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Distinction within a folksy consumer culture

An investigation of speciality coffee consumers

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Abstract

This research departs from two domains within the research field of consumer culture theory (CCT), *Consumer Identity Projects* and *Marketplace Cultures*. The goal was to add insights to the field by investigating social distinction through exploration of a context that traditionally has been characterized as being democratic and folksy. This research will study speciality coffee consumers as they differentiate their consumption practices from the dominant folksy coffee culture.

The empirical material was collected through 8 in-depth interviews with 4 speciality coffee consumers and 4 speciality coffee producers. The interpretation of this research is following the methodological criteria of phenomenological interpretation i.e. the emic approach, autonomy of text and bracketing

Findings from this research show consumers distinct themselves from dominant folksy consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices in terms of knowledge, experiences and skills. Differentiation from a folksy dominant consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices can only become possible for consumers that possess a certain level of knowledge about the actual taste and the whole process behind the refinement of the product. They need this knowledge in order to break away from traditional consumption patterns, to distinct themselves from other consumers through a common understanding of what the product is not.

Keywords: consumer culture theory, social distinction, status, identity projects, speciality coffee consumers

1.0 Introduction

Our research departs from two domains within the research field of consumer culture theory (CCT), *Consumer Identity Projects* and *Marketplace Cultures* (Arnould & Thompson 2005). Our goal is to add insights to the field by investigating social distinction through exploration of a context that traditionally has been characterized as being democratic and folksy. Therefore we will study speciality coffee consumers as they differentiate their consumption practices from the dominant folksy coffee culture.

Contemporary Swedish society has experienced a growth of micro coffee roasters and coffee bars that produce and serve speciality coffee. Speciality coffee is characterized as having a unique- and crafted quality with a distinct taste superior to conventional coffee (Speciality Coffee Association of Europe 2014). Coffee bars that specialized in serving speciality coffee first opened in Stockholm and eventually spread to other parts of the country (sverigestelevision 2008). One of the first actors in the speciality coffee industry in Sweden is Johan & Nyström. The company was founded ten years ago by a group of coffee enthusiasts with the goal of changing the dominant Swedish coffee culture. Their goal was and is to “break the anonymity of the bean and to promote the skill and craftsmanship that goes into a good cup of coffee” (Johan & Nyström 2014). The demand for speciality coffee seems to grow as the number of micro roasters and cafés specializing in speciality coffee increase. Presently there are approximately ten micro roasters in Sweden that is specifically dedicated to the roasting of speciality coffee (sverigestelevision 2008). In line with this development it seems that some groups of consumers desire to change the dominant Swedish coffee culture. The barista Ida Carlsson reason that consumers are getting more and more aware of what they drink. They ask where the beans are produced, about the farmers and the whole production from bean to cup (sverigestelevision 2008). This increased interest is illustrated by internet forums such as “real coffee” where coffee enthusiasts communicate about different brewing methods, tips for roasting coffee at home and different kinds of speciality coffee (Riktigt Kaffe 2014). Thus it is strongly indicated that consumers and producers of speciality coffee stand in contrast to dominant coffee culture, which is characterized by mass production and Starbuckified coffee chains.

There are several examples of studies and researchers exploring consumers that stand in contrast, or opposed to dominant consumer culture. A relevant example is Arsel & Thompson (2004) study of coffee consumers that distinct themselves from the norm by avoiding Starbucks. Their study illustrates how the multifaceted oppositional discourse that permeates

local coffee shop culture arisen from Starbucks's stratospheric growth and market dominance. From their findings they categorize two different types of coffee consumer groups' *café flâneurs* and oppositional localists that differentially leverage the multifaceted anti-Starbucks discourse to experience local coffee shops. The oppositional localists use local coffee shops as a means to enact "think globally, act locally". Their respective identity goals intersect with ideals of civic responsibility and cohere around a broader collective project of supporting socially responsible actors. While on the other hand *café flâneurs* doesn't view Starbucks as a corporate colossus destroying local competition, they regard it as a boring, standardized, and mass-marketed meeting place, catering to the prosaic tastes of the corporate world. Both groups however provide examples of consumers that stand in contrast to dominant consumer culture. Further Arsel & Thompson (2011) describe in their study of indie consumers, how consumers with higher status, had higher levels of field dependent social and cultural capital. In addition their study provided insights regarding consumers' reflexive efforts to manage protect or boost the value of the cultural and social capital they have gained through identity investments in specific field of consumption (Arsel and Thompson, 2011).

We reason that Arsel and Thompson (2004, 2011) demonstrate what Holt (2002) describe as consumption practices that stand in contrast to dominant practices that occur when consumers are fed up with the principles of dominant consumer culture and collectively become more knowledgeable and skilled in enacting this extant culture and distinct themselves from the consumers' en masse. However more interestingly Arsel & Thompson (2004, 2011) research hints that particular consumer groups (oppositional localists, *café flâneurs* & indie consumers) engages in practices similar to Holt (2002) notion of the consumer-artist. In other words it seems that the consumer groups described by Arsel and Thompson (2004, 2011) thrives on the overabundance of cultural materials produced and engage the materials as artists might or pursue other bases of identity formation than brand assisted identities (local culture work and art etc) (Holt, 2002). Furthermore we perceive similarities between the described consumer groups and consumers of speciality coffee. Namely, speciality coffee consumers seem to have traits similar to that of the consumer-artist. Even though these different consumer groups share similarities there are differences that are context bound that needs to be explored. We find the phenomenon of consumers engaging in sophisticated consumption practices to distinct themselves from the dominant folksy consumer culture to be underexplored. Thus in order to explore this phenomenon, we will investigate how consumers socially distinct, build identities and consume status, in a context that traditionally has been characterized as being

democratic and folksy (Kjeldgaard et.al 2011). More precisely we will add insights to our research field by answering the following question:

How do consumers through sophisticated consumption practices distinct themselves from dominant folksy consumer culture

2.0 Theoretical Background

In this chapter we first explain and argue for our departure in research and our research aim, followed by a discussion of our field of research and the specific domains, where we add insights. We then provide the reader with an outline of theoretical reasoning, concepts and notions that frames our thesis. Further we provide a description of what consumer culture theory is, however that section will not be analyzed.

2.1 Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as the departure in research

Consumer culture theory (CCT) is not a grand theory. Rather it refers to a bundle of theoretical perspectives that aims to investigate the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings. Consumer culture theory represents a multiple of distinct theoretical approaches and research goals. Researchers within CCT share a common theoretical approach toward the study of cultural complexity that programmatically links their respective research efforts (Arnould & Thompson 2005).

When studying relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings, CCT enables us to explore the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the diversity of overlapping cultural group formations of our phenomenon. Rather than viewing coffee culture as a quite homogenous system of shared meanings and shared values by member of society. We view coffee culture accordingly to CCT as dynamic and heterogeneous. With transportation of meanings and overlapping cultural groupings that is present within the wide sociohistoric frame of globalization and market capitalism. (Arnould & Thompson 2005)

Consumer culture theory enables us to explore how consumers actively engage in the work of transforming symbolic meanings. That is encoded in advertisements, brands or material goods to display their own particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals (Holt 2002). In this case the marketplace supply consumers with a widespread and heterogeneous tray of resources from which consumers construct both individual and collective identities (Thompson and Hirschman 1995). The consumption of these widespread and heterogeneous recourses including products and symbols is central to consumer culture

where Holt (2002) argue for is much dependent on of free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life.

The conceptualization of consumer culture as an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that group together the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities, and meanings. That will enable us to understand the sense of consumers' environments and to orient the consumer cultures members' experiences and lives (Kozinets 2001). In order understand the sense of consumers we have to organize a set of theoretical questions and frameworks. That is related to the relationships among consumers' personal and collective identities and further the cultures that are created and embodied in the lived worlds of consumers. (Arnould & Thompson 2005)

Our study departs from the CCT research domain *Consumer Identity Projects* that conceives consumers as identity seekers and identity makers (Arnould & Thompson 2005). In this view the marketplace function as a source of mythic and symbolic resources where consumers use this to construct narratives of identity (Belk 1988). The marketplace further produces certain types of consumer positions that consumers can choose to inhabit (Arnould & Thompson 2005). Our investigation also departs from the CCT research domain *Marketplace Cultures* that addresses some of the most distinctive features of the intersections regarding marketplace-culture. Rather than to view people as culture bearers, we view people as culture producers (Arnould & Thompson 2005). This domain of CCT highlights that social status within the group in our case the group of speciality coffee consumers is achieved through manifestation and display of localized culture. The localized culture is contained of particular forms of knowledge and skills that are valued in the group of speciality coffee consumers and skills in combining, reinterpreting and innovation of the variety of symbolic resources that are collectively shared by group members (Kozinets 2001).

2.2 Consumer-artist

The conceptualization of the consumer-artist is described as consumers that have the time and energy to engage in consumption activities at one or the other extreme end of the distribution curve. At one extreme of the distribution curve, consumers will thrive on the overabundance of cultural materials produced and want to engage this material as an artist might, as raw ingredients with which to create (Holt 2002). At the other end of the curve are individuals who get semiotic vertigo from so much cultural fragmentation and dynamism. These consumers will deselect brand-assisted identities to pursue other bases of identity formation

such as local culture, work and art, etc. Other consumers in this extreme end may make less of a commitment and instead choose to erect narrowcast gated consumption communities to exclude all but a minimal aliquot of the sponsored world (Holt 2002).

2.3 Field dependent capital

The concept of the field originates from Bourdieu's work (1984). The central principle of the notion is that societies are organized in discrete and to some extent independent socio-cultural spheres that support particular types of status games. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:16-17) illustrates that the field is at the same time an area of conflict and competition, where individuals compete to monopoly over types of capital effective in it. For instance cultural authority in the artistic field, scientific authority in the artistic field and so on and so forth. Additionally Bourdieu (1990) describe the field as comparable to a game. By that he means that the field is structured by rules that the players follow and guides the competitors' strategic moves (ibid). Regarding the notion of field dependent capital Arsel & Thompson (2011) found in their study of indie consumer that those with higher status had higher levels of field dependent social and cultural capital. Their study gave insights regarding consumers' reflexive efforts to manage protect or boost the value of the cultural and social capital they have gained through identity investments in specific field of consumption (Arsel & Thompson 2011).

2.4 Habitus and capital

The *habitus* according to Bourdieu (1984:170) acts as the “generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices”

The *habitus* produces both practices and “the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products” (Bourdieu 1984:170). The habitus place the individual in the social space into an embodied arrangement that impact on the way we feel our tastes our “likes” and “dislikes” as natural to us. Consumer tastes are according to Bourdieu (1984:170) produced and constructed by social structure where the habitus is the “structured structure” These tastes of “likes” and “dislikes” are translated into lifestyles that we share with others that are located near ourselves in the social space. The expression of tastes in this manner structures social space where individuals form relationships with each other based on their economic and cultural capital.

Bourdieu's (1984) reasoning regarding how tastes structure and how such structures are structured by the social space and the market through “homologies of position”. Bourdieu's

notion of taste and of what he calls “homologies of position” provides useful theoretical frameworks for understanding of how consumers utilize high cultural capital in order to interpret and refine practices. The common bonds through the habitus forms sign systems that dictate who’s socially qualified, what is socially acceptable behavior (Bourdieu 1984:172).

As status and *habitus* could be applied to speciality coffee consumers we reason that these notions by Bourdieu (1984) are crucial to understand these consumers and their consumption practices. However we will not share to the same extent Bourdieu’s (1984) rather deterministic view of status. Bourdieu (1984) highlights the discussion of status achievement through consumption of goods to the embodied principles of differentiation that position people in the social space. Bourdieu reasons that the consumer is expressive but often unconsciously so the consumer “chooses” the goods that correspond to the consumers economic and social position but this “choice” is natural for the consumer. It is this consumer’s taste. The economic capital is consisted of wealth and the cultural capital is consisted of the resources obtained from education, history and family background. “Cultural capital” manifests the accumulation of something with realizable, real-world value, which refers to ones skills, knowledge and educational advantage, rather than the amount of money. Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural capital” is constructed of three subcategories: “objectified capital” such as art and artworks, “embodied capital” in the form of habits and dispositions acquired such as knowing how to behave at art galleries or the theater and “institutionalized capital” such as credentials of practices and academic achievements (Bourdieu 1997:46).

2.5 Distinction through distaste

Extending Bourdieu’s (1984) conceptualization of tastes structure and how it are structured by the social space Wilk (1997) reasons that good taste can be considered to be largely a process of learning what bad taste is with people making “...conscious overt statements through public non-consumption or avoidance” (Wilk 1997:193).

As consumers often have less difficulty to articulate and express their distastes and “dislikes” and have problems with articulating the negative product user stereotypes and negative associations with followed by product cues (Wilk 1997). Individuals are therefore much more inclined to define their self through contrasting their tastes with tastes of other individuals thus differentiate themselves through the dislike of something which other individuals like (Rozin & Fallon 1987).

