Effect on retail store image of a new format development

An explorative study of store image customers' associations in a pick-up point format setting

Master Thesis

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I. ABSTRACT

Title: Effect on retail store image of a new format development: An explorative study of store image customers' associations in a pick-up point format setting

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Key Words: Store image; format development; pick-up point; traditional format; store image dimensions; store image attributes; IKEA; home furnishing retailer; multi-channel; omni-channel; video-elicitation

Purpose: The purpose of this research was to explore the effects on store image of a new format development. Specifically, the researchers investigated the new pick-up point format recently introduced in the homefurnishing sector. Moreover, the study intended to evaluate and compare customers' perceptions of two different types of pick-up point stores introduced by a single retailer.

Methodology: The researchers considered the philosophies of epistemology and ontology, and respectively employed the interpretivist and social constructionism stance since the main focus was to understand how customers personally perceive the store image of the new pick-point format, in relation to their reference point (i.e. traditional format). Moreover, the researchers followed an abductive approach and applied qualitative methods for data collection. Specifically, these choices were justified by the need to utilize existing theory on store image of traditional retail formats as a valid starting point, which could then be inductively revised based on empirical insights collected with the use of video-elicitation and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the study adopted a case study strategy to answer the research and sub-research question.

Theoretical Perspective: The study focused on reviewing the areas of literature that were valuable for the research purpose. The researchers examined studies including the areas of format development, multi-channel practices as a form of establishing new formats, and the format category of pick-up points. Moreover, a thorough investigation of existing literature about store image and store image attributes was conducted in order to develop the initial theoretical framework of the study.

Empirical Data: The researchers applied a multi-method procedure for the data collection. In particular, scholars conducted 19 semi-structures interviews in combination with video elicitation to customers of the two pick-up point formats under investigation. The methods of data collection were coupled with direct observation and documentation in order for the researchers to acquire a holistic view of the functionality and role of the new format.

Conclusion: The researchers developed a revised theoretical model which enabled them to show that the new pick-up point format has a significant effect on store image. Moreover, by conducting a comparison between the two different types of pick-up points, the researchers revealed both similarities and differences that can exist within the same new format. Furthermore, the revised theoretical model generated through this study's findings was able to prove that existing literature was confirmed but, in view of its strong focus on traditional formats, had to be enhanced with new insights on the associations customers' develop when retailers introduce a new format (i.e. pick-up point).

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the introductory chapter, the background and problematization of our study are presented in order to provide the reader with knowledge on the field of the issue in question. Throughout the chapter, the themes of retail growth strategies, format development, multi-channel practices, pick-up point format and retail image are introduced in a way that presents their correlation. Moreover, even though each topic is also discussedon a company point of view, the overall background is customer oriented. In the end of the chapter, the purpose of the study is presented along with the theoretical and practical contributions of the research findings. In relation to what previous studies have shown and what is not exploited yet, the chapter will proceed by outlining the research question and presenting the approach and methodology that the study will apply to resolve the issue in question (methodology which will be further developed in Chapter 3). Finally, this chapter concludes by introducing the content outline of the paper.

1.1 Background

In this section, the background analysis of the study will be presented and will follow the rationale projected in the figure below:
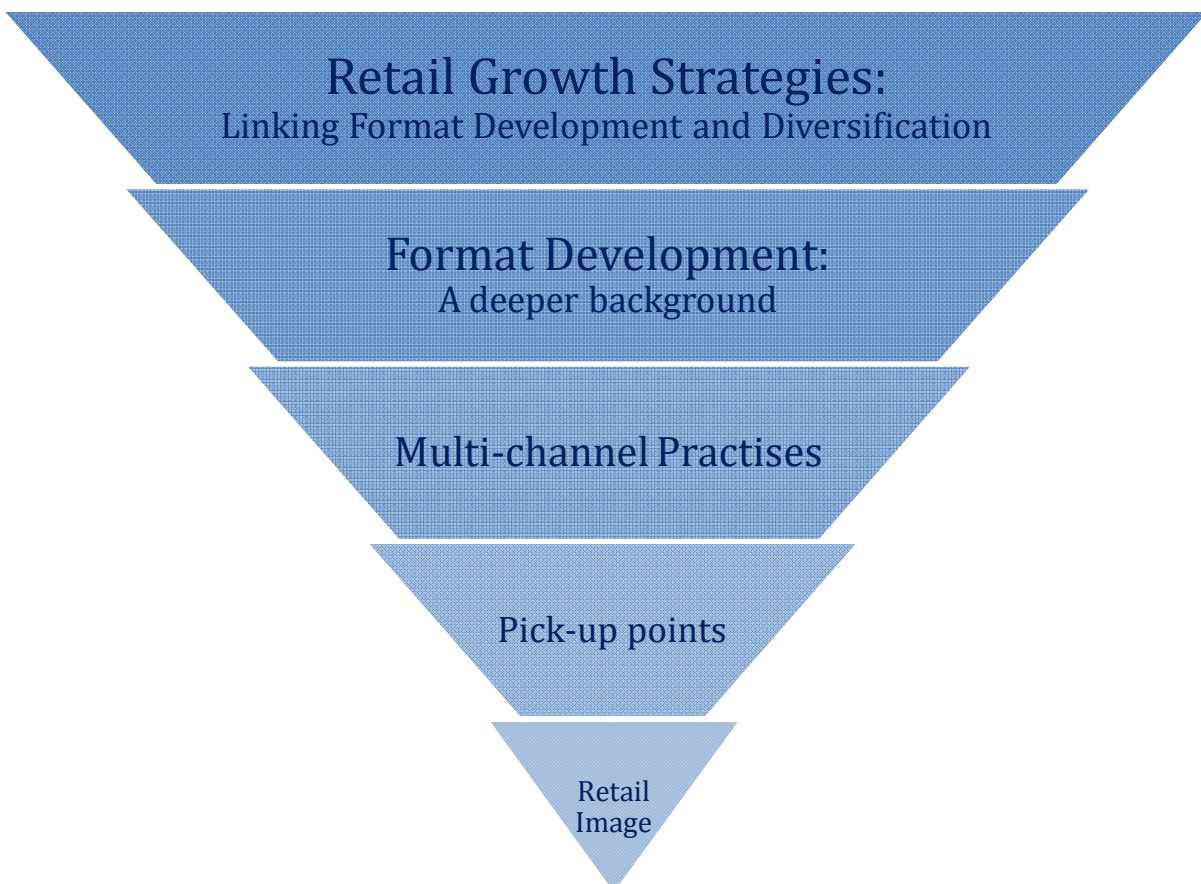
Figure 1: Areas discussed in this study

1.1.1   Retail Growth Strategies

We observe that, in an era of increased competition, it has become crucial for firms to constantly find strategies to differentiate in the market, reduce tensions, enhance their key differences and provide a unique proposition. Focusing on strategy in retailing involves all planning procedures such as product, communication and geographic considerations (Levy & Weitz, 2009). Thus, **retail strategy** plays the role of a tactical tool that defines the firm's actions and determines the target audience and focus of firm's activities and actions (Levy &Weitz, 2009). Furthermore, it defines the chosen retail format that is adopted as a tool to deliver firm's services and blend of actions to consumers (Levy & Weitz, 2009). As a result, firms will meet the demands and wants of customers (Levy & Weitz, 2009) and thus, as we assume, will be equipped with a competitive edge in the market of operation. This will enable retailers to ultimately expand their sales and customer share in a continuous pace (Levy & Weitz, 2009). In order to achieve these goals, retailers are thus implementing the so-called **growth strategies** (McGoldrick, 2002) which need to be revaluated and assessed on a regular basis to perform, reply and accommodate on market's adjustments (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011; Rizea, 2015). Specifically, there are various growth strategies to accomplish these goals and help firms to determine the essence of their business operations but also setting companies' objectives (McDowell Mudambi, 1994). For example, **retailers can pursue growth** by either expanding the content of company's know-how and enhancing the extent of its activities, or advancing the mix of company's actions (Pellegrini, 1995). A common way to achieve this expansion is explained in the Ansoff's matrix (1965) which includes **four categories of growth,** namely "market penetration, market development, product development and diversification". The matrix has been further adjusted by Levy and Weitz (2009) who have established the following approaches: "market penetration, market expansions, format development and diversification" (see Image 1 below). Among these growth strategies, **format development** is a common technique in the retail industry to establish new channels (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015; Beck & Rygl, 2015). Specifically, retailers incorporate a new format in their retail strategy to differentiate the way they serve their existing target audience (Levy & Weitz, 2009). Alternatively, retailers can employ diversification and utilize their essential capabilities to introduce new offerings in different markets, in order to satisfy and exploit a diverse target segment with new touch points (Fernie, Fernie & Moore, 2015; Levy, College & Weitz, 2009).

Although format development and diversification, according to the above literature, constitute two different strategies to establish growth, we believe that, at a certain point, they can also be interrelated. Both growth strategies, as it is depicted in Levy & Weitz (2009) matrix, are incorporating a new retail format with which they connect and communicate with consumers to ultimately generate more sales (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014). Thus, the distinction between the two strategies seems to be based on whether these extra sales are generated by existing or new target market and customers. However, retailers developing a new retail format (e.g. pick-up points/ order and collection point) can ultimately succeed in both their existing target market (i.e. format development) but also in enhancing their reach, and satisfy the needs of consumers that were not met before via previous store formats in a new target market (i.e. diversification). Consequently, we assume that retailers engaging in format development can often in reality also implement a diversification growth strategy. Specifically, this can be the case of global companies which develop new format that will soon be used to enter new markets. Accordingly, since the confines between the two growth strategies can be subtle and temporary, when studying new formats introduced in the retailing sector, we believe that scholars should consider the possibility of positioning their study in both the bottom squares of the below growth strategies matrix (Levy & Weitz, 2009).
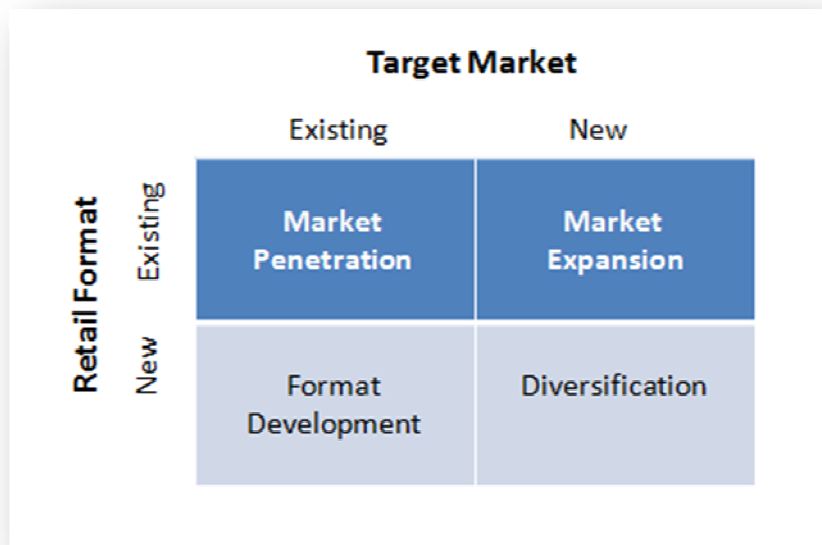
Image 1: Growth Strategies [*Source:* Adapted from Levy & Weitz (2009)]

1.1.2   Format development

In the previous section, we have introduced retailers' growth strategies and discussed the difference but also the possible link between format development and diversification. In this paragraph, we are now going to further analyse the main concept of our study. To begin with, a **retail format** can be defined as a "*specific configuration of the retail marketing mix (e.g. store size, typical location, merchandise, price and service offered) and it often forms the core of the retail strategy*" (Zentes, Morschett and Schramm-Klein, 2011, p. 3). In addition, previous studies have also described retail format as a particular mix of attributes which include also elements such advertising, promotions and store design (Levy & Weitz, 1998).

In view of the increasing competition in the retail sector, firms are modernizing and broaden the scope of their store formats so as to overpass competition and generate a distinct brand differentiation and offering in the market (González-Benito, 2001). By adopting new store formats, firms are aiming to expand their earnings and performance (Ahlert, Blut & Evanschitzky, 2010). In addition, this serves as an attempt to explore unique growth paths that operate outside of their current formats (McGoldrick, 2002). There are three main factors, as proposed by Ahlert, Blut and Evanschitzky (2010), which are aligned with format development. First of all, the fact that consumers attitudes and wants are modified, generate the need for establishing advanced and distinct formats. Moreover, another factor deals with the unique abilities of each retailer that may be further supported by a new format. Last but not least, the change and deviation of producer's business activities can be another factor that leads to the generation of new formats in the retail sector. Since the rise of online shopping, brick and mortar stores have been facing an increased need to be supported by additional operations (Aubrey & Judge, 2012). As a consequence, brick and mortar retailers need to differentiate themselves and find ways to evolve by either making changes in their offerings or by creating a presence in a new location (Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003). Accordingly, retailers can then enhance their "offline" mediums and defend the increase of e-commerce. Specifically, this can be achieved by offering unique attributes that cannot be offered online such as accessibility, customization and unique information but also proposals and assistance based on customer's needs (King, Sen & Xia, 2004). Moreover, these are considered to beways for retailers to further generate customers' loyalty and trustworthiness (King, Sen & Xia, 2004). In general, format development and the possible effects on retailers' customers have mainly been studied in the grocery sector (e.g. Jain &

Bagdare, 2009; Kaswengi & Diallo, 2015; Nilsson et al. 2015 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). In fact, grocery retailers are those who continuously introduced new formats under their mother brand to meet the changing consumers'needs (Kahn & McAlister, 1997; Lewis, Turcsik & Barry, 2001 cited in Haans, 2011). Thus, on the consumers' side, format development can be considered as a solution for the increasing importance that individuals give to quick trips to the stores (Sorensen, 2009).

With regards to our study, as already mentioned, although the focus of the literature on format development in retailing has been mainly on the grocery sector and only recently (Wispeler & Wolf, 2015) on the home furnishing one, we believe that we can still use important findings from previous studies to build our theoretical framework. Specifically, in retailing there is a strong differentiation between food and non-food stores due to the diverse customers' purchasing behaviours and relation with store personnel (e.g. Burt & Gabbott, 1995; Geuens, Brengman & S'Jegers, 2003; Etgar & Rachman-Moore, 2010). However, there are today characteristics of new formats in the home furnishing sector (e.g. cafés and showroom within the stores as well as increased store accessibility) that can justify the use of previous literature on grocery in the Chapter 2 of our study.

Finally, in the next section, we are going to offer to the readers a background on multi-channel practise. In fact, a "channel" can be defined as the medium/touch point in which customers have direct or indirect interaction with a company/retailer (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015). Accordingly, retailers opening new format means for customers an additional channel of interaction.

1.1.3 Multi-channel Practise

As already mentioned, a mean towards format development and/or diversification is **multi-channel retailing** in which the retailer is incorporating a supplementary customers' touch point/format to the current format portfolio (e.g. Levy & Weitz, 2009; Bustos-Reyes & Gonz´alez-Benito, 2008; Skallerud, Korneliussen & Olsen, 2009; Avery et al. 2012).

According to Rigby (2011), the retail sector is periodically facing changes and transformations. At the same time, the increased digitalization of the society is enhancing for retailers the integration challenges (Leeflang et al. 2014). In recent years, consumers are changing their purchasing habits and are engaging in multi-channel platforms to serve their needs (Teppema, 2013). The need for a multi-channel strategy is supported by the fact that consumers are aiming for satisfaction across all mediums (Grau, 2009 cited in Teppema, 2013). The aforementioned consumer shifts, enhances the pressure on retailers to maintain online and offline channels simultaneously (Teppema, 2013). In fact, online and offline mediums can support different roles and supplement each other (Rigby, 2011). Specifically, issues have appeared in relation to the level of integration between the different channels both on company and customers point of view (Neslin et al. 2006). Consequently, the literature suggest that retailers should move from a multi-channel to an omni-channel strategy (Rigby, 2011). Recently, Beck and Rygl (2015) claimed that there is a difference between multi-channel, omni-channel and cross-channel retailing strategy. Specifically, the choice of the channels retailers will ultimately use, depends on two variables. First, the scale of engagement that consumers have with each channel (i.e. "Interaction by customer") and second, the extent of unification amongst channels of operation from the retailer's side (i.e. "Integration by retailer") (Beck & Rygl, 2015, p. 175). Based on these variables, with respect to the level of integration among channels, multi-channel is the lowest in the hierarchy, followed by cross-channel and then omni-channel which has the highest level of integration (Beck & Rygl, 2015).

However, based on the literature reviewed in this section, it seems that reaching the highest level of integration among channels (i.e. omni-channel) still represent for retailers a goal and not an objective. In next

paragraph, having already discussed the growth strategies in retailing, format development and multi-channel practices, we are going to present a background on the pick-up points format and its recent innovations.

1.1.4   Pick-up points

Pick-up points constitute a type of format development and touch point which several multi-channel retailers have used to fulfil their online orders (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). On a customer point of view, pick-up points is a way to get the best out of both the online and physical retailing world since it allows to reduce or escape delivery charges (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). Furthermore, customers using pick-up points benefit from the convenience and immediacy of having their products in a dedicated area of the physical store, resulting in shorter waiting lines (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). On the other hand, when compared to the home deliveries, pick-points involve an extra effort from customers' side in view of the need to visit the store (Boyer, Frohlich & Hult, 2005; Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). A variation of the pick-up point format was also studied by Spark (2003). Specifically, the author focused on the format of the retailer Argos and defined it as "*a catalogue showroom retailer which relies on the catalogue for the merchandising and display, with the fixed store being dominated by the physical transaction and the buying and receiving of goods by the consumer*" (p.80). At this point, it is important to underline that retailers in the past have mostly used the pick-up option within their original store formats and mainly in the grocery sector (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). However, in recent years, we noticed that some retailers have started to implement brand new formats and stores solely dedicated to customers' pick-ups. Furthermore, we have observed a new type of pick-up point that combines the collection area with showrooms and other features that effectively make it a new store type (e.g. in the home furnishing sector). Thus, in our opinion, the evolution of the pick-up option into a new stand-alone format can offer to customers increased convenience and accessibility. Accordingly, we believe that the in-store experience of pick-up points can be different from what customers have been offered so far in the original formats or through the online channel. Moreover, the new pick-up point formats have been operated in different locations than the original stores.

According to previous studies on store location, the **location strategy** is related to firms' decisions about where to locate their stores, but also the role, purpose, and service that the formats will serve to customers (Kent & Omar, 2003). Specifically, by deciding on the location of the store, retailers are able to seek for new critical prospects (Kent & Omar, 2003). Thus, in line with the above authors, we assume that the new pick-up points can be part of companies' growth strategies and can help retailers to grow their market share through accessing new areas. In general, the literature categorizes store location decisions in urban or suburban (outside the city center) areas (Kent & Omar, 2003; Levy & Weitz, 2009; Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). With regards to the new pick-up points' format, they seem to fall in the first category as they are mainly placed in urban areas and target people for whom the access to previous suburban stores was not easy. Therefore, on a customer point of view, we believe that with new locations retailers can better fulfill customer's expectations and wants (Kent & Omar, 2003), since the location is one of the primary factors that consumers perceive when it comes to accessibility and accommodation of needs (Jain & Bagdare, 2009). Accordingly, in view of the possible alterations (e.g. different accessibility, convenience) that the new pick points' format might cause on consumers' perceptions of a company store, we consider important for retailers to evaluate how their store image is affected by the new practice. In fact, in support of our assumption, store image is consider by several authors as a phenomenon sector, location and format dependent (e.g. Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Burt, Johnasson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015).

1.1.5 Retail, Store, Product and Company Image

In the marketing and retailing field of research, the term **image** is of paramount importance (e.g. Brown et al. 2006; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010; Kapferer, 2012). Global retail companies are usually adopting a standard way of presenting their brand and retail image to consumers (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007). At the same time, due to copy cuts, similar offerings exist in the market which enhances the need for differentiation among retailers (Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Hildebrandt, 1988; Oppewal & Timmermans, 1997; Burt & Mavromattis, 2006). Specifically, many firms acknowledge their brand image as their main competitive advantage (Burt & Mavrommatis, 2006). Furthermore, recent studies showed that consumers are increasingly engaging in purchasing goods and products through multiple touch points, especially in developed markets in which competition of firms with similar formats and products are detected (Bustos-Reyes & Gonzalez-Benito, 2008; Skallerud, Korneliussen & Olsen, 2009). By engaging in additional formats, companies will maintain differentiation among the competition, and keep up with the retail world and consumers' changing needs (Levy & Weitz, 2009). Specifically, we believe that the importance lies in the fact that consumers create their interpretations and understanding of the world which, ultimately, generates each individual's own view of reality. Accordingly, consumers' actions and decisions are affected by the associations they develop towards a brand are influenced by each persons' background (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). As consequence, image is considered to have an idiosyncratic interpretation and to be something personal.

