have difficulties finding furnishing at Ikea which appeal to them. Since Ikea has chosen to offer their products to the many people, individualistic consumers might be excluded.

“I like Ikea! But when you get older and earn more money, you become more interested in alternatives. You seek variation.”

(Interview Maria)

“I do not think that Ikea offer me a total solution. I rather pick something from different stores.”

(Interview Linda)

An attempt from Ikea to appeal to the more original seeking consumers is the launch of Ikea Stockholm 1st April 2007. As stated by Ikea: “Why should quality and good design only be offered to some people?” With this collection Ikea has put extra effort on materials, functions,

and details, still offered at a low price. The collection is made up by 82 different items and includes everything from a dining table to lightening. Ikea state that these products appeal to everyone since they are divided into four different colour schemes. The brown express masculinity, red communicates youth and energy and while the black and white offers a more feminine feeling. (www.ikea.com [3]) By having a separate collection, which also has its own label, Ikea appeals to the more sceptical consumers, striving for originality, since it is not “really Ikea”. This is confirmed by one of our respondents, Karin. She has bought a couple of items from the collection even though she states that she would not buy any furniture at Ikea. She thinks that Ikea Stockholm offers something which the ordinary assortment cannot. Furthermore she believes that other people not immediately can see that it is from Ikea, but still she feels an urge to defend her Ikea Stockholm items.

Style comes in many forms

“Most people like Ikea. The reason is that Ikea offer customers a wide range of products, from modern to classical and natural materials.”

(Interview Maria)

“At Ikea there is something for all ages and styles. There is something from that you are 20 to 50. They appeal to different consumer styles, depending if you want to be modern, retro or more classic. There is something for everyone!”

(Interview Helena)

As the notion of segmentation is to divide the market into smaller homogenous segments (Smith 1956), it is important to acknowledge that we are all different. People have different tastes, and it is likely that it exists as many styles and tastes as people. The most obvious denominator from our data is that we all have opinions regarding our style. We choose our home furnishing carefully which much consideration to whom we are, to our own *personality*. As such, we strive to be stylish, in what ever sense we regard as stylish.

“I like my home to be stylish.”

(Interview Helena)

Most of the respondent stated that they considered the showrooms to have different styles and that they appealed, in some way, to everyone. However, two of the respondents felt they wanted more different furnishing styles in the showrooms. The two respondents believing this were the respondents from the segment “living with children” and also the oldest women being observed and interviewed. Regardless of this, the two respondents still considered the showrooms to be inspiring.

“I like the ideas with the showrooms. Some of the solutions in the showrooms are appealing to me. Most of the showrooms have a modern touch. I wish for a better mix between styles in the different showrooms.”

(Interview Eva)

“The Ikea stores are appealing and inspiring. I get ideas from Ikea. Sometimes I get ideas for setting the table or ways to put pillows. I like the small details at Ikea. However, I do not believe that the showrooms appeal to all people with different furnishing styles.”

(Interview Ingrid)

There seems to be some confusion concerning what style we regard ourselves to have. From when we are born we are integrated into the consumption society which strives its very best at shaping us. Culture constraints us from being not too far from the mass, but yet again favouring individuality. Commercial attempts to make us buy products, that we most part do not need. So does this confusion emerge from society or us? As one of the respondents put it:

“I get affected by the commercial saying; this is the latest. Home furnishing is the same thing as fashion, when you see it for the first time you usually do not think it appeal to you. But after a while you start to like it more and more and eventually you buy it.”

(Interview Helena)

“I believe that you can like all kinds of things independent who you are.”

(Interview Helena)

At Ikea they have divided their styles in Scandinavian, modern and traditional (Magnusson 090507). Is it then possible to classify the many styles?

Natural/Scandinavian style

Both Maria and Jenny view their style as Scandinavian. Maria had a more feminine and soft style. Her small apartment was filled with products from Ikea, all in calming light colours from bright purple to egg white. Her bookshelves and desk were composed of natural materials, and natural rocks were located to convey a sense of nature, softness, and femininity. Over the bed, she had hanged a big painting posting flowers in bright purple, perfectly matching her pillows on the couch. Her apartment is clearly a reflection of herself; her calm, quite and soft way of speaking, her relaxing character, and her peaceful approach during the observations (letting nothing affect her state of mind). Her stated loyalty is expressed through several pictures hanging on her wall posting various happy friends.

“I am fonder of the Scandinavian style, which has more calm colours and more light. I do not like the high-tech stuff, shiny black and so on.”

(Interview Maria)

“I have tried to use few colours in my apartment; white, pink and purple. I have also used more natural products, like wood, metal and rock. I do not like plastic materials at all, it is not me.”

(Interview Maria)

Jenny's apartment did also convey a feminine style; colours in white and beige were used in order to portray a sense of calmness. She had light wood bookshelves, light wood table, white curtains, white walls and a beige sofa. Pictures on her family hanged on the walls. Nothing sticks out; the entire apartment feels at ease, perfectly matched with one another. The apartment portrays who she is, rather calm but yet not shy, happy, and very simple.

“I have calm and pleasant style, my style is very layback. To me it is important to feel at home in my home. I want it to be bright.”

(Interview Jenny)

Both Maria and Jenny furthermore liked the same rooms when they were asked to elaborate on rooms from the Ikea catalogue.

“Bright, I like it! Fresh and cosy!”

(Observation catalogue p.108-109, Jenny)

“I like it! I like the feeling, very relaxing.”

(Observation catalogue p.108-109, Maria)

Traditional style

Eva had a more traditional style. Nothing in her home stuck out, it was very simple, yet relatively cluttered without colourful details. She had traditional, old furniture (probably very expensive today), matched with Ikea products, and new trendy products. On her walls hanged African masques, and art which had been painted by a close friend. It portrayed a rather refined and cultivated taste with a sense of traditionalism, characteristics identical to her personality.

“When I buy something new it has to be both practical and nice. The design is very important to me. I do not like colourful homes since I think you easily get tired of it. I like natural colours with something colourful. In a colourful and trendy home young people live, it is nothing for me.”

(Interview Eva)

“My furnishing style is classical and it has always been like that.”

(Interview Eva)

Furthermore, Eva was the one to appreciate the Ikea Stockholm collection. When she entered the Ikea Stockholm living room, she said;

“This is me. Typically 60’s. Classic but yet cool.”

(Observation Ikea, Eva)

Modern/Colourful

“I do not like messy homes with too many things. It should be clean and stylish and I think my home looks like that. Things should match and complement each other.”

(Interview Ingrid)

“We have one wall in our living room painted in red which I really like; it makes the room look special.”