What we wish to highlight with Bourdieu's conceptualization of tastes and the extension of this concept by (Wilk 1997) and (Rozin & Fallon 1987) is that their taste is perceived as something natural for them but is actually operating and determined by the social space. As Bourdieu states "The agents only have to follow the leanings of their habitus in order to take over, unwittingly, the intention immanent in the corresponding practices, to find an activity which is entirely 'them' and, with it, kindred spirits" (Bourdieu 1984:223).

Consumption is therefore seen expressive and relational; individuals express social distinction through consuming differences. By expressing tastes through consumption practices consumers place themselves in different classes and class fractions which reflect their social status. Cultural objects in this case coffee and to a greater extent coffee practices are differentiating. Coffee have cultural codes that have a certain meaning that objects are encoded and must be decoded by the consumer which requires cultural capital i.e. education, skills and knowledge of the discourse. Bourdieu relates this notion to class by linking consumers to the value of what they purchase (1984). Similar to Bourdieu but on a more tolerant view of than Bourdieu's rather deterministic view of *habitus* Holt's (1997:343) main arguments is that "consumption is socially patterned because people who share similar social conditions acquire similar tastes that organize their consumer actions".

2.6 Status consumption

Status consumption has been explained as a "form of power that consists of respect, consideration, and envy from others and represents the goals of a culture" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981:29). According to Bourdieu (1984) status consumption is manifestation to others of a view of consumption as both unconscious and conscious status competition in which everyone is involved:

Status consumption is an intentional strategy through which members of a group seek to differentiate themselves from the group immediately or believed to be so, which they use as a foil, and to identify themselves with the group immediately or believed to be so. They recognize themselves as possessing a legitimate life-style that is only ensured full effect by intentional reduplication for the automatic and unconscious effects of the dialectic of the rare and the common, the new and the old, which is inscribed in the objective differentiation of conditions and dispositions (Bourdieu 1984:246).

Eastman (et al. 1999) argues for that status consumption deals with both practices and the motivations consumers go through to improve their social standing by using products that

display social status to other members of society. In order to display social status consumers must first and foremost acquire make use of and present certain types of goods and services to increase their sense of self. Further these goods and services are used to present an ideal image of what kind of consumers they are and represent the types of social relationships they wish to develop. This is illustrated in Holt (1995) where he followed baseball fans over time. For instance by purchasing outfits that expressed and proved the individuals' attendance to games, had a middle status value. Whereas though storytelling the baseball individual supporters could create an image of having a special relationship to baseball. Thus status consumption is viewed as a value for consumers (Richins & Dawson 1992). The greater the need the consumer has to seek status symbols, the further he or she will engage in consumption behaviors in an attempt to increase the portrayed status level (O'Cass and Frost 2002).

2.7 Identity projects

In western materialistic societies an individual's identity is influenced by the symbolic meanings of his or her own material possessions, and the way in which he or she relates to those possessions (Dittmar 1992:205). By using relevant cultural materials consumers are able to construct their identity/identities (Holt 2002). Further all consumption could be seen as consumption of symbolic signs where these signs are interpreted and re-interpreted by consumers. Symbolic signs are not limited to pre-existing set of meanings set by the producers. The signs are generated and negotiated together by consumers and producers within a system of signs that function as a "more or less coherent discourse" (Baudrillard 1988 in Corrigan 1997:20). Similar reasoning is held by Fiske (1989:31) which states that "commodities are not just objects of economic exchange they are goods to think with goods to speak with". As commodities are goods to speak with they also serve as expressions of group membership and as means of locating others in the social-material environment. Moreover, material possessions provide people with information about other peoples' identities (Dittmar 1992:205).

Consumers are social actors who use images, symbols, ideas and commercial products to construct meaningful identity projects. Every consumer on an individual level or together with different groups of reference strive to find the "self" by certain consumer products and consumption practices by simultaneously distancing their identity and/or identities from others. Consumption is therefore according to (Baudrillard 1988 in Poster 1988) central to construction of the social world. The same reasoning as (Baudrillard 1988 in Poster) is held

by (Belk 1988) who mean that consumption is essential for expressing both individual- and collective identity/identities (Belk 1988).

Belk (1988:146) states that “people, seek, express, confirm, and ascertain a sense of being through what they have”. The essential meaning of this statement is that consumers intentionally engage in consumption practices to reach a preconception of their fundamental and ultimate self. Consumers gain a sense of being from what they consume and what they own to create their identity/identities. These items that are used for consumers to create their identity/identities are injected with meanings that extend far beyond what the producers intended to (McCracken 1986). For example a brand intended to provide associations of high qualitative coffee with a revealed scandal of child-labor could be interpreted by consumers as something “non-ethical” and non-moral”.

Belk (1988) reasons and illustrates that material items act as extensions of the self and communicate personal identity as well as group identity. Consumers seek to make material items i.e. tangibles their intangibles beliefs and values in order to express their connection to these associations. Consumers imagine constructions of the self through these material items as a powerful tool to create their identity. He further describes the important and real relationship between the consumer “self” and objects with the loss of possessions becomes so personal that it could be compared to physical violation and a loss of the self (Belk 1988). “It seems an inescapable fact of modern life what we learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions” (Belk 1988:160). In the study by Holt & Thompson (2004) the authors demonstrate that men act as ideological bricoleurs were they draw upon the discourse of heroic masculinity as a naturalized toolkit to construct their identities. They demonstrate that these men continuously create themselves as heroic men-of-action in ways that permeates their lives as consumers and as workmen.

2.8 Cultural meanings

McCracken (1985) accounts for the structural movements of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. Cultural meanings according to McCracken (1985) keep up in three locations: the culturally constituted world, the consumer good and the individual consumer. The consumer good carries cultural meanings that are either apparent or hidden. It is equally common for consumers to be aware or don't realize these cultural meanings. However when they are aware of a consumer goods cultural meanings they start to manipulate the meanings of these (McCracken, 1985).

Further these cultural meanings can only be aware by consumers and latter manipulated and interpreted when placed in the context of contemporary culture. Within the context of manipulation and interpretation of signs Appadurai (1996) reasons that people express their identity and create communities through manipulation of signs, symbols, commercial products and their respective meanings.

The goods or practices that are produced by culture have symbolic properties with meanings shared by the members within culture (Solomon 1983). Thus the “status symbols” differ from culture to culture -Antique furniture or an old golden necklace in a sophisticated rich old family or an Abercrombie & Fitch shirt among trendy young adults. The social value of the product helps the individual within the culture to increase their social visibility (Belk 1988).

In the socialization process the consumer gather knowledge and learns to agree on shared meanings of some symbols. The consumer also develops individual symbolic interpretations of her or his own and uses these symbolic meanings to construct, preserve and express each of her/his multiple identities. Whereas socially consumed products such as coffee or beer are utilized most often in contexts of symbolic consumption (Hyatt 1992). These socially products are used because consumers are more inclined to use products that are visible in the social space in order communicate their identity to others (Lee 1990).

Consumers do not only consider it important to communicate their identity to others but consider it important to establish and determine how other people in their social group might interpret the meanings of certain products, practices and brands (Ligas & Cotte 1999). Consumption here functions as a display of cultural objects that indicate ones cultural style within a group (Lurry 1996:46). Consumers embraces and uses these meanings to signify social distinction us vs them. For example consumers that only engages in sustainable consumption activities opposing against other “irresponsible” consumers.

Within the context of symbolic consumption Bourdieu (1984:19) display that the symbolic constituent of a consumer product has all to with the conformity to consumers being a “social being”. Within the context of speciality coffee consumption books about different brewing methods will attract some consumers while specialized coffee with unique flavors and aromas will attract others. It could therefore be seen that any product or practice when it comes to speciality coffee consumption mean different things for different consumers. They are not universally or not nationally perceived as status symbols. The perception of the level of status symbols by coffee products or coffee practices will depend on context, history, and

background. For example upper-middle class consumers in the southern area of Stockholm a place known for its “hipster culture” may view drinking coffee at single speciality coffee shops where the beans are locally roasted as a status symbol.

Yet other consumers such as lower middle class in Malmo may view drinking coffee at Starbucksified coffee chain Espresso House as a status symbol. Different social and geographical contexts, may not only ridicule the coffee from Espresso House or individuals drinking coffee at Espresso House, but they do so from various dispositions. Here Elliot (1994) states that a product or a practice may carry a varied range of meanings due to that the creation of meaning is not deterministic. Each and every individual may attribute different cultural meanings to a product or a practice but it is dependent on to the extent of which they share the collective imagination (Elliot 1994). Regarding consumption activities of branded products consumers will look for brands to contribute directly to their identity projects by providing original and relevant cultural materials with which to work (Holt 2002).

2.9 Café flâneurs and oppositional localists

Arsel & Thompson (2004) explore the multifaceted oppositional discourse that permeates local coffee shop culture arisen from Starbucks’s enormous growth and market dominance. They found and categorized two different kinds of consumer groups’ *café flâneurs* and oppositional localists that differentially leverage a multifaceted anti-Starbucks discourse to experience local coffee shops. Oppositional localists use local coffee shops as a way to enact a “think globally, act locally”. Their respective identity goals intersect with ideals of civic responsibility and join together around a broader collective project of supporting socially responsible (local) enterprise and contesting corporate hegemony.

Café flâneurs on the other hand doesn’t view Starbucks as a corporate colossus destroying local competition, they regard it as a boring, standardized, and mass-marketed meeting place, catering to the prosaic tastes of the corporate world. They valorize local coffee shops as noncommercial environments where they can experience aesthetic and social stimulation, and enjoy, as a kind of gift from the establishments’ proprietors, an authentic expression of local culture.

2.10 Consumer tribes

Consumer tribes are tied together by shared passions and emotions for a particular consumption practice or ritual. Consumer tribes will endure and stick together for as long as the passions and emotions regarding the cult-object and relating rituals do not fade.

Furthermore tribe members adapt diverse roles within the tribe. They share lifestyles, moral beliefs, emotions etcetera while committing to the tribe symbolically and ritually. (Aubert-Gamet & Cova 1999; Cova & Cova: 2002) Symbols within consumer tribes attain meaning through the members' collective negotiation and interpretation of those meanings (Cova & Cova: 2002).

It is important to state that consumer tribes are not consumer communities. For instance because of the diversity of members tribal consumers are often without long term moral responsibilities that many members of consumers communities feel (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). Notably it seems that consumer tribes are playing with market place recourses in an active manner (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar 2007).

3.0 Method

In this chapter we present and argue for our methodological approach and choices. Firstly we explain our reasoning behind the choice of ontology and epistemology. Further we account for our research design, data collecting method. Additionally we account for how we selected our respondents, how we conducted the semi-structured interviews and how the data analyzed.

3.1 Ontology and epistemology

Our departure into the realm of consumer culture theory (CCT) has steered us towards suitable research philosophies. Naturally the adopted research philosophy will affect the end results. However neglecting to think through philosophical issues can according Easterby-Smith et al (2013:17) seriously jeopardize the quality of our research. Therefore we want to clearly state our philosophical stance.

Our goal is to investigate how speciality coffee consumers make sense of the world and how they socially distinct from others. Thus we argue that it is natural to implement a social constructionist ontological stance. Our standpoint is that social entities i.e. the nature of reality should be considered as social constructions built from perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman & Bell 2011:20). In other words we perceive “reality” as something that is not objective but rather something that is socially constructed and given meaning by people (Easterby-Smith et al 2013:23). We assume that there is no objective reality, no outside world that can be observed with objective eyes (ibid). The goal is to appreciate people’s experiences, instead of searching for external causes (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012: 24). Thus we argue that it is only natural for us to adapt a social constructionist stance, since through such an adaptation it is possible to investigate, how speciality coffee consumers make sense and experience their social reality. Thus consumption of speciality coffee is assumed to be a constructed occurrence with socially constructed meanings. Thus we believe that consumer culture is not out of consumers reach to influence. We perceive reality within culture as something that is continuously changing i.e. reality is continuously under

construction and reconstruction (Bryman & Bell 2011:22). Members within a specific coffee culture changes and develop this culture. As we understand reality as social construct, we reason that reality is shaped by interactions between individuals (Moisander et al 2009).

In sum we share Becker's reasoning (1982:521 in Bryman & Bell 2011:22) that people create culture continuously. As this research project aim to add insights to the research field of consumer culture theory regarding how speciality coffee consumers differentiate themselves. We find an interpretivist epistemology to be suitable for our purposes. We adopt social constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. Since research within the field of consumer culture theory illustrates that the world is not unified, uniform, nor transparently rational (Arnould & Thompson 2005). CCT research has shown "that many consumers' lives are constructed around multiple realities and that they use consumption to experience realities" (ibid). Accordingly we argue that in order to understand consumption of speciality coffee we must view the phenomenon. Through a philosophy that views social worlds of and subsequently consumption and consumption practices as a continuously changing social construct.

3.2 Research design

Research design according to (Bryman & Bell 2011:40) provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. As earlier discussed the assumptions and decisions regarding ontology and epistemology conducting this research will help to construct an appropriate research design (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2013:17). Further the choice of research design and research methods should according to Flyvbjerg (2006) clearly depend on the problem that is under study and its circumstances.