With regards to the **store,** it is seen as the touch point where consumers come in contact with the retailer's brand, and where the image that consumers generate about the store is shaped (Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Schiffman et al. 1977; Burns, 1992; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). Martineau (1958) is one of the researchers who first attempted to describe store image and used both concrete and obscure characteristics. In addition to store image, when we are referring to the retail industry, another term is emerging which is related to **product image** (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). Initially, this concept has been common in research referring to industry production brands (Aaaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2008). The product itself is the main contact and relation consumers have with the retailer since they purchase it from the store, and they use it either once or for a long period of time, depending on the type or product (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). Moreover, the rise of private label brands, where the product is directly linked to the retailer, enhances the connection between the terms of retail and product image (Burt, 2000; Anselmsson & Johansson, 2005 cited in Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). Finally, the growth towards the establishment of a **company image** which surpasses the limitations of store or product image, aims to enhance the connection between the corporate image and brand attributes (Varley, 2005; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). In fact, contrary to what Corstjens and Corstjens (1995) explained as "shelf space" which focused on retailer's store image, there is a continuous tendency of retailers to focus on how they can generate "mind space". Specifically, this can be done by giving meanings to consumers that are above solely the product or the store image (Burt, 2000; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007).

At this point, we have offered to the reader a full background on the topics that are related to our study. In fact, retailers growth strategies, format development and/or diversification, multi-channel practices, pick-up points format and, finally, the concept of image, have all been introduced and linked to each other. Consequently, in the next paragraph, we are going to present our problem formulation.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Due to the longevity of its life-cycle, the retail industry is characterized by sporadic transformations (Davidson, Bates & Bass, 1976). As a consequence, existing retail formats continue to operate in their original form instead of vanishing (Badot, 2001 cited in Colla, 2004). On the contrary, during the recent years, it has

been observed that retailing is confronting regular transitions. Multi-channel retailing is an example of retail transition, in which consumers have access to different channels for their shopping (Ansari, Mela & Neslin, 2008; Coughlan et al. 2006; Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002). As previously mentioned, a "channel" is a touch point/medium through which customers interact with a company/retailer (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015). Accordingly, opening new store format means for customers an additional channel of interaction with firms. In the last decades, despite the degree of retailers' operations, companies are changing and adopting new formats that enable them to expand and meet consumers' advanced desires, ways of living and anticipations (e.g. Avery et al. 2012; Balasubramanian, Peterson & Jarvenpaa, 2002). Regardless of retailer's growing tendency towards multi-channel and format development, we observe that the home furnishing retail sector was characterised by lower levels of adaptability due to their persistence on operating through traditional touch points (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014). However, we notice that the sector is currently facing development towards new business channels and formats (i.e. e-commerce, inner city stores and pick-up points). Possibly, this late development of the home furnishing sector explains the focus of previous literature on grocery retailers' format development practises and their impact on consumer's perceptions (e.g. Jain & Bagdare, 2009; Kaswengi & Diallo, 2015; Nilsson et al. 2015).

The pick-up points home furnishing stores recently opened in cities such as Tromsø (Norway) and Norwich (UK) are a new unexplored format and object of our study. Specifically, these stores are possibly aiming at enhancing customers' reach and market share by offering solutions to consumers in a more convenient way. Through the integration of e-commerce, traditional brick and mortar store, showrooms, planning sections and other peculiar characteristics, the new touch point provides fresh solutions to consumers. Consequently, this new retail format along with other developed touch points are anticipated to affect retailers' store image (Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). According to Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2007), the store is the essential meeting point with the customer. Thus, we understand that through their journey inside the store and their communication with the store's personnel, customers ultimately develop their own store associations and company image. This implies that retailers' focal point should be to provide a unique offering while administrating how consumers perceive the store's image (Walters & Knee, 1989)

Consequently, following the above problematization and with regards to "**what is not known**", we believe that it is essential to identify the unique store image attributes developed by customers every time a new format is launched. Moreover, this need is enhanced when the new format (i.e. pick-up point) presents to customers unique characteristics within a single store (i.e. showrooms and others) which, as already explained in the background section, are not yet exploited and discussed in the literature as part of the specific pick-up point offering of our study. Furthermore, even though the new format is now available in the home furnishing sector, in the future it could also be implemented elsewhere. In support of our argumentation, Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2010) explained that image in the marketing literature is considered as a subjective element that is formed when consumers come in contact with a store. Accordingly, **we argue that each single store format generate a different store image** and, consequently, the attributes generated by customers need to be studied. In fact, we believe that current literature cannot exclude the possibility that new and unique store image attributes are developed by consumers visiting the new pick-up points in the home furnishing sector. Therefore, our study differs in this sense from previous research.

1.3   Purpose and Research Question

The **purpose** of this study is to evaluate and compare the effects on store image of two different versions of the new pick-up point format, recently launched in the home furnishing retail sector.

With regards to the **theoretical contributions**, we will attempt to identify the unique store image attributes developed by customers of the new and innovative store. Moreover, by comparing two different pick-up

points, the research will increase knowledge and provide a unique contributionin the area of store image attributes' variations within a single new format. Furthermore, the study might provide new insights on the relation between store image and corporate image, when companies engage in multi-channel practises and format development.

Overall, we believe that the aforementioned contributions can be relevant in view of retailers' recent attempts to pursue growth through multi, cross and omni-channel strategies (e.g. Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002; Coughlan et al. 2006; Ansari, Mela & Neslin, 2008; Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015; Beck & Rygl, 2015). In fact, the store image generated from the new formats and channels might bring new insights which require the attention of the researchers.

Although it is true that several attempts have already been made to identify store image attributes, the literature presents a certain variability on the topic (e.g. McGoldrick, 2002; Amirani & Gates, 1993; Keaveney & Hunt,1992; Golden, Albaum & Zimmer, 1987; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977; Jain & Etgar, 1976; James, Durand & Dreves, 1976; Lindquist, 1974). Furthermore, our assumption that the way consumers develop store image vary across market sectors, store formats and geographical regions is supported by many authors (e.g. Burt & Carrareto-Encinas, 2000; Burt & Mavrommatis, 2006; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). Therefore, in view also of the previously discussed increasing importance of multi and omni-channel practices, we believe that our research will increase knowledge about this sector and format dependant topic (i.e. store image). In support of the above argumentation, it is worth to repeat that previous studies on format development have mainly focused on the grocery industry (e.g. Jain & Bagdare, 2009; Kaswengi & Diallo, 2015; Nilsson et al. 2015) and only recently on the variation of store images attributes in the home furnishing sector (Wispeler & Wolf, 2015).

To conclude, our study is oriented towards the future of retailing store image in a specific sector (i.e. home furnishing), and should complement current literature by filling the gap in relation tonew types of pick-up points format. Moreover, our research will increase knowledge on possible variations of store image within different versions of the same format (i.e pick-up point). Finally, on a general level, this study will increase the understanding of format development's effects on image in the whole retailing industry, since pick-up points might be easily implemented in other sectors.

Concerning the **practical contributions** of our study, by uncovering new store image elements of the new pick-up point format, retailers can be offered the chance to improve these attributes and develop stronger and unique retail brand associations (e.g. Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Hartman & Spiro, 2005). Specifically, managers and employees who are responsible for brand image and format development but also practitioners of the home furnishing retail industry, could benefit from identifying how and if their store and, ultimately, their company image are affected by the adoption of pick-up points. Moreover, they will gain insights on the associations that consumers develop towards the brand through their engagement with the traditional and the pick-up points format. Overall, thanks to our research findings, managers will be able to take relevant actions and strategic decisions in relation to new and existing formats, to meet customers' expectations and ensure that their companies' image is expressed as intended.

Regarding **previous studies**, we acknowledge that the existing literature is extensive and has already suggested several store image attributes (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Lindquist, 1974; Van Marrewijk & Broos, 2012; Lu & Seo, 2015; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). **However,** as already discussed, consumers' perceptions of store image vary across countries, geographical regions, market sectors, store formats, and competition (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Cardozo, 1974; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Arnold, Ourn & Tigert, 1983; Davies, 1992; Oppewal & Timmermans, 1997; Burt & Carralero-Encinas, 2000; Burt & Mavrommatis, 2006; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). **Thus,**

previous studies can only represent a solid base to explore further the store image of a specific new format.

At this point, following the above analysis and in order to have a clear focus along with a guide for the literature review and the empirical investigation (Bryman & Bell, 2015), we present the research question of our study:

- **RQ:** How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?
- **Sub-question:** Are there any similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between two different versions of the new pick-up points?
- **Approach description:** Having as a starting point the store image dimensions and attributes already available in the current literature, we will attempt to uncover and gain a deeper understanding of possible additional pick-up points' image characteristics. As supported by Kalwani et al. (1990 cited in Haans, 2011), support, customers generate expectations for the new format prior to their visit which will ultimately affect the way they perceive the new store. Specifically, we assume that customers of the new format are using their already existing reference points (e.g. traditional stores or similar formats) in order to build their opinions and perceptions on the new pick-up points. Finally, we will further examine whether these associations differ or remain constant across the two different versions of the format studied.

In accordance with the above purpose and research question, our **methodology** will follow an **abductive approach with qualitative methods for data collection** from a chosen "revelatory case" (Yin, 1984) and subsequent analysis.

According to Amirani and Gates (1993) and Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2007), previous studies on store image mostly followed a deductive approach. However, we believe that our methodology might fit better the investigation of a new format's store image. In fact, as stated by Bryman & Bell (2015), qualitative methods allow researchers to view "*events and the social world through the eyes of people being studied*" (p. 405) and, consequently, they might help us to uncover the unique store image attributes of the new pick-up point format. An exhaustive description of our research philosophies, approaches, and design will be presented in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, it is important to mention at this point that qualitative methods also seem appropriate because **we assume that store image** is a phenomenon requiring an in-depth investigation of consumers' own interpretations of the stores, through the interactions with the researchers. Accordingly, we follow the epistemological position labelled as **interpretivist** and the ontological position known as **constructionist**. In support of our choice, several authors in the literature are in line with the above qualitative methodology and philosophies (e.g. Oxenfeld, 1974; Hirschman, 1981; Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Zimmer & Golden, 1988; Keaveney & Hunt, 1992; Lee & Johnson, 1997; Janse van Noordwyk, 2002; McGoldrick, 2002; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). However, at the same time, even though the focus of this study is on a specific sector and recent format, we realize that the existing literature on store image is extensive and date back to Martineau (1958). Consequently, an **abductive approach** is suitable for us because it entails both elements of induction and deduction (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Accordingly, we believe that the store image dimensions and attributes available in previous literature should be reviewed, accepted and combined as a basis or source of inspiration for the empirical facts collection (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Finally, we are convinced that by following an **iterative process** and, thus, by aligning the data collected with present theories, the exploration of the new store format image can be more systematic (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) and might enable us to result in the following findings:

- Possible similarities and differences of store image between the new pick-up point and the traditional format (i.e. effect on store image of the new format development);
- The variations that exist among different type of pick-up point formats affect store image and, consequently, generate different attributes for customers;
- The new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector generates different store image attributes than previous or similar pick-up points in other sectors.

1.4   Thesis Outline

The **first chapter** of our study provided the reader with background information on the topic of research, by initiating the discussion at a more general level with retailers' growth strategies, and progressively linking related topics and narrowing down to the concept of store image. In addition, we presented the study's problem formulation, research purpose and question and explained the theoretical and practical importance of our research. Consequently, the **second chapter** will discuss the literature of format development and pick-up points, along with multi and omni-channel practices and, finally, image and store image. Through the literature review, we will introduce the theoretical framework which will be used as a starting point for the investigation of the topic. With regards to the **third chapter**, the focus will be on the description of our research philosophy and design, the chosen data collection methods and the analysis process. Furthermore, the methodological research limitations along with political and ethical considerations will be presented. Moreover, throughout the chapter, we will provide detailed information on the way research and data collection were conducted.

In relation to the **fourth chapter**, we will present and analyse the results derived from the data collected, but also develop a revised framework in view of the findings, which will allow us to answer our research and sub-research question. Finally, in the **fifth chapter** we will focus on the conclusions of the study, and will also discuss the theoretical and managerial contributions, its limitations and weaknesses, and the recommendations for further research.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The **second chapter** exploits the fields of literature that are relevant to the research question and purpose of this study. As already discussed in Chapter 1, we aim at exploring the effect on store image of format development with specific focus on the home furnishing sector. **In view of our purpose,** the tools available from the literature that will help us in the study have been identified in previous research on the concept of format and its development. Furthermore, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, the establishment of new formats implies for retailers to engage in multi-channel strategies. Thus, this topic will also be reviewed to gain a better understanding of the positioning of format development in the literature. Finally, the empirical tool of our study is store image. Consequently, we will position this concept by reviewing previous studies on the topic of image in its different forms (i.e. brand, corporate and product image). In addition, our study will explore and review the attributes that are affecting the way store image is perceived by consumers. Overall, through the selected topics elaborated in the literature review, we believe that the study will ultimately show the effect that format development has on retail companies' store image. In particular, the study will eventually present potential linkages among different image types.

In order to identify, explore and present the findings of literature in the aforementioned fields, we utilized the database platforms of EBSCO host, Google Scholar and Research Gate. Moreover, our aim was to specify our search process and thus narrow the focus of the findings into topics that are related to our research subject. Consequently, we applied a number of keywords (i.e. "retail formats", "format development", "new format",

"retail image", "store image", "product & brand image", "store location", "multi-channel", "pick-up points", "collection and order points", "general merchandise retailer", "growth strategies", "store attributes", "store image measurement" and "consumer perception"). The aforementioned terms were chosen based on the knowledge we have gained through our earlier studies, courses and lectures in Marketing. Thus, we have consulted several marketing and retailing textbooks as well as academic articles (available on the reference list) in order to verify the relevance of the chosen keywords. Furthermore, the selected keywords were utilized in differing combinations in order to help us to locate the most relevant studies. In line with the use of terms, we eliminated most of the studies that were not conducted in Western countries. Literatures' findings covered the years from 1958 until 2015, since store image and format development are continuously changing and growing topics that have attracted the attention of researchers for years. In addition, we reviewed journal articles, theses, PhD papers and implemented a screening on the reference list of sources found in order to detect possible other related studies (Hart, 1998). Lastly, we also reviewed textbooks related to the purpose of our study and exploited theirs sources to evaluate established concepts in retailing (e.g. advertising). Specifically, textbooks were identified and appraised on the basis of the aforementioned keywords and tools selected for our theoretical framework. Finally, this process was critical in the cases where the international journals we found were not exhaustive.

2.1   Format Development

2.1.1   Definition of retail format

During the last years, we have noticed that various scholars have been focusing on examining the field of retail formats. The explanations and descriptions that have been associated with the specific subject vary between researchers and this, unfortunately, is not enabling the study to be based on a specific definition of retail formats (Brown, 1986 cited in McGoldrick, 2002).

Despite the fact that researchers have addressed the topic of consumer behavior in relation to diverse touch points (e.g. Rousey & Morganosky, 1996; Messinger & Narasimhan, 1997; Uusitalo, 2001; Carpenter & Moore, 2006 cited in Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014), a number of scholars claim that there is a narrowed focus on exploring the elements that comprise format (Reynolds et al. 2007; Ishii & Mukoyama, 2009 cited in Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014).

In particular, according to Levy and Weitz (1998 cited in Brown, 2010), retail format is "*the retailer's type of retail mix (nature of merchandise and services offered, pricing policy, advertising, and promotion program, approach to store design and visual merchandising, and typical location)*" (p. 161). In line with that view, Sethuraman (2006), described retail format as "*a specific configuration of the retail marketing mix (e.g. nature of merchandise and service offered, pricing policy, advertising and promotion programme, approach to store design and visual merchandising, typical location, etc.) which is maintained consistently over time*" (p.193).

Moreover, retail format is the outcome of a company's plan and activity which is targeted towards a wide segment and characterized by related anticipations of the value that customers will receive from their interaction with the store. Thus, retail format refers to the location where customers purchase is taking place (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, which focuses on the image customers create towards a new touch point, we rely on the view that retail format is linked to the retailer's mix (Levy & Weitz, 1998) but also that format is an outcome of a business plan linked to a specific location and to customer's expectations (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014).

2.1.2   Types of retail formats

With regards to the types of retail formats, they can be classified into two main types of touch points. Specifically, the distinction is between the stores that **have a physical touch point** and **the stores that do not have an actual store** (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). In fact, we noticed that although a considerable amount of purchases are taking place in the physical store formats, non-physical stores also play an important role in retailer's total amount of transactions.

The word non-physical stores involve internet mediums, direct selling or the use of catalogues which are all different mediums from the traditional brick-and-mortar type of stores (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). Following this distinction between store and non-store formats and in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic, we are going to examine the categorization of formats through describing specific types of stores. In the below image, a list of retail formats is provided.

Store-based formats	Non-store based formats
Grocery • convenience • discount stores • hypermarkets/ superstores • supermarkets • small grocers • food/drink specialists	**Internet** • e-stores/ e-commerce • online auctions • group buying • social commerce
Non-Grocery • specialty stores (e.g. apparel, electronic, appliances, health & beauty) • mixed retailers: - department stores - variety stores - mass merchandisers - warehouse clubs	**Other non-store** • direct selling • television home shopping channels • mail order catalogues • market stands

Image 2: **Classifications of Retail Formats [Source: Adapted from Musso & Druica (2014)]**

According to the type of format each retailer decides to adopt, a number of varying attributes and values are generated towards customers but also towards firms (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014). Likewise, the way each format is developed and practised by each retailer depends on the management structure, values, and vision of the company, the experience and the existence of the firm in the market, the level of novelty and originality, but also the extent of company's competencies (Dawson & Mukoyama, 2014). Consequently, we believe that engaging with any of the format types mentioned in the above image is based on a per company and market basis.

However, the list is not exhaustive since new formats are recently being implemented across the retail sector. Specifically, the constant development of new touch pointsis linked to the emergence of new product related evaluation metrics that are influenced by consumers' needs and wants, but also by new target audiences'

characteristics (Musso & Druica, 2014). Thus, in the following paragraph, we will discuss the missing store formats.

Specifically, there are two other types of formats that are not illustrated in the above categories (see Image 2) and play an important role for our study. Specifically the two formats are store-based and are called "category killer" and "pick-up point" and are going to be described in the following paragraph. Their relevance for our study is supported by the fact that we are focusing on customers' store image towards the new type of format of "pick-up point" in relation to the perception they already have from the existing format which is a "category killer".

To begin with, the format type of "**category killer"** refers to stores that are experts in the field of their operationand, usually, offer a large variation of specific types of products and, at the same time, a narrow number of different products (Piyush Kumar & Sanjay Kumar, 2007). This type of retailers are also called "discount specialty stores". The reason they are called 'killers' is due to the fact that they can monopolize a product category in view of their deep assortment of products (Piyush Kumar & Sanjay Kumar, 2007). Another general characteristic is that this type of format is applying the customer self-service option and, due to their expertise in the field, they take advantage of their enhanced purchasing power to achieve competitive prices and agreements with partners (Piyush Kumar & Sanjay Kumar, 2007).

Moreover, the **pick-up point format** combines the online ordering of products with delivery and pick-up options directly from the store. Furthermore, retailers can also include other characteristics when implementing this format. For example, they can present a specific amount of products available in the store for direct purchase (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). Moreover, retailers can also include showrooms for extra items to be ordered in-store or online and such rooms are considered to be a growing trend for dominant e-commerce retailers (Bell, Gallino & Moreno, 2014). The reason behind this phenomenon is the ability of showrooms to give the opportunity to customers to see, touch and feel the products before they decide to order them (Bell, Gallino & Moreno, 2014). Since pick-up points are the type of stores that will be examined in this study, we will further discuss this format in the next paragraph.

2.1.3   Pick-up points

As we will discuss in section 2.2.1, retailers are currently facing and engaging in an increasingly complex environment due to the need of establishing new market channels (e.g. social media, e-commerce and mobile) as well as different store formats (e.g. pick-up points) (Iouguina, 2015). Specifically, numerous retailers strive to create channel synergies (i.e. omni-channel strategies) by offering customers the possibility to buy products online and then pick them up at the chosen company's physical store (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). According to Boyer, Frohlich and Hult (2005), the option to pick-up an order in store increases the self-service responsibility for customers since it implies travelling to a specific location to collect their products. On the other hand, the aforementioned authors also underline how pick-up options reduce not only the waiting time of customers to receive their products but also the shipping costs.