(Interview Ingrid)

Ingrid and Karin could be seen as modern and colourful people, the same characteristics equivalent to their apartment/home. Ingrid’s living room was colourful with new furnishers and designs, carefully picked and matched with the other interiors. Two big black leather couches stood in the middle of the room drawing attention. All the other rooms in the house went in same direction; modern and stylish. The computer room had green wall paper with golden dots, perfectly matched with details in the same colours, showing her spontaneous and cheerful personality, and consideration for details. Her style is illustrated by her comment when the bedroom observations were finished.

“There is no bedroom that is really cool and modern, they all pretty much look the same. I miss something that looks like our bedroom, something else and special.” She said with a dissatisfied look on her face.

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

Karin’s living room had a huge grey couch, decorated with green pillows. On the opposite side stood two black leather chairs, all making a perfectly matched place for watching TV. To the left Karin had placed the Stockholm collection; a dinning table with matching chairs and a cabinet for glasses, enabling her to reveal something about herself; a trendy person, with an eye for details. In her bedroom, one wall was painted with a calm greyish tone above her bed, enabling her to be (somewhat) original. The apartment portrayed a happy person.

“My home is modern I think. I like to have a few accent colours combined with rather traditional furniture.”

(Interview Karin)

Mixed style

Helena and Linda had a mixture of different styles. Helena moved to her boyfriend’s apartment, and could not as freely decorate the apartment according to her own style. She had to adjust. While her boyfriend liked dark materials and had inherited many furnishes, Helena on the other hand liked more colourful things that make the apartment look more joyful, perfectly matching her personality. Together they had created an apartment which could not as easily be categorized, staying loyal to one another wishes, however portraying her kindness and loyalty. It was obvious where Helena had tried to bring out her style. She claimed during the interview:

“Boys tend to think about function only and therefore we have mixed our styles. He likes black, white and grey and I like much more colours which I think is more female. It is all about compromising.”

(Interview Helena)

“The home furnishing style in our apartment is quite hard to define, we have both classic, modern style with some antiques. I like to have some small things from a certain style mixed with bigger thing from a totally different style.”

(Interview Helena)

“Nice combinations of colours; dark and red. I can imagine living like this, Joel on the other hand would be harder to persuade.”

(Observation catalogue p.104-105, Helena)

Linda had brown leather couches situated in the middle of the living room, light brown wall papers and a dinning table with big white chairs. The details in her apartment were of African style, while the colours of the smaller things were light blue. On the contrary, her bedroom had a completely different style from the rest of the apartment. The apartment reflected a sense of confusion, conveying a young person not yet aware of what she liked; an expression of Linda; a bit childish, always living for the day (troubles can be dealt with tomorrow), and happy. As she stated:

“My bedroom is 2000. It is silver, white and grey with mirrors.”

(Interview Linda)

“In my living room I have tried to get a touch of Africa. I have darker wood and a chest as a coffee table. I have some paintings and statues that reminds of Africa.”

(Interview Linda)

4.4 Behavioural

An exciting experience

“I travel to Ikea once every second week. I like to just walk around looking for new arrivals. Most of the time I buy small things.”

(Interview Eva)

Jönnerheim (130307) claims that an exiting experience, different meetings, attractions, surprises, good ideas, attractive news, fun and enjoyment at Ikea is what makes the home furnishing journey to a good shopping experience. Ikea strives to become a place, an exhibition, where everybody can go for a fun day out, fulfilling the need not only for home furnishing but also for day activities. Competing with for instance Gothenburg’s famous amusement park Liseberg, they position themselves as a happening for the whole family. It should be fun! And it should be inspirational! The directions towards families are obvious when you arrive at the store. Welcoming families with a huge children’s ballroom, full of liveliness and full of colours, they set the tone for the whole shopping experience. Ikea is not only for families, singles and couples; it is also a “children’s Ikea”. When children are in focus, creativeness imbues the entire store. From the big ball room, to toys, and showrooms only intended for children to play and dream. (Jönnerheim 130307)

Ikea do their utter most to convey the many meanings to people; it is not only a place where you go when you want to buy something special, rather it is an activity for *regular usage*. If you do not intend to shop anything, it is still a perfect option for an exiting experience. Deeply positioned in our minds, Ikea is not only an ordinary furnishing store. Offering customers a big restaurant, packed with typically Swedish food like meatballs and pancakes, they enable people to stay for a whole day. Ikea has even become a place where you even go to solely buy one of their famous hot-dogs or ice-cream, and of course at “Ikea price”. As Helena stated;

“I do not visit Ikea a lot, but if I am bored and do not have anything to do, I can just go there for fun; maybe buy a hotdog. Even if you do not have any money to spend, it is nice to walk around, watch and get some inspiration. However, most of the time you end up buying those cheap things; candles, flowers and napkins, things that was not planned.”

(Interview Helena)

Linda was the only one of our respondents who did not go to Ikea on a regular basis. She was furthermore reluctant to Ikea as a whole and unenthusiastic to Ikea’s products, their showrooms and their business concept. As such, her *loyalty status* to Ikea can be seen as none even if she however was informed of Ikea’s concept. This was though the only respondent which could be classified as having low *loyalty status*. The other respondents were all very positive to Ikea as a concept, and regarded their selves to be an Ikea customer, even if they differed in *usage rate*. Consequently, they could be classified as loyal customers.

Most of the respondents go to Ikea in order to attain inspiration and ideas; it is a perfect inspiration source. Their exhibition is one of the kind, presenting many ideas for which

customers is encouraged to use and personalize. The many solutions and ideas portrayed in the showrooms, conceptualizes a big part of Ikea's marketing strategy. It enables the concept of a *regular occasion* experience, increasing the many meanings Ikea stand for. This is furthermore one of the *benefits sought* by customers, to see and experience the wide range of products. No other competitor has been able to accomplish the same inspiration (Jönnerheim 130307). Every one of our respondents thought Ikea was an excellent inspiration source, even Linda who was unimpressed by Ikea's showrooms.

"If you are redecorating your kitchen, it is perfect to go to Ikea, get inspiration about different solutions, take them home and see if you can somewhat personalize them and if they match your own home and style".

(Interview Helena)

"The showrooms are also an inspiration source. It is nice to see how you can mix products and how they match. Ikea is very good at that! They are alone at that."

(Interview Maria)

"I do not visit Ikea a lot, but when I go there it is nice to just walk around and get ideas and inspiration."

(Interview Helena)

"I think Ikea is a source of inspiration. They have these nice, small showrooms, in which you can see different combinations of colours and furnishing. In the showrooms it is easy to see things and find something that you like. They give me inspiration and a lot of ideas to how my home can look like. The showrooms have different styles; there is something that appeals to everybody"

(Interview Jenny)

"I find the Ikea store inspiring and if I am bored one afternoon I can go to Ikea just for fun."