We are interested in the participants' experiences, their opinions and thoughts. Therefore, we argue that in order to gain an understanding of how consumers experience, we find that words are preferred over numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 386). We want to understand human behavior and because we perceive "reality" as something that is socially constructed. We argue it is sensible to put emphasis on words rather than on quantification when choosing research design. Due to the above reasons we have adopted a qualitative research strategy for this study. McCracken (1988:21) reasons that "qualitative research is most useful and powerful when it is used to discover how the respondent sees the world".

In other words though qualitative investigation, we are able to gain an understanding of what is hiding behind the numbers (McCracken, 1988:21). We argue that a qualitative research strategy is most suitable for this study. However the choice of will be exposed to criticism. Since qualitative research is by some accused of being too biased, that the data generated is too dependent on what the researcher finds important (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 408). We are well aware of this potential criticism; however we still argue that a qualitative approach is most suitable for this study. Because this study aims to investigate how consumers experience and perceive the world. As McCracken (1988) argues, the goal of qualitative interviews is to get access to cultural categories and assumptions that according to one culture interpret the world. Thus it is the categories and assumptions that are of interest. Further qualitative research is not concerned with surveying the landscape; its goal is to mine it. Hence qualitative research is concentrated rather than wide-spread in its objectives (McCracken 1988:17). Our goal is not to scratch the surface but rather to generate rich and vivid empirical material that can be used in order to describe and generate insights. We are more interested in deep analysis of the answers gained from the interviews than a randomized sample (Bryman & Bell 2011:489). As Sofia Ulver (2008:85) explains the purpose of interpretivistic research is not to generalize across populations or find universalities, but rather to discover cultural phenomena in the form of particularities that may then be conceptually transferable to other individuals or groups outside the research context.

3.2.1 Transparency

Easterby-Smith et al (2012: 54) argues that transparency is important in order for qualitative research to be trustworthy. In other words they argue that it is crucial to be clear on how access to the participants was gained (ibid). How was the informants chosen, how was the data collected and recorded, how did the data transform into ideas and explanations (ibid). Our study must be conducted in an as transparent manner as possible, without hurting the participants in any way. In other words it is important that we record, transcribe and explain as much as possible of the research process. The findings from this research will rely about us as researchers view on what is significant and what is important (Bryman & Bell 2011:408). This will not only contribute to a more subjective collection and interpretation of data but this study will be hard to replicate. Being the main instrument of empirical data collection so the things heard and observed and what to concentrate on is based upon has much to do with our predilections. Therefore we find it important to be as transparent as possible. The interviews

will be recorded and transcribed and according to Sullivan (2001:349) this is a good idea since it gives others the chance to investigate whether if there is any bias or misinterpretation, thus giving validity to the research. Thus providing access to transcriptions, we will give others the opportunity to assess whether we are biased or not. This increases the transparency and subsequently the credibility of our study.

3.3 Research method, phenomenology

As we are interested in how consumers of speciality coffee perceive their consumption practices determines our interest of learning how our participants perceive the world. Therefore we have adopted a phenomenological approach to our methodology that is “concerned with how individuals make sense of the world around them” (Bryman and Bell 2011:18). In other words social action has meaning for humans or in our case consumers of speciality coffee (ibid). Furthermore since social action contains meanings, human action is important and expressive (ibid). Therefore social action contains meanings for consumers and they act on “the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and the acts of others” (ibid). The phenomenological approach is suitable for our goals of understanding the motivations behind consumption of speciality coffee as it aims to investigate meanings as they are lived in everyday existence (Laverty 2003:22).

Polkinghorne in Laverty (1983: 2003) “identified this focus as trying to understand or comprehend meanings of human experience as it is lived”. Since our goal is to understand and comprehend the meanings and experiences consumers of speciality coffee apply to their consumption practices will furthermore argue for adopting the phenomenological approach. This approach is also compatible with or social constructionist epistemology, interpretivism and our qualitative research design. Additionally phenomenology is compatible with in depth interviews (Thompson et al 1989).

3.4 How we gathered the empirical material

3.4.1 Qualitative interviews

The intention of our study is to investigate how and why consumers consume speciality coffee. Thus it is vital to peek into how the participating consumers perceive and understand speciality coffee. We reason that in order to get an understanding of coffee consumers’ experiences, what they find important and what they find meanings in, words are preferred over numbers (Bryman & Bell 2011:386). Interviews are probably the most commonly used data gathering method within qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011:465). Further May

(2011:157) argues that interviews are used in order to understand how individuals make sense of their social world and how they behave within it. To understand how the participants make sense of the world, or their motives to consume speciality coffee. We feel the decision to conduct qualitative interviews is motivated. Furthermore we argue that interviews are a logical extension of the phenomenological approach that this study adapts.

It must however be highlighted some weaknesses of the interview. For instance it it's impossible to freeze a social setting which will allow different empirical data can be obtained from one time to another (Bryman & Bell 2011:395). Another weakness of conducting interviews lies within the interplay and chemistry between researcher and interviewee. This will most probably affect the respondents' answers making it hard to replicate for another researcher. Even though we have adopted a social constructionist stance, assuming that there can be no truly objective truth. It is important to avoid bias that is transferred from the interviewer to the participant. According to Easterby-Smith et al (2012:130) this is a real concern when asking interview questions and when the answers are interpreted. It might be impossible not to influence the interviewees in any way. Since we meet the interviewees face to face (in all but three cases), the interviews were social interaction and these interactions might influence the data gathered from the interviews. Furthermore we interpreted their answers, making misinterpretations a risk. However the interviews was recorded and transcribed which gives others the chance to investigate whether if there is any bias or misinterpretation, thus giving validity to the research (Sullivan 2001:349).

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews allow us to follow a somewhat organized list of issues and questions we want to address (Bryman & Bell, 2011:473). In other words a semi-structured approach allows for an interview guide; it is possible to break the sequence of questions, to further inquire an interesting answer (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012:127). We have adopted the assumption that experiences are highly personal. Thus in order to capture such personal experiences, one needs a research tool that gives respondents room to elaborate and explain how they experience certain situations. We argue that semi-structured interviews are a tool, a good choice of data gathering method for this study. Additionally the interview guide is for us a great help particularly since we are rather inexperienced interviewers. The guide will serve as a foundation of safety. The guide provides us with some structure and we believe this structure to be necessary in order to conduct as productive interviews as possible. It is

important to state however that the guide was not a cage. It was a source of security and we did diverge from the question sequence and asked follow-up questions in order to generate as good empirical material as possible. Further we contend that semi-structured interviews are a good tool for gathering in depth material which is needed for a good qualitative analysis (Bryman & Bell 2011:489). We aspired to conduct as long interview as possible. Because the richness of the data i.e. details and self-contradictions trust is likely to increase when you spend more or “longer” time with a participant (McCracken 1988).

We conducted eight interviews that spans between 45 to 75 minutes. We contend that the interviews generated interesting and relevant insights, relevant for our research topic. Furthermore McCracken (1988) reasons that additionally to the length of the interview, it is preferable if it takes place at location/context where the participants feel comfortable and safe. Additionally we followed McCracken’s (1988) suggestion and conducted the interviews at locations the participants would feel comfortable in. Thus, the interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents, a café owned by a participants and on the phone. When conducting the interview only the interviewer and the participants except during one phone interview (the participant was in a car with colleagues). Thus we reason that the participants felt comfortable and safe, which hopefully lead to truthful and honest answers. This in combination with the support the interview guides provide makes semi-structured interviews a good method for this study.

3.5 Sampling & selection of interviewees

We selected the participants following McCracken’s (1988:17) principle that “less is more”. Thus we as McCracken reason that eight participants are usually more than enough for a qualitative study. However it is important to clarify that the small sample is not meant to represent the “larger world”. Rather the sample is a window through which we can glimpse complicated characters and the logic of culture (ibid). In other words we have decided to focus on exactly eight participants and on longer interviews. In order to understand them and gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive speciality coffee and related consumption practices.

We employed what Bryman and Bell (2011:489) describes as a convenient sample. However we argue the term “convenient” sample has far too negative connotations. We were carefully selecting suitable participants; we have gained access to interesting and valuable empirical data even though the sample was not randomized. Frankly our opinion is that had we in fact

utilized a randomized sample it would most likely not generate valid insights regarding speciality coffee and related consumption practices and meanings. Thus we argue that our convenient but carefully selected sample is appropriate for answering our research questions.

The interviews were conducted in Lund (5), Malmö (1) and Stockholm (2). Three of the interviews were conducted through telephone. We would have preferred to conduct all interviews face to face. However it was not possible because of time constraints (for the participants and us), geographical issues and we did not have the funds to travel. Nevertheless we argue that these three interviews are better than no interviews. Furthermore they generated interesting and valuable information. Despite that we missed body language and facial expressions. In other words the three phone interviews generated valuable and interesting empirical data, which were of great use for our analysis. We argue that without these three interviews, it would not have been possible to complete our study. Therefore the choice of conducting three phone interviews is justified, although we realize that the approach was not optimal.

3.5.1 Why the participants were chosen

The common trait among the participants is that they all share an interest and a passion for good, quality coffee. It is important to highlight that half of the participants (4) are professional baristas and/or coffee roasters and the other half “regular consumers” of speciality coffee. In other words for the professionals coffee is not only part of their identity as consumers but coffee is also a part of their professional identity. This has of course affected the gathered data to some extent.

However the answers and the themes gated from the professionals and the consumers alike are mostly consistent. In other words it appears that both groups have similar thoughts and perceptions and motivations regarding what speciality coffee are and why they consume it. The professionals or rather specifically the roasters do have more expert knowledge regarding taste and the production chain. Since it is part of their professional role to know, thus they are more knowledgeable than the average speciality coffee consumer. However we argue that the decision to mix professionals with consumers is justified for several reasons. Firstly, themes i.e. thoughts and motivations are similar between professionals and consumers. Secondly many of the professionals are forerunners that have seen the industry grow and are knowledgeable regarding speciality coffee consumers. Thus we argue that they have a good overview and unique insights. Furthermore, simultaneously they are speciality coffee

consumers privately, passionate about good coffee, much like the regular consumers. Overall both the professional and the “regular” participants provided similar accounts of the motivations behind consuming speciality coffee. Therefore we argue that our choice of participants is suitable for this study.

We deliberately sought out persons we knew had more knowledge than us regarding speciality coffee and related consumption practices. Thus all interviewees are more knowledgeable than us regarding speciality coffee and related consumption habits. An approach Thompson (1989:138) argues is preferable. We would actually argue that the knowledge gap between us and participants regarding speciality coffee was crucial for our investigation. Had the participants not been more knowledgeable than us and the “average Joe” consumer, the study would not have been motivated. Without the knowledge gap it would be unlikely that the study would generate any interesting insights.

Furthermore half of the participants were perfect strangers and the other half were acquainted with us. However we reason as Nancarrow et al (2001) that contends that the perfect strangers is a myth. Therefore we are questioning whether the participants are inhibited by knowing interviewer. Furthermore since the data from the interviews where we were knew the interviewee does not differ in any significant way from the interviews where the participants were perfect strangers. Thus we are of the opinion that the contaminating effect those four interviews had on the end results is minimal.

3.5.2 Conducted in Swedish

Furthermore we must be transparent and mention that all interviews were conducted in Swedish and the stamens and quotes used were subsequently translated to English. This does mean that some statements and expressions risk getting lost in translation. However we argue that the diction to conduct the interviews in Swedish was correct for several reasons. Firstly all but one participant has Swedish as a native language; Imre has lived in Sweden for almost forty years. In other words he speaks impeccable Swedish. Thus we would argue that the participants were able to better express themselves in the language they are most comfortable with. In other words we are of the opinion that we would have lost valuable insights had we conducted the interviews in English. Because we believe that the participants would not be able to express their thoughts and opinions in a sufficient manner. Secondly it would most likely been tougher to get access to participants had we suggested the interviews be conducted in English. In sum we conducted the interviews in Swedish so that the participants would feel

as comfortable as possible. Thus gaining access to empirical data that is not inhibited by language barriers. However the main reason why the interviews was conducted in Swedish was because we were following McCracken's (1988) advice of ensuring that the participants felt as comfortable as possible. And we reason that speaking in their native tongue would have that effect on them.

3.5.3 Designing the interviews

We designed the interview guide to start with a biographical question were the participant was asked to provide a description of how he perceives himself. These questions were asked to capture simple descriptive details of an individual's background and life (McCracken 1988). This was followed with questions regarding how many cups the participants drink a day and if coffee is important for them. We did this in order to get the participant to talk and think about speciality coffee. The following questions of these opening questions were the grand circuit questions (McCracken 1988) which was designed to address the topics that was provided by our theoretical background to get the respondent to talk about the area that is under investigation.

3.5.4 Data analysis

After the interviews were transcribed into text the interpretation began following the methodological criteria of phenomenological interpretation i.e. the emic approach, autonomy of text and bracketing (Thompson et.al 1989). In accordance with the emic approach the interpretation relies on our coffee consumers own terms and category systems rather than the researcher's (Kvale 1983 in Thomposn et.al 1989).