With regards to our study, it is important to mention that current literature, at the best of our knowledge, focuses mainly on issues that are related to the company's perspective and interest. In particular, logistic and cost aspects were mentioned by several authors (e.g. Kamarainen & Punakivi, 2002; Xu, Hong & Li, 2011). Furthermore, there are no studies on the specific pick-up point format recently introduced in the home furnishing sector. In fact, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, the available literature highlights that retailers have typically used the pick-up option within their original store formats and mostly in the grocery sector (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). Alternatively, some studies have been focusing on retailers (e.g. Argos)

implementing formats defined as "catalogue showroom", where the store is dedicated to physical transactions and pick-up of goods, while the display of the merchandise is presented through catalogues (Spark, 2003).

According to Mahar, Salzarulo and Wright (2012), it is possible to distinguish between two main types of pick-up/click and collect points, namely the site-to-store pick-up and the immediate in-store pickup. In relation to the former type, it refers to the customers' possibility to simply pick-up their products in one of the company's local stores where the goods have been transported from a central warehouse some days after the date of order (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012). Regarding the latter (i.e. immediate in-store pick-up), it implies that retailers indicate to customers in which store the products are available for immediate pick-up. Moreover, retailers can choose to have some stock available within a certain pick-up point for direct purchase once customers' orders are concluded and, thus, shipment delays can be reduced (Mahar, Salzarulo & Wright, 2012).

Based on the above review and as already mentioned, there seem to be no specific studies on **the format we want to investigate** which refers to **a new store in the home furnishing sector,** specifically **dedicated to customers' pick-up in-store**. Moreover, its layout also includes characteristics typical of **showrooms** as well as planning/consultancy sections, cafés and other features (the specific attributes of the new format will be further presented in Chapter 3 and 4). In view of these unique characteristics, we found a recent study from Bell, Gallino and Moreno (2015) that describes showrooms format as "*offline locations where customers can physically examine products before placing an order, but orders are placed on a tablet or Internet-connected device in the store, fulfillment is done via shipping, that is, showrooms do not have products available for immediate in-store purchase*" (p. 360). Moreover, they underline how this new format is practised mainly by dominant e-commerce retailers and is considered to be a growing trend (Bell, Gallino & Moreno, 2015).

With regards to our study, we believe that the new pick-up points recently introduced in the home furnishing sector, represent a new and interesting format comprised of a combination of already existing concepts in different fields. In support to that, this type of store also includes some other unique characteristics that are not yet exploited and discussed in literature as part of the pick-up point offering. In view of the aforementioned reasons that explain why the new pick-up point format we are focusing is a different unexploited concept, we believe that there is a need to examine this new type of store in order to be able to see the possible effects on store image. Accordingly, our aim is to analyse and compare the characteristics of this new pick-up point in relation to a category killer format but also to a different version/ type of pick-up point offered within the same sector (i.e. home furnishing).

Finally, as we will also underline in the multi-channel section of the present chapter, the new pick-up point formats can also be considered as additional channels for retailers which need to be integrated with other touch points (i.e. omni-channel strategy).

2.1.4   Characteristics of formats

There are various **elements that are associated with store formats**. Specifically, the product variety and assortment, the types of services offered, the customers' profiling, the size of the store, the location, the structure of the organization, the attitude and approach of the sale's clerk, the arrangements of the channels, and the division of power amongst outlets (Brown, 1986; Wileman, 1993; Arnold, 2000 in McGoldrick, 2002 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015).

Moreover, Goldman (2001 cited in Brown 2010), has attempted to identify additional aspects of the retail format. Specifically, he supported that the elements of retail format were first the expertise of retailers and secondly the unique selling proposition they offer in the market. The offering has to do with extrinsic elements such as the product variety, the store's atmosphere and layout, the available services, the location and

the pricing strategy. These elements provide practical, collective, visual, amusement and psychological advantages for customers inside the store. Finally, the expertise of the retailer involves its level of knowledge and experience on the field of operation (Goldman, 2001).

2.1.5   Format development

As we discussed in Chapter 1, format development is a strategy that empowers retailers to expand the range of their operations. Specifically, it enables firms to provide the market with a unique offering that will distinguish the retailer from its competitors and at the same time be appealing to a wider target audience (Levy & Weitz, 2009). In addition, format development provides customers with a number of purchasing options which will ultimately result in an increment growth of the retailer's market share (Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003 cited in Haans, 2011).

Engaging in a variety of formats, retailers attempt to comply with different markets and different target audiences (Mason, Mayer & Wilkinson, 1993 cited in Brown, 2010). Consequently, adopting a new format can result in an increase of retailers' market share and profitability since they are adapting to the expectations and needs of a larger target segment (Blackwell & Talarzyk, 1983 cited in Brown, 2010). **In relation to our study**, we believe that retailers engaging in format development and, thus, reaching new customers while, at the same time, providing new offerings to existing ones, need to understand how possible variations between the existing and the new format can affect the way customers perceive their stores.

2.1.6   Positive associations that can be linked to format development

We have observed that an important factor for achieving a positive response from customers towards the new format is customer's journey inside the store and the **experience** they build while purchasing. Specifically, a positive experience inside the store can generate beneficial associations about the retailer (Kerin, Jain & Howard, 1992 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). Thus, **we assume** that consumers build a positive store image when they establish a positive experience inside the store and link valuable associations towards the new format. Experience is built when customers engage with the store and, specifically, when they are exposed to the store's layout, when they receive assistance from the store's clerk but also when they deal with the store's procedures (Kerin, Jain & Howard, 1992 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). In particular, purchasing experience inside the store can be affected by surroundings and layout of the store, the store's personnel, the product assortment, audio and visual features, the accessibility of the store, extra facilities that comfort customers' while in the store, and also valuable services (Jain & Bagdare, 2009 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). Furthermore, there are a number of aspects that affect consumers' purchasing attitudes across various touch points. For example, competitive prices, value and quality of products and services, the importance of time availability of consumers, shopping occasions, anticipated risks, shopping incentives but also demographic and geographic traits (Jayasankaraprasad, 2014).

In addition to the aforementioned attributes, **store's features** play an important role in shaping consumers' behaviors amongst formats (Jayasankaraprasad, 2014). As described, **value for time** is an essential element that affects consumers' cross purchasing behavior and as supported by Bhatnagar and Ratchford (2004 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014), consumers select the touch point they will interact based on the time they need to spend to visit the store. In support of this argument, a number of researchers claimed that proximity to the store, but also transportation duration has a considerable effect on customer's loyalty to the store (e.g. Loudon & Della Bitta 1993; Runyon & Stewart 1987 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014). This indicates that consumers acknowledge the value of convenience as a mean to reduce time and effort related to stores' selection and

shopping preferences (Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002; Jones, David & Beatty, 2003 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014).

To conclude, **with regards to our study**, we will attempt to understand how customers experience the new pick-up store format. In particular, we will examine how the new store responds to customers' shopping behaviors and needs and how the store's features affect and shape their perceptions.

2.1.7 How consumers evaluate format development - Expectations

Once retailers engage in format development, we believe they should be aware of the evaluation criteria that consumers will use to establish an image and build a perception towards the new store and format. The new touch point is creating uncertainty for consumers regarding the structure of the store but also the store's characteristics (Kalwani et al. 1990 cited in Haans, 2011). On the other hand, customers are aware of the owner company and the initial store. Consequently, in view of their established experience with the original store format, customers tend to generate certain anticipations about the new format that will ultimately influence their mindsets and actions before they visit the store (Kalwani et al. 1990 cited in Haans, 2011). More specifically, a number of researchers support that price is an essential factor that affects customer's loyalty and shopping preferences, but also it is frequently utilized as an assessment metric for the retailer and the store format (Campbell, 1999; Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003; Jun et al. 2003; Kopalle & Lehmann, 2006; Xia et al. 2004 cited in Haans, 2011). The way consumers shape their anticipations about the store's prices is influenced by the level of knowledge they have about the new format but also on the comparison they make to other related offerings from competition (Ross & Creyer, 1992; Mason & Bequette, 1998 cited in Haans, 2011). Furthermore, price expectations are influenced by the information and the experience consumers have about the initial store and company (Taylor & Bearden, 2002; Kardes, Posavac & Cronley, 2004 cited in Haans, 2011). Price can ultimately have a considerable effect on the new format's image in view of the significant impact of price in consumers' evaluation of a store's new format, which is based on customers' reference points (Campbell, 1999; Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003; Jun et al. 2003 cited in Haans, 2011).

To conclude, the attributes and characteristics that will be recognized as important for customers when they will engage with the new type of store, will depend on the level of closeness among the two stores (i.e. the new format and the original format). This closeness relies on the objective of each store but also on the needs each format aims to satisfy (Boush & Loken, 1991; Park, McCarthy & Milberg, 1993; Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003 cited in Haans, 2011.) The higher the similarity of the purchase intentions from the new store in relation to the original store, the more intense is the resemblance and comparison of the stores' similar attributes (Boush & Loken, 1991; Park, McCarthy & Milberg, 1993; Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003 cited in Haans, 2011). On the contrary, if customers' aim when visiting the new touch point differs from the purchasing intentions they had when they visited the initial format, they might not compare their experience in the new store to their previous one. Consequently, they will examine possible similarities and differences with other similar formats offered by competitive companies in order to evaluate the store's attributes (Boush & Loken, 1991; Park, Milberg & Lawson, 1991 cited in Haans, 2011).

Following the above analysis of expectations that consumers have when visiting a new store format, our study will examine how customers evaluate their experience in the new store. More specifically, we will explore how customers built the store's image and perceive the attributes of the store in relation to their previous experience in the traditional format, or in similar stores.

2.1.8 Format development and its effect on store image

Engaging in format development encompasses the adoption of a different store layout which might consequently lead to a transformation of the firm's image (Kotler, 1973). In particular, consumers' understanding and impression of the retailer might be influenced if the new type of format has a new size since this attribute is of significant importance for the store's image (Uusitalo, 2001 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). Moreover, stores that are enriched with satisfying facilities are usually generating a positive image of the store (Jayasankaraprasad, 2014). In particular, facilities include the anticipation of such structures and services that improve the enjoyment and the shopping experience of consumers inside the store (Nevin & Houston, 1980 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014). In support to that, various researchers discuss the favorable role of store's environment (Miranda, Konya & Havrila, 2005 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014) and store's display (Richardson, Jain & Dick, 1996; Siu & Cheung 2001 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014) in the consumers' store selection process, but also in consumers' patronage decisions. In particular, store patronage decisions refer to customers assessment of the store's attributes based on specific retail store benchmarks (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1968 cited in Philpot, Reizenstein & Sweeney, 1972).

In view of the above connection between format development and store image, in the section 2.3 we are going to examine the concept of image as well as its components. Furthermore, in the next paragraph, we will review the literature on multi-channel practices due to its already mentioned connection to the phenomenon of format development.

2.2 Multi-channel practice

2.2.1 Multi-channel retailing - A growing phenomena

The technological evolution and the emergence of the internet led to the development of communication mediums that interact with each other. This drove the appearance of multi-channel management that has a significant impact on retailers' evolvement and enables them to establish successful operations (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).

In the past decades, authors have been focusing on studying the growing development of multi-channel strategy (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006; Neslin & Shankar, 2009; Verhoef, 2012 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). This phenomenon has caused a significant change in the retail sector. Specifically, the arrival of the digital world and the opportunity for retailers to adopt an online channel (i.e. mobile and social media) has differentiated the way retailers are operating and formulating their retail mix but also it has affected consumers' purchasing attitudes (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). Accordingly, the multi-channel expansion is linked to the developing tendency of consumers to engage with a number of mediums for their purchases, which consequently led firms to incorporate additional channels in their operations (e.g. Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002, Coughlan et al. 2006; Ansari, Mela & Neslin, 2008 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015).

To capture consumers' changing behaviour, in view of the increasing rate of the technological advancements (Peterson, Balasubranian & Bronnenberg, 1997 cited in Lapoule & Colla, 2015), companies have been adopting new channels for development (e.g. Colla & Lapoule, 2011 cited in Lapoule & Colla, 2015) to offer their products to customers in a convenient way (Coelho, Easingwood & Coelho, 2003 cited in Lapoule & Colla, 2015).

According to Brynjolfsson, Hu and Rahman (2013 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), the introduction of new channels of interaction with customers has impacted the way retailers develop their differentiation plans and plan their competitive approaches. Specifically, the new mediums have simplified the geographic

boundaries but also eliminated the levels of ignorance of consumers. Thus, companies realized that it is essential to reevaluate their business models and strategies as channels have become substitutes of one another across all phases of the shopping processes (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, we are interested in the area of multi-channel retailing since we are focusing on the home furnishing sector in which companies have introduced new channels/formats in the last years. Specifically, we are interested in understanding customers' shopping perceptions across the channels of a company.

2.2.2 Multi-channel definition & strategy

The touch point or the medium in which the customers have a direct or indirect communication and interaction with a brand or a firm is described by the literature as "**channel**" (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015). In line with that, other authors claim that when customers have any type of interaction with a company or brand, this reveals that they come in contact with the retailers' channels of operation (e.g. Court et al. 2009 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

As we have discussed in the previous section (see 2.1), format development in the retail sector is an occasion in which a firm introduces a new touch point that includes a varying retail mix (i.e. in comparison to existing formats) that is addressed to the same target audience. In connection to that, **multi-channel** is the general strategy in which format development can be seen as a tactic for a firm to introduce a new touch point to serve and meet its customers, as an extension to the channels their currently operating (e.g. a traditional physical store is launching an e-commerce channel) (Levy & Weitz, 2009).

Hans (2011) underlines that retailers are engaging in a centralized multi-format approach, which is falling under the firm's name with the aim to enhance their earnings. Specifically, firms are presenting a number of touch points that are titled under the company's brand name, but each format includes similar and also different characteristics in relation to the parent company (Haans, 2011). Moreover, Neslin et al. (2006 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), described multi-channel retailing as the "*as the design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development*" (p.96).

In view of retail's world development, a number of companies have introduced the multi-channel approach in their marketing strategies (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). In particular, this strategy was initially concerned about whether the additional channels were to be incorporated into the current distribution system of the retailer (e.g. Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002; Deleersnyder et al. 2002 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). For instance, physical stores (i.e. brick and mortar channels) were questioning if they should incorporate an online channel. This was also the case with online retailers who were considering to include a physical store (Avery et al. 2012 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). At the same time, firms are confronting pressures regarding the extent of integration amongst the various channels they are operating, but also in relation to their decentralized system's arrangements (Zhang et al. 2010 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015). In fact, **in our study**, the new pick-up point format represents for customers an additional channel to purchase their goods.

2.2.3 Multi-channel to omni-channel practise

Retailers that are operating in a unified multi-channel approach are practising a number of similar elements across mediums. In particular, these common characteristics include their communication activities, product offering, their centralised system that tracks client's, prices' and stock's information, but also a scheme for

enabling the various channels to facilitate the process of product dispatch to the store, after an online or catalogue order is fulfilled (Berman & Thelen, 2004 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015).

Moreover, the extent of integration across the multiple channels is relying not only in the level of unification of channels from the firm's perspective, but also on the way that the channels offered by the retailer are relating with one another as seen from the customers' perspective (Schoenbachler & Gordon, 2002; Berman & Thelen, 2004; Neslin et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2010 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015).

Despite the fact that multi-channel was the primary focus in retailing during the last decade, we observe that the sector is currently experiencing **a change towards the omni-channel retailing**. A number of scholars have recognised the importance of this subject (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006; Patrício, Fisk & Cunha, 2008; Neslin & Shankar, 2009 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). Specifically, it has been observed that researchers have mainly focused on the areas of product variety and assortment but also pricing policies as main elements of integration among multiple channels (e.g. Pan, Ratchford & Shankar 2004 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). Moreover, apart from scholars, journalists are reporting this transition from a multi-channel to omni-channelpractise (Rigby, 2011 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), which we believe indicates the significance of this subject. This new retailing marketing strategy was portrayed by Brynjolfsson, Hu and Rahman (2013 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman 2015), who described this situation: "*In the past, brick-and-mortar retail stores were unique in allowing consumers to touch and feel merchandise and provide instant gratification; Internet retailers, meanwhile, tried to woo shoppers with wide product selection, low prices and content such as product reviews and ratings. As the retailing industry evolves toward a seamless 'omni-channel retailing' experience, the distinctions between physical and online will vanish, turning the world into a showroom without walls*" (p.23). Consequently, the focus of multi-channel strategy has expanded by addressing the areas of handling the customers and unifying the retail offering throughout the channels (e.g. Neslin et al. 2006 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). In view of this development, omni-channel strategy is concentrating in adopting a wider angle on the way they firms are operating their channels. In particular, the focal point of the channels is on the way consumers are affected by the various channels that exist and on how they engage with each channel throughout the information search and purchasing process (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

An important element that has been associated with omni-channel is the concept of "showrooming". Specifically, this term refers to the behaviour of consumers who tend to search through their mobile phones about products found in the traditional stores with the aim to purchase them online in order to benefit from reduced prices (Placed, 2013 cited in Georgescu, 2013). Despite the newness of this concept, literature has addressed this characteristic of consumers' behaviour as "research shopper phenomenon" (Verhoef, Neslin & Vroomen, 2007 cited in Georgescu, 2013), which refers to customers who acquire information about a product in one channel, and decide to conduct the purchase in a second channel,. For instance, it has been observed that retailers have been integrating their channels by combining the newly emerged mediums with the traditional touch points. In particular, companies are offering a complete in-store experience by giving customers the opportunity to look for product information and order products through electronic devices available in store (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). Consequently, the tendency of consumers' to switch between retailers' channels has become an essential part of the omni-channel retailing and, thus, companies should acknowledge it in order to offer their customers' an integrated experience (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015).

2.2.4 Omni-channel Definition & Challenges

According to Verhoef et al. (2009 cited in Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015), when retailers are adopting an omni-channel strategy, they target their efforts on providing exceptional levels of experience for their

customers. Verhoef, Kannan and Inman (2015), in their study they define omni-channelas an aligned and integrated operation of the company's channels and mediums with the aim to provide an advanced performance, service and experience to customers throughout their touch points. Consequently, the customers are using all channels during their shopping, which means that the channels are interacting with one another.

As literature points out, there are a number of **challenges** that retailers face with the aim of channel integration. Namely, Neslin et al. (2006 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015), discuss the unification of information shared among mediums, the consideration of customers' attitudes and needs in view of their exposure to an environment with a number of touch points available, the assessment of channels, the evenly distribution of recourses, but also the aligned strategy adopted by each channel. In addition, four years later, Zhang et al. (2010 cited in Beck & Rygl, 2015), presented the 'ingredients' for the development of a unified strategy in view of a multi-channel approach adopted by companies. Specifically, the study included the level of integration among the data shared in the company, the organization's arrangement and design, customers' analytics, but also the assessment criteria of channel's performance.

In our research, we are going to examine how a new channel introduced in the home furnishing sector is being integrated with the other channels offered by a retailer from a customer's point of view. As already mentioned, **we believe that the field of omni-channel practise is relevant for our study. In fact,** we are interested in examining how a retailer in the home furnishing sector is unifying the operation of a new format/channel with the already existing stores and, specifically, how customers perceive it.

2.3   Image

Since image is the empirical tool for this study, in order to build our framework, we have reviewed and considered the available literature on the topic of image. The outcome of our searching process showed that the key concepts and relevant studies on imageare bounded to old literature and findings dating back to second half of the last century. Consequently, the following review is also based on the pioneer studies on image which we consider extremely relevant and still applicable to present times. Specifically, our decision can be supported by the existence of many citations of leading studies on store image both in recent textbooks and journals on the topic. Thus, the relevance of existing sources for the establishment of our theoretical framework on store image seems to be plausible. Furthermore, older studies have been utilized in combination with more recent literature in order to verify the applicability of the findings to the current retail sector. Finally, the various concepts reviewed in this section are all connected to our research question and, therefore, they will assist us through the data collection process and subsequent analysis.