(Interview Eva)

As the statements above indicate, the respondents thought Ikea and their solutions portrayed in the catalogue and in the showrooms were constructive. Being one of Ikea's goals, to offer ideas for a better everyday life, the respondents were both positive and enthusiastic towards Ikea and regarded it as an inspiration source. Thus Ikea can be seen as a place you go to on *regular occasions*; a place for inspiration and fun.

Observations in the same room

"This is the room that give me most inspiration; I really like the combination of colours and the small details." She enters the room with a big smile on her lips. Her arms that normally were crossed during the observation were now touching the furnishers.

(Observation Ikea, Linda)

“This looks really boring, looks really cheap. This is nothing for me, it is too messy and the colours are boring. I do not like this, especially not the bookshelves. This room do not give me any inspiration at all” Her facial expression showed that she did not like the room at all, she was silent and calm. When a similar room was found in the catalogue she got the same facial expression, it was obvious this was nothing she liked.

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

As above indicates, there are however noticeable differences in the showrooms concerning *attitude*. None of the respondents stated that they can imagine themselves living in one of the living rooms. This implies that Ikea’s showrooms as a whole do not appeal to the customers; merely they act as a source of inspiration and ideas. Furthermore, the respondents expressed diverse approaches to the living rooms. When one of the respondents liked a specific room, another did not. Observable, this *attitude* was dependent on the respondents’ own style, or what she thought her own style was. The same argument is valid for Ikea’s bedrooms. Again, most of the respondents thought these rooms were not realistically portrayed; they did not reflect actual persons living there. The respondents received a feeling of sterility combined with clutter. Even if the wanted corner stones in the rooms are activity, need and solution, (Jönnerheim130307), the sterile perfection, designed by a person who obviously could not imagine a “real” home, conveys no sign of activity taking place; strangely as this is what Ikea seek after. There is almost a political statement expressed which again goes back to “the many people”; everyone should be included, no one should be left out. By not sticking out, you remain on the safe side. Personal belongings are coordinated into orderly staples, matching to the absolute most the style present in the room, leaving no opportunity for personal characteristics to be observed. Thus, customers’ needs are to some extent not perfectly fulfilled. By trying to not offend anyone, sticking on the side of the many people, decorations are carefully selected. As Maria noticed:

“This is a room for women.” She says while picking up the cautiously placed magazine lying under the table. It is a magazine on home furnishing, portraying a woman on the front.

(Observation Ikea, Maria)

This can be further exemplified by the carefully selected art, which illustrates conventional photos and paintings, again offending no one. Many of our respondents were reluctant to Ikea’s paintings, almost to the degree of dislike. Even if they had a positive *attitude* towards Ikea as a whole, and the products offered, there seemed to be a negative feeling towards the art. The art was not sufficiently innovative and creative. As Eva elaborates:

“I cannot see myself in possession of an Ikea painting. A painting says so much of who you are, your own style you try to bring forward. Additionally I think they are quite boring. [...]I would prefer to have something *real*.”

(Interview Eva)

This aversion can be exemplified by Maria who bought a painting several years ago when she first moved to live on her own. With limited financial means and a need to make her student apartment more inviting; she bought a painting on sale from Ikea. The painting had a significant place in the apartment, it was very obvious. However, when asked to elaborate on her own home furnishing style, the painting was last to be mentioned. It was obvious that she was to some degree embarrassed of the Ikea painting; she felt it was not enough personal and creative. However, she had the opposite reaction to her “Ektorp” couch, the number one bestselling couch. This was first to be mentioned and regarded as very nice and practical; it

could become a bed and the casings could be taken off (either for washing or replacing). Her attitude towards the Ikea couch was thus much more positive, than towards the Ikea painting.

Thus there seem to be some differences in *attitude* towards Ikea. Different product categories are associated with diverse feelings. Essential furniture, for example a bed or a couch, has a more positive feeling in the respondents minds, whereas for example art and decoration products are considered to have lower status.

Overall, the respondents had furthermore a positive *attitude* towards Ikea's kitchen showrooms. During the observations at Ikea, the respondents had different approach behaviour towards the kitchen showrooms than towards the bed and living rooms. In these rooms, the respondents were more active. Almost all of them walked around, touching the strategically placed glasses on a tray, opened the cupboards and drawers, and imagined how it would be to live in a kitchen like this. Consequently, the kitchen rooms did not only act as an inspiration source for the respondents, more they were conceived as "real" rooms where the respondents actually could portray them living in. They were not seen as equally sterile and conventional as the other room. Even Ingrid, who often expressed a bored feeling towards the showrooms, states she overall likes Ikea's kitchens and conveyed a positive behaviour in these rooms.

Jenny shouted: "This is exactly what Jon and I want. I would not change a thing in here!" When she was in this kitchen she smiled and gesticulated with her arms in excitement.

(Observation Ikea, Jenny)

An additional example is when Helena was subject to a kitchen she really liked. She then started to imagine what it would be like to live in this kitchen. She walked around and talked about how she and her cohabiter could invite friends over and make a nice dinner together. She fantasized about serving nice cocktails and snacks which she had prepared in advance and stored in the large fridge.

The respondents had furthermore dissimilar thoughts and feelings about the Ikea catalogue. One of the respondents longed for its appearance, others found it inspiring, and while one did not perceive the catalogue at all inspirational. Those who found it inspirational did only scrutinize it through when getting it and at occasions when they needed furnishing ideas.

"When I was little I loved the Ikea catalogue; you waited on its arrival! Then you looked it through and dreamt about your future house and how it would look like."

(Interview Maria)

"I do not find the Ikea catalogue inspiring to me, I prefer walking around and look in the store instead. I only look in the catalogue once a year when I get it."

(Interview Eva)

"If I want to buy anything, I look through the catalogue; it is inspiring and fun! It is very creative, especially all the many solutions."

(Interview Maria)

“The showrooms are the only thing in the Ikea catalogue that gives me inspiration. If you do not like the entire room, you might for example like a sofa or a table or get some ideas about storage.”

(Interview Helena)

Everything under one roof

“I don’t feel that anything is missing at Ikea, they have everything. It is Ikea!”

(Interview Linda)

The Ikea stores have everything consumers need for their homes under one roof. Whatever you might think of needing, Ikea has it. (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006) This was mentioned to be an important determining factor when choosing to go to Ikea. All of our respondents stated that the main *benefit* with Ikea is their product range. Consequently, if you intend to purchase a variety of products, it is convenient to go to Ikea. Additionally, all our respondents were *aware* of the wide range of products at Ikea.

Another, to some extent obvious, *benefit* customers gain from Ikea, is low priced products. Everyone is aware that Ikea is a low priced store. They want to fulfil their notion of creating a better everyday life for the many people. Clearly those customers who buy products at Ikea, desire low price.

“At Ikea I purchase smaller things like lamps or other decoration items.”

(Interview Jenny)

“When I buy items at Ikea, it is usually kitchen products for example glasses and napkins; you can never get too many of those. Of course candles are also a common purchase. Cheap stuff!”