The goal for us when adopting the phenomenological interpretation approach is to describe experience in lived rather than conceptually abstract terms. For example in one of our interviews the respondent explained high quality coffee. Whereas a conceptual definition of high quality coffee might include attributes such as high-standard and sufficient quality measured this respondent explained it as coffee with pure taste which you can only determine if you are knowledgeable and experienced coffee consumer regarding brewing, the whole process and finely tuned taste. Using the respondents terms is crucial methodological procedure according to Thompson et.al (1989) to stay at the level of lived experience.

To treat our data as autonomous as possible, the preconceived theoretical notions about our phenomena must be bracketed. In other words the theoretical notions must be passive as we ought to see and describe the world from some perspective. The interpretation of our data will

have its ground in that our world view is contextual; our focus in experience and our research goal is thematic descriptions (Thompson et.al 1989). Holding on to these assumptions does not exclude bracketing specific preconceptions such as theoretical models and reasoning about the phenomenon. For example when we describe a respondent's consumption activities of speciality coffee we can intend that the consumption activities are to express status or manifest identity. When bracketing we relate to the respondents reflections in a non-dogmatic manner which will enables us grasp meanings emerging from the conversations instead of impose meanings (Thompson et.al 1989).

4.0 Analysis

Our analysis attempt to answer ho consumers distinct, create identities and consume status within a consumption field traditionally characterized as being folksy and democratic. The analysis is structured after themes identified from the semi-structured interviews. We adopt this structure in order to convey our respondents' thoughts and world view as clearly as possible. Further in this chapter we conduct an in depth analysis of our empirical material

4.1 It is all about the taste

The search for pure tastes & knowing how to consume

In conversation with Karl a self-proclaimed bon vivant barista from Malmö, he describes what a really good coffee should be and taste like:

“I enjoy coffees were the natural flavors have been savored (...) I don't like coffees were the origin taste and character has been roasted away. I want coffees with pure tastes”.

The notion of pure tasting coffee is present in almost all interviews. Pure, fruity and natural flavors provide connotations to quality and superior taste. As Illustrated by John coffee entrepreneur and barista:

“I like the thought of coffee having a character that reflects were it grew. Coffee is a berry and I like the thought of it being a berry (...) I enjoy coffees with berry connotations, fruity and soursh flavors. Or well I like almost all coffees as long as they are pure on some way”.

From Karl's and John's illustrations it seems that in order to understand and search for pure tastes and identify them they need rather high levels of cultural capital. However their level of cultural capital does not necessarily need to be high in all consumption practices. Much like Arsel and Thompsons (2011) indie consumers, our respondents seem possess high levels of cultural capital within the consumption field of coffee. It would appear that they socially distinct from other consumers by being able to identify pure tastes and quality coffee. Further the search for pure tastes can be seen as the rules of the game (Bourdieu 1990).

Bourdieu's notion "Cultural capital" (1984) is constructed of three subcategories, "objectified capital" "embodied capital", and "institutionalized capital" (Bourdieu, 1997). "Objectified capital" translates to how one recognizes what characterizes high quality coffee. In conversation with Richard one of the co-owners of Drop Coffee a speciality coffee shop located in Stockholm he gives an explanation of how one recognizes what characterize high quality coffee, he as Karl and John search for pure tastes in coffee:

"What would you say characterize high quality coffee?"

"Pure taste"

"Pure taste?"

" Yes, most of the coffees we drink are defected for different reasons but most of these defects you don't recognize (...) the only thing we consumers have learned are how coffee is roasted where it is written on the package medium roast, or dark roast or light roast and then it is written which roaster has produced it. Because we have so limited amount of knowledge there could be all kinds of defects that is hidden and if you don't know about these defects or taste these defects we don't know why the coffee tastes as it tastes instead we complain on the coffee machine at work, it is a crappy machine, but when you actually taste the coffee and think of the bitterness in the coffee and think of that is something sweet, that it is something sour how the real flavor is like we judge a gravy or in some cases wine than we can notice that it is different pure flavors that we can taste, pure taste is basically that it is very few defects and it means that it is almost mature coffee berries that has become whole and pure coffee beans that has been dealt with caution on a good manner which is high quality coffee, it gives the coffee another taste, another flavor, it provides the coffee with more flavor, it provides the coffee with a purer taste, a sweet taste and less bitterness."

In conversation with Douglas a professional coffee roaster and barista, he describes what kind of coffee he prefers. In other words what he identify as quality coffee:

"I would say I like coffee where you have enabled to preserve the coffees' natural flavor and character which is most of the time not too dark roasted because it tends to damage the coffees' natural flavor and character, so I drink lots of light roasted coffee filter coffee, coffee should have a pure taste"

What do you mean by pure taste? Could you elaborate on that?

“Well when you use paper filters instead of metal filters for example you remove lots of sediment and some oils so when you use paper filters the taste becomes purer. However lots of people use metal filters because they like when the taste is a little bit dirty but I don’t I use paper filters because I like very pure and a sourish and clear taste”.

“(…) I appreciate coffee that does not fall into any kind of category of what you would expect; I like coffee that stands out and really love to get far away from the traditional expectations about what coffee should be. I like coffee that tastes more like fruit juice, floral tastes and fruity flavors. Bitterness is really nothing I seek or enjoy”.

The search for purity, light, floral and fruity taste is a theme that pervades all interviews and is not limited to coffee professionals. For instance Klas, a coffee enthusiast describes a good coffee as:

“I have decided that I like the lighter coffee types that are light roasted (……) I like a more, fruity, floral ehhh little sourish coffee, instead of a dark roasted bitter taste”.

On the question can you describe a good cup of coffee? Aris answer

“Ohhh that is a tough one, that depends I am not a big fan of dark roast so I like when it is smooth, it should be a little bit fruity, I don’t know I always feel a little bit ridiculous when I talk about these things aromas and things but kind of fruity floral, I am more of a fan of coffee like some of my friends describe as it tastes more like tea, not because it really tastes like tea but a little more tea like than the classic coffee.”

The statements show a preference for lightly roasted and pure taste, with floral and light character and an avoidance of dark roasted bitter, conventional coffee. Thus in order to recognize speciality coffee, it seems consumers need knowledge to understand flavors that traditionally is not associated with conventional coffee. In other words they need sufficient “objectified capital” to identify high quality i.e. speciality coffee. This indicates a requirement for rather high levels of cultural capital within the field of coffee consumption. Without sufficient levels of cultural capital, it would be unlikely that they could appreciate a coffee so different from the norm. Furthermore the respondents seem to practice social distinction

As stated above objectified capital helps consumers identify what high quality speciality coffee is and how it should taste. Whereas “Embodied capital” in the context of speciality

coffee relates to how the beverage is best consumed. In other words to know how speciality coffee is best experienced. According to John, barista, roaster and coffee entrepreneur:

“many of these really really good expensive types they do not always work so well together with other stuff.(.....) often in our world a really good coffee is light, it's somehow quite easy to drink and it's light roast and the sides easily dominate. So I only drink coffee with coffee”.

The statement indicates that consuming speciality coffee is a rather different consumption practice compared to conventional consumption of coffee. Conventional coffee is usually consumed with a cinnamon bun, cookies or other sweets. However consumption of speciality coffee favors different practices. It is centered on the enjoyment of coffee or as John states:

“Speciality coffee is something you drink to enjoy the uh, traditional coffee does not work like that for most people, it's just fuel in some ways I think”

Thus speciality coffee is a beverage that should be consumed alone, without any distractions. It is a beverage of pleasure. Therefore certain levels of “embodied capital” are needed in order for consumers need to know how to consume speciality coffee. They need knowledge to break away from traditional consumption patterns, to completely focus solely on the coffee. Such consumption indicates a high level of sophistication, thus high cultural capital.

The last subcategory of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” is what he calls “institutionalized capital” which refers to credentials of practices (Bourdieu 1997:46). ”Institutionalized capital” is manifested in the conversation with Aris regarding how he brews his speciality coffee:

“(.....) I go for the whole beans, I ground and brew these beans dependent on how many cups of coffee I want and what type of coffee I am in the mood for, I usually go for the brewing method called aero pressed or pour over which is when you pour over kind of like a coffee percolator but you do it manually”

Could you describe the process?

”Yeah you boil up water and when it is getting close to 85 degrees also it is depending on how you are going to do it, than you pour it in a pour over pot and then you simply have a coffee pot and a filter holder and then you pour like this constantly pouring for approximately two minutes until you have finished and it is called pour over because you pour over the coffee”

How does this differ from ordinary drip coffee?

“It is some stuff you have more control over the process because you have control over the speed when you are pouring, you can decide the extraction of the coffee, how much water that is in the filter container and then you pour over a little bit of water on the beans before you start, it is called that you bloom the coffee, you pour a little bit of warm water on the beans first and get the beans all wet so they suck up the water and wait for 40 seconds and then you pour over again, then you can pour it in a special spout which enables you to have control over the speed of the pouring so you can decide how the extraction of the coffee will become”

The respondent illustrates and manifests practices of brewing speciality coffee in a manner that demands more knowledge and skills than brewing ordinary drip coffee. The process of brewing coffee like Aris is described in an advanced and sophisticated way. The quotes portrays that brewing coffee in a manner like Aris demands more practical knowledge and techniques than brewing ordinary drip coffee. Further it seems as if understanding of pure taste provides speciality coffee consumer with cultural authority Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

It takes knowledge to identify speciality coffee

The habitus place the individual in the social space into an embodied arrangement that impact on the way we feel our tastes our “likes” and “dislikes” as natural to us. The expression of tastes in this manner structures social space where individuals form relationships with each other based on their economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984).

Furthermore, knowledge appears to be a prerequisite for identifying both good and bad coffee. In other words consumption of speciality coffee includes cultural codes that must be decoded by consumers. Codes that signs what characterizes good and bad coffee. To interpret the cultural codes of speciality coffee requires cultural capital, in other words, education, skills and knowledge of the discourse (Bourdieu, 1984). It is likely that consumption of speciality coffee demands rather high levels of cultural capital within the field. Hence, it seems high cultural capital within the field coffee consumption is required in order to appreciate speciality coffee, to interpret and understand the value and taste. Understanding the value of speciality coffee is demonstrated in this statement by Aris:

“You have to be informed and involved to appreciate it, first of all you have to know that it is good to really know, it can't be high status for someone who doesn't know what it means to

drink coffee, what it costs and which processes the coffee has gone through, so you have to be involved and informed to respect the product, I really believe in that, it is like you can't say club but little as a membership to be involved in coffee it is among people who know some, it is much more different that it is perceived as better with people who know than people who doesn't have a clue".

This statement manifest that to appreciate speciality coffee and the values provided speciality coffee requires a certain level of knowledge and taste regarding drinking and the whole process behind the coffee. It also displays that expressing and gaining high status is only possible for those who know what it means. Klas describes a situation illustrating Aris reasoning, when his girlfriend's sister tried speciality coffee for the first time.

"(...) I remember I got told by my girlfriend's sister that it (the coffee) did not taste so much. It was like American shit, she said, when I tried to explain this and that, this is quality coffee I think it's great but she did not think the coffee was good".

The quotation paints a rather clear picture; the sister did not have sufficient skills and knowledge regarding how speciality coffee should taste. She did not have enough knowledge to interpret the cultural codes of what speciality coffee should be and taste. This would indicate that she did not have sufficient levels of cultural capital, within the context of speciality coffee. The coffee did not express high status for her, nor did she feel there was any status to be gained, because she did not understand the value of it. The taste was alien to her; she did not recognize quality on the contrary. She interpreted the coffee as being of low quality. The situation does quite neatly illustrate that high cultural capital within the field of coffee consumption is important for the understanding and appreciation of speciality coffee. Further an interesting observation from Klas recollection is that it illustrates that consumers with lower levels of cultural capital regarding coffee consumption seem to be confined by convention; they seem to limit their consumption to conventional coffee. While on the other hand consumers with higher levels of cultural capital within coffee consumption are guided by a search for more knowledge and better understanding of unconventional tastes. While bound to a western context and to the context of speciality coffee, there are some similarities. Since it takes knowledge and higher levels of cultural capital within the field coffee consumption to understand speciality coffee.

The above might explain why the participants describe speciality coffee as a different beverage. A beverage that is totally different from conventional and commercial coffee. It is coffee yet it is described as something different. As John puts it

“It's almost like another beverage; speciality coffee is almost like another drink”

Klas have similar thoughts; he reasons that speciality coffee, *“(...) feels like coffee 2.0, a step up”*.

The description of speciality coffee as a beverage that is different from conventional coffee with characteristics and tastes that is not normally associated with coffee i.e. floral, fruity and sourish tastes. From Bourdieu's (1984) notion of “homologies of position” we reasoned that purchasing speciality coffee from small local coffee rosters which is more expensive and more qualitative but has an equivalent function as mass-produced coffee can signal a certain social status. When it comes to purchasing coffee Aris states:

“I usually purchase speciality coffee from different micro roasters and some speciality stores (...) I usually purchase online or to Java Teahouse or to the Tea & Coffeehouse in Malmoe or to some other speciality store were you check out some coffee sorts, talk with the employees regarding which one is good, if they have something to recommend or if they have something fresh and then you try one of the fresh ones and taste some”

Imre states when he: *“have the opportunity to indulge I go to a micro roaster in Malmoe which roast their coffee that they have acquired from small producers”*.