2.3.1   Brand & Retail Image

In the marketing field, the term *image* is generally used to summarize the overall perceptions that customers hold of a company (Brown et al. 2006). According to Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2010), the importance of image can be explained by the assumption that consumers take decisions based on the way the perceive reality. Furthermore, the authors above also underline how these perceptions can then be transformed in the meaning that consumers attach to brands (i.e. brand image). Keller (1993) describes brand image as the perception consumers have of a certain brand/name/symbol which reflects the particular association they hold in their memory. Specifically, these associations are related to any aspect of the brand which is stored in consumers' minds (Aaker, 1996). Accordingly, Roy and Banerjee (2007) claim that brand image is formed by all feelings and thoughts consumers have towards a certain brand. Furthermore, Faircloth (2005) underlines how these thoughts form in consumer's mind a certain uniqueness for the brand in comparison to other firms.

For the present study, in relation to the retailing industry, we consider that retailers are companies possessing a certain brand around which the retail image is formed. In fact, as supported by Floor (2007), retailers are continuously trying to become brands themselves in order to be more competitive and to create a favourable image in their customers' minds. Thus, in line with Kapferer (2012), we acknowledge that brands cannot be considered anymore as solely linked to products. On these bases, we will begin this section by explaining the different dimensions which form the concept of retail image. Specifically, according to Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2010), the retailer's image consist of the corporate image, product image and, finally, store image.

2.3.2   Corporate Image

In view of the increasing importance given to corporate identities and public relations, the concept of image has in the last decades embraced the corporate level (Ind, 1992). Consequently, it is important to define the notion of corporate image. Specifically, previous studies on the topic underlined how corporate image is linked to the overall impression of a company held by the general public (Kotler, 1982; Grönroos 1984; Bitner, 1990 cited in Mostafa et al. 2015). Furthermore, Ind (1990) claimed that corporate image is the result of the sum of all the messages consumers received in relation to a certain firm. Other authors, also link corporate image to the total purchasing and consumption experience that consumers have with a company over time (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998 cited in Mostafa et al. 2015). More recently, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) claimed that corporate image is the result of the interpretation given by all company stakeholders to the corporate personality. Specifically, with relation to customers, Andreassen (2001) claims that corporate image is the total reflection of the perceptions individuals have of a certain organization in view of their experience and knowledge of the company. Additionally, in recent years, Roper and Fill (2012) identified the attitudes, values and beliefs a stakeholder perceive from a company as the major elements influencing the creation of a corporate image. Accordingly, we assume that the way firms communicate with stakeholders, as well as the place (e.g. store) where the communication occurs, might have a certain influence on the corporate image. In fact, the perception and image that individuals have of a certain organization are supposed to be built on the personal experience with the corporate's symbolism, behavior and communication (Birkigt & Stadler, 1986 cited in Van Riel, Cees & Balmer, 1997). Finally, product and store image area complementary and integral parts in the construction of corporate image and the overall process of corporate branding (Varley, 2005). Thus, **for our study**, we believe that customers' perceptions of the new pick-up point format might somehow affect and be affected by the image of the company implementing these new channels.

2.3.3   Product Image

Product image has been for several years the main focus of the branding literature (Kapferer, 2012). In fact, numerous brand definitions from the last century underline the strong connection between the name/symbol/brand and the products or services sold by companies (Aker, 1991; Kapferer, 2012). Consequently, in relation to the available literature on product image, we have found that the term is mainly included in the wider concept of the perceptions consumers have of a brand (Kapferer, 2012).

According to Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2010), the importance given to product image is due to the fact that products are what consumers eventually seek and buy when visiting a store. Furthermore, in the retailing industry, several companies are making use of their own private names to brand their products (Burt, 2000; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010). The reason behind this trend is that a strong product image aids retailers to differentiate their merchandise from competition and to increase customer loyalty (Porter & Claycomb, 1997). According to Quester, Karunaratna and Goh (2000), products have personality traits that ultimately

build a certain product image in the mind of customers which goes over the functional attributes of a product and also incorporates psychological associations. Furthermore, Biel (1992) claims that brand association can also arise from product image. Thus, the image consumers develop around the products sold by a retailer, represents for companies a highly valuable asset (Porter & Claycomb, 1997). In fact, as already mentioned, product's image is an essential element of retailer's image (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2010).

Based on the above review, **with regards to our study**, we believe that differences in the product offering, and the availability and the display of products among different channels/formats, might affect customers' perception of the store.

2.3.4 Store Image

The attention of literature towards the study of image is driven by the supposition that the stores that carry the elements of image that consumers need and expect, have higher probability of being chosen and preferred (Martineau, 1958; Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Amirani & Gates, 1993). Retailers across all fields and sectors have been continuously focusing on creating their offerings to consumers and on coordinating the way their store was perceived by customers (Walters & Knee, 1989).

One of the drivers that play a crucial role in a retailer's performance in the market is store image (Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Hildebrandt, 1988). The reason for its great influence is firstly the fact that image is affecting the store that consumers will ultimately choose to purchase (Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Schiffman, Dash & Dillon, 1977; Burns, 1992 cited in Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007). Customers' response to the atmosphere, physical arrangement and image of the store is influencing the company's finances (Newman, 2003). Likewise, when consumers are satisfied with a store's image and when their needs are met, higher levels of loyalty are achieved (Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Osman, 1993). Last but not least, effective store image is connected to a favored position in the market and offers a unique differentiator from competitors (Oppewal & Timmermans, 1997; Pessemier, 1980; Davies & Brooks, 1989; Walters & Knee, 1989 cited in Burt & Mavromattis, 2006). Consequently, store image is a term that needs to attract retailers' attention since consumers are selecting the store of their preference depending on whether the store image is closely related to their perception of themselves (Bearden, 1977). Researchers tend to make a distinction between 'store identity' and 'store image' as the latter is focusing on how the world and the customers perceives the store whereas identity is closely linked to the image a retailer has for its store (Chun, 2005). To conclude, it is essential to recognize that the product, company and store images and associations developed by consumers, affect significantly their shopping attitudes and choices (Porter & Claycomb, 1997; Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Zimmer & Golden, 1988).

In relation to our purpose, we acknowledge that studies on store image play a significant role for our research since we are focusing on the effects that a new format has on store image from a customer's point of view. Having reviewed the extensive literature on store image definitions, we have developed a chronological report of the researchers who have described the term. Specifically, in the table below, we have summarized the store image definitions that have been identified in the literature.

YEAR	AUTHOR	DEFINITION
1958	Martineau	*"[...] the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by the functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes"* (p. 47) *(embraced by Keaveney & Hunt, 1992 and Zimmer & Golden, 1988)*
1960	Arons	*"[...] a complex of meanings and relationships serving to characterize the store for people"* (p.2)
1968	Kunkel & Berry	*"[...] discriminative stimuli for an action's expected reinforcement. Specifically, retail store image is the total store image is the total conceptualized or expected reinforcement that a person associates with shopping at a particular store"* and *"[. . .] an image is acquired through experience and is thus learned"* (p. 22)
1974	Oxenfeldt	*"[...] an image is more than the sum of its parts, it represents interaction among characteristics and includes extraneous elements. It also has some emotional content... Thus, I consider image a combination of factual and emotional material"* (p. 9).
	Doyle & Fenwick	*"The term is used interchangeably with attitude toward the store to describe the overall impression a consumer has to it"* (p. 40)
	Lindquist	generated from consumers' need to facilitate their shopping procedures by building representative associations that are meaningful to them
1976	James, Durand & Dreves	*"[...] a set of attitudes based upon evaluation of those store attributes deemed important by consumers"* (p.25) *(embraced by Pan & Zinkhan, 2006)*
	Jain & Etgar	overall perception and opinion consumers have established about a store
	Marks	*" A store's image is a composite of dimensions that consumers perceive as a store. Store image is an overall picture that is more than the sum of the parts, for the parts interact with one another in the consumer's mind."* (p.37)

1981	Hirschman	*"A subjective phenomenon that results from the acquisition of knowledge about the store as it is perceived relative to other stores and in accordance with the consumer's unique cognitive framework"* (p. 19)
1982	Engel & Blackwell	*"[...] one type of attitude, measured across a number of dimensions hopefully reflecting salient attributes."* (p. 518)
1985	Dichter	*"It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others... an image is not anchored in just objective data and details. It is the configuration of the whole field of the object."* (p.86)
1986	Mazursky & Jacoby	is composed by interpretations (i.e. tangible or intangible) that consumers associate with the store according to their own understanding and self reference criteria (i.e. experiences)
1987	Assael	customers' understanding of store's features
1991	Steenkamp & Wedel	*"[...] the overall attitude towards the store, an attitude which is based on the perceptions of relevant store attributes."* (p.301)
1997	Barr & Field	*"[...] multi-sensory, multidimensional and subject to fading without reinforcement."* (p.11)
2002	Bloemer & Shroeder	the collection of store's elements as they are produced from consumer's own shopping experiences
2003	Thang & Tan	is developed through consumers' understanding and response to internal and external incentives
2006	Pan & Zinkhan	*"The way in which the store is perceived by shoppers."* (p.231)
2008	O'Cass & Grace	the activity of consumers' evaluating the store's attributes according to what is of greater importance to them
2011	Beristain & Zorilla	a combination of associations that represent consumers' impressions about the store's characteristics and received value

Table 1: **List of store image definitions found in the literature**

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Having reviewed literature's definitions on store image and in view of the study's research question and purpose, we have chosen to use the following definitions for our theoretical framework. In particular, we will follow Oxenfeldt's (1974) claim that image involves functional and emotional elements. In addition to that, our research is going to be based on Steenkamp and Wedel (1991) definition that image is an outcome of consumer's perceptions of the store and the attributes that compose it, and this results on a specific attitude towards the store. Since **our research question** focuses on exploring the associations consumer's develop towards the new pick-up point launched in the home furnishing sector, we believe that the chosen definitions are the most appropriate for proceeding to the analysis.

2.3.5   Store Image Attributes - The initial theoretical model

Consumers assess the store they will ultimately select to conduct their purchases according to specific characteristics and benchmarks (i.e. the store's attributes) (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh & Best, 2007 cited in Janse Van Noordwyk, 2008). Therefore, we observe that the emphasis on the store's attributes is essential for retailers' strategy implementation. Particularly, each customer's unique evaluation contributes to understand the choices and preferences of consumers towards specific store formats (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992). A considerable amount of research has been conducted in order to determine the attributes that affect store image (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Fisk, 1961; Lindquist, 1974; Bearden, 1977; Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Manolis et al. 1994; Samli, Kelly & Hunt, 1998; Popkowski & Timmermans, 2001; McGoldrick, 2002). As mentioned earlier, store image is shaped by the attributes, tangible or intangible, that consumer develop towards a store. These associations differ between retailers depending on the target audience and market but also the product category (Janse Van Noordwyk, 2008). Consequently, it is vital for retailers to determine the elements that are valuable and prominent for their customers and certify that there is an consistency between retailers' ideal store image and the actual image customers have of their store. By doing so, retailers will guarantee that they served consumers' needs and anticipations from the store (Lindquist, 1974; Osman, 1993).

Following analysts' attempts to define store image throughout the decades, **we believe** it is valuable for the study to review the literature of store image attributes and explore the elements that previous research studies have associated with this term. There has been a continuous discussion and dispute amongst researchers in relation to the characteristics that affect and are associated with store image. During the years, studies have identified store's image elements across diverse categories of retailers varying from "*individual stores and departments to malls and chains...*" (p. 3) (Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007).

The initial conception of the idea that a store is connected to an image, was developed, as mentioned earlier, by Martineau (1958). In line with this first effort towards describing the term, the author was also a pioneer in suggesting the fundamental components of store image. These attributes comprised of the physical arrangements and design of the store, the symbols and color variations it was associated with and, finally, the communication activities and its salespeople (Martineau, 1958). At the same time, Martineau (1958), advised that the attributes he developed may differ between consumers' position in the society. Following this first study on store image, Berry (1969) established twelve attributes of a department/retail store's image. Namely the attributes are product pricing, quality and variety, style and contemporary assortment, store's clerk services, convenience offered through store's area and location, services facilitating customers (e.g. parking, open hours), other services (e.g. restaurant, home shipment), communication activities, store's environment, promotional activities, and merchandise return services. Moreover, Lessig (1973) supported that the characteristics that form store image are compatible with the way consumers perceive themselves. This entails that consumers attempt to show their ideal self-image through the process of shopping. However, Lindquist (1974) recognized that store image has both substantial aspects (i.e. the practicality and utility of the store) and cognitive aspects that are an outcome of consumers' journey inside the store. More specifically, he revised

numerous studies that have been developed at the time and established nine different classifications of thirty attributes that affect store image. The attributes were merchandise (i.e. value, product variety, contemporary and stylish product offerings, guarantees and pricing strategy); services (i.e. availability of self-service, store's personnel service, dispatch and shipping options, merchandise return and credit policy); customers (social class, self-image in relation to store's image); facilities (e.g. physical arrangement, architecture, elevators); accessibility and convenience (parking, area and location's accessibility); communication activities (promotional activities, product demonstrations, symbols and colors); store's environment (relaxed environment that make customers feel comfortable); organization's factors (character of the store, prestige, trust) and post-purchase services (possibility or product exchange or return and any services that facilitate the customers after their purchase). From the literature review so far, **we can assume** that Lindquist (1974) study was the most inclusive. Apart from determining a thorough extensive list of characteristics, the researcher was a pioneer in addressing the element of merchandise and price as vital aspects of store image.

Following a similar approach, Oxenfeldt (1974), who defined store image as the totality of its fractions, identified three extents of the term: a) the evident and substantial elements, b) the non-physical but authentic real advantages and c) the imagination which was a new addition by the author. During the same year Doyle & Fenwick (1974) illustrated five characteristics that compose store image. Namely they addressed the importance of retailers' merchandise, the product pricing, the type and variety of products offered but also the store's area and place of operation. Three years later, a new study was conducted by Hansen and Deutscher (1977) who supported that specific labels do not exist to define the factors that determine store image. Instead, they suggested three categorizations that analyze the term (i.e. 'attributes', 'components' and 'dimensions'). The lowest segment of store's image is defined as 'attribute' whereas 'component' refers to the entirety of the most repeated characteristics. Last but not least, **'dimension' characterizes the overall view of the store that is constituted by its most frequent elements.** Assessing and extending Doyle's and Fenwick's research findings (1974), Bearden (1977) determined four more attributes of the store. Regarding the product assortment the author focused on the importance of the quality of the product portfolio. In addition, he included the environment of the store, the extra facilities offered to customers (e.g. parking) and finally the quality of personnel's assistance. During the same year, Hirschman, Greenberg and Robertson (1978), identified ten characteristics that are relevant for store image. These elements included the service offered by the store's personnel, the store's area of operation, products' prices, paying procedures, store's environment, quality of products, product portfolio and variety, paying options, merchandise return, product demonstration and finally the portion of savings depicted in expenditures. Linked to that, a favorable image can be generated when the store is enriched by extra services that facilitate and improve the experience and convenience of customers while being in the store (Nevin & Houston, 1980). Besides the aforementioned factors that might influence store image (e.g. self-image, physical store characteristics, store's communication activities), Palmer (1985) presents another element that affects store image in the study he conducted on store image formation in shopping outlets. In particular, he observed that despite the presence of elements that appear as well in existing findings (such as price, assortment and value of products and parking offerings), the characteristics associated with the shopping center were new (i.e. unique happenings taking place in the store or the option of a bistro, restaurant for customers). On the other hand, Kapferer (1986), attempted to offer a solution in determining the elements that shape store image by developing the "identity prism" model which consists of practical (tangible) and intangible (emotional) elements that express the brand/ retail store from consumer's point of view. Moreover, Lindquist's (1974) list of attributes, were further examined from a consumer's point of view by Mazursky & Jacoby (1986) who concluded that some of the elements were affecting store image, others were regarded as having minimum significance and some were not relevant at all for the store's preference. In view of Oxenfeldt's (1974) contradicting view about store image which he defined as 'the sum of parts', Zimmer and Golden (1988) conducted a research study to determine consumer's perceptions of the store and, precisely, to verify if this perception was linked to specific elements (e.g. merchandise) or an

overall image of the store. The analysis of this research showed that the attributes identified by literature do not define entirely the way that consumers perceive the store. Nevertheless, a lot of the attributes identified by researchers combine various concepts that are related to store image. This claim, shows that consumers gather and interpret stimuli received from a specific store and then they create an image of the store by aligning it to wider aspects that create a more spherical view and perception of the store (Zimmer & Golden, 1988). Confirming Lindquist's (1974) fundamental role on store's image research, Davies (1992), was inspired by his predecessor's findings and explored their significance in the food retail market. During his study he developed several characteristics that are valued by consumers. These elements had to do with food related factors such as sanitation issues, freshness of products but also private labels. In 1998, Chowdhury, Reardon & Srivastava, claimed the importance of retailers' pricing strategy and specifically the adoption of competitive prices that offer value for customers.

Adopting a similar approach to Lessig (1973) mentioned above, Samli, Kelly and Hunt (1998) and Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg (2000) supported that the most noticeable and important elements that will comprise store image are driven by consumer's personal ambitions.Additionally, Samli, Kelly and Hunt (1998) stressed the importance of store's service in generating a favorable store image by trying to surprise customers and surpass their anticipations. Although authors have addressed the element of service, variations appear in the way each retailer explained the connection of this attribute to the store. Precisely, Lindquist (1974) discussed about the existence of the self-service option for customers, the payment and dispatch alternatives and the possibility to return a product. On the other hand, McGoldrick (2002) addressed the presence of extra services that facilitate consumers in their store experience (e.g. parking, cafeterias, restaurants). **We assume** that this variation in the way authors describe the same element of store image might have to do with the fact that services offerings and pricing varies amongst retailers (Levy & Weitz, 2009). The study towards store image inspired by Lindquist's work was carried on by two more researchers, namely Burt & Carralero-Encinas (2000). This is a proof that numerous studies were inspired by this researcher and were established by adjusting and coupling elements that were already developed by Lindquist (1974). **Regardless of the variations of store image attributes between the studies**, all **researchers agree** that store image is affected and shaped by characteristics that have to do with concrete (i.e. functional) and obscure (i.e. symbolic) aspects of the store. Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein (2011) supported that the product variety and portfolio is an essential factor of every retailer's unique selling proposition, and this namely refers to the "merchandise mix". Likewise, recognizing the importance of merchandise, McGoldrick (2002) focused on this element and explored its components (e.g. product style, product variety, product portfolio, style of products, unique and quality products offered).

Similarly, Ailawadi and Keller (2004), having reviewed Lindquist's study, presented five unique attributes that have an effect on how consumers perceive store image (i.e. store's accessibility, store layout and atmosphere, pricing and communication, variety of products and product categories). Miranda, Konya, and Havrila (2005) supported the view of their predecessors' claims about store's overall look (e.g. Richardson, Jain & Dick, 1996; Siu & Cheung, 2001 cited in Jayasankaraprasad, 2014) and acknowledged the importance of store's physical arrangement as a central determinant of store image and customers' store selection. Acquiring a similar position, Beristain and Zorilla (2011), supported that the elements of store image include the quality of products and services, the product assortment and portfolio, the product pricing, the facilities of the store and the customers' service offered by the store's clerk.

Based on the above chronological review of store image attributes, in the following table we have *encapsulated* the store image dimensions and relative attributes identified in previous studies. The reasoning behind this process follows what previously discussed by Hansen and Deutscher (1977). As already mentioned, these authors explain that specific labels do not exist for the factors determining store image. Furthermore, they explain that store image attributes can be categorized and included in overall dimensions to

be investigated by researchers. In order to clarify the logic behind the way we categorized the store image attributes found in the literature under the respective dimensions, as shown in the below framework, we are going to give some examples. In particular, we are going to indicate how we categorized some attributes that might not be immediately understood by the reader. Specifically, the "*display of promotions*" attribute has been included in the communication dimension based on the assumption that the way products are displayed send certain advertising messages to the store's customers. At the same time, "*quality of display*" is placed within the store environment and layout dimension since it plays the different role of creating an overall pleasant view and atmosphere. Another example is the distinction between the dimensions of "extra facilities" and "extra services". The ratio behind is that the former includes those attributes related to physical additional facilities of the store, while the latter refers to non-strictly physical store image attributes found in previous literature. For instance, the option of a cafeteria is considered an extra facility offered by the store which is an additional physical attribute. On the other hand, the dispatch alternatives or the payment options offered to customers are grouped under the extra services dimension due to their non-physical nature. With regards to "parking", we assumed that this attribute had to be included both in the "extra facilities" and "location" dimensions due to its relevance for "store accessibility". Finally, the attribute "opening hours" has been inserted within the "extra facilities" dimension based on the assumption that it relates to the physical facilities of a store.