(Interview Maria)

The above mentioned further entails that Ikea attempt to make their customers buy on impulse. Often perceived are that Ikea’s customers purchase much more than planned before entering the store. One of the respondents claimed during the interview that she frequently go to Ikea with the intention to just look around but every time she spends much more money than deliberated. This is further emphasized by Helena and Karin who both bought napkins and candles during the observations. As Karin stated:

“I have just run out of these things.”

(Observation Ikea, Karin)

Everyone can go to Ikea and find something they like; even though if this is usually smaller items, located next to the cashier. This is maybe one thing that they are best at; impulse buying. Jönnerheim (070313) upholds that Ikea have arranged their stores in order to get their customers to purchase items that they did not intend to do before entering the store. A way they do this are by creating hotspots in the middle of the path.

“Ikea is best at unplanned buying! Lights, napkins and everything at the cashier are easy to buy; it is so cheap!”

(Interview Linda)

“Most of the time I visit the store, I buy something small. Big items I only buy there once a year or so.”

(Interview Eva)

In the Ikea stores you find a variety of products; ranging from napkins to kitchen supplies, and couches to bookshelves. Our respondents claim that they normally buy smaller items when visiting Ikea; consequently they are *heavy users* of Ikea's smaller things. Bigger items are bought more seldom, as it demands a more careful consideration before purchasing. This can be connected to how long an item is to be kept. Beds, couches and bookshelves are in general remained for a long time, whereas napkins or kitchen supplies are characterized as more disposable. This is exemplified by Ingrid, as mentioned before, who recently got rid of her bookshelves she bought 15 years ago at Ikea.

During the interviews many of the respondents talked about when they first moved to live on their own. They did not have much money to spend on furniture, and thus Ikea was a convenient place to go due to their low prices and wide range of products.

“When I moved away from home, I only had one week to buy everything for my new apartment. I went to Ikea and bought everything in one afternoon.”

(Interview Helena)

“At the time we bought our house we bought much furniture at Ikea. They have good furniture to good prices”.

(Interview Ingrid)

“When I moved to this apartment, I did not own any furniture at all. So I had one day to buy everything. The easiest way was to go to Ikea and buy everything; from towels to sofa.”

(Interview Maria)

Almost every one of the respondents can be classified as *heavy users* when they first moved to their own apartment. As they elaborated, many bought their first furniture at Ikea. But this high amount of purchase did only occurred one time, consequently our respondents can be referred to as *heavy users* at that specific time. When people have bought the essential items needed to create a home, these are usually kept for a while. Thus the respondents are no longer *heavy users*. Even if they all still go to Ikea, some several times per month, it is not to buy a large amount of furniture. Instead they seek products to complement their home. Thus the respondent can be seen as *light users*.

Ikea is though best at unplanned purchases. All respondents buy napkins and candles when they go to Ikea. This was uplifted by everyone. Thus they can all be classified as *heavy users* of cheap, disposable products.

“I often buy napkins and candles and other smaller things. It was a long time ago since we bought something big.”

(Interview Ingrid)

However Karin bought dining table, chairs and a cupboard from Ikea Stockholm at impulse. Even though Karin is interested in interior decorating and cannot see herself in possession of much Ikea furniture, she argued that as the Ikea Stockholm collection is more expensive and has more quality, the entire Sweden will not be in possession of it. This further implies that Ikea is a great alternative for consumers wanting to purchase as many things as cheap as

possible. Concerning the smaller items frequently bought by our respondents, Ikea have succeeded in having a wide range of products as well as being good at exposing them.

During the interviews, several of the respondents uplifted discussions about storage. Ikea is good at offering customers solutions for a functional life, as much focus lays on compact living (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006). This is also an important part of Ikea's marketing strategy. Many products can be used in a variety of ways; it is up to your own imagination. This is accentuated by the observations made in Maria's and Linda's apartments. As mentioned before, they both have the same bench from Ikea but have used them for different functions. Linda has used it as a TV bench, whereas Maria has used it as a bookshelf.

"Ikea is really good when it comes to storage."

(Interview Helena)

"I like the storage solutions in this bedroom. The drawers under the bed are really practical and the wardrobe is large enough." Helena walks around, scrutinizing the many solutions for storage. Her face expresses a impressed look, when she opens the wardrobe and notice the different boxes for underwear, the drawer for ties or necklaces, and when she sees the practical solution for shoe storage she gets amazed.

(Observation Ikea, Helena)

"It is unbelievable that they have been able to get all things to fit on this small living space. Really clever to have shelves under the ceiling for storage."

(Observation Ikea, Eva)

"This kitchen has excellent storage solution." She says when opening the many cupboards.

(Observation Ikea, Linda)

There were also differences in *attitude* towards Ikea's storage solutions. Ingrid who lived in a house thought it looked to messy with all storage solutions in the showrooms. She felt that this was nothing she needed, as she had a large house. Instead she wanted it to be kept simpler.

"Too messy, unnecessary big bedroom. Too much storage solutions, too many shelves become unpractical and collect dust." She touched the shelves, shaken her head and quickly left the room.

(Observation Ikea, Ingrid)

Our other respondents, all living in apartments, felt the opposite. They were more positive towards the many storage solutions and the practical ideas Ikea have.

5 Joint discussion

In this chapter the findings from the analysis will be condensed into a discussion structured around the research question: which connotations will an evaluating approach render to traditional market segmentation by applying ethnography? Furthermore their consequential meanings for Ikea will be discussed.

This research took an evaluating approach towards traditional segmentation, attempting to investigate if these segmentation variables still are applicable, or if there is a need for new variables, thus meaning what connotations an evaluating approach would render. By investigating Ikea, which today adopts demographic segmentation, we attempt to evaluate and hopefully contribute with new, fresh insights into this theory. When beginning to investigate the scenery of segmentation, criticisms were found to every variable of traditional segmentation, however some were more discussed as inappropriate to use in today's society. Thus this research attempt to conclude if this criticism is legitimate or nor.

Geographic was one variable to receive criticism as it lacks the opportunity to predict consumer behaviour. In our research we have not found any evidence indicating geography to be an appropriate segmentation variable for Ikea to use, as it does not determinate behaviour and attitudes towards Ikea as a brand and Ikea's products. How a person perceives Ikea does neither depend on where a person is born or raced, nor does it depend on where the consumer lives today as six of our respondents live in big cities. Among our respondents we did not distinguish any similarities according to behaviour and attitude and it is for that reason not relevant to use geographic as a segmentation variable for Ikea.