Karl have similar ideas as Imre he state that, *“I don't know if you know about that place but it's a place that sells coffee which is really good and they have a wide range of coffee sorts, there is a coffee called Monsooned Malabar which is really good”*

Social distinction through distaste of conventional coffee

Wilk (1997) sees good taste as something that can be considered to be largely a process of learning what bad taste is with people making “...conscious overt statements through public non-consumption or avoidance” (Wilk 1997:193). This avoidance and non-consumption is presented by our respondents: Aris states:

“I never buy coffee from supermarkets, not anymore because they only have the common brands and that is not very interesting, you don't even know when it is roasted, you get no information on those vacuum packed bricks (laugh)” (Aris)

“When it comes to me as a coffee consumer maybe I do not settle with just buying a specific brand, I want to know which types of coffee beans that is behind” (Imre)

“(…) now I don’t drink coffee from supermarkets such as ICA and Coop or any of those” (Klas)

It is clear that these consumers avoid mass-produced and anonymous coffee which is seen as a learning process both when it comes to the actual taste of the coffee and coffee in terms of more information and transparency. Regarding the actual taste of the coffee:

Rikard states that: *“to feel the difference between speciality coffee and conventional coffee you have to try speciality coffee three times and then you can decide this is really nice or no this is not for me it is not stranger than that some people doesn’t like grapefruit, and that speciality coffee have a certain type of sweetness and sourness and of course not all people like this but with knowledge and guidance and taste it three times is actually what is needed to feel the difference”*

“(…) some people doesn’t think it is coffee if it doesn’t burn in the throat that you feel it in the stomach that it is very sour and rough.. I don’t like that so much but it is a learning process it changes over time in the beginning I really loved Skånerost (typical coffee sold in supermarkets popular in the south of Sweden) and I thought this is coffee but now I don’t like it, I don’t think it’s coffee anymore I think it tastes burned and that it tastes too strong.. I can still appreciate it but not as much as I used to.” (Aris)

These two quotes illustrates that good taste of the actual taste of coffee is a learning process through tasting and knowledge. Thus consumers enjoying speciality coffee could be seen as they have developed their knowledge regarding taste and preferences of coffee. Imre compare speciality coffee with fine wines: *“Coffee is similar to wine you enjoy some wine sorts and others you don’t someone like it a little bit sweeter and someone like it a little bit dryer and then you find your family that you enjoy and then you pick sorts within this family and avoid other families.”*

Consumers differentiate through disliking what others like (Rozin & Fallon, 1987) which is in line with much of our empirical material. Practically all participants could quite vividly describe what kinds of coffee they did not enjoy. For instance the barista from Malmö explains:

“I generally don’t drink coffee from a large roaster, that dark roast I don’t think it taste good.” Klas have similar thoughts *“had you asked me before I found speciality coffee I would answered I like dark roast but I have come to the conclusion that I do not because it has a bitter tone”*. As does John *“ what I absolutely, absolutely do not like, is dark roast, I don’t drink it at all”*

What is clear is that the overwhelming majority of the participants dislike dark roasted coffee in general. The only consumer who could appreciate dark roasted coffee sometimes is Imre: *“I like all different kinds of brewing methods that you can use when you are brewing your coffee and also different kinds of roasts (...) sometimes I am in the mood for the intense and heavy taste of dark roasts and sometimes I am in the mood for more light taste”*

However all dislike dark roasted, bitter tasting coffee from market incumbents such as Zoégas and Gevalia. Thus they distance from the coffee the majority consume (Wilk, 1997, Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Conventional coffee does not seem to satisfy their high standards of what coffee should be and taste like. The respondents reasoning indicate that their taste in coffee is more sophisticated and demanding than what mass-produced coffee can produce. *John* paints a rather illustrative picture of this. As to why conventional coffee is disliked by our participants. Even though the quote is from one individual, the content is representative for what was said in all interviews.

“conventional coffee does not taste good because knowledge, knowledge you get from tasting a lot of coffee, and then taste the commercially conventional coffee it is not good, no good quality”

The participants find the taste of conventional coffee to be bad. Since they have the knowledge to identify and understand coffee of high quality. It is through knowledge the participants are able to articulate distaste towards conventional coffee. Thus it is through knowledge they are able differentiate from other coffee consumers. While they might disagree on what exactly quality coffee is or how it should taste. There seem to be consensus regarding what quality coffee is not. Thus it is indicated that consumers of speciality coffee differentiate through a common understanding of what speciality coffee is not.

Social distinction, through feelings of moral superiority

A majority of the respondents argues that social justice is an important factor when they buy coffee. They want to know that everyone in the production chain is paid decent wages. As illustrated from the following statements from Emanuel and Karl the barista from Malmö:

Emanuel explains that: *“There are farmers that are working for companies that exploit them, to produce the cheapest cup of coffee possible. It is important for me, who can afford to spend a few bucks extra help people to live in better conditions”*.

Karl actively *“avoid the coffee which I know is produced in a way that is not morally acceptable both environmentally and socially for farmers”*

The statements show with clarity that they prefer coffee that is produced in a way that is socially responsible. Further social responsibility is a theme that can be found in almost all interviews. For instance John started his own roastery partly because the roaster he previously worked for did not live up to his moral standards. However he also claims that he does not *“have any particular opinion about the commercial industry.”* Although overall it seems that consumers and producers of speciality coffee seek to produce and purchase coffee that is farmed and manufactured under acceptable social terms. Further it is indicated that a majority of the respondents find that industrial rosters cannot live up to these standards. For instance Karl argues that the commercial coffee industry *“exploit people”* and that he is *“quite critical or skeptical of any major rosters (business) approach and methods* and that they engage in *“false advertising*. The above can be seen as an example of how speciality coffee consumers distinct from others, us versus them (Lurry, 1996). From the interviews one can sense that the participants feel slightly morally superior to other coffee consumers. They avoid industrial roasters not only because they don't like the taste of their coffee but also because they do not trust that they are socially responsible. Speciality coffee provides the participants with greater taste experiences and at the same time consuming a product that is just and morally sound. Even though it is not explicitly stated a majority of the participants does implicitly hint that they are responsible consumers. In other words they implicitly claim that they are different from regular coffee consumers, some more clearly than others.

4.2 Knowledge is status

The more the better

Status consumption has been explained as a “form of power that consists of respect, consideration, and envy from others and represents the goals of a culture” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981:29). Richard, the coffee roaster from Stockholm, describes how speciality coffee consumers consume status. He reasons that the status is centered round the taste:

“Because it is the taste that is important so coffee actually costs money and status is usually like, I have got hold of this coffee from this African roaster. Or this particular type of exclusive bean from them, this is what we want to show perhaps rather than products”

The quote indicates status consumption within the context of speciality coffee is about finding the best taste. Thus one must have the knowledge to identify what good taste is. Know how to find exclusive beans and to know which African coffee roasters are good. This demands rather high levels of knowledge and dedication. In other words, knowledge seems to be an essential component when consuming status, within the context of speciality coffee.

Bourdieu (1994) reason that status consumption as an intentional strategy that members of a group employ to identify themselves with the group. They recognize themselves as possessing a legitimate life-style. Thus knowledge becomes a way for consumers of speciality coffee to position themselves within their group. Furthermore the knowledge they possess sets them apart from conventional coffee consumers. It would seem the more knowledge or cultural capital the speciality coffee consumer possess, the more status he or she will gain.

Goods or practices that are produced by culture have symbolic properties with meanings shared by the members within culture (Solomon, 1983). Thus status symbols differ from culture to culture. In the context of speciality coffee there are some practices that are shared between the participants. That is when brewing coffee at home the majority states and presses the importance of grounding the coffee beans before brewing the coffee. The practice of grounding coffee is as much else related to speciality coffee about enhancing flavors, to produce the best tasting cup possible. From the interviews it is indicated that a coffee grinder is the most basic item a speciality coffee consumer should have. Otherwise the taste is impaired. In order to illustrate this Klas compares whole coffee beans with an onion:

“To grind home is best since the taste is better preserved in a whole bean compared to pre-grounded coffee. You could compare it to an onion, if you chop it will go bad fast or faster than a whole onion. It is the same thing with coffee it loses taste and fragrance”

Karl has a similar argument, according to him: *“If you are interested in coffee you should ground coffee at home”*

Thus it would seem that a coffee grinder is a basic item that is indicated to be the foundation for good coffee at home. Arguably for a conventional consumer, drinking pre-grounded coffee from any of the market incumbents. Grinding your own coffee is probably not a practice that has any significant symbolic value. However in the context of speciality coffee the coffee grinder is something crucial, a simple rather cheap gadget. That ensures that good coffee can be brewed at home. Gadgets don't seem to have very much value as products. It is indicated that they are important to enhance and bring forward the unique flavors of coffee. This further indicates that taste and taste experiences is at the heart of speciality coffee consumption. As Emanuel states, *“speciality coffee is a drink of indulgence”*. Emanuel's statement seems to capture what seems to be the most important aspect of speciality coffee. That is to say the coffee is in focus. The participants seem to want to let the coffee speak for itself. Further John argues that *“the role of the roaster is to capture what is unique with a particular coffee”*. In other words within the context of speciality coffee it seems that gadgets are of secondary importance. It is indicated the coffee and the quality of the beans and the taste that truly matters. Therefore the social value seems to be connected to how knowledgeable the consumer is and what beans and coffee he or she can get hold of. John describes two types of knowledgeable consumers.

“They actually become more and more and that's fun ehmm but how to describe them, I think that there is a type that is always a bit of a kick seeker, like always want to try new coffees and buy most things that are new and coming from all sorts of roasters”.

“Then there are also those who have really learned to appreciate a good cup of coffee and then they find their coffee type and then they like stick to it. There are two types somehow”.

As stated above knowledge seem to generate social value for consumers of speciality coffee, in other words knowledge could increase their social visibility (Belk 1988). Knowledge seems to be synonymous with status within the context of speciality coffee. However to gain knowledge one must invest time and effort, a notion the following section will explore.

To put in time and effort is required

In order to display social status consumers acquire and make use of and present certain types of goods and services to increase their sense of self. Further, consumption is used to present an ideal image. In other words status consumption is expressive. Additionally different practices generate different levels of status (Eastman et al. 1999, Holt, 1995). The knowledge requirement seems to be a barrier that consumers must overcome in order to become consumer speciality coffee. Therefore consumption of speciality coffee could be perceived as a rather exclusive consumption practice. Since it seems that it takes time and effort to become a speciality coffee consumer. In order to really understand the tastes and why a coffee tastes like it does. In other words speciality coffee consumers express, what could almost be described as superiority. They understand and so many others do not. As Aris puts it:

"I am a little bit of one of those who have finely tuned preferences there are those people who just drink their coffee for the caffeine and doesn't care about the taste or there are people like here in my corridor who purchase the absolute cheapest coffee euro shopper and absolutely doesn't care they just want coffee... for me coffee is a little bit of an experience every time, I drink it more for the whole experience, to take a cup of coffee is a thing for me, I have these different beans and these gizmos it is like a ritual, some people doesn't understand how I can spend ten minutes on my morning coffee but for me it's really nice, for me it's the big thing you ground the beans you smell it, it's kind of like a little ritual, I have this manual coffee ground and then I usually brew it with an aero press and I do this each and every morning."

Consumers of speciality coffee put emphasis in the taste and the taste experiences or as Richins & Dawson 1992 puts it, status consumption is perceived as a value for consumers. Klas statement below paints a picture.

"I think for that before, I really like did not reflect so much about what it (coffee) tastes like and did not see coffee the way I look at it now (...) The experience has increased, as I can sit and spin around a coffee and smelling it several times to feel the tastes better so that way it's a completely different experience now than it has been before".

Klas describes that before he found speciality coffee he did not reflect over the taste of coffee. However as he discovered speciality coffee he began to think about coffee in different light. Drinking coffee has become more of an experience and a pleasure for him. He makes an effort to feel and experience various tastes better. It is the hunt for new and better tastes that provides Klas like the majority of our participants with value. Thus it to understand tastes, to

experience and take pleasure from speciality coffee seems to be synonymous with status. Since consumers of speciality coffee understand a taste, a group of coffee that the vast majority do not. Thus consumption of speciality coffee sets them apart from the vast majority of coffee consumers. This seems to cause a dilemma for many of our participants. They want to be inclusive yet at the same time put much emphasis on how important knowledge is to understand speciality coffee

Desires to be inclusive, however knowledge excludes

As mentioned above many of our respondents face a dilemma. They want to be inclusive yet the knowledge and time investment required to gain status excludes. Below two statements from Douglas and John that describes that they don't like the thought of speciality coffee being too excluding:

“Speciality coffee that is what we are working with should never be difficult you should never feel like you are not allowed to take part. However unfortunately it happens quite often with coffee in Sweden and in many other places in the world right now. That subcultures form out of people like drinking speciality coffee”

“Yeah it's really interesting because I think that speciality coffee industry has been damned snobbish and is still to some extent., a gap has been created between themselves and the consumer by being damn cool and having a quite excluding style”(…) “if you are too cool you won't get friends like no one dares to be with you”

Douglas and John both describe speciality coffee as rather excluding. An industry and consumption practice that is hard to take part in. This is something they disapprove of. They seem to genuinely want speciality consumption practices to be more inclusive. Douglas even explicitly states that speciality coffee should never be hard and John if you are too cool you won't get any friends. Undoubtedly they want speciality coffee to be more inclusive and approachable for consumers. However at the same time they stress that knowledge is of utmost importance, in order to understand speciality coffee. For instance John states that speciality coffee:

“Require much training and constantly develop your knowledge, knowledge above all, to understand why it tastes the way it does. So in some ways I think that it will not go like super-fast to teach people to appreciate it is a fairly slow process, I believe”.