DIMENSIONS	ATTRIBUTES	AUTHORS
Store environment & Layout	▪ Physical arrangements ▪ Design, symbols and color variations ▪ Layout and atmosphere ▪ Quality of display	Martineau (1958), Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Bearden (1977), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Ailawadi & Keller (2004), Miranda, Konya & Havrila (2005)
Communication & Advertising	▪ Communication activities/mediums ▪ Promotional activities (e.g. sales promotions) ▪ Displays of promotions	Martineau (1958), Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Ailawadi & Keller (2004)
Experience	▪ Unique happenings/events taking place in the store	Palmer (1985)
Extra facilities	▪ Extra services that facilitate consumers in their store experience (e.g. parking and elevators) ▪ Cafeterias, restaurants or the option of a bistro ▪ Opening hours	Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Bearden (1977), Nevin & Houston (1980), Palmer (1985), Beristain & Zorilla (2011)
Location	▪ Store's accessibility (e.g. travelling time, parking, transportation means availability) ▪ Store's area of operation (e.g. urban vs. suburban)	Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Doyle & Fenwick (1974), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Ailawadi & Keller (2004)
Merchandise	▪ Quality of products and services ▪ Product assortment and portfolio (merchandise mix) ▪ Product style ▪ Unique products ▪ Private labels ▪ Contemporary assortment (style /fashion)	Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Doyle & Fenwick (1974), Bearden (1977), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Zimmer & Golden (1988), Davies (1992), McGoldrick (2002), Ailawadi & Keller (2004), Beristain & Zorilla (2011), Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein (2011)

Price	▪ Pricing strategy (i.e. competitive prices, value for money, price range)	Lindquist (1974), Doyle & Fenwick (1974), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Chowdhury Reardon & Srivastava (1998), Ailawadi & Keller (2004), Beristain & Zorilla (2011)
Extra services	▪ Payments procedures and options (e.g. credit policy) ▪ Dispatch and delivery alternatives (e.g. home shipment) ▪ Option for product return (e.g. merchandise return services) ▪ Post transaction assistance (e.g. guarantee) ▪ Self-service option for customers	Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), McGoldrick (2002), Beristain & Zorilla (2011)
Store's personnel & sales clerk	▪ Quality of personnel's assistance (i.e. level of customers service offered by the store's clerk) ▪ Product demonstration	Martineau (1958), Berry (1969), Lindquist (1974), Bearden (1977), Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Beristain & Zorilla (2011)
Clienteles' Expectations	▪ Characteristics that form store image are compatible with the way consumers perceive themselves (i.e. consumers show their ideal self-image through shopping and store selection) ▪ Clientele (i.e. social class and demographics) ▪ Consumer's imaginations and expectations	Lessig (1973), Lindquist (1974), Oxenfeldt (1974), Samli, Kelly & Hunt (1998), Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg (2000)

Table 2: Store image - the initial theoretical model

The table above shows all the authors that have discussed store image attributes, and were found in our review. As previously mentioned, these findings have been encapsulated within our theoretical framework. Thus, in the following sections, we are going to discuss the contents of each dimension presented in the table. Furthermore, we would like to mention at this point that due to **our choice** to follow an abductive approach for this study, we are grounding our research in the literature that has been already developed by academics throughout the years. At the same time, as it will be discussed in Chapter 3, **we aim at discovering** additional customers' interpretations and associations on store image (i.e. specifically in the home furnishing sector) in relation to a new format (i.e. pick-up points).

Store environment & layout

The dimension of store environment and layout can be found in several studies on store image. Specifically, store environment can be defined as the sum of all non-physical and physical store features that retailers might control to improve the shopping experience of their customers (Eroglu & Machleit, 1990). Moreover, store environment is considered extremely influential for the overall experience customers have in stores (Jain & Bagdare, 2009; Seock, 2009). Consequently, in order to increase customers' loyalty, retailers have to strive to understand what determine customers' store choices and create for them a pleasant store environment (Seock, 2009).

The concept of store environment is closely linked to the store layout and design. In fact, layout enhances the path consumers follow in the store and their tendency to purchase the product displayed (McGoldrick, 2002). In general, a variety of layout options is available for retailers. For example, according to Varley and Rafiq (2004), grid layout, freeform layout and boutique layout are considered as possible standard options for retailers. Overall, the choice of a specific store layout depends on the idea retailers have of the way customers should walk around the merchandise (Lusch, Dunne & Carver, 2011). Consequently, it is important for companies to understand how to make consumers' journey in the stores as efficient as possible (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). With relation to our study and as shown in Table 2, store environment and layout usually include the customers' perceptions about the store'sphysical arrangement and display, as well as the design, symbols, color variations, and atmosphere (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Miranda, Konya & Havrila, 2005).

Communication and Advertising

The store image dimension of communication and advertising has been discussed by different authors. According to Gilbert (2003), advertising can be defined as "*any paid form of non-personal communication through the media about a product that has an identified sponsor*" (p.179). On the other hand, communication has a broader scope and refer to any transfer of information that occur between a sender and a receiver (Bearden, Ingram & La Forge, 2004).

The communication and advertising dimension is considered an extremely important factor affecting the perception consumers have towards a certain store through their interpretation of the contents advertised (Martineau, 1958). Consequently, communications and advertising are fundamentals for retailers to build their intended image in the mind of customers and other stakeholders (Levy & Weitz, 2009). With relation to our study and as shown in Table 2, the communication and advertising dimension of store image includes a number of attributes. Specifically, our review indicates that several authors have considered the importance of the specific dimension by mentioning the attributes not only of communication activities and mediums but also sales promotions and their display (Martineau, 1958; Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004).

Customer Experience

Customer experience is generally considered as a holistic concept which include individuals' affective, cognitive, social, emotional and physical reactions to the elements characterising the whole customers' journey inside the store (Bolton et al. 2014; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Consequently, it is essential for all retailers to offer a pleasant and unique customers' experience in order to increase consumers' satisfaction and loyalty (Bolton et al. 2014; Verhoef et al. 2009). In relation to our study, although customer experience is certainly a wide concept, specific store image attributes belonging to this dimension were only found in the study conducted by Palmer (1985). As we can see from Table 2, customers' perception towards the store can be positively affected when unique happenings and events take place in a certain store (Palmer, 1985). However, we assume that precise customer experience attributes have not been clearly identified in previous studies due to the holistic nature of the experience concept (Bolton et al. 2014; Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Extra facilities

In the dimension of extra facilities, we have included several attributes affecting store image that have been identified in previous studies. With the word facilities, we refer to any permanent or semi-permanent physical retailers' property which facilitate consumers in their store experience. Specifically, in our review we found that facilities such as parking, cafeterias, restaurants, bistro, as well as store's opening hours, but also elevators and similar convenient options for customers, can affect their perception of the store (Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Bearden, 1977; Nevin & Houston, 1980; Palmer, 1985; Beristain & Zorilla, 2011). With regards to the home furnishing sector, we believe that this store image dimension might be particularly relevant for our study, in view of the nature of the products sold by the specific type of retailers

Location

The location chosen by retailers for their stores is of paramount importance (McGoldrick, 2002; Levy & Weitz, 2009; Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). In fact, finding the best location for a store has always been a key strategic decision in the retail sector (Hernandez, Bennison & Cornelius, 1998) due to the potential long-term advantage that can give over the competition (Ghosh & Craig, 1983). Thus, before taking this decision, retailers should understand and define the optimal store location that will ultimately meet their potential clients' needs. In addition, it is essential for retailers to analyze the situation and assess possible synergies with other existing stores in the considered area (Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011). Accordingly, it is important for retailers to assess lifestyle and demographic profiles which can define a possible location for their stores (Levy & Weitz, 2009; Zentes, Morschett & Schramm-Klein, 2011).

With regards to store image, our review showed that store's accessibility (i.e. travelling time, parking and transportation means availability) as well as the store's area of operation (i.e. urban vs. suburban areas) are important attributes affecting this dimension and thus, the perceptions customers have for this aspect of the store (Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004).

Merchandise

The word merchandise refers mainly to the products sold by retailers and available in the store (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). The merchandise attribute is widely recognized in the literature and the first researcher describing the importance of this element of store image was Berry (1969). In the following years, several authors described store image attributes which relate to the merchandise dimension (e.g. Lindquist, 1974;

Bearden, 1977; Zimmer & Golden, 1988; Davies, 1992; McGoldrick, 2002; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Beristain & Zorilla, 2011). Specifically, as shown in Table 2, the quality of products and services, the product assortment and portfolio, the product style and uniqueness are all characteristics linked to the merchandise dimension. Additionally, the presence of private labels inside the store and the overall modernity of the assortment are all attributes that could potentially affect the perception customers have of a certain store's merchandise. Finally, Zentes, Morschett and Schramm-Klein (2011) explain how all these elements composing a store merchandise can be called merchandise mix, and relate to the store assortment width.

Price

From a consumer's point of view, price can be defined as "*what is given up or sacrificed to obtain a product*" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 10). In general, customers visiting a store consider the price element as a particularly important factor expressing the value and fairness offered by the retailer (Chowdhury, Reardon & Srivastava, 1998). Thus, prices can affect both consumer behaviour and belief (Hamilton & Chernev, 2010). Specifically, as already mentioned in the format section of this study, price can have a great effect on stores' image when it clearly differs from customers' reference points (Campbell, 1999; Bolton, Warlop & Joseph, 2003). Consequently, retailers should also consider factors such as competition (online and offline), seasonal offers and location when establishing their prices (McGoldrick, 2002). Thus, overall, price strategy related decisions imply for retailers the need to establish a monetary value, which reflects the customers' willingness to pay for their specific products and services (Gilbert, 2003).

Finally, with regards to the price dimension of store image, it has been firstly introduced by Lindquist (1974). In the following years, numerous authors have also identified this dimension and included the attributes of price competitiveness, value for money and price ranges, as elements affecting customers' perceptions about the store (e.g. Chowdhury, Reardon & Srivastava, 1998; Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Beristain & Zorilla, 2011).

Extra Services

According to Proomprow (2003), the word service incorporates different attributes for each of its letters. Specifically, the author claims that service means *Satisfaction, Expectation, Readiness, Value, Interest, Courtesy and Efficiency.* Accordingly, the word retailing is strongly linked to the concept of service and, therefore, the importance of the extra services dimension in relation to store image can be deduced (Levy & Weitz, 2009). In line with this view, Samli, Kelly and Hunt (1998) claim that the number and quality of services offered by a store are of paramount importance if retailers aim at creating a positive store image by meeting and exceeding their customers' expectations. With regards to our review, we found that several authors have studied store image attributes associated with the extra service dimension. Specifically, elements such as payments procedures and options (e.g. credit policy), dispatch and delivery alternatives (e.g. home shipment), option for product return (e.g. merchandise return services), post-transaction assistance (e.g. guarantees) and self-service options, can have a certain effect on customers' perceptions about a store (Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; McGoldrick, 2002; Beristain & Zorilla, 2011). Finally, the inclusion of these attributes in the extra services dimension is justified by their intangible nature. More specifically, this means that they cannot be perceived by customers prior to their experience with the services (Biege et al. 2013).

Store's personnel and sales clerk

According to Martineau (1958), the store's personnel and sales clerk of a particular store can have a significant effect on the image perceived by customers. Specifically, the author underlines that the personnel's attitudes and behaviours towards customers are important drivers for the formation of clients' store perceptions. Furthermore, Levy and Weitz (2009) claim that when the store's personnel provide customers with a level of service and assistance which reflect or exceed their expectations, the retailer ultimately benefits from an increased customer loyalty and positive word of mouth. With regards to our review, we have found numerous authors describing store image attributes that can be included in the store personnel dimension. Specifically, factors such as quality of the personnel's assistance (i.e. level of customers service offered by the store's clerk) and the option of product demonstration, can affect and can create a positive image about the store (Martineau, 1958; Berry, 1969; Lindquist, 1974; Bearden, 1977; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Beristain & Zorilla, 2011).

Clienteles' Expectations

The clientele visiting a particular store can vary in view of the fact that individuals tend to shop in locations and stores where they can find lifestyle trends and demographics mirroring their expectations (Levy & Weitz, 2009). With regards to store image, Lessig (1973) was the first author discussing the possible impact of the clientele factor on the perception consumers develop for a certain store. In the following years, several authors have considered clientele as an important determinant of store image. Specifically, as we identified in our review, elements such as the characteristics of other store's visitors, the ability of the store to mirror the ideal self-image of customers, and to ultimately meet their expectations, are attributes that can be categorized within the clienteles' dimension (Lessig, 1973; Lindquist, 1974; Oxenfeldt, 1974; Samli, Kelly & Hunt, 1998; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000).

2.3.6   Variations in store image definitions and related attributes

Following the previous discussion on store image definitions suggested by researchers but also the literature's focus on identifying the attributes that affect and shape store image, **we conclude** that there is a difficulty in defining this term but also in determining the factors that influence store image from consumer's point of view. A number of researchers have given an explanation to this difficulty, which acknowledge the discrepancy in describing the elements that actually build store image (e.g. Golden, Albaum & Zimmer, 1987; Lindquist, 1974; Jain & Etgar, 1976; James, Durand & Dreves, 1976; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Keaveney & Hunt, 1992; Amirani & Gates, 1993; McGoldrick, 2002). In support of this viewpoint, Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson (1978), Burt, Johansson & Thelander (2007) and Wispeler & Wolf (2015), argued that this variation is attributed to the fact that the components of store image differ significantly depending on the competitive landscape, the industry and field focus, but also the market of a store. Accordingly, Davies (1992) and Mazursky and Jacoby (1986) also conclude that the associations and factors consumers consider valuable and relevant for formulating a store's image vary. This variation is assigned to the gradual evolvement of expectations, wants and behaviors of consumers. Likewise, Keaveney and Hunt (1992) supported that retailers who do not successfully meet the needs (i.e. tangible or intangible) of the segment they are targeting, will ultimately end up in variations of their store image from customers' point of view. Moreover, Burt, Johansson & Thelander (2007), reinforced this view point by claiming that the difficulty in forming store's image concept is appointed to the variations between store's physical location, level of experience offered, and the situations within which the image is developed. In conclusion, in line with Burt, Johansson & Thelander (2007) argumentation, several authors

believe that consumer's interpretation of store image is a complex task since it differs depending on the country, sector, city, location, format but also competitive landscape of a store (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Cardozo, 1974; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015).

In relation to our study, we decided to examine the effect of the pick-up point format on customers' store image in view of its novelty and uniqueness in the home furnishing sector. Despite the fact that literature on store image attribute is extensive, as presented earlier, it is difficult to certify that the existing attributes can be relevant for the new pick-up point format. In support to that, as argued before, store image is a sector, location and field specific term and, thus, we believe it is important to reassess it when new formats become available in the market.

2.3.7   Store Image Measurement

Despite literature's attempts to define store image and determine the attributes that are important in shaping store image, Arnold, Ourn and Tigert (1983) has drawn the attention to the variability of store image elements depending on the country, area, sector, format and competitive landscape of a retailer. As a consequence, while determining the factors and attributes that are relevant of a specific store, retailers should question and verify their relevance for the specific target segment they are operating (Arnold, Ourn & Tigert, 1983). Taking into consideration the numerous attributes that consumers associate with the retailers' store image, **we believe** that collecting these characteristics from a consumer's point of view and words, will enable the study to gather empirical material and measure their effect on store image.

Zimmer and Golden (1988) claim that "measurement is the way the consumer's perception is elicited" (p.265). In line with that, McGoldrick (2002), argued that studies on image involve the calculation and assessment of consumers' behaviors and beliefs rather than measuring elements based on their amounts.

As it has been observed in the literature, a number of researchers studying store image have measured the empirical data they collected based on their own explanation of store image and their own understanding of the characteristics that affect it (Oh, 1999). Moreover, according to the methodology of the study, different measurement techniques can be utilized to analyze the data collected. Specifically, quantitative measurement usually apply structured techniques which include the "semantic differential" (e.g. Kelly & Stephenson, 1967; Hirschman, Greenberg & Robertson, 1978; Menezes & Elbert, 1979; Golden, Albaum & Zimmer, 1987; Wong & Tees, 2001), the "multi-dimensional scaling" (e.g. Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Jain & Etgar, 1976; Davies, 1987), the "conjoint and cluster analysis" (e.g. Amirani & Gates, 1993) and the "multi-attribute" (James, Durand & Dreves, 1976). Moreover, common qualitative measurements utilized in research, traditionally employ unstructured techniques such as "content analysis" (e.g. Zimmer & Golden, 1988), "word association" (e.g. Dickson & Albaum, 1977) and "open-ended questioning" (e.g. McDougall & Fry, 1974-1975; James, Durand & Dreves, 1976). However, Amirani & Gates (1993), claimed that there are three traditional approaches towards store image measurement. Namely the authors included the "scaling techniques", the "multi-dimensional scaling and other multi-attribute models" and "unstructured techniques".

Enforced bias is an obstacle in research that **we are willing** to overcome. Applying unstructured methods during research is a way that can minor the level of influence from the researchers' side towards a specific direction. Specifically, Thompson and Chen (1998), explained that the unstructured techniques are often employed in qualitative research studies. Accordingly, Kvale (1996 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015), suggested nine different types of questions that can be used in qualitative interviews, such as "Please tell me your opinion about X (i.e. merchandise attribute)?", "What do you mean by…?". Furthermore, the author explains

how open-ended questions should be combined with direct ones towards the end of the interview, in order to clarify respondents' answers. These techniques enable researchers to accurately measure store image since consumers are sharing with the interviewer their personal interpretations and meanings. There are two main methods of unstructured measurement that are most commonly used in store image studies, the "open-ended questions" and "projective techniques" (McGoldrick, 2002). As stated by the researcher, by adopting an "open-ended question" technique in an interview, consumers are more open to share their own opinions and perceptions on store image attributes and are not influenced by fixed beliefs possessed by the interviewer. On the other hand, in the "projective technique", participants are exposed to words or any visual incentives and are asked to use one word to describe what they were projected (Jain & Etgar, 1976). Both techniques enable researchers to produce similar outcomes. As described earlier, when studying store image, one of the advantages of using unstructured techniques in qualitative research in contrast to quantitative methods is that the attributes of the store are expressed by individual's own interpretations, and not dictated by the researcher (McDougall & Fry, 1974-1975).

One limitation over this advantage of unstructured techniques is the coding procedure that is held after the data collection and is acknowledged to be more challenging, and require more time than other methods such as the "semantic differential measurement or MDS" (Zimmer & Golden, 1988). Moreover, in the coding process there is the possibility of researchers to interpret the findings in a subjective way based on their own perceptions and experiences. This potential weakness can be surpassed when more than one researchers are involved in the collection and analysis processes (James, Durand & Dreves, 1976). Despite the above disadvantages, "an unstructured technique may be preferred when the objective is to identify *consumers' unaided image perceptions*" (p. 268) as supported by Zimmer & Golden (1988).

Having reviewed the common measurement techniques utilized in research and in view of the qualitative nature and scope of our study, **our approach** is going to employ qualitative measurement techniques. Specifically, we agree with Zimmer and Golden (1988), Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2007), Bryman and Bell (2011) and Wispeler and Wolf (2015), who support that qualitative methods are appropriate for the study of store's image concept, and argue that qualitative research places consumers in the center of attention and attempts to see through their eyes. Furthermore, **our study** will be based on our knowledge of the attributes of store image found in previous literature, but also open the floor for consumers to explore what are the associations they develop towards the store. This way, **the study** will further exploit what customers believe about new store formats and discover the attributes they consider when they shape the image of pick-up points. Finally, in Chapter 3, **we are going** to present and explain in detail the philosophies and methods we are applying in this study.

3   METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, we present the adopted research philosophies that compose the assumptions affecting our point of view (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, we explain our research approach and strategy, as well as the methods chosen for the data collection. Moreover, we will discuss our study time horizon, and the techniques and procedures employed for the analysis process that will follow in Chapter 4. Importantly, throughout each section that composes our research design, we will discuss the link between our choice and purpose of the study. Finally, the possible limitations of our methodology, as well as the ethical and political considerations of the study, are discussed at the end of the chapter.

3.1   Research Philosophy

According to Johnson and Clark (2006) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), it is important for the researchers to discuss their philosophical position. Specifically, we have considered two main philosophies influencing our considerations, namely the **epistemology and ontology** (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Accordingly, considering that our purpose is to explore the effect on store image of format development (i.e. pick-up point in the home furnish sector), our epistemological choice was between the collection and analysis of pick-up points' store image 'facts' (positivist stance), versus analyzing the 'feelings and attitudes' of the customers towards the format (interpretivist stance). As already mentioned in Chapter 1, we employed an **interpretivist** position since, in line with other researchers (e.g. Janse van Noordwyk, 2002; McGoldrick, 2002; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015), **we consider** store image as a personal and situation specific phenomenon which requires a deep investigation of each format's customers. Therefore, with this study, we tried to take the **consumers' point of view** and understand how and if the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector can alter a well-established store image formed with previous formats experience.