The criticism towards demographic segmentation was basically the same as towards geographic; it cannot predict consumer behaviour. Our research has though demonstrated that demographic segmentation does have some validity, even if few features in this segmentation can be dismissed. Ikea is targeting the many people, thus attempting to include all ages. It would not be effective to use age as a segmentation variable if the target group were to be the same. This would hinder the possibility of either adopting an effective target group or an effective segmentation strategy. Furthering this discussion, our data contend no obvious signs indicating age to be a determining factor of attitude, values, preferences and behaviour towards Ikea. All of our respondents differed in age, ranging from 23 to 45 years old. Similarities could be observed between Karin 30 and Ingrid 45, as well as differences between Maria 24 and Linda 23. Therefore we argue that age is of no use for Ikea when segmenting the market.

Today, Ikea have divided the market into "living alone", "living together", and "living with children", adopting life cycle segmentation. Again, Ikea strive to capture the mass which enables this segmentation to be useful, as we all to some extent can be classified in these three life courses, however not necessary to be the most effective one. This is mostly concerned with the unproductive use of this segmentation, as diverse focus and segmentation leads to confusion among consumers. We have found that this life cycle segmentation is not obviously portrayed in the showrooms. During our observations in the store, none of our respondents were aware which room was directed to whom, as so no obvious sign of which showroom aimed to singles, couples or families with children were found. Furthermore, our data entails

that the showrooms could not be separated in relation to whom it was directed. Rooms appealed on other basis, irrelevant of life course. A showroom that was obviously designed to attract young, single people was appreciated by most of the respondents. The homes which were directed to the three living situations, did not always appeal to those who they were suppose to appeal to. One respondent living alone preferred the home directed to those living together while one respondent living with children were excited about the home directed to singles. In addition, no similarities could be concluded in the respondents' attitudes and behaviour in either one of these life cycles. The basis for a respondent's attitude and behaviour were instead the respondent's personality and style preference. If Ikea had more effectively applied the life cycle segmentation, it is possible that the research had showed other results. Though, with today's ineffective use, we claim that Ikea should not segment the market based on life cycle stages. Instead, we believe that their centre of attention should be even more on families, although focus is to some extent on families today. Even though Ikea had strategically plant toys in several rooms, in an attempt to direct them to families with children, the respondents did not notice this, nor did anyone of the respondents' part of this category feel as this was perfect for them. Instead they all stated that Ikea had not understood what needs families with children have. But many of Ikea's customers are families with children. It is therefore vital to find other ways to integrate families with children. If Ikea do not manage to do this, they might miss out on the potential profit this group can generate.

Apart from focus on families with children, Ikea additionally focus on women. Even though we only have had womanly respondents, we believe this to be accurate since our data indicate that the women are those who, to a large extent, decide how the home should look like. If Ikea were about to segment on gender, a first choice would have been on women since they have the power on home furnishing. Nevertheless, doing so would exclude the men living on their own. This is the case regarding gender segmentation as there only exists two variables, women and men. Ikea can only choose one segment; otherwise there is no use of segmentation since they then target everyone. We therefore suggest that Ikea not should segment regarding gender however still focus on women. We argue this can be done by integrating a female touch in the showrooms both in stores and catalogue.

As mentioned before, Ikea target "the many people", reaching to everyone yet no one. However, by targeting the mass, they have created a positioning as being a store directed to the less fortunate people, those with lower income. This have consequently made customers with a higher income to not be attracted by Ikea's offerings; "it is nothing for me". As our data indicates the respondents with a higher income do not purchase at Ikea, though they still have a positive attitude towards Ikea in general. We have found that people with a lower income are more willing to buy their furniture at Ikea, but as you earn more money, you become reluctant. Nevertheless, one of the respondents "blessed" with a higher income did purchase her furniture at Ikea, but only because they came from the Ikea Stockholm collection and had therefore a reputation of being exclusive, offering the original customer an alternative with higher quality. Still, she nevertheless feels a need to defend her choice of furniture. Based on this argument, it would be more appropriate to either focus on those consumers with a lower income or have more collections similar to the Ikea Stockholm that might appeal to those consumers with a higher income. This can preferably be done using the demographic segmentation variable income, since we have noticed income to be an important factor for determining who purchase at Ikea.

Important to acknowledge is that when consumers purchase smaller things (for example the vital napkins and candles) at Ikea, their current target group, "the many people", are

applicable. All of our respondents, regardless of income, do purchase these things at Ikea. However, we argue there is only a need for segmentation in Ikea's showrooms since it is there the different segments should be apparent. We claim that segmentation is not needed regarding smaller household articles since all customers purchase them.

If Ikea also want to reach wealthier consumers and those who seek other low price alternatives, we believe it might be an idea to eliminate their statement to offer low priced furniture. Even if consumers purchase at other low cost stores, they do not feel an urge to defend their choice of store. We believe that the reason for this is the feeling that these stores are trendier and much later established than Ikea and consequently feels new and fresh. Another reason for this might be that many low cost stores (for example Lagerhouse) have not publicly announced being a low cost store, hence consumer experience it to be more accepted to purchase there.

Criticism against psychographic were mainly based on that this variable do not forecast what consumer will buy. Our research contends that personality could be used as a segmentation tool. Our respondents had various personalities which did not determine their attitudes towards Ikea. An introvert as well as an extrovert personality can think and feel the same even though being totally different. However, we have seen that a consumer's home furnishing style reflects who you are, your own personality. Maria and Jenny have equal personality characteristics. They both are calm persons, loyal to friends and families, who both have a Scandinavian style in furnishing. This can further be exemplified by Ingrid and Karin who on the contrary both have a modern style, which reflects their personality's features of being happy and having a sense for details. Hereby, we argue that style is determined by the personality of the consumer. In home furnishing it can be argued that consumers have the same need, requirements of vital components of a household. However, what furniture we do want and prefer is determined by our style, hence our personality. Thus, is could be profitable for Ikea to target personality by means of style. Again, the perception of confusion appears in Ikea's strategy. An additional focus is on three different styles; Scandinavian, modern and traditional. Even though this focus, it is possible to take it one step further and segment the market after these styles.

Additional argument for style to be a determining factor is that style was the single denominator of whether a respondent liked a room or not. We have been able to divide five out of our seven respondents into Ikea's three categories of styles; Scandinavian, modern and traditional. The two remaining respondents are regarded to have more of a mixed style and can therefore not be categorized into a specific style. As a result, we argue Ikea have succeeded with their three different styles since they are so broad that they can appeal to many consumers. However, two of our respondents believed that Ikea have failed to capture all furnishing styles. Despite of this, we argue that Ikea have succeeded with their three styles, based on the fact that 70 percent of our respondents could be categorized according to them. Consequently, we claim that Ikea should continue with the styles they use today.