Thus indicating that knowledge within coffee consumption is needed in order to appreciate speciality coffee and that it will take time to teach consumers. Therefore even though it seems that they genuinely want to be including, the need for knowledge is excluding. Consumers must have certain levels of knowledge to appreciate speciality coffee. To have knowledge seems to be synonymous with status within the context of speciality coffee. As O’Cass and Frost, 2002 puts it, the greater the need the consumer has to seek status symbols, the further he or she will engage in consumption behaviors in an attempt to increase the portrayed status level. In other words since knowledge equals status. Speciality coffee consumers and professionals will work to deepen their knowledge, in order to gain more status. Therefore they risk becoming even more excluding.

Douglas and John are both coffee professionals, so naturally they want to be more inclusive in order to expand their business. However, similar reasoning is found among regular speciality coffee consumers. For instance Klas states that

“There are certainly those who think that coffee has become a connoisseur thing(...) I enjoy good wines, good coffee, however I also like falukorv and macaroons so I do not think it is connected, I just think it's really fun with new flavors”.

Klas statement highlights that he understand that some perceive his coffee consumption connoisseur and a bit snobbish. However he does not agree since he also enjoys foods and drinks that are not considered to be located within the connoisseur sphere. Like John and Douglas it seems Klas want consumption of speciality coffee to be inclusive. However as he stated above, he reflects around the tastes of coffee. He knows more about coffee than the average consumer. Thus he is in a sense also excluding. Since he has more knowledge and is increasing his knowledge. Thus he gains more status and since knowledge equals status speciality coffee consumers can be perceived as excluding.

4.3 Speciality coffee a material for identity building

Identities tied to knowledge of coffee

In western materialistic societies an individual’s identity is influenced by the symbolic meanings of his or her own material possessions, and the way in which he or she relates to those possessions (Dittmar 1992:205). In conversation with Aris he starts to show me his coffee books and explain what they are all about

“(...) I have these books, I mean this book is about everything from bean to cup, from field to cup as it is called, so I bought this book to learn more because the more you learn the more you can appreciate it, so for example if it is written naturals on the coffee package I now know that it means that the beans has been drying in the sun instead of in another way and because this is a harder process I can appreciate it more”

“This other book who I actually bought recently is about coffee history and its history written in a more funny manner it is little more interesting to read then other history written in a boring way, this book is really interesting and it’s called uncommon grounds it is about the whole coffee development from the beginning to the end and further I read a lot on the Internet about farming and articles and all of those things”

Aris statements show that his material possessions of coffee products possess meanings in terms of knowledge and education. His identity is influenced by these possessions in terms of that they provide him with knowledge, knowledge that he uses to appreciate coffee and being a more educated coffee consumer.

Douglas explains how some consumers are using speciality coffee in order to be expressive:

“I see how cultural tendencies right now that some people express themselves by drinking coffee but I think it is temporary”

John has similar thoughts he believe that coffee is,

“Extremely important that I think it has become more and more like this to you, it is the coffee you drink in any way it's a way to signal what to say, eh an identity I really believe that”.

The two quotes above from Douglas and John points towards an interesting notion. That consumption of speciality coffee is used to signal an identity and express themselves to their surroundings. Interestingly as Richard explained above, consumption of speciality coffee centered round the taste. The products used to brew the coffee are of secondary importance. Both the professional and the amateur participants put time and effort into increasing their knowledge. In order to learn more about coffee and get a deeper understanding of why it high quality coffee tastes like it does. Thus it is the knowledge that separates our respondents from conventional coffee consumers. Therefore knowledge is a tool for the respondents to express their identity as speciality coffee consumers.

Identities shaped by distance

In conversation with Richard he describes symbols, ideas and commercial products within the culture of speciality coffee:

(...) “what hat I like about this culture is when we talk about speciality coffee and speciality roasters is that it is little bit low-fi, it is very few in this little business that would recommend people to buy espresso machines for home use because we know that if we want satisfying results you have to purchase espresso machines that costs lots and lots of thousand crowns and lots and lots of work and it will cost a lot in terms of education and losses to produce a really good espresso, I mean espresso machines was the Christmas gift of the year in Sweden I think two years and there has been lots of people that has purchased bad machines and then they stand there and sweat because of it and purchases lots of kilos of coffee without any good results and they are trying to skim the milk but we recommend to purchase just filters and gizmos boil some water on the stove with total investment costs of thousand crowns to produce the absolute best cup and then you should use a grinder which is also low-fi, it is the taste that is the most important thing and that is a little bit low-fi because it is the taste that is most important and in this case then the actual coffee is that costs and the status is in this case often where you have got your hands on this particular coffee from this African roaster or this type of exclusive bean from those guys, this is what we want to show off instead of maybe the products.”

Richard reasons that speciality coffee and the culture around it is low-fi. Consumers within this culture of speciality coffee according to Richard construct meaningful identity projects by distancing themselves from the mass that purchases expensive machines instead it is the craftsmanship, the grinding and brewing of coffee and the consumption of the actual coffee that is of importance. It is the actual coffee product and your skills you use to construct your identity of being a speciality coffee consumer not with expensive coffee machines. Every consumer on an individual level or together with different groups of reference strive to find the “self” by certain consumer products and consumption practices by simultaneously distancing their identity and/or identities from others (Baudrillard 1988 in Poster).

In conversation with Imre he shows and talks about all his different coffee gizmos. *“(...) this is a mocca-brewer which is a common method for home brewing in Italy, I also have a percolator brewer, and here we have a bistro brewer and this brewing method generates little*

bit different flavors and nuances.” Further he shows how you ground and brew Turkish coffee:

“What characterize Turkish coffee is that you ground very finely and then you use this little Dixie that is pretty slender in the estuary and bigger in the bottom so all the aromas are preserved that you really heat up the water and you always leave this coffee-ground left.”

Imre demonstrates his wide and deep knowledge of coffee brewing through showing his different brewing gadgets, how he grounds and brew it and how it will affect the taste. Imre make his possessions and the relationship he have with these possessions influence their identity of being skilled and knowledgeable coffee consumers.

Symbolic signs are not limited to pre-existing set of meanings set by the producers. The signs are generated and negotiated together by consumers and producers within a system of signs that function as a “more or less coherent discourse” (Baudrillard 1988 in Corrigan 1997:20). These generated and negotiated signs of consumers are described by several of our respondents.

Imre states that: *“(...) Of course I reason that if I have heard something or if some manufacturer or a brand have too much preservatives or if they got some criticism or if you hear something from friends you avoid these coffee products but there was this ones I felt that this coffee was not good then I have thrown the whole package in the garbage”*

Aris states: *“Well I avoid cheap coffee I usually don’t buy coffee if they doesn’t have any certifications unless if it’s micro roasted coffee then I sometimes know that even if they don’t have any certifications even though they are keeping it good.”*

Emanuel reasons that: *“There is kind of like a correctness to drink speciality coffee brands, whole beans is a nice thing that you can’t even compare with big packages containing mass-produced coffee,, for example Zoégas which all of them taste the same but with the whole beans you know you get a more taste experience and I am also very delighted about high quality coffee and the whole journey from bean to cup is very interesting, where the beans are produced.”*

These respondents describe generated and negotiated signs regarding coffee products. The respondents create a picture of what characterize good coffee for them through words from others, taste and their interpretation of brands and certifications. They avoid cheap coffee and

mass-produced coffee because of their limitation to satisfy their demands regarding taste and there limitation to provide the consumers with relevant information of the product. Aris reasons:

“If I choose a café I choose one that has good coffee and who are a little bit more socially responsible and who really knows how to brew good coffee, for me it is absolutely crazy that there are cafés who serve terrible coffee, I mean they are a café, but today in Lund like people get their coffee and cookies they are cafés everywhere I mean here in Lund you can run a café and serve shit coffee and still get around which is for me totally strange so I go to places where they serve good coffee or to a place I haven’t tried before but it must be a good place.”

Aris demonstrates that he knows better than other consumers were to find good coffee. He is according to himself more critical and knowledgeable than most consumers when it comes to brewing and drinking coffee. He finds the “self” and simultaneously distancing his identity from others by his knowledge and developed taste when it comes to coffee.

Klas also demonstrates that he is more knowledgeable than most consumers when it comes to purchasing coffee:

“I don’t think I have bought coffee in some of the food retailers since I began to work with coffee, I have either been drinking coffee at work or bought coffee from work because then I know where it comes from, that the farmers have decent wages and I know that it is well processed.”

Klas doesn’t purchase the coffee that most consumers buy. He wants to be informed and make sure that it is good conditions for the workers which he relates to his identity of being more knowledgeable and more aware when it comes to purchasing coffee than the masse. Both Aris and Klas find the “self” by purchasing coffee that is socially responsible and that suits their finely developed taste and avoid mass-produced and “shit coffee” which distance their identities from the coffee consumer masse by being more knowledgeable regarding coffee.

Klas statement above touches upon a notion that many of the respondents identify themselves as responsible consumers, a notion that will be explored in the following section.

Identities of being responsible consumers

Belk (1988) contend that consumption is essential for expressing both individual- and collective identity/identities. Aris, Imre and Klas manifest their individual and collective identity/identities through their consumption of coffee.

Imre: *“When I purchase coffee I want to make sure that it is Fairtrade and that it is humane conditions for the ones who work on the farms that they get better paid for their work and I would like to know that these types of coffee doesn’t have too much preservatives.”*

Klas: *“Now when I have started to work with coffee it has become even more important and I have realized that even though it is labeled that the coffee is ecological and Fairtrade it could maybe be so that the Fairtrade salaries are not that high and ecological sure but there are also some coffee farms that are smaller and the ecological certification cost a lot and as I have understood it this ecological certification costs as much as hell and then small farms can’t afford the certification.”*

The consumption activities of our respondents express their collective identities of being well aware, informed and responsible when it comes to purchasing coffee. All the respondents express identities of being knowledgeable when it comes to purchasing what they call good coffee.

Belk (1988:146) reasons that consumers gain a sense of being from what they consume and what they own to create their identity/identities. In conversation with Emanuel he states:

“I am overall interested in the quality of food and beverages because I want to eat and drink quality products but I also care much about where the products are produced and my own impact on the external environment”

Emanuel expresses that he gains a sense of being and creates his identity through consumption of quality- and responsible products. These consumption activities reflect his identity of being reflective and cautious citizen.

These items that are used for consumers to create their identity/identities are injected with meanings that extend far beyond what the producers intended to (McCracken 1986). These items produced by some coffee producers and coffee shops are injected with meanings from consumers that are beyond what the producers intended to is manifested by Imre:

“A colleague of mine opened up a package of coffee from the food retailers at work and we were like boy this smells like ground beef and then you don’t purchase coffee from that producer anymore, when you open up a coffee package and the whole thing really smells like ground beef then unfortunately one time is one time to many and then you avoid this types of coffee, and it could be that you have been drinking some sorts of coffee at a café and you I was like boy this is really sour and then you don’t purchase that kind of coffee, I don’t like when the coffee taste that sour and you can avoid that by the brewing technique or if you smell a scent that you don’t like then you don’t purchase that coffee.”

Imre demonstrates that his refined taste when it comes to coffee causes some coffee to be “bad” and rejected which results in creating an identity of being an experienced and critical consumer.

Belk (1988) reasons and illustrates that material items act as extensions of the self and communicate personal identity as well as group identity. In conversation with Emanuel he communicates his personal identity and group identity through his material items:

“I am very keen of doing the right thing for example purchasing Fairtrade coffee, purchasing coffee that comes from good working conditions, that it is good for the farmers”

So the whole process from bean to cup is important to you?

“Absolutely, the whole transparency, I mean you can’t compare it to banana plantation and stuff like that but you know how bad the conditions could be for the farmers and workers who are being exploited by companies just to produce coffee as cheap as possible and I think it is important for me because I am lucky to afford to spend a couple of extra money to help out people so they can live and work under better conditions”

Emanuel states that the whole transparency from field to cup and good humane working conditions is of great importance when he purchases his coffee. This indicates that he communicates an identity of being responsible and caring citizen.

Aris *“If I choose a café I choose one that has good coffee and who are a little bit more socially responsible and who really knows how to brew good coffee, for me it is absolutely crazy that there are cafés who serve terrible coffee, I mean they are a café, but today in Lund like people get their coffee and cookies they are cafés everywhere I mean here in Lund you can run a café and serve shit coffee and still get around which is for me totally strange so I go*

to places where they serve good coffee or to a place I haven't tried before but it must be a good place."