With regards to **ontology**, in relation to the topic investigated by this study, our choice was between viewing store image as an objective or subjective phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, if we had chosen an objective stance, we would have decided to use previous literature to develop certain hypothesis to be quantitatively tested. However, in line with our interpretivist position, we assumed that **store image is a subjective topic** and, thus, we aim at understanding the way customers attach their own individual meanings to the new pick-up point format. Accordingly, our research philosophy was also affected by **social constructionism** since we believe that it is necessary to explore and understand the personal meanings motivating the pick-up points' customers' actions. In fact, as thoroughly discussed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), customers may give an alternative explanation and evaluation of the settings they are exposed (i.e. pick-up point store), because they use their own glimpse for responding to the messages they receive. Moreover, the scope of our study is to understand how consumers receive the store image of a home furnishing retailing company, when the firm is incorporating two different versions of a new format. Thus, we wanted to compare and give importance to the words that customers of different types of pick-up points used to elaborate their answers and, ultimately, determine how the associations they develop affect their perceptions towards the retailer's store.

With regards to the evaluation of our **anxiology**, in line with our interpretivist stance, we were aware that the study was bound to our set of values and personal interpretations. However, we strived to be **pragmatic** by also adopting objective points of view when analysing the findings of our research. Specifically, this was done by relying on the guidelines found in previous literature that we encapsulated into our initial theoretical framework.

In view of the above argumentation, we planned to see through the customers' eyes and to understand how they perceive store image attributes of a home furnishing retailer. Furthermore, we aimed at understanding how this store image may change when consumers engage with the new format of pick-up points. Finally, we also focused on spotting possible variations in the store image attributes of two different types of the same format. **In conclusion,** as already mentioned in Chapter 1, we assume that store image is a phenomenon requiring an in-depth investigation of consumers' interpretations of pick-up points, and that this can be done through live interactions and discussions.

3.2   Research Approach

In this section, we analyse the possible research approaches and explain the reasons for our final choice. According to Bryman & Bell (2015), in order to relate research and theory, the most common views in business research are the inductive, the deductive and the abductive approach.

In relation to our research that aims at investigating the effect on store image of format development, and based on the above discussion on the philophies affecting our study, an inductive approach would have represented an appropriate choice for our research. On the other hand, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, current literature on store image is extensive and date back to Martineau (1958). Thus, even though we believed that store image is a concept requiring the understanding of the meanings customers attach to a specific format, we also, at the same time, realized that previous studies could be extremely useful as a starting point and solid base for our research. Accordingly, we followed an **abductive approach,** meaning that we applied to a certain extent *deduction* by using as starting base a theoretical framework built on existing literature on store image. Furthermore, at the same time, we were *inductive* by adjusting and revising our initial temporary model according to the insights and findings (i.e. data) generated on the field. Therefore, our approach reflected and combined the philosophical and anxiological positions previously discussed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Specifically, the first step of our study was to identify the existing literature related to format development, pick-up formats, multi-channel practise, image and store image. Secondly, all the store image attributes found have been encapsulated in the framework discussed in Chapter 2. Thirdly, the data collection in the field was conducted on the basis of our framework, but also in consideration of the interactions with customers of the new format (i.e. pick-up points in the home furnishing sector). Finally, the empirical data we collected were analyzed and a new model has been developed, which reflect the store image of the new format studied (i.e. iterative process**)** from a customer's point of view. Thus, our abductive approach combined both elements of induction and deduction (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), and allowed us to overcome the main limitations of these approaches. Specifically, the rigidity and superficiality of the deductive reasoning (i.e. in terms of the low importance given to deeper insights from customers of the new pick-up points) has been overcomed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, by relying on our theoretical framework as a starting base, we increased our chances to overcome the main inductive reasoning limitations and, specifically, the difficulty in building a theory from a purely unstructured research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In fact, as stated by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), "*with induction you have constantly to live with the fear that no useful data patterns and theory will emerge*" (p. 127) which, considering the quality and quantity of the already available theories and literature, would have been an unnecessary risk for our study.

3.3   Research Strategy

In view of our study purpose, research question, philosophy and approach, we decided to adopt a **case study strategy** (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Bryman & Bell 2015).

According to Eisenhardt (1989), "*The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings*" *(p. 534)*. Moreover, in recent years, Yin (2009) defined a case study as *"an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a "case"), set within its real-world context…"* (p. 18). In view of the above definitions, it was clear to us that a case study strategy would be appropriate for our research question since it would allow us to understand the characteristics of a particular contemporary phenomenon (i.e. pick-up format) as well as the importance of its setting/context (i.e. home furnishing sector). Accordingly, we considered store image and format development as phenomena that are particularly sector dependent (i.e. context). In addition, we employed an idiographic approach which indicates that we were "*concerned to elucidate the unique features of the case*" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 68) and, specifically, of the new pick-up point format recently introduced in the home furnishing sector.

With regards to the **outcomes of a case study research**, Eisenhardt (1989) claims that a case can be used to provide a description of a phenomenon, as well as to test or generate theory. Accordingly, in relation to our study and as already explained before, we aimed at describing the store image concept in a particular format (i.e. setting), and ultimately generating new knowledge and deeper insights about the term.

Concerning the type of case study we chose, we took into consideration the several options proposed by Yin (2003 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, we opted for the so-called **revelatory case** because this is considered particularly suitable if "*an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation*" (Yin, 1984, p. 44 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015). Accordingly, the opportunity to study the effect on store image of the pick-up point in the home furnishing sector is *accessible* to scientific research since 2015.

With regards to the **main limitation associated with a case study strategy**, we were aware that generalizing our findings would not be possible unless the resulting theory will be verified (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, at the same time, in line with Eisenhardt's view (1989), we believe that the validity of our findings is still high "*because the theory-building process is so intimately tied with evidence that it is very likely that the resultant theory will be consistent with empirical observation*" (p. 547). **In conclusion,** we have decided to focus on a single case of a home furnishing company, which will be presented in section 3.3.1. As also supported by Bryman and Bell (2015), since the specific pick-up format we are interested in is available (to the best of our knowledge) just from a specific company in the home furnishing sector, we consider a case design as the most appropriate research strategy for our study's purpose.

3.3.1 Arguments for the selected Case

As discussed above, we decided to follow a case study strategy. In view of our research question (i.e. *"How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?"*), the revelatory case selected for our study was the new pick-up point format launched by IKEA in Tromsø (Norway) and Norwich (UK). This choice was mainly due to the **uniqueness and innovation** brought by these two stores, but also due to the fact that this specific type of touch-points were one of the first launched by IKEA, which is the pioneer in the home furnishing sector (Marina Dupakina, meeting with IKEA, 25 February 2016). Furthermore, the **accessibility** of the selected stores (i.e. case) played an important role in our choice. In fact, the company offered an excellent access to both pick-up points in Tromsø and Norwich, and covered our research costs. Moreover, IKEA provided us with the necessary information on the new stores, as well as with insights on the pick-up points' implementation and performance. Finally, the study of the new pick-up points launched by IKEA in 2015 can provide literature with unique and additional insights, in the field of new format development and its effect on store image.

With regards to the **characteristics of the selected case**, the new pick-up points launched by IKEA in 2015 combine the following elements and functionalities:

- Collection of goods ordered directly from the fully dedicated store or delivered at home;
- Order of goods from the store or through the online channel;
- Extra charge (i.e. variety of collection fees based on weight and/or volume of the order) to collect the order from the pick-up point which is cheaper than the available home-delivery option;
- In-store showroom (i.e. limited products display of selected merchandise to inspire customers);
- Limited stock for direct in-store purchase and immediate take away (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Inspiration area (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Music (**only for Norwich pick-up point**) & screens with product videos;
- Possibility to order the majority of the merchandise available in the online channel;

- IKEA Swedish food stock for immediate take away (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Small cafeteria (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Free coffee for customers (**only for Tromsø pick-up point**);
- Planning area (e.g. self-service computers to plan/design your kitchen, wardrobe, bathroom) and assistance when requested;
- Children play area;
- Extra facilities (e.g. parking, toilets, changing room for babies, trolleys for pick-ups);
- Tools for furniture installation available for immediate purchase in store (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Tailor made parking 'spot' that facilitates orders' collection (**only for Tromsø pick-up point**);
- Larger variety of merchandise presented in the showroom (**only for Norwich pick-up point**);
- Urban store location in comparison with the sub-urban traditional IKEA stores.

Based on the innovative combination of format characteristics presented in the above list and as already discussed in Chapter 2, the new pick-up point format, with the two respective differing types of stores, represents a new touch point for customers which is the result of the company's format development strategy. Accordingly, **in line with the purpose and research question of our study**, we assumed that these pick-up points could be appropriate to explore the effect on store image of new format development in the home furnishing sector. Furthermore, IKEA was at the time of our research and at the best of our knowledge, the only organisation in this sector engaging in format development through the adoption of innovative pick-up points. Importantly, although we compared two different versions of IKEA pick-up points and also benchmarked with customers' opinions on the store image attributes of the traditional "IKEA blue box", the present study still needs to be acknowledged as tied to a **single revelatory case** (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

With regards to the **evaluation of the chosen case**, we relied on guidelines established by Yin (1994). Specifically, the new IKEA pick-up points met the criteria of **uniqueness** because the company has only recently engaged in format development and was focusing for years on the same "blue box" format (Andreas Otto, meeting with IKEA, 8 March 2016). Thus, since the original format image has already been established throughout the years, the case seemed to us particularly suitable to explore the effects on store image of the new pick-up point stores. Moreover, we were interested in the home furnishing sector and IKEA is considered worldwide as a leader in this field. Furthermore, a previous study done by Wispeler and Wolf (2015) on the effects of IKEA's first attempt of format development through the inner-city store in Hamburg, Germany, was successfully evaluated by the company and the academics. As already explained in Chapter 1, in comparison to an inner-store format, pick-up points alter IKEA's store layout and customers' experience. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 1, store image is a phenomenon sector, format and country dependent and IKEA is well-aware of this aspect (Andreas Otto, meeting with IKEA, 8 March 2016). Consequently, the company kindly offered us excellent **access** to the pick-up points in Tromsø and Norwich as well as supported us with all our needs in terms of resources for the study. Finally, IKEA pick-up points met the criteria of **exploratory device** (Yin, 1994) since they were only launched in 2015. Moreover, no previous studies have considered this specific format in the home furnishing sector and, as explained in Chapter 1, we believed it would have brought relevant new insights on store image and format development fields. To conclude, the following table **summarizes the selected case suitability for our study**.

Selected case suitability attributes (Yin, 1994)	IKEA Pick-up points - Tromsø (Norway) & Norwich (UK)
Uniqueness	▪ IKEA is a leader in the home furnishing sector and has always relied on the same "blue box" format; ▪ It is also the only company in the sector implementing the new pick-up point format with the specific unique characteristics listed before
Exploratory device	▪ New format concept that has not yet been exploited and studied (June 2015, Tromsø & November 2015, Norwich), which facilitates researchers to discover unique insights
Excellent access	▪ IKEA offered excellent access to both pick-up points in Tromsø and Norwich, and covered the research costs; ▪ Moreover, the company provided all necessary information on the new format, and insights on their pick-up points' implementation and performance

Table 3: Case suitability [Source: Adapted from Yin (1994)]

3.4   Research method link to the purpose and description

In view of our study's purpose of exploring the effect on store image of a new format development and, specifically, customers' perceptions of the new pick-up points stores launched in 2015 by IKEA, our research has an exploratory nature and, thus, we do not aim at giving final and conclusive answers (Singh, 2007). As previously discussed, the type of research question in combination with the extensive available literature on store image suggest the use of an abductive approach. Accordingly, our data collection was conducted on the basis of the theoretical framework we discussed in Chapter 2 and, at the same time, adapted to the new insights, with the aim to develop a new model explaining the effects of pick-up points on store image.

As already reviewed in Chapter 2, several studies on store image applied quantitative methods. However, considering the uniqueness of the new pick-up point format, we agreed with those researchers who claim that qualitative methods are suitable for the study of store image. Accordingly, we attempted to see through the eyes of consumers, gain deeper insights, and emphasize on particularities more than generalities (e.g. Zimmer & Golden, 1988; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Hultman et al. 2012; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). In fact, **what makes the new pick-up point format so special** is that it combines a set of characteristics (see "Arguments for the case study" at section 3.3.1) that create a unique and new touchpoint for consumers and, thus, researching the new format requires to "wear glasses again" to uncover its effect on store image. Hence, previous stores' image findings might be neither fully transferrable to the new format that we are studying, nor unquestionable in view of the sector and format specific nature of image. Thus, we decided to exclude quantitative methods with emphasis on the measurement of the object of the study through numbers instead of words (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, **we preferred qualitative research** methods because they allowed us to uncover the opinions and perceptions of actual pick-up point's customers through the precise

language they used. Therefore, we wanted to emphasize the importance of words to get a profound understanding of "how" the store image in the home furnishing sector is affected and altered by the adoption of two different versions of a new format (i.e. pick-up points). Furthermore, using qualitative methods also allowed us to understand better the context surrounding the pick-up point image since they generated insights while we were immersed in the same setting (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Hence, in line with our research philosophies and approach, we believe that qualitative methods enabled us to generate more holistic and deeper insights than a quantitative analysis of data (e.g. numbers) would have provided. Accordingly, our research was designed as a qualitative single case study to be carried within a week in the Tromsø and Norwich pick-up stores. Finally, on the basis of what we mentioned before (as well as in Chapter 2) about the importance of customers' in the creation of store image, the individual perceptions towards the new pick-up point format is the focus for this research (Burt, Johnasson & Thelander, 2010).

With regards to our additional **research choices**, in line with the methodology but also with the research strategy and philosophy previously discussed, we chose to collect data through **multi qualitative methods** (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). One of the reason justifying our choice was the need to strengthen the findings of the study through a triangulation of qualitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, using different methods provided us with facilitation since the various techniques supported and aided each other's (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Concerning our **research time horizons,** the study had to be accomplished within a ten weeks period. For the purpose of variation (Bryman & Bell, 2015), within a week time, we collected data from different customers in the IKEA pick-up point in Tromsø (Norway) and in Norwich (UK). Thus, we followed the so-called *cross-sectional design* since the data were collected at a similar point in time and on more than one case, before proceeding with the examination and then detection of patterns of associations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, to a limited extent, the principles of ethnography were used since we were immersed for three days in the pick-up points stores in Tromsø and Norwich.

Regarding the specific qualitative methods chosen for this study, we selected **documentation**, **direct observation** and, finally, **semi-structured interviews** in combination with **video-elicitation**.

- ▪ **Documentation**: We referred to the information available online about the new pick-up points and to internal documents which IKEA kindly shared with us. Consequently, we had the opportunity to familiarize with the phenomenon under investigation, to prepare our data collection from customers and, thus, to build solid bases to plan our research.

- ▪ **Direct observation**: We immersed in the two pick-up points selected as representative of the new store format before proceeding with the collection of the empirical data from customers. Thus, we added in the documentation additional information about the new format, which we collected directly in the stores (Yin, 1994). Specifically, direct observation was extremely useful to verify and generate the content of the video-elicitation technique used in combination with the semi-structured interviews.

- ▪ **Semi-structured interviews**: They were used after documentation and direct observation provided us with a solid knowledge about the new pick-up point format versions. Therefore, we initiated our empirical data collection by *interviewing* IKEA customers as embedded units of our research in the Tromsø store and, after reaching the point of theoretical saturation (Bryman & Bell, 2015), in the Norwich pick-up point. The reason we chose semi-structured interviews was the ability to combine questions regarding the temporary theoretical framework built through previous literature, with the possibility to give interviewees the freedom to discuss aspects not included in our model (Bryman &

Bell, 2015). Thus, this technique helped us in investigating the unique store image perceived by IKEA pick-up points' customers, and in **answering our research question**, *"How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image*?*",* as well as **our sub-research question** *"Are there any similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between two different versions of pick-up points?".*

- **Video-elicitation**: As already mentioned and as it will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter, the technique was used at the beginning of each interview. The reason we chose to use this technique is that the new pick-up point format is very recent (June 2015 for Tromsø and November 2015 for Norwich) and we assumed that customers might not yet have full familiarity with the new IKEA store characteristics. Furthermore, our documentation showed that home furnishing stores' customers have a lower number of average visits in comparison with other sectors (e.g. grocery) (Andreas Otto, meeting with IKEA, 8 March 2016). Thus, we believe that showing videos that recreate and refresh the customers' in-store journey in their minds, as well as recalling important characteristics of the new format, has definitely assisted us in increasing the quality of insights collected with our interviews, and in answering our research question.

Each of the above techniques will be explained in detail in the data collection section of this chapter. However, at this point, we would like to mention that by using the temporary store image theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2, we managed to build a final framework for both Tromsø and Norwich pick-up points' store image, and to discover the existing variations in terms of attributes and customers' perceptions. Therefore, we also managed to answer our research sub-question, which was stated before. A summary of the qualitative techniques introduced above, as well as the order in which the different methods were applied, is shown in the figure below.
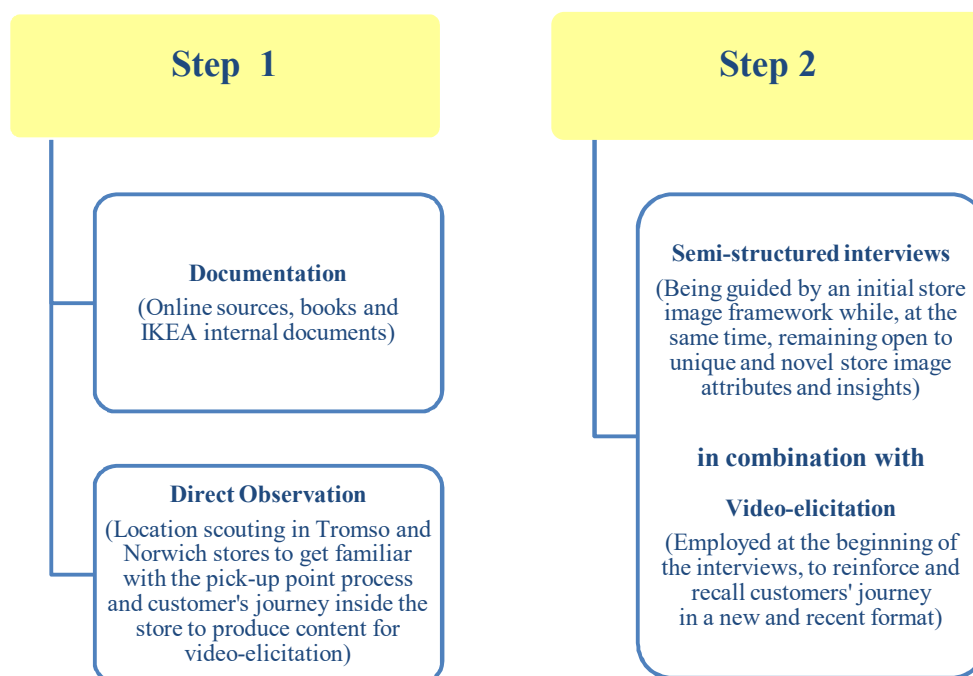
Figure 2: Multiple-qualitative methods to collect evidence

To conclude, as already mentioned earlier, using **multiple methods** (i.e.documentation, direct observation and semi-structured interview in combination with video-elicitation) allowed us to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study through a triangulation of qualitative methods (Yin, 1994; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Finally, the different techniques we used supported and aided each other and, consequently, facilitated to answer our research and sub-research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.5   Data Collection

As explained in the previous sections, in light of the purpose of our study and in view of our research philosophies, approach and strategy (i.e. revelatory case), we decided that qualitative data were needed to answer our research question and sub-question. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) and to Bryman and Bell (2015), adopting a relatively unstructured and open-ended approach can help researchers collect more contextual data and insights. Furthermore, as already mentioned in our literature review, studying image involves the assessment of consumers' beliefs and behaviours rather than measuring elements based on their amounts (Zimmer & Golden, 1988; McGoldrick, 2002; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015). On this basis, we conducted the **semi-structured interviews** at the IKEA pick-up point in Tromsø (Norway) and in Norwich (UK) during a week. Both pick-up points were located not far from the city center, which is one of their distinguishing characteristics in relation to the traditional IKEA format. With regards to the latter, the traditional IKEA "blue box" was indirectly investigated, since each interviewee was required to have experienced the traditional IKEA store before (i.e. reference point), and asked to compare it with the new pick-up point for each single store image attribute in our temporary framework, as well as every time new characteristics and attributes were discussed. Furthermore, the same process was followed when interviewees had also experienced other pick-up points' stores/ options. **Importantly**, customers of the Tromsø pick-up point were only asked to discuss this specific store in comparison with the traditional IKEA format and, eventually, similar pick-up points. Accordingly, customers of the Norwich pick-up point were not interrogated about the Tromsø one. By doing so, we managed to build for each specific pick-up point version (i.e. Tromsø and Norwich) an updated store image theoretical framework which attempts to answer our question about how the new pick-up point format affected store image in the home furnishing sector. Furthermore, it was then possible to compare the two stores' frameworks and answer our sub-question related to possible similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between the two different versions of the pick-up points.