You strive for individuality, and individuality does not come in mass produced flat boxes which you have to assemble on your own. However, be favouring originality we argue that Ikea Stockholm and other attempts from Ikea to do similar collections should not only attract those consumers with a higher income. Consumers seeking originality will also be attracted. One of our respondents stated that "everyone" purchase at Ikea while another claimed that those who purchase at Ikea do not dare to be different. Thereby we argue that consumers who want something different do not buy their furnisher at Ikea. Collections with originality,

higher price and better quality can also attract those who today not are Ikea customers. Today Ikea's products can be seen as rather traditional and mainstream. As such, customers who buy a bed or couch at Ikea know that they are not getting the latest design nor that it will attract lots of attention. However, we believe this is what customers seek when purchasing at Ikea. They do not want the trendiest design. Instead they seek Ikea's standardized, functional products offered at a low price, in order to combine these with their own personal belongings. Hereby we argue that Ikea should keep their current product range and add collections as Ikea Stockholm to be able to attract as many consumers as possible.

Behavioural segmentation did also receive criticism, as it lacks the opportunity to predict consumer behaviour. Our research has however shown that behavioural segmentation can be appropriate to use. In addition to Ikea's focus on women and families with children, they furthermore focus on compact living. Our data entails that this focal point is the only one that is obviously present in the showrooms. It is to some extent strange that one store can have focus on families' with children but then again also favour compact living. These two dissimilar views attempting to be integrated with one another do not go hand in hand. As such, our data have shown that it is only the compact living that is obviously portrayed in the showrooms, causing the focus on families with children to be neglected. The many people cannot be divided into compact living, especially not in Sweden where many live in houses, enabling lots of storage possibilities. Compact living is not a solution to all people living in houses and Ikea might fail to benefit from those since they do not experience the solutions to be appropriate for them. Furthermore, it adds a messy impression in the room. This enables an additional segmentation variable; benefit segmentation. Consequently, Ikea could divide the market according to peoples living situation, thus either living in houses or living in apartments. Consumers who live in apartments might seek other benefits, concerning storage solutions, than those who live in houses. If Ikea state that their target group is everyone, they should thus appeal to everyone. An idea might be to not focus on compact living space in all showrooms, but instead also adapt to the wants of customers living in houses.

The compact living brings about the issue of first movers. When you first move to live on your own, it is usually to a smaller apartment, thus you experience a need for functional solutions. As mentioned above, Ikea is a perfect place to go to fulfil this need. All of our respondents did purchase much of their furniture when they first moved to lived on their own. According to our research, first movers can thus be perceived as heavy users since they purchase a lot on one occasion. On the other hand, these consumers might only be heavy users once in their life time. Despite this, we still argue that Ikea should focus even more on first movers as it could contribute with growth in sales. Even if Ikea today do offer starting packages, we believe that these offerings can be advanced. Another aspect we have found is that it is common to also buy much furniture when you get children, due to Ikea's convenient price and range. Thus it is possible to once again be regarded as heavy users, which could be exploited through the use of starting packages directed to families with children. These arguments make it possible for Ikea to use the behavioural segmentation variable usage rate.

6 Furthering the discussion

In this chapter we will present additional conclusions, vital for Ikea and thus furthering the discussion from the previous chapter.

6.1 To everyone and no one

The world's largest home furnishing company have with their standardized strategy offered "the many people" modern and low priced furnishing for many years. This approach has been adopted since the beginning and has thus come to be one of the reasons for Ikea's success. But can Ikea's success be questioned at all?

The viewing that everyone should be given the opportunity for purchasing Ikea's products, even those who are not fortunately blessed with a high income, imbues the organisation. By reaching to the mass, they have made sure no one is excluded. The catalogue is transmitted to almost every household in Sweden, and TV commercial is directed to "the many people"; no specific target group can be observed (Magnusson 090507). Everyone is welcome to Ikea.

Implicitly Ikea believes that everyone needs their low-priced furniture; as stated "everyone can create a better everyday life." (Ikea Facts and Figures, The Ikea Group 2006) But how can a company be successful when their target group is the mass? As Kotler *et al* (2005) argue that a company which adopts a segmentation strategy has understood that people are diverse and consequently have different needs and wants. Thus can we all be categorized into the values of Ingvar Kamprad?

"I think I belong to Ikeas target group. They target many different people."
(Interview Jenny)

"I think I belong to Ikeas target group. Ikea fits everybody wanting good things at a reasonable amount of money. Everyone from singles; singles with children; families to older people; to everybody that is."
(Interview Helena)

"I think we belong to the target group of Ikea as well."
(Interview Ingrid)

"I do not spend that much time on Ikea. This is because I am a student and don't have any money to spend. But of course, I am still an Ikea customer."
(Interview Maria)

As above indicates, consumers are aware that Ikea's target group is "the many people". Everyone feels included in the "Ikea family" and experience a need for the assembled products, which constantly are being reproduced. Responding to "the many people's" needs and wants indicate the adoption of a mass marketing strategy, consequently also a mass production. Thus "the many people" are believed to have globally equal preferences for home furnishing. Based on Ikea's undisputable success, they have profitably, however not necessary effectively, managed to adopt a mass-marketing strategy, but when at the same time not fully practicing it.

Ikea's standardized strategy strives for the many people, focusing on families with children but in addition also adopting a demographic segmentation strategy; which divides people after life cycle. They strive to not miss anyone, but then again reach no one. People are sorted in life cycles in an anticipation to capture the many people and make consumers believe that no matter what age and life course you are in, you can still go to Ikea and find what you are looking for. However, this implies that we all go through the same life stages. We are born into a family, in order to be shipped of to make it on our own. Hopefully we eventually meet our other half, live happy and have children. The circle is closed. But what happens if we are singles for our entire lives? Will we still feel part of Ikea's three life courses? As Eva states:

"I am not sure if I fit into Ikea's target group".

(Interview Eva)

Will we eventually not feel bored of Ikea's products and experience an urge for renewal? Can thus Ikea satisfy the many peoples' need for home furnishing during their entire life? This is what Ikea strives for, producing mass products to fulfil our need for revitalization by offering low-priced furniture that can easily be replaced, thus providing what we all want. But by purchasing Ikea's products, we can definitely be sure that the rest of Sweden has the same.

"Ikea's target group is everybody; however not very rich people. If you have money, you do not go to Ikea; you want other stuff that not the entire Sweden is in possession of."

(Interview Maria)

Everyone is not part of "the many people"; more the other way around. Many of our respondents felt they belonged to Ikea's target group, but then again as we inevitably are part of the many people, we cannot specifically say that we are not. Ikea's effective use of words (as this is merely what it is; hence their focus and segmentation strategy) has thus positioned itself in our minds that we do belong, we are not excluded. However, our data entails that we strive for individuality and our home should reflect who we are. Strangely, as we strive for individuality, do we not voluntary move beyond the mass – "the many people"?

"I like Ikea and their products, but however they are mostly composed of bad quality materials, which you have to replace in a couple of years, and sold to everyone. Everyone has something from Ikea. I want to be different, I want to be myself."