Aris demonstrates that he knows better than other consumers were to find good coffee. He is according to himself more critical and knowledgeable than most consumers when it comes to brewing and drinking coffee. He finds the "self" and simultaneously distancing his identity from others by his knowledge and developed taste when it comes to coffee.

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Klas doesn't purchase the coffee that most consumers purchase. He wants to be informed and make sure that it is good conditions for the workers which he relates to his identity of being more knowledgeable and more aware when it comes to purchasing coffee than the masse. Both Aris and Klas find the "self" by purchasing coffee that is socially responsible and that suits their finely developed taste and avoid mass-produced and "shit coffee" which distance their identities from the coffee consumer masse by being more knowledgeable regarding coffee.

Speciality coffee, cultural material for identity building

"Commodities are not just objects of economic exchange they are goods to think with goods to speak with" Fiske (1989:31). "Aris describes his book Blue bottle craft of coffee with great enthusiasm: *"It is about everything from farming, roasting to how to drink coffee and there is also recipe of pastries and which types of food that suits which types of coffee and they bring up some history and lots of information about different areas and different kinds of methods to roast coffee, he also gives out a guide for how to roast coffee at home and describes all of the different brewing methods, the book comes from blue bottle coffee company which is one of the largest speciality coffee roasters in America, it is very popular in San Francisco, very popular in the American coffee world and the guy who started up this business is kind of like an icon."*

The book *Blue bottle craft of coffee* expresses that Aris is genuinely interested of speciality coffee. It also expresses that he is knowledgeable about the whole process of refining speciality coffee from farming to drinking it.

Consumers are social actors who use images, symbols, ideas and commercial products to construct meaningful identity projects (Baudrillard 1988 in Poster 1988). Speciality coffee seems to provide many of the participants with original and relevant cultural material with which to work and contribute to their identity projects (Holt, 2002).

Klas states that: *“I don’t drink as much coffee as I did before, now it is more special”*. In other words Klas now see coffee as something special that enhances his everyday life, a special moment of the day. Further John likes what he describes as the ritual before the coffee is consumed *“Firstly you grind fresh coffee beans and then you use a scale to weigh and then uh, and then I choose the brewer, then you often have a filter and the filter rinsed because but various paper filter taste different”*. The elements of the ritual John talks about all lead towards one thing, to produce the best cup of coffee possible.

The quotes from Klas, and John, are good illustrations of themes that have been present in all interviews. Speciality coffee seems to provide the respondents with special moments of indulgence in everyday life. Thus it is indicated that a majority of the participants are trying to convey an image of being epicurean. And speciality coffee is a cultural material used in order to convey what seems to be a desired identity, of being a knowledgeable epicurean. In fact when asked to describe themselves a majority of the participants used words such as being a *“bon vivant”* and/or *“coffee enthusiasts”*. Thus it is indicated that speciality coffee is a product with relevant cultural material which the participants can use in order to contribute to their identity project of being bon vivant. In other words being a bon vivant seems to be a part of what a majority of the participants what to convey. What is interesting is that they are using coffee as cultural material, because coffee is a beverage that has not historically associated with being epicurean or gastronomic. Or as Aris statement rather vividly illustrates:

“(…) to some extent if you consume and drink good coffee you will be perceived as a connoisseur and I identify myself to some extent as a connoisseur, it is a hard thing to think of what you identify yourself with but of course I like it”.

Furthermore from the interviews it is indicated that the respondents continuously recreate their identity as knowledgeable bon vivant’s. Through consumption of speciality coffee and

because of what seems to be a constant hunt for new knowledge regarding the product in focus. Instead of drawing upon a discourse of heroic masculinity (Holt and Thompson: 2004). The respondents partaking in our study draw upon the discourse of being a knowledgeable epicurean coffee consumer. Through which they continuously create their identity of being knowledgeable and being bon vivant.

4.4 Plying with cultural meanings of coffee

Manipulating what good coffee is

It is only when consumers are aware of a consumer goods cultural meaning they start to manipulate that meaning (McCracken, 1985). Arguably most of the participants appear to be aware of the cultural meanings of speciality coffee, to varying extent. Some of the participants try to manipulate the meanings of speciality coffee, by making it more inclusive and less snobbish (John, Douglas). However more importantly from the interviews, it is indicated that the majority are manipulating with the cultural meanings of coffee on a more general scale. They are playing with what a coffee can be, what coffee can taste like. In many ways speciality coffee is moving in the opposite direction of the commercial and conventional coffee industry. John explains that:

Industrial roasters such as Zoégas, Ljöbergs and Gevalia in Sweden, for example, are moving in opposite direction of speciality coffee, their coffee moves towards being cheaper and cheaper, lower qualities and darker and darker roast. While I think our part of the industry goes against that. We learn more and more develop better and better qualities and the roast becomes lighter and lighter. It's moving in the completely opposite direction.

John's statement above can be seen as example that cultural meanings can only be manipulated when placed in the context of contemporary culture. Speciality coffee can to some extent be understood by what industrial and commercial coffee is not. Consumers and producers of speciality coffee want to give the impression. That speciality coffee is moving in the opposite direction of commercial coffee. Superior taste and flavor appears to be the main motivation why the participants consume speciality coffee. Further most participants are fascinated by tastes and flavors that are not generally associated with coffee. Such as floral, fruity, nougat and citrus are some examples of tastes the participants described that are not commonly associated with coffee.

In the following statement, Richard describes a knowledgeable coffee consumer.

“Open and curious but the first step is to be open for new flavors that, that you don’t have it set in your mind how coffee should taste”.

Richards’s statement captures an important notion that has been present theme in a majority of the interviews. That is to say that, in order to be a knowledgeable i.e. a good speciality coffee consumer, one must be open for different flavors. Be a consumer accepts coffee as a versatile beverage that is not caged within a frame of what it should be. Thus they are manipulating the cultural meanings of coffee. It is indicated that they steer the cultural meanings away from convention and towards a consumption practice that demands rather high levels of knowledge. Thus it is indicated that they are constructing a coffee practice with cultural codes and meanings which cannot be understood without certain levels of cultural capital.

Shared cultural meanings

What is manipulated is what seems to be the core of speciality coffee and that would be taste. From the interviews it is indicated that it is through manipulating what a coffee can and should taste. That many of the respondents express their identity. There are some commonalties; all participants seek great tasting coffee. Further they all seek coffee that is not bound by conventions that dictates how coffee should taste. Most of the participants express identity through knowledge. By being knowledgeable enough to understand speciality coffee, it is a part of lifestyle. John for instance explicitly states that coffee is a *“lifestyle beverage”*. The others are not as explicit however all participants express that coffee is important for them.

In the following statement, Richard describes a knowledgeable coffee consumer.

“Open and curious but the first step is to be open for new flavors that, that you don’t have it set in your mind how coffee should taste”.

Richards’s statement captures an important notion that has been present theme in a majority of the interviews. That is to say that, in order to be a knowledgeable i.e. a good speciality coffee consumer, one must be open for different flavors. Be a consumer accepts coffee as a versatile beverage that is not caged within a frame of what it should be. Thus they are manipulating the cultural meanings of coffee. It is indicated that they steer the cultural meanings away from convention and towards a consumption practice that demands rather high levels of knowledge. Thus it is indicated that they are constructing a coffee practice with

cultural codes and meanings which cannot be understood without certain levels of cultural capital.

The above can be understood as an illustration of parts of Appadurai (1996) notion. That people express their identity and create communities through manipulation of signs, symbols, commercial products and their respective meanings. From the participants answers it is indicated that they indeed express their identity by manipulating signs, symbols and their meanings. They are actively making a choice not to purchase conventional coffee; several statements above have demonstrated that. What is manipulated is what seems to be the core of speciality coffee and that would be taste. From the interviews it is indicated that it is through manipulating what a coffee can and should taste. That many of the participants express their identity.

Furthermore and every individual may attribute different cultural meanings to a product or a practice but it is dependent on to the extent of which they share the collective imagination (Elliot 1994). There seem to be some shared cultural meanings of what good speciality coffee is. For instance speciality coffee consumers should be open to tastes traditionally not associated with coffee. They all value knowledge and want to understand coffee better. In other words there are indications that share to some extent a common understanding of what speciality coffee is. Thus there are some indications that speciality coffee consumers is a consumption group, with some shared identity traits and cultural meanings.

4.5 Connecting over coffee & coffee artists

Café flâneurs or oppositional localists

Judging from our respondents answers and the analysis above it seems speciality coffee consumers. Find conventional, commercial coffee to be boring. To illustrate this notion extra clearly we highlight Emanuel's reasoning:

“You'll find a boring sameness drinking coffee from the big brands it is impossible to compare speciality coffee with store bought coffee”.

From the statement it is indicated that Emanuel values the variety speciality coffee brings. Further makes it rather clear that he find coffee from market incumbents to be boring. They all taste the same in his world. John a coffee entrepreneur and barista have similar ideas as Emanuel, John reasons that:

“If you look at how the commercial side of the coffee industry works with Zoégas on top. All of their coffees taste the more or less the same way. They all taste like the roast machine.”

Both Emanuel and John express that they feel bored by conventional coffee. It does not provide enough variety in taste and flavor.

And conventional coffee to be boring, thus they avoid consuming such products. However they also find social responsibility to be important. Many of the respondents do not really trust the big coffee brands. In other words it is indicated that our respondents i.e. consumers of speciality coffee share traits with Arsel & Thompson’s (2004) café flâneurs and oppositional localists. However does not seem to fit in either category. The reason for this seems to be the main motivation the respondents gave as to why they consume speciality coffee. From the respondents answers it has been made very clear throughout the analysis that speciality coffee consumption centered on taste. A short statement for Richard paints a picture that together with findings from the analysis above cannot be misinterpreted. He reasons that when comes to speciality coffee:

“It is the taste that is matters”

Richards’s short but very illustrative statement is representative for arguments and reasoning’s found in all interviews uttered by all respondents. Consumers of speciality coffee value taste over everything else. Our respondents value civic responsibilities important and in a sense fight for socially responsible (local) enterprise and against contesting corporate hegemony. However at the same time they regard conventional coffee as boring, standardized, and mass-marketed meeting place, providing the simple tastes of the corporate world. In other words our respondents fit into both groups, yet they seem to belong to none. The reason being they are motivated by taste and to understand the taste of coffee to become more knowledgeable about coffee, thus they are motivated by a quest gaining more knowledge to understand coffee better. That is why it is questionable that speciality coffee consumers can be defined as group or a community. It is more likely they are part of a consumer tribe, as the next section will explore.

Not a community but perhaps a tribe

Bourdieu's (1984) notion of habitus to show one's position in the social space through consumption of speciality coffee is portrayed by Aris when he answered the question: Why do you think people go to micro roasters and speciality coffee shops?

“It could be some different factors, either they are one of those connoisseurs who enjoy wine and cheese you know one of those people who are attracted to go to these places because of the taste experience, there are people as long as it is the most finest on the market they will go, then it is hipsters and alternative people who only want to drink what the masses don't as long as there is an alternative way they will drink it those are the ones who for example cold brew tea at home who does everything in an alternative manner and then there are also coffee fanatics who really enjoy coffee, who really are attracted to these places I would say that they are coffee nerds who have five different coffee gizmos at home that can brew coffee and explain the exact difference in everything, I am not that extreme but I think my friends would say that I am one of those guys, they would say I am a coffee nerd (...)”

The respondent displays different kinds of individuals that he categorizes in hipsters, connoisseurs and coffee nerds consuming coffee at micro roasters and speciality coffee shops. This description presents speciality coffee consumption as something that is only conducted by some types of consumers. Further Richard the co-owner of Drop Coffee describes who visits his café and portrays the people who drink speciality, he states that:

“The ones who visit our place and drink our coffee is usually around 25 to 35 years old with a slight dominance of men I don't remember exactly (...) and we have lots of coffee tourists, tourists that drink good coffee who are eager to find places that serve good coffee (...) I would say that this kind of flavor of speciality coffee and the ones who drink it is not restricted to certain type of social group either age or gender or something like that the ones who enjoy this enjoy it and it is a matter of how they will find this place but have you tried to make your own sausage or to make your own sourdough bread and you like to purchase micro-brewed beer then it is of course easier to get the point with small-scale foods and beverages and this is of course very evident here on this area of Stockholm but I think it's a little bit too narrowed”

The respondent highlights that it is not any specific social group, or specifically males or females, or certain age groups that enjoys and consume speciality coffee. The two respondents differ a bit in their portraits of the types of consumers that drink speciality coffee. The first respondent highlights that it is certain types of groups that consume speciality coffee whereas the second respondent is broader and doesn't narrow it down to groups. However both respondents' portraits consumers enjoying and drinking speciality coffee as the ones who have developed finely tuned preferences and knowledgeable within the area of coffee or as the ones who are generally interested and knowledgeable when it comes to food and beverages. The reasoning from Aris and Richard paints a blurred picture, there does not seem to be consensus of what type of consumer a speciality coffee consumer is.