Overall, semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allowed us to have face-to-face interaction with customers of the pick-up points stores and, thus, to focus on their minds and acquire a deep knowledge of their perceptions of the new pick-up points (Lofland & Lofland, 1995 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, using semi-structured interviews enabled us to identify which **reference point** (i.e. traditional IKEA format and, when applicable, other pick-up experience in other sectors) customers/interviewees were using every time a certain store image characteristic/attribute was discussed. Moreover, we always strived to keep the semi-structured format in each interview by controlling our direct questioning and level of involvement. Thus, this strategy allowed us to give the freedom to interviewees to express their thoughts in the order they preferred, once the video-elicitation was used.

To conclude, the use of semi-structured interviews in combination with the video-elicitation allowed us to increase the chances to obtain useful and deeper data to answer our research question. At the same time, this procedure enabled us to be open to unique insights about the customers' perception of the new pick-up point format, which were not found in previous studies. Furthermore, through the interview process, we managed to clearly distinguish among the customers' perception of each new pick-up point (i.e. Tromsø and Norwich), the

store image of the traditional IKEA "blue box" and, when applicable, the image of other pick-up options experienced by the interviewee.

In the table below, we summarized the location, date, and methods used for our data collection, along with their average duration. Finally, the details of our data collection process steps will be presented in the following sections of this chapter.

Location	Dates	Data collection method	Data collection average time
IKEA pick-up point Tromsø (Norway)	From 12/04/2016 to 14/04/2016	Customers' semi-structured interviews & video-elicitation	42.3 minutes
IKEA pick-up point Norwich (UK)	From 16/04/2016 to 18/04/2016	Customers' semi-structured interviews & video-elicitation	41.5 minutes

Table 4: **Data collection overview**

3.5.1 Video-elicitation and store image attribute inclusion

Before further describing our data collection methods, the video-elicitation technique is introduced as well as the way videos encapsulated the store related attributes.

In the Chapter 2 of our study, we reviewed all store image attributes we could find in previous researches, and incorporated them in a temporary framework of store image dimensions and relative attributes (Table 2). As already mentioned, our framework was used as a base and structured part of the interviews with customers. However, as previously explained, we used semi-structured interviews to have more flexibility, to be open to new store image attributes and unique insights from customers not covered by present literature and, thus, specific to the new pick-up point format. Furthermore, our decision can be supported by the fact that existing literature on store image is mainly referred to the grocery industry, which decreases its appropriateness for a new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector. Moreover, as already discussed, the store image attributes perceived by customers can vary between market, format and locations. Finally, the use of quantitative methods and attitude scales would have implied for customers of the new pick-up point to be forced to comment dimensions and attributes, which might not precisely define the store image of IKEA's new format in the home furnishing sector (Zimmer & Golden, 1988; McGoldrick, 2002; Burt, Johansson & Thelander, 2007; Wispeler & Wolf, 2015).

In order to support our semi-structured interviews and make sure that customers of a recent and unique pick-up point format had a clear understanding and opinion of the store, we decided to use the **video-elicitation technique**. As already mentioned, our decision was based on the information provided by IKEA that customers in the home furnishing sector tend to visit stores 3 or 4 times per year, but also in view of the novelty of the store. Thus, we assumed that a unique new format launched in May 2015 (Tromsø) and in November 2015 (Norwich) might still not be clear to customers and, consequently, projecting to customers videos reproducing the in-store journey and describing the format was necessary to recall and fortify the interviewee's experience.

With regards the **antecedents of video-elicitation**, the use of video for investigations in social science, despite its potential, has not been extensive (Kissmann, 2009). In fact, investigators have only utilized video elicitation in fields such as studies on learning sciences (Goldman, 2009; Mehan, 1979 cited in Jewitt, 2012),

workplace research (Heath, Luff & Hindmarsh, 2010 cited in Jewitt, 2012), and the home environment investigations (Norris, 2004; Goodwin, 2000 cited in Jewitt, 2012). Furthermore, the technique has been utilized to study cultural aspects of our daily life such as home decoration (Pink, 2003 cited in Jewitt, 2012), and the YouTube video creation and sharing process (Adami, 2009 cited in Jewitt, 2012). **However**, according to Roth (2009 cited in Jewitt, 2012), video elicitation might also be used by researchers in combination with interviews in order to stimulate participants memory, prompt discussions as well as reflections. Thus, **in relation to this study**, we were given by the selected company (i.e. IKEA) explanatory videos of the two different pick-up points (i.e. Tromsø and Norwich) under investigation (Appendix 8). With regards to the first location we visited (i.e. Tromsø store), the video provided by IKEA was verified with our **direct observation,** and considered objective and bias free since it consisted of a simple descriptive journey within the pick-up store. On the other hand, in relation to the second location we visited (i.e. Norwich store), the video provided by IKEA included several comments from customers which we decided to cut in order to avoid to influence our respondents. Furthermore, the video also included comments from IKEA stuff explaining their vision and mission. Thus, we selected and included only those which we considered descriptive and not potentially biasing. Finally, in view of the fact that our modification to the original video resulted in a total streaming of one minute and it was still missing the descriptive parts of the journey in comparison to the Tromsø's one, we created an additional descriptive and objective part of the customer's journey in the Norwich store, and we combined it with what we selected from the IKEA original one. The reason behind this choice was that we wanted to keep consistency with the video elicitation used in the Tromsø store, as well as somehow improving the technique based on our learnings and previous experience in Tromsø (i.e. benefits of the abductive approach). Moreover, in terms of biases, we assumed that videos made in a descriptive and objective way (see Appendix 8), as well as with contents verified by us on the field, would be less biased than a video recorded and verified only from the company side (Jewitt, 2012). **Overall,** as already mentioned, we found video elicitation extremely useful because the format under investigation is very recent (i.e. 2015) and the assumption that customers might have not yet completely realised its key features at the time of our data collection was proved on the field. **In detail,** we decided to use those videos at the beginning of each interview in order to decrease the risk that customers who only visited the new format few times might have missed certain important characteristics. Thus, immediately after the interviewees read and signed their participation consent form and screening questions were completed, they were asked to watch with us the video on a laptop computer that we had with us for all the interviews. Once the projection was completed, customers were asked to openly comment and express their opinion and perceptions on the characteristics of the new pick-up point format. Specifically, they were asked to relate the content of the video (i.e. only the Tromsø's video for interviewees in that store and only the Norwich's one in the other pick-up point) with their actual in-store experience, and also to compare to their reference point (i.e. IKEA traditional format and, when applicable, other pick-up options experiences).

With regards to the **link between the video-elicitation technique and our temporary theoretical framework on store image** dimensions and attributes, the videos we used (available in the Appendix 8) reproduced a real customer journey within the Tromsø and Norwich's pick-up points. Furthermore, an objective description and explanation of what was streamed in the video was provided by the voice recorded within the same file. Specifically, all the characteristics of the store were elicited in the videos and, thus, we assume that the elements characterising the new pick-up points store image were shown to customers. For example, elements such as merchandise, price, extra services, and facilities were all part of the videos. **However,** we recognize that other store image attributes such as clientele and store's personnel that are included in our temporary framework, could not be perceived from the video. In view of this and as already discussed, the video were used just as a recall and stimulation for the actual real experience that interviewees already had with the store. Thus, we believe that the use of the technique was certainly consistent with our temporary theoretical model and purpose of the study.

With regards to the **possible alternatives**, we took into account the possibility to use photo-elicitation. In fact, according to Rose (2012 cited in Wispeler & Wolf, 2015), photographs can stimulate interviewees to further elaborate on their perceptions of a social phenomenon. However, in line with Knoblauch et al. (2006), we opted for video-elicitation because we believe that it can better recreate "*the temporal and sequential structure which is so characteristic of interaction*" (p.19), as well as stimulate interviewees' memory and prompt discussions (Roth, 2009 cited in Jewitt, 2012). Specifically, **we assumed** that descriptive and objective videos, due to their nature, can be better than pictures in recalling the customer's in-store experience and, consistently with what can happen in reality, in recreating the feeling and visual stimuli of a customer's journey.

With regards to the **video elicitation main weakness**, like all forms of data, the technique excludes certain elements of the world. In fact, videos just partially record audio and images in relation to the restricted view of the camera lens and, thus, they do not provide a peripheral vision of the phenomena, and the mobility is limited (Jewitt, 2012). However, **in relation to the videos used in the present study**, they were utilised as an extra elicitation for customers who already had a real in-store experience and, furthermore, the streaming was done within the same pick-up point where the interview was conducted. Thus, we believe that the videos we used respect the evaluation criteria proposed by Goldman (2009) for video-based research. Specifically, the videos discussed in this paragraph and available in Appendix 8, were, in our opinion, sufficiently detailed and captured the essence of each pick-up point store. Furthermore, even though it cannot be proven that those videos actually gave the sense to participants of "being there", they were used on actual customers who had passed our screening selection criteria (i.e. already visited the specific pick-up point store as well as were familiar with the traditional IKEA store). Consequently, we consider that also the validity of the order of the events represented in the videos is aided by the respondents' almost concomitant in-store experience. Finally, in relation to the video's perspective, we informed each respondent that the video was co-created by us and IKEA, and we also asked, at the end of each interview, their opinion about the video in correlation with their actual experience. **In conclusion,** the use of video elicitation in combination with semi-structured interviews was, in our opinion, extremely helpful, and consistent with the need of collecting deep and rich insights on the unique store image of a very recent new pick-up format in the home furnishing sector.

3.5.2   Semi-Structured Customer Interviews – the strategy

As already mentioned, our purpose was to explore what customers would say about the way they perceive pick-up points' store image in comparison to the traditional IKEA store, or similar pick-up formats. Accordingly, the **use of semi-structured interviews** offered us a good flexibility and allowed to get deeper insights on customers' perceptions of the new format. In fact, the technique gave us the chance to probe customers' answers and uncover through spoken words the exact meanings participants were giving to each store's characteristic/store image attribute (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This is in line with the benefits associated with the interview technique (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), which is indeed broadly used by scholars conducting qualitative researches (Bryman & Bell, 2015), and following a case study strategy (Yin, 1994).

With regards to **possible alternative qualitative techniques**, in comparison with in-depth or unstructured interviews, using a semi-structured method allowed us to be guided by our temporary theoretical framework (Table 2) (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), which included all the store image dimensions and attributes we collected while reviewing the extensive available literature on store image. Thus, semi-structured interviews were also in line with our research abductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, as previously discussed, we managed to cover during each interview all the elements included in our framework in an order which adapted (i.e. flexibility) to the respondents' spontaneous connections. Furthermore, as explained earlier, several attributes were also elicited through the streaming of the specific pick-up point customer journey video at the beginning of each interview. Thus, we managed to fortify and stimulate the memories of a recent format's customers, which, otherwise, might had been still unclear due to the low

average number of store visits per year in the home furnishing (Andreas Otto, meeting with IKEA, 8 March 2016). Moreover, during all interviews we always encouraged respondents' free thinking by stressing that there were no correct answers but just personal opinions and perceptions of the stores. Therefore, our interviewees always talked in a comfortable and subjective way when explaining their perceptions of the new pick-up point format.

In conclusion, even though we relied on our temporary theoretical framework including the list of store image attributes found in current literature, we managed to use the list only as a reference while being flexible throughout the conversations. Ultimately, by doing so, a level of consistency on the issues addressed from each interviewee was maintained as well as on our study purpose. Furthermore, this form of semi-structured interviewing allowed us to clearly compare the new pick-up point customers' perceptions with those they had for their reference points (i.e. IKEA traditional format and, when applicable, similar pick-up options experiences). Thus, even though each interview started with the video-elicitation technique, and our temporary theoretical model as an interview guide and as a final cross-check list for respondents, all questions were always accustomed to the participant's ideas and spontaneous connections among the different store's attributes.

3.5.3   Semi-structured customer interviews – numbers, design and steps followed

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in both IKEA pick-up points in Tromsø (Norway) and Norwich (UK). The data collection in the Tromsø store was conducted from the 12th of April until the 14th of April 2016, while we were in Norwich from the 16th to the 18th of April 2016. **Even though the country and geographic area of the stores was different**, English is fluently spoken in both countries and was selected as the language to conduct the interviews. In fact, all Norwegian customers interviewed were fluent in English and, according to IKEA and the documentation we collected, there were no significant differences in terms of image dimensions between the two cities and countries.

In total, we interviewed 9 customers in the Tromsø pick-up point with an average of 42.3 minutes per interview, and 10 customers in the Norwich pick-up point with an average of 41.5 minutes. Thus, a total of 19 interviews with an overall average of 42 minutes were conducted for this study. The variability of the interviews' length is explained by the respondents' level of engagement, their extent of interests in IKEA, but also by the amount of insights they shared with the researchers. Overall, our interviews' average duration is in line with what is expected from a qualitative approach and methodology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

With regards to the **interviews' location** and **setting**, there are also important factors that can influence the interview process (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Hence, we conducted the interviews in a living room area (i.e. showroom) within the pick-up points, which was close to the planning and design area of the store where customers spend the most of their time when they are about to make an order. The interview location was also agreed with the store managers, and was based on the assumption that this location will enable the interviewees to feel relaxed, and comfortably discuss with us upon the end of their shopping experience. Moreover, IKEA kindly provided us with visitor passes and IKEA Family t-shirts/sweaters in order to be more recognizable and official. Before starting with the video-elicitation technique, all respondents were asked to read a **consent form** describing our research purpose and research process. The form also included a section where customers were asked to fill their personal information. Furthermore, they were informed that the interview will be audio-recorded in view of our detailed analysis process (Yin, 1994) and only their first names will be used in our study. During the interviews, we offered customers drinks and snacks in order to increase their comfort but also to treat them for their participation and time. In order to **motivate customers to participate in our study**, we offered an IKEA gift-card of the equivalent value of 30

euros. At the same time, to ensure that customers were honest in their answers, the screening procedure questions (i.e. criteria used for the purposive sampling which will be discussed in the next paragraph), were not communicated and were done directly from us in order to evaluate customer's ability to participate in the interview. Furthermore, at the beginning of each interview, the screening was intensified to eventually spot inconsistency in interviewees' declarations. Moreover, while they were reading and filling the interview consent with all the needed information, we were further explaining them the interview procedure and always underlined our autonomy from IKEA company and our role of researchers on behalf of Lund University (Sweden). Furthermore, participants were given a sheet with the **contact information** of the researchers but also a paragraph describing the purpose of the study they participated, in order to reassure them about the validity of our research.

There were a number of **steps** we followed **for our interviews**. The **first step** was asking customers about their experience in the specific pick-up point of the study, other IKEA stores or other pick-up points they might have visited. In the **second step**, the video elicitation technique was utilized, and we were asking customers' opinion about the content seen in the video (see next paragraph and Appendix 8). During this step, we also asked to relate the video elicitation with their actual experience in the particular new format, as well as to their actual experience in the traditional IKEA "blue box" and similar pick-up points of other stores, companies or sectors. In **the third step**, we used our temporary store image theoretical framework to ask the interviewees their opinion about each store image attributes we found in the literature in comparison to their reference points stated in the beginning. During this step, we were always adapting the order of attributes on the basis of the interviewees' responses and possible spontaneous connections between the store's characteristics. Furthermore, we limited our involvement by just offering explanation and clarification to the open-ended questions when it was requested by customers, or when the interviewees were clearly confused about the meaning of the question. In **the fourth step**, once our theoretical framework was fully discussed, we asked each customer to go through a table (see Appendix 5) including the content of our temporary theoretical model, and circle the attributes which for them characterized the specific pick-up point they visited (i.e. Tromsø or Norwich). Specifically, the **content of the table/framework** was updated and adapted to a language that was clear for people who are not familiar with marketing and business terms. Furthermore, for each store image dimension and relative attributes listed in the table, we included a column where **customers were asked to add extra comments or characteristics** of the specific pick-up points in case they felt that the ones already listed were not expressing their views. Overall, the use of this table allowed us to verify what customers have told us earlier in the interview but also to further stimulate them to recall their unique perceptions of the specific pick-up point. The **last step** was to ask customers to elaborate whether "the way they think about/perceive" the specific pick-up point store image (i.e. Tromsø or Norwich) was different/similar/same than the way they perceived the IKEA traditional store format and, if applicable, other pick-up points experience with other companies or sectors they might have had. By doing so, we gave once again the opportunity to customers to reflect on their experience and personal perception, and elaborate an answer which helped us to confirm what they told us during the interviews. Finally, we also asked whether "the opinion they have about IKEA as a company" (i.e. brand image) changed in view of the implementation and launch of the new pick-up point format. Specifically, this was done in order to try to understand the extent of the effects on store image of format development.

Going back to the **video-elicitation**, as already mentioned, the technique was used at the beginning of each interview to stimulate participants' memory, prompt discussions as well as reflections on a very recent and new pick-up point format (Roth, 2009 cited in Jewitt, 2012). Specifically, different videos of the specific stores were shown to Tromsø and Norwich's customers. Both videos had a duration of almost five minutes and were overall consistent. However, as already mentioned, we enhanced the Norwich video with some

additional information describing the pick-up point's services based on the experience we had a couple of days before in Tromsø. This particular decision was in line with our abductive approach which allows researchers to continuously learn from the data collection process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, despite the use of video-elicitation at the beginning of each interview and the initial theoretical framework guiding the set of questions, we were always as open as possible by adapting the interview's flow and order to the participants' spontaneous responses. Furthermore, additional details and explanations were provided to interviewees only when requested or when they were clearly showing difficulties in understanding the questions.

To conclude, we are satisfied by our data collection process since it allowed us to fortify respondents' memories about their journey inside the particular pick-up store, other IKEA stores and, when applicable, other pick-up points. Moreover, we were able to openly ask questions and adapt to the interviewees' needs, to make sure they understood the questions and, thus, increasing the probability of collecting more personal and deeper insights, which finally reflected our overall research approach. Therefore, the nature of the revelatory case study we followed, but also our qualitative research methods, were facilitated by the use of **semi-structured interviews** (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.5.4   Sampling and participant selection criteria

Since the purpose of our study was to delve into pick-up points customers' perceptions, the individuals selected through the sampling were important in order to reassure the most relevant and insightful findings. To accomplish this goal we used the **purposive sampling,** as we did not randomly interview consumers but strategically chosen customers according to specific criteria and characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, the requirement (i.e. **participant selection criteria**) was that consumers had to be familiar with the pick-up point format (i.e. already visited the new store), as well as with the traditional one (i.e. IKEA traditional store format) since it was essential they had engaged with both stores, in order for us to examine the possible differences in their image associations towards the retailer. Thus, within a week, we visited both the pick-up points in Tromsø (Norway) and Norwich (UK) to conduct our research, and we were in each stores for 3 days to collect the needed amount of interviews to answer our research question. As already mentioned, we reached the point of **theoretical saturation** with a total of nine interviews in Tromsø and ten in Norwich, which allowed us to develop the final theoretical framework available in the Chapter 4.

With regards to our **sampling target**, we believe that the clientele of IKEA's pick-up stores was ideal to conduct our study and explore customers' perceptions of the new format in the home furnishing sector. Specifically, our assumption can be proven by the fact that the IKEA's pick-up points customers we interviewed have all been purchasing from IKEA traditional stores in the past. Furthermore, by sampling in the specific stores, we also managed to cover the typical market segments, age distribution and other demographics of customers of the format under study (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

With regards to the **sampling process followed**, we walked around the pick-up points and approached customers by informing them about our survey, asking them the screening questions and then, if they fulfilled the selection criteria, we provided the details of the interview process, the duration, but also their participation reward (i.e. 30 euros gift card). This approach proved to be really effective because customers considered the prize as valid reason to spend some extra time in the store. Overall, as already mentioned, we did not randomly chose the participants, but we consciously selected those that met the selection criteria and, thus, fit the purpose of our study. Consequently, not all the population in the store had the same probability to be chosen for our research (Malhotra, 2010). Furthermore, during the process, we tried to interview pick-up store's customers from different age groups and backgrounds in order to collect insights from various types of

customers. Finally, once a respondent agreed to be selected, we were going back to our stand and strived to create a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere.