(Interview Karin)

"I would not buy much from Ikea, but I like the Ikea Stockholm category. They are much more trendy and also of good quality. Of course you have to pay a bit more, but it is definitely worth it. I bought the whole dining set the first time I saw it. Peculiarly, even if this is Ikea furniture, I have not yet come across anyone who has it. That is good."

(Interview Karin)

As such, is this the best combination; "to the many people", families with children, and life course? By standing on the side of the majority of people, Ikea has decided to represent the ordinary people's interest. Sticking to this, no matter good or bad, has imbued the company since the foundation. To meet the needs of the many people, demand a close understanding towards the lives, hopes and aspirations of the majority of people. Thus developing imaginative and appealing products suitable for the mass society can be a hard task. Is "the

Ikea way” really the correct way? Can you segment a market on the basis of Ikea’s core values? If that is the case, why do not more companies apply this segmentation strategy, as it enables mass production in a society favouring individuality? It is rather unlikely that we all are characterized by rationalized thinking (read: Ikea’s rationalized thinking), cost-consciousness, solidarity and common sense (read: Ikea’s common sense) (Edvardsson and Engqvist 2002).

6.2 Defining the Ikea customer

Kamprad state in his “the Testament of a Furniture Dealer”, the best way to get to know a company’s customers, is through personal experiences. To use the public transport, enables a closer connection to people and thus an understanding towards the many people’s needs. As so, Kamprad contends that you can obtain significant information by being on a bus. (Edvardsson and Engqvist 2002) But people in Sweden are normally introverted characterized, postulating a reluctance of talking to strangers. Thus, it might be difficult to attain this knowledge of the many people’s needs and wants, by being on the bus. Moving forward demands an appreciation to find new better ways, to constantly improve.

As we were evaluating Ikea’s segmentation, our research resulted in three characteristics which define the Ikea customer.

6.2.1 Meet the Ikea customer

Cost-awareness

The most obvious character we have come across in our research, is that of cost-consciousness. Ikea’s low-price strategy goes hand in hand with their business idea, and as so, people are well aware of its low prices. This is connected to Ikea’s social responsibility (read: what Kamprad refers to “good capitalism”) to the many people; offering low priced products with meaning (Edvardsson and Engqvist 2002). Permeating the entire company, this has contributed with that an Ikea customer is rationally cost-oblivious. You go to Ikea if you want inexpensive products, even to some degree “penny pinching”. Even if you can buy napkins and candles at almost every supermarket or store, you still go to Ikea to purchase these items; not definitely saving money. It is Ikea’s mission, to be a low-prices store, and consequently we, as consumers, regard them to be the most inexpensive store. We do not question this statement; it just lies in the back of our heads.

“To me Ikea is best at unnecessary products, those which are really inexpensive, that you did not know you needed until you visited the store. It is impossible to not buy a bunch of candles or those cheap glasses.”

(Interview Karin)

“Everybody knows what Ikea is; they have cheap things which you have to assemble on your own”.

(Interview Eva)

Practical

Another evident characteristic among our respondents is practicality. People seek functionality in their life, thus favouring products associated with practicality. Even if the respondents had different styles, they all had one common thing; they all wanted to be practical. If they planned to buy anything, it had to be functional as well match their own home. The entire product range can be seen as functional, offering customers the ability to

make their imagination real. As such, the only constraint is your own imagination. Creatively you can use the same chair as a coffee table, the same lamp stand for a variety of lamp shades, the same TV bench as a bookshelf; the potentials are boundless. This also enables individuality, as you are encouraged to not stick to the mass; the only hinder is your own creativeness. Furthermore the practically can take the shape of functionality, seeking to make every space useful. The nature of functionality can thus further be seen as storage, vital in our struggle for perfection, leaving no obvious sign of disorganized apartments/houses.

“It is very compact living [my home], so you have to be practical in order to make room for the essential stuff. I have tried to cover as much space as possible, but also incorporate lots of storage. However, I do not like when stuff is lying everywhere, so I have made an effort to be as minimalists as possible. This is a hard task though, making it practical and nice with little space.”

(Interview Maria)

“It is very important for me how my home looks and it is even more important that the furniture is practical and function in the everyday life.”

(Interview Eva)

“We want the things in our home to be practical, but off course also good looking.”

(Interview Jenny)

“I think one step ahead when I purchase furnishers; I want to keep them for a while.”

(Interview Helena)

“When I chose my furniture, I was practical. I took the largest desk in order to make room for my stuff, for example my computer and writer. I also wanted a large bed and a sofa that could be use as a bed for visiting friends.”

(Interview Maria)

“I do not like orange, but despite of that I like this bedroom. There are much storage solutions which make the room practical. The bedroom is the room in the apartment where you can hide all your things.”

(Observation catalogue p.182-183, Karin)

Thus it is possible to define the Ikea customer as practical, seeking for not only design but also possibilities for functional solutions.

Simple

One of Ikea's three styles *Scandinavian* can be seen as rather minimalist in that sense it represents natural materials, light colours and an approach to favour simple products, “less is more”. The simplicity in its form, can also be a converted to Ikea's customers. Favouring our Scandinavian heritage, we seek simplicity in all its possible appearances. We do not want colours to take over; we do not want too much furniture, we do not want chaos in our life. It is the characteristics of our nature; not rigidly outspoken, rather humble, and slightly introvert.

As such, we strive to be stylish, avoiding to the highest degree any nature of clutter. Maybe this is a necessity, keeping us at float when handling our daily hectic life determined to

become our ideal self. Thus we need relaxation and order; we have to have and be in control over our life. Our home thus becomes the place we go to find peace, our own castle.

Thus the Ikea customer is simple in its taste, preference, need and want, and seek “less is more” products. Many of Ikea’s products are characterized by simplicity, from its assembling to its form. The simple design of Ikea’s products enables the many people to be individual as it offer room for personification building. By providing opportunities for individual product interpretations, customers are able to derive individual meanings (even) from Ikea products. As such, Ikea leaves room for people to adjust after their own needs, wants and preferences; to convey our personality. Consequently Ikea have cleverly reduced the many individual differences, an opening for originality. Thus the Ikea customer is simple, striving for a decorating which does not damage the balance, which does not stick out too much. Simplicity has become a virtue.

6.3 Reaching the customer

In our joint discussion we have come to various possible ways for Ikea to use when segmenting the market. However, by their present strategy, Ikea does not effectively exploit the possibilities segmentation can render. This is based on that our research has contended that Ikea’s three life course variables to not affect the customers’ behaviour, attitude or values. As Kotler *et al* (2005) contend a company need to understand its customers; it is the focal point in segmentation. Concerning the above discussion, we have undertaken an extensive investigation of few Ikea customers, resulting in the conclusions that the Ikea customer can be perceived as cost-aware, practical and simple. We therefore argue for a possible change of present segmentation strategy. But how can these three characteristics function as a segmentation strategy? Can these be seen as an element of the traditional methods?