However there are some commonalities; all participants seek great tasting coffee. Further they all seek coffee that is not bound by conventions that dictates how coffee should taste. Most of the participants express identity through knowledge. By being knowledgeable enough to understand speciality coffee, it is a part of lifestyle. John for instance explicitly states that coffee is a "*lifestyle beverage*". The others are not as explicit however all participants express that coffee is important for them. The participants share an interest in quality coffee. They all value knowledge and unconventional tastes of coffee, in other words that is a common denominator. Their search for superior taste is further something the participants share. In other words there are signs of some shared imaginations of what speciality coffee is and should be. However it is not viable to argue that it is tight consumption community.

Rather consumers of speciality coffee seem to be bound together through some shared imaginations of what coffee should be. Or rather they seem to tie together through a common interest in coffees which tastes that are not bound by convention. Therefore we argue that speciality coffee consumers can to some level be described as a consumer tribe. The strongest indication that speciality coffee consumers can be perceived as a consumer tribe is their common passion for good, unique and unconventional tastes and their common desire to become more knowledgeable. In other words they share a passion and emotion. Additionally they seem to share moral beliefs in the sense that they value social responsibility. Further they do share lifestyle traits in that they all value taste of coffee and share a common interest on food and beverages. (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999; Cova and Cova: 2002)

Symbols within consumer tribes attain meaning through the members' collective negotiation and interpretation of those meanings (Cova and Cova: 2002). Further indication of speciality

coffee consumers being a tribe is their playful relation to market place resources (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar: 2007). They all respondents seem to play with tastes and ideas of what coffee should be. They use local rosteries and their products in order to create an identity and in the processes they create a common identity. An identity embossed with a common playful relation to coffee and taste.

Even though there are indications of speciality coffee consumers belong to a consumer tribe they are not a close knitted community. They do not feel moral responsibility for one another (Muniz and O'Guinn: 2001). Our respondents might as Richard claim be part of a movement with some common identity traits and shared passion for coffee. However boiled down, what seem to truly motivate them are their own taste experiences. It is indicated that it is the individual respondents own quest for knowledge and increased understanding of coffee and subsequently increased status. That seems to motivate their consumption, not a sense of belonging to group or community. As illustrated by the fact the respondents are in disagreement regarding what types of individuals consume speciality coffee. In other words they all seem to have different views of what type of person consume speciality coffee.

Coffee artists

A consumer-artist is described as consumers that have the time and energy to engage in consumption activities at one or the other extreme end of the distribution curve. At one extreme, consumers will thrive on the overabundance of cultural materials produced and want to engage this material as an artist might, as raw ingredients with which to create (Holt 2002). In the following statement Aris manifest his morning coffee procedure

(...) "some people doesn't understand how I can spend ten minutes on my morning coffee but for me it's really nice, for me it's the big thing you ground the beans you smell it, it's kind of like a little ritual, I have this manual coffee ground and then I usually brew it with an aero press and I do this each and every morning."

Aris statement indicates he uses coffee in order to create a unique and good cup of coffee, every morning every day. Thus it is indicated that Aris engages coffee consumption and brewing with an artistic touch. It seems as if he uses speciality coffee as material to build and create an identity. Furthermore it is indicated that Aris feels that he is control regarding what coffee symbolizes and what meanings the product express. Thus it seems that he is not interceded in what marketing campaigns tell him coffee is, how it should taste and what it symbolizes. He wants coffees that allow him "artistic freedom" to use and decide for himself

what coffee is what it should taste and what it symbolizes. In other words it is indicated from Aris statement that he use coffee as a raw material in order to create meanings and a sense of identity. Furthermore, Klas describes that

(...) “if I were awesome at playing the piano than I would play piano to show my skills... I see the same thing with coffee I want to show my skills and because I have great coffee I want other people to taste my awesome coffee”.

Klas statement as Aris highlights a desire to use coffee as a cultural material to create and express an identity. Klas want to preform, he want to show and treat other consumers to his coffee. Klas seems to want freedom to express and show his skills as speciality coffee consumer. He do not want to be bound by convention, he does not want a cultural resource that is neatly packed and ready to use. He and a majority of our respondents want create their own meanings of what coffee should be. In other words it seems speciality coffee could be likened with a canvas on which the respondents paint their identity and what coffee means to them. They want the freedom to interpret and create their own ideas of what coffee should be. Further there are consumers that deselect brand-assisted identities to pursue other bases of identity formation such as local culture, work and art, etc (Holt 2002). As an illustration, Karl describes a speciality coffee consumer

“As an individual that familiarize with the local coffee roasters, familiarize with different origins, different tastes and different brewing methods”.

Karl’s reasoning indicate a will to bond with local coffee roasters and a desire to connect with the origin of coffee. In other words seems as if he in the context of coffee has abandoned a brand assisted identity. Instead he seems to build his identity around a combination of commitment to local rosters and a quest for knowledge, in order to be able to brew the best cup of coffee possible. Furthermore while there are brands, i.e. businesses that produce speciality coffee. It is unlikely that consumers like Karl from their identity around the brands. Rather it is indicated that Karl and his kinsmen build identities around local rosters and constant hunt knowledge and better tasting coffees. Thus it is irrelevant what the coffee brand is called as long as it is not a conventional mass produced coffee. Such coffee has no value for consumers like Karl and his kinsmen.

5.0 Discussion

We add insights to the research field of CCT within the domains of consumer identity projects and market place cultures through an investigation of how consumers socially distinct build identities and consume status, a context that traditionally has been characterized as being democratic and folksy. More precisely, we utilize distinction theories that offer a framework through which we can understand and explain, how consumers through sophisticated consumption practices distinct from dominant folksy consumer culture

5.1 Theoretical contributions

5.2 Contextual consumer artist

Our research indicates that speciality coffee consumers carry characteristics of the consumer-artist (Holt 2002). However the artistry is bound to the context of coffee consumption. Thus our study indicates that, consumers can adapt an identity of being a consumer artist, within a particular consumption field. It seems like consumers might engage in practices similar to that of the consumer artist in order to distinct from a dominant and folksy consumer culture.

Further our research indicates that consumers can be what we call contextual consumer artists. In other words it seems consumers can engage in artistic practices within a particular context, while being perfectly regular in other consumption areas. Further our research indicates that consumers are able to adapt practices that can contain aspects from both ends of Holt (2002) distribution curve. Consumers are able to jump between ends of the curve and/or simultaneously inhabit both. Thus it seems consumers within certain contexts can play with market provided cultural materials and use it to create unique creative meanings of what a product can and should be with the intention to distinct from dominant consumer culture.

Furthermore our study point towards an interesting notion that the ends of the Holt's (2002) distribution curve do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. We perceive that consumers within the context speciality coffee carry traits from both ends. Consumers seem to enjoy playing with market material and use it as raw material for identity creation. However at the same time denounce brand-assisted identity creation and focus on local consumer culture. This seems to be possible within consumption contexts that are centered on a consumption practice with one overall goal. In the context of speciality coffee it is to produce the best and most unique flavor possible. Therefore they are able to play with market provided material on what coffee is and should be while at the same time denouncing brand-assisted

identities. Since they are consuming a product that is locally refined and with superior taste, the brand is of secondary importance. In other words, we do see that consumers seem to employ characteristics' of Holt's (2002) conceptualization of the consumer artist. In order to distinct from dominant folksy consumer context and build an identity around consumption practices. In other words we are seeing hints that there are active consumer-artists in contemporary consumer society. However they seem to be bound to particular consumption contexts. In other words a consumer seems to be able to be a conventional consumer in one context and a consumer artist in another.

5.3 Being a bon vivant in a folksy consumption practice

Our study adds to Arsel and Thompson (2004) findings that demonstrate how consumers distinct from the norm by avoiding dominant consumer practices. They identify two distinct groups with different motivations to why they differentiate from the norm, café flâneurs and oppositional localists. Our research suggests a third group or rather a consumer tribe, namely the coffee bon vivant. The coffee bon vivant do care about local enterprises, find mass produced coffee to be boring and is skeptical towards market incumbents. In other words the bon vivant has traits of both the café flâneurs and the oppositional localists. However those traits are of secondary importance. What the bon vivant cares about, is taste and knowledge and understanding of taste. Thus he/she constantly works to increase knowledge levels and understanding of coffee and subsequently they become sophisticated consumers. This makes them distinct and differentiates form dominant consumer practices, much like the café flâneurs and oppositional localists. However the bon vivant distinct by through knowledge that they use to interpret an advanced version of a product that is generally perceived as folksy.

Additionally our study contributes insights regarding how consumers position themselves and identify what good taste is though a common understanding of what good taste is not. Thus we provide further empirical research regarding tastes and distastes as Wilk (1997) calls for, however we do so in a contemporary context.

5.4 The paradox of the inclusive-exclusive consumer

Additionally our study contributes complements to Arsel & Thompson (2011) insights concerning consumers' reflexive efforts to protect the value of the cultural capital they have gained through identity investments in specific field of consumption. From our study it is clear that consumers protect their cultural capital and identity investments by increasing their knowledge and while becoming more knowledgeable they develop and protect their finely

tuned preferences. Thus they are continuously building knowledge barriers that exclude consumers with lower levels of cultural capital within the context of coffee. However their constant hunts for gaining knowledge within the field and protect their identity investments is contradictory to their desire for these consumption practices to be more inclusive for other consumers.

5.5 Knowledge defines the consumer

Consumers within the context of speciality coffee share a great interest for the product and have developed finely tuned preferences and knowledgeable within the area. It is clear that speciality coffee consumers avoid coffee that is mass-produced and anonymous because it doesn't satisfy their high standards of how coffee should be and taste like. Since they have the knowledge to identify and understand how what quality coffee is. This is considered by speciality coffee consumers to be a learning process. Both when it comes to the actual taste of the product and in terms of more information and transparency about the product.

It is the knowledge these consumers use in their consumption practices to differentiate from other consumers and a dominant folksy consumer culture. They utilize strategies to become more knowledgeable and sophisticated and thus differentiate from the folksy consumption practice. Further speciality coffee consumer differentiate through a common understanding of what the product is not. They express subtle sense of superiority. They understand what so many others do not. Thus it is indicated that they are constructing a coffee practice with cultural codes and meanings which cannot be understood without certain levels of cultural capital. However they express wishes of their consumption practices to be more inclusive and approachable for other consumers. Thus a paradox is identified, speciality coffee consumers seem to be folksy, yet distinct from the dominant folksy consumer culture that surrounds conventional coffee consumption. Furthermore consumers also use knowledge as an essential component when consuming status within the context of speciality coffee. Expressing and gaining status within the context is only possible for those who know what it means. Thus knowledge functions as a tool for consumers within these instances to position themselves within their group. The more knowledge or cultural capital the speciality coffee consumer possess, the more status he or she will gain. As knowledge equals status consumers and professionals within these instances will work to deepen their knowledge, in order to gain more status.

Accordingly speciality coffee consumers construct their identity of being skilled and knowledgeable through their consumption practices. They create meaningful identity projects by distancing themselves from the mass by engaging in craftsmanship, the grounding and brewing of the product and the consumption of the actual product that is of importance. It is the actual product and their skills they use to construct identities not with expensive machines. Gadgets don't have very much value as products. It is indicated that they are important to enhance and bring forward the unique flavors of the product. The taste and taste experiences is at the heart of the product. Further consumers within these instances consumes the product only if it's is socially responsible and that suits their finely developed taste. They distance their identities from the consumer masse by demand greater taste experiences and being more critical, aware, and responsible.

Last these consumers convey themselves as a "bon vivant" or as a "connoisseur" where they have re-interpreted the cultural meanings of this product that has not been associated with being epicurean or gastronomic to contribute to their identity project of being a "bon vivant" or "connoisseur".

5.6 Conclusions

Our findings show that consumers distinct themselves from dominant folksy consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices in terms of knowledge, experiences and skills. Differentiation from a folksy dominant consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices can only become possible for consumers that possess a certain level of knowledge about the actual taste and the whole process behind the refinement of the product. They need this knowledge in order to break away from traditional consumption patterns, to distinct themselves from other consumers through a common understanding of what the product is not.

5.7 Limitations and future research

We found rich and relevant insights through our speciality coffee consumers. However, we find that there are several limitations that we must acknowledge in this research study. As our outline of outline that frames our thesis are quite broad we believe that by narrowing down the theoretical outline with fewer theoretical concepts and notions could address the phenomenon deeper in certain aspects in future research.

In order to gain even deeper and more focused insights in instances where consumers distinct themselves from dominant folksy consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices, studies of only identity theory or only status theory could be pursued.

Moreover one interesting insight from our study is that even though knowledge, skills and experience are required to practice sophisticated consumption practices the consumers want it to be more inclusive and approachable for other consumers. Thus it could be interesting for future research to explore how consumers work to get sophisticated consumption from a traditionally folksy consumer culture to be more inclusive. Furthermore, the selected group of respondents was all males. Therefore we recommend approaching our topic with a mix of male and female respondents. However

Last we find it relevant for future research to investigate other contexts than coffee culture where the distinction from dominant folksy consumer culture through sophisticated consumption practices is vivid in contemporary consumer society.

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