To conclude, even though the purposive sampling can influence the validity and generalizability of our findings, we believe that the technique was effective and in line with our research question and qualitative approach to the study of the effect on store image of the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector.

Before explaining our data analysis choices, we present in the following table a **list with our study's participants'** information, which they agreed to be published.

Interview number	Participants in Tromsø (Norway) IKEA pick-up point	Duration	Participant selection criteria met (Yes/No)	Participants in Norwich (UK) IKEA pick-up point	Duration	Participant selection criteria met (Yes/No)
1	Rolf Gunnar, -, male, married, visited IKEA in Norway and Northern Sweden	48'	Yes	Clare, -, female, married, visited IKEA London (UK), Bristol (UK) and Freiburg (Germany)	46'	Yes
2	Gro, 49, female, married, visited IKEA Oslo (Norway both stores) and Malmo (Sweden)	37'	Yes	Lorraine, 43, female, divorced, visited IKEA London (UK)	36'	Yes
3	Bergljot, -, female, married, visited IKEA in Norway and Haparanda (Sweden)	44'	Yes	Gosia, 35, female, single, visited IKEA Milton Keynes (UK)	47'	Yes
4	Maria E., -, female, married, visited IKEA Furuset (Norway) and Slependen (Norway)	30'	Yes	Joshua, 28, male, married, visited IKEA Bristol (UK) and Manchester (UK)	33'	Yes
5	Maria M., 33, female, married, visited IKEA Uppsala (Sweden) and Oslo (Norway)	48'	Yes	Jennifer, 73, female, divorced, visited IKEA London (UK)	45'	Yes
6	Benedict, 37, female, married, visited IKEA Haparanda (Sweden)	39'	Yes	Andrew D., 34, male, married, visited IKEA Cardiff (Wales)	38'	Yes
7	Morten, 35, male, divorced, visited IKEA Oslo (Norway) and Sweden	39'	Yes	Andrew, 54, male, married, visited IKEA Warrington (UK)	45'	Yes
8	Jostein, 45, male, married, visited IKEA Helsinborg (Sweden) and Bergen Asane (Norway)	53'	Yes	Shaun, 70, male, divorced, visited IKEA Toronto (Canada) and Milton Keynes (UK)	46'	Yes
9	Abul, 35, male, married, visited IKEA Oslo (Norway)	44'	Yes	Chris, 40, male, married, visited IKEA Warrington (UK) and Leeds (UK)	34'	Yes
10	_		Yes	Lisa, 48, female, single, visited IKEA Lakeside (UK), Tokyo (Japan) and Croydon (UK)	48'	Yes

Table 5: Interview participants' information

3.6   Research data analysis method outline

The method we adopted to analyze the outcomes of our data collection process was consistent with our research philosophy and methodology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, in view of our abductive approach, we generated theory as a result of the iterative process between our data collection and subsequent data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As already mentioned, the temporary theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, which included all store image dimensions and attributes we found in the literature, was used as a starting base and guide for the semi-structured interviews and data collection process (Yin, 1994). However, the data we collected were not only related to the existing store image attributes found in the literature and included in our temporary theoretical model, but also to new and unique pick-up store image findings offered by customers' interpretations. This is supported by Dubois and Gadde (1999) who claim that when *"the researcher's objective is to discover new things - other variables and other relationships [...] the researcher must consider phenomena in the light of a theoretical framework. However, the researcher should not be unnecessarily constrained by having to adhere to previously developed theory"* (p. 7).

The use of semi-structured interviews produced abundant language data on the customers' store perceptions of both IKEA's new pick-up stores. In order to avoid possible loss of information but also to ensure that we listen and analyse customers' insights in a more accurate way, we recorded all interviews that were later on transcribed for the analysis. The **transcriptions** were done in the same language used during the interviews (i.e. English) and respected the exact words and constructs used by our study's participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The analysis of the transcribed data (i.e. words) followed an objective **hermeneutic approach** and interpretation, aimed at understanding customers' perceptions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, for each comment and sentence used by participants, we respected the original context in which they were expressed in order to understand their real meaning, and avoid any false interpretation of the data collected by isolating customers' thoughts. Accordingly, in line with our abductive approach, we followed a **continuous assessment** of the empirical data collected in relation to the existing theory we have found during the review of store image. Thus, overall, by following and abductive and hermeneutic approach we managed to analyse the outcomes of our data collection process in a way which enabled us to discover the unique customers' perceptions of the new IKEA pick-up point format.

With regards to **the steps we followed for our analysis**, the semi-structured interviews data were examined with a **three steps model** (Flick, 2014). Specifically, the **first step** was to read our interviews' transcripts and highlight the expressions linkable to our initial framework presented in Chapter 2, through a line by line sequential structure. In detail, this means that for each respondent's answers, we underlined all parts in which they were referring to each one of the store image dimensions included in our initial framework. Accordingly, when pick-up points' customers were moving from discussing a certain store image dimension (i.e. Store Environment & Layout) to expressing their opinions about a different characteristic of the format (i.e. Store personnel), we distributed their observations in view of what was related to our initial set of store image dimensions available from previous literature. Moreover, when customers' insights were not linkable to any of the dimensions of our temporary framework, they were preserved in order to understand if they could represent a pattern and attributed for hypothetical new and unique dimensions not available from our literature review. Regarding the **second step**, we focused on finding codes that were applicable for the customer's perceptions of the new pick-up point format. As already mentioned, the store image categories and attributes covered (i.e. if findings were linkable to our initial theoretical model dimensions and attributes) our temporary

theoretical framework, but also resulted in new codes which were not previously found in the literature review. Following that, we focused on retrieving possible patterns within the data (i.e. words) collected with the semi-structured interviews. Specifically, these patterns were required to be linkable to individual codes and themes we earlier detected (the pattern generation and coding process will be discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4). **Importantly,** the first two steps were conducted separately for both the Tromsø and Norwich IKEA pick-up point. Furthermore, for each code and pattern, the specific pick-up point store was also compared to the customers' perception of their reference point (i.e. IKEA traditional format and, when applicable, other pick-up options experiences). By doing so, we managed to create an updated version of our store image framework for each pick-up point store as well as for the traditional IKEA format. Thus, in **the last step**, we compared the contrasting store image of the typical IKEA format with the customers' perceptions of the selected pick-up points, and we managed to outline the effect on store image of format development in the home furnishing sector. Furthermore, in order to answer our sub-question related to the existence of possible variations on the store image attributes of two different versions of the new pick-up point format, we also compared customers' perceptions of the Tromsø and Norwich pick-up point.

In view of the above process, the existing literature we included in our temporary theoretical framework was successfully used to link theory to our empirical outcomes (Flick, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2015), while expanding the knowledge on store image and format development and answering our research question. Specifically, the aforementioned analysis process was **deductive** in the sense that store image dimensions and attributes found in previous studies were fully used to generate findings on pick-up points' store image (i.e. theory → findings). However, at the same time, we were **inductive** in evaluating customers' insights that could not be explained by our initial theoretical model, and showed patterns leading to new knowledge on store image (i.e. findings → theory). Thus, the analysis process we followed and described in this paragraph, combined both elements of induction and deduction, and was **consistent with our abductive approach (**Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), as well as with our qualitative methodology and case study strategy (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, our data analysis method was also in line with Yin (1994), who explained that, in order to analyse a case study, it is of paramount importance to include all the key aspects of the case, as well as all contrasting interpretations and relevant evidence.

Finally, in view of the fact that we were **two researchers working on this study**, we separately conducted the analysis of the data collected, and excluded interpretations on which an agreement was not found. Specifically, before proceeding to the analysis, we established a systematic approach to review the data (see Chapter 4 for details). Based on that system, we independently identified and selected the data from the interviews' transcripts. At the end of this process, we jointly discussed the individually collected data and selected the findings for which there was a mutual confirmation. Thus, through **'intersubjectivity'**, we attempted to verify the *quality of the data* selection and interpretation.

3.7   Research methodology limitations

With regards to our methodology limitation, we will first discuss the general criteria indicated for business and management research, and, finally, those for case studies. Specifically, in business research there are three main evaluation criteria. Namely, these are *replication*, *reliability*, and *validity* (Bryman & Bell, 2015). On the other hand, qualitative researchers show some concerns regarding the relevance of these criteria when the measurement aspect is missing (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, **considering our qualitative research methodology**, the criteria of *authenticity* and *trustworthiness* will be used to evaluate the weaknesses of our study (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In relation to *authenticity* (Bryman & Bell, 2015), we acknowledge that a possible weakness is represented by the fact that only a certain number of customers of the two specific pick-up points were interviewed. This means that readers might see a **lack of transparency** in the criteria we followed for our purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, as previously discussed, we always selected participants based on fixed selection criteria and reasons related to our research purpose.

Regarding *trustworthiness*, it is made up of four criteria labeled as *transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability,* each of which has a parallel criteria in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To begin with, we cannot ensure the *transferability* of our research findings [equivalent to the quantitative criteria of *external validity* (Bryman & Bell, 2015)]. In fact, our research is limited to only two pick-up points of the home furnishing industry which represent the only two examples of the new format under investigation, at the time of our research. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with a relatively small number of customers of the selected case study (i.e. IKEA). Thus, it is not possible to generalize our findings to other countries, sectors, formats or other pick-up points.

Concerning *credibility* [parallel to *internal validity* in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015)], it evaluates how plausible the researchers' findings are (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since our study is based on interviews with only IKEA customers, our findings cannot be easily generalized, and they might only be credible within this narrow context. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, IKEA represents the leader in the home furnishing sector, and it is the only company who engaged in the development of the new pick-up point format to the best of our knowledge. Therefore, the lack of credibility can be justified by the uniqueness of the phenomenon studied.

In relation to *dependability* [equivalent to *reliability* in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015)], it helps to assess how reliable is the study for other researchers. Specifically, our study relied on documentation, direct observation of the format and semi-structured interviews in combination with video elicitation which, due to their qualitative nature, generate some concerns in terms of **interviewee and interviewers possible biases** (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Consequently, the reliability of our study could be questioned since the interviewers' comments, non-verbal behavior or tone of voice were not easy to "**audit**" (Bryman & Bell, 2015), and might have generated bias in the interviewees' responses (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). **However**, throughout the process we maintained evidence of every step of our study from the problem formulation, to the literature review, the interviewees' selection criteria, the interview transcripts, and the data analysis decisions in order to reassure that our decisions and processes followed were clearly presented to the reader.

Moreover, on the interviewee side, bias deriving from personal reasons (i.e. relative dissatisfactions or satisfactions from the new pick-up format), and uncomfortable feelings in the interview's setting might have resulted in a partial picture of the situation studied (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). However, as already discussed, we did our best to create a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere by creating rapport with respondents and offering drinks and appetizers (i.e. "*We are students from Lund University… there are no right or wrong answers… it is just a conversation to understand your anonymous opinions while enjoying some coffee together*…"). Furthermore, we always urged interviewees to be clear about their personal beliefs (i.e. "*is your opinion based on a particular experience you had, or is it a general characteristic of this store?*"). Another aspect affecting the dependability of our study might be our **frame of reference** and our interpretation and construction of questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Consequently, it is essential to take into account our ability in defining and asking questions, listening to answers (Sörgärde, 2016) and, in general, in conducting semi-structured interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Specifically, we are Master students with no significant experience in interviewing. However, thanks to the use of an interview guide, the efforts we made in studying the chosen data collections techniques and our abductive approach (see Appendix 6), we are confident about our performances. Finally, all over the study and data collection we strived to report and analyse the customers' opinions with a strong focus on the possible reliability (i.e. we always

considered if the insights were bounded only to a specific interviewee's situation, or if they were part of wider patterns). Furthermore, we audio-recorded all the interviews, and they are available for any future application or enquiry.

Lastly, with regards to *confirmability* [parallel to *objectivity* in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015)]**,** it is hard to guarantee and prove that we did not allow theoretical inclinations and personal values "*to sway the conduct of the research and findings deriving from it*" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 403)**.** Moreover, the semi-structured interviews were held in English in both Tromsø (Norway) and Norwich (UK) and, thus, linguistic issues could be raised (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Specifically, it might be pointed out that English is neither Norwegians' nor our first language. **However**, as previously discussed, all respondents we interviewed in Tromsø were fluent in English. Furthermore, we are both students of a well-respected Master taught in English, and the qualitative methods used allowed us to further explain questions/concepts whenever lack of clarity occurred. Finally, in order to increase the confirmability of our study, we always strived to prevent our theoretical inclinations and personal values to affect our judgments and general conduct of the research (i.e. our analysis followed an abductive approach, which resulted in a significant importance given to customers' insights, despite possible lack of connections with existing literature). In line with that, since we were two researchers working on this study, we utilized our **intersubjectivity** as a benefit to independently reflect on the various processes and, at the same time, exchange our thoughts in order to be more receptive and reduce biases. To conclude, we believe that, despite the above limitations and in line with our research purpose, our methodology choices enabled us to acknowledge the importance of individuals' perceptions of store image, and to gain a deeper understanding of the field under investigation.

With regards to the **limits of a case study,** we attempted to follow the directions suggested by Yin (1994). Specifically, the author underlines the importance of using **multiple-methods** and source of evidence to increase the validity of a case study. Accordingly, we combined documentation, direct observation as well as a good number of interviews (i.e. 19, with an average duration of 42 minutes), and video-elicitation to guarantee a **certain degree of data triangulation** (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For example, store image attributes and dimensions were only coded if patterns and connections were identified among customers' opinions and pick-up point's characteristics, but also documentation and direct observation confirmation. Consequently, the triangulation of data also increase the accuracy and validity of our findings and conclusions (Yin, 1994). However, as already mentioned before, we cannot certify the external validity of our study since this would have required to quantitatively test our findings, and replicate the study on other cases. Nonetheless, as already discussed in previous sections, IKEA pick-up points respected the criteria indicated by Yin (1994) in terms of suitability and importance of the case study.

Finally, another limitation might be the fact that we are not experts on the case study strategy and conducting some pilot beforehand is generally suggested (Yin, 1994). However, we did our best to overcome this problem by studying as much as possible methodology papers and textbooks before starting our research process.

In conclusion, the weaknesses and limitations of our research design that we discussed above are mostly related to its qualitative nature. Nevertheless, our study's methodology might find justification and support from the topic's characteristics and purpose of the study (i.e. to explore the effect on store image of format development and, specifically, of the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector) (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). As already mentioned earlier, the new pick-up point format represents a special topic. In fact, it combines a set of characteristics (see "Arguments for the case study" at section 3.3.1) that results in a unique and new touchpoint for customers, which required us to "wear glasses again" to uncover its effect on store image. Furthermore, as proven by our new findings, previous stores' image studies were neither fully transferrable to the new format that we studied since their focus was mainly on traditional formats and grocery sector, nor unquestionable in view of the sector and format specific nature of image.

Thus, we believe that the overall benefit of flexibility deriving from our qualitative and abductive research counterbalanced the limitations previously discussed. In support of our point, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) claim that overcoming the limitation of a qualitative approach "*would not be realistic or feasible without undermining the strength of this type of research*" (p. 328), which, instead, proved successfull to fulfil our purpose, answer the research questions and generate new knowledge.

3.8   Ethical and Political Considerations

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012), when a study is being held for a distinct company, there are some specific barriers and restrictions (i.e. **politic of access**) that might be dominated by the company's managers. For our research, we focused on a single case study design, that of IKEA company and its new pick-up point format. The company was not directly involved in our study and the research's focus was on consumers' perceptions. With regards to access to the company stores, from the initial meeting with IKEA we were informed that we would be assigned a tutor from the company who will provide us with all the data and information we need for our research. Moreover, we were introduced to the respective store managers of Tromsø and Norwich pick-up points in order to organize our research visitation. Consequently, we were given access to the stores, but also provided with possible guidelines and proposals for areas inside the store where we could approach customers. Moreover, IKEA's store managers provided us with all the necessary apparel (i.e. IKEA family t-shirts/sweaters to officialise our presence in the stores), visitor passes for security reasons, communication table stands to inform customers about the interview process and to generate traffic for our survey, participants' gift cards (i.e. 30 euros value), and dedicated rooms to reflect on the research process. Furthermore, IKEA's managers shared with us relevant information and research reports about the practice of pick-up points which was valuable for our documentation process. **Importantly**, through our in-store direct observation, we tried to verify all the information received by IKEA. Finally, the contents of our research were screened by IKEA in order to approve the information to be published and possibly exclude sensitive company information. Apart from the above aspects, there was not any further involvement from IKEA's side in the development of our research.

With regards to the **ethical considerations** in business and organizational research, Bryman and Bell (2015) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) describe the different positions on ethics. Specifically, for the present project, we followed a ***deontological*** and ***universalist*** **stance**, which means that our ethical principles (i.e. fairness, transparency, truthfulness and respect for autonomy) were never broken since we considered their infraction as morally wrong, and it could have harmed participants regardless the ends served by our study. In fact, we have taken into account the conservation of participants' information (i.e. privacy), but also the guarantee of research outcome's truthfulness based on the interviewees' responses (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). According to Bryman and Bell (2015), there are four dimensions of ethical issues (i.e. "harm of participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception"). In relation to this study, since we came in contact with consumers through interviews, we had to take into account the ethical dimensions suggested by those authors. Thus, we were honest regarding our study's overall scope so as for customers to have a clear picture of the objective and process of the research, and ultimately decide whether to participate or not, by signing our consent form, where the possibility of ending the interview was indicated.

When customers accepted to participate, we did our best to make them feel comfortable in order to avoid any harm since the qualitative interview process had an extended duration (average of 42 minutes per interview) and thus, could potentially be stressful. Importantly, the effort made by our study participants was rewarded with gift-cards with the value of 30 euros. Furthermore, we reassured all the interviewees that in case they were not willing to answer a question, they had the freedom to skip it (see participant's consent form in the Appendix 3). Moreover, when respondents showed any indication of stress or embarrassment we respectfully

and accordingly adapted our interview process and setting (e.g. we proceeded to a next question), as described in the methodology chapter. Therefore, building trust and rapport was considered extremely important for our interviewing process (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In view of the possibility that respondents might have been thinking that we were working for IKEA and not as independent researchers, we clearly explained to each of them that any data provided by participants would have been used for our Master thesis research purposes only. Finally, interviewees were informed about the recording process and, thus, were aware that we documented their inputs.

In conclusion, in this section we have tried to evaluate how certain political and ethical aspects might have affected our study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). On the other hand, we were also aware of the fact that qualitative studies can be unpredictable (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and, thus, possible harm might have not been identified and discussed in the present section.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Identifying and interpreting dimensions and attributes of store image

In the present chapter, we present and analyse the empirical data and findings we collected through the combination of video-elicitation technique and semi-structured interviews. Specifically, for each of the ten store image dimensions included in the initial theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2, we cover customers' perceptions of the new pick-up point in Norwich in relation to the IKEA traditional format, which was used by respondents as their reference point. Furthermore, the additional store image dimensions and attributes perceived by customers are also discussed and, thus, our temporary theoretical model is mainly utilized as a guideline, and the order in which the image dimensions are discussed does not represent any priorities. Accordingly, the same process is followed for the Tromsø pick-up point. Importantly, the theoretical meanings of each store image dimension are not replicated in this section since they were explained in detail in Chapter 2. Thus, in the following paragraphs, we present directly our findings, which are the results of the data analysis method discussed in Chapter 3 and further explained in the following sections.

4.2 Customer Interviews analysis and findings

As already mentioned, in the present section, we present our findings through customers' quotes that represent their perception of the Norwich and Tromsø pick-up point's store image, in relation to the traditional IKEA format. As a result, we generated a new framework which depicts and highlights the contrast between the image of the two pick-up points and the traditional store. Hence, in line with the purpose of our study, we describe the effect on store image of the new pick-up point format development. Furthermore, the same framework will be utilized to underline the possible store image variations caused by the implementation of two different versions (i.e. Norwich and Tromsø) of pick-up points (i.e. sub-research question).

4.2.1 How findings were selected and how patterns were generated

With regards to the method we used to obtain our findings, the analysis was based on the transcript of the interviews. Since