Since our data entails the Ikea customer to be cost-aware, practical and simple, it is these characteristics that the Ikea customer seeks when purchasing products from Ikea. Even if we all have different personalities, styles and behaviours, the basis for choosing Ikea is to receive the benefits of low-price, practical and simple products. Otherwise, our choice could/would have been another store. Therefore we uphold that it is more appropriate to segment the market on the foundation of these three characteristics.

It is also important to reflect upon the company itself, in order to find a suitable and effective segmentation strategy. However, even if this is not a research investigating the effectiveness of our new proposed segmentation strategy, we can argue for our beliefs. Since Ikea already offer customers these variables, we perceive that it possible to go one step further and apply it as a segmentation strategy. These three imbues the entire company, some more (read: low price) some less. Thus by redirecting focus to these characteristics, it is possible to reach even more customers. Furthermore, this enables the possibility of continuing adopting the target group “the many people”, which seems vital for Ikea and its corporate culture. As a result, this will eliminate the confusion which today is present among consumers. Instead of focusing on various groups of people, the many people will understand what their benefits are by going to Ikea. Thus, Ikea should apply behavioural segmentation, part of the traditional segmentation variables.

7 Concluding discussion

In this section we provide our reflecting thoughts on our research. Further we will provide suggestions for possible contributions to managerial practice and theoretical development derived from our research. This research has aimed to contribute to the understanding of traditional segmentation theory. Lastly we present suggestion for possible future research.

7.1 Reflections

Products are perceived and interpreted in an individual manner, enabling differentiation and uniqueness. This decomodification of products is created in consumer minds, and is therefore difficult to detect by the visual beholder. However we argue that our ethnographic approach has enabled us to understand the drivers for behaviour, vital to effectively segment a market. By this, we have taken the present literature one step further; investigating the heavily applied traditional marketing segmentation methods and contributed with new connotations.

Before conducting this research, we believed that the lack of contemporary research on segmentation argued for a need to undertake new investigations. In the final stages, we though can conclude that traditional segmentations still are applicable, however some variables can be seen as more effective. The criticism towards geographic and demographic segmentation variables are to some extent strengthened by our research, as these revealed to not function as significant variables to divide the market effectively for Ikea. Geographic segmentation was not an influential factor on customers' behaviour or attitude against Ikea and Ikea's products. However, we still find it possible to use this variable, in order to divide a country to more tangible areas. Concerning demographic segmentation one variable appeared to be practical. Income was one common aspect, which affected a customer's attitude towards Ikea and Ikea's products.

As such, it is possible to conclude, that more appropriate to use is psychographic and behavioural variables, as our actions and behaviour are strongly connected to who we are. One essential finding in our research was the impact the psychographic variable personality has on attitude, preference, values and behaviour. The personality was obviously portrayed in all of our respondents' homes, which in turn affected their behaviour. Our personality is thus one of our main drivers. Furthermore, our research entails that the benefit customers seek in a product highly determines behaviour and attitude, thus enabling behavioural to function as a good segmentation variable.

To conclude from an overall perspective, this research approached traditional segmentation in a new form. No previous investigations have been undertaken in the area of segmentation applying an ethnographic approach. Thus, we believe we have contributed to bring new light on the traditional segmentation literature, as well as opened up for further investigations.

If a company should segment a market, we argue for undertaking investigations which contribute with knowledge of what drives an individual to a specific behaviour. By attaining a more profound understanding towards the needs of consumers, the possibilities to segment a market "correct" increases. However, correct can be comprehended in variety of ways; what one might find correct another find incorrect. Thus, it may be possible that no correct ways

can ever be found. As such, our research are merely suggestions, we do not strive for perfection. Though, we argue that our ethnography has enabled us to capture the inner self of individuals.

However, we want to highlight the low generalizability of this research, as we have studied the actions, behaviour and attitudes of few Ikea customers. That is, other results may have been rendered if additional respondents have been investigated. Furthermore, as we have undertaken the primarily role as interpretivers, our research is limited to the meanings we have found distinguishing. As such, our interpretations are/can be reflections of our selves.

7.2 Managerial and Theoretical Implications

By using a more insightful method, as ethnographic studies, we have been able to access beneath the surface knowledge of our respondents. Thus meaning we have been able to discover the many meanings individuals have, consequently affecting their attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviour. As such we argue to have captured what really drives a person to consumption. And it is also this knowledge which can be effectively used by managers when segmenting a market. It is essential to completely understand customers' needs and wants in order to effectively divide the market.

Referring to our research question, we believe to have contributed with new, valid information to the heavily investigated and used traditional marketing segmentation variables. Since criticism have been directed to this rather old strategy, we find it encouraging to have evaluated this doctrine and contend that the traditional segmentation variables are still valid. Thus, our research favours both companies adopting one of these four variables or for market researchers in the area of segmentation.

By applying ethnography to investigate Ikea's segmentation strategies, we have obtained extensive information of Ikea's consumers which could be of great use to further develop their present understanding of their consumers. Additionally, Ikea can receive information whether their current segmentation strategies are maximizing their potential of reaching as many consumers as possible and if other segmentation variables are more appropriate. Furthermore, our derived definition of consumers, and the consequential segmentation strategy, can be of interest for Ikea.

7.3 Future research

In this research we could only undertake a micro-ethnography, meaning few objects could be studied under a short period. It would therefore be interesting to further our research and undertake interviews and observations with customers over a longer time period, in order to attain additional knowledge to the complex individuals. Thus we suggest a more profound and enduring research within our area.

Furthermore, we welcome studies covering a larger region in Sweden, preferably applying Ikea. This would be beneficial for Ikea, as if same conclusions can be made over the entire Sweden; the incitements for a change of current segmentation strategy exist.

Our research has resulted in three characteristics defining the Ikea customer. We proposed these to be the basis for a behavioural segmentation strategy. However, there is a need to test these variables, in order to evaluate the effectiveness. Thus we welcome a research to evaluate our segments.

Even if the traditional segmentation variables have been adopted by companies and examined by market researchers, there is still a need to further evaluate the concept of traditional segmentation. It may be possible that our conclusions is only applicable for Ikea, due to its large size and standardized product assortment, meaning other companies may not benefit from our research. Thus, undertaking similar investigations of other companies operating in diverse industries would be beneficial and interesting.

Another topic to examine would have been to not conduct an evaluating approach, whereas instead focusing on developing new segmentation strategies. As present strategies were developed a long time ago, incentives for finding new and better segmentation strategies exist.

We hope that this research will function as an encouragement for further investigations and offer inspiration to undertake out of the ordinary methods. As such, mowing forward demands an appreciation to find new better ways. Think different and you can accomplish great things.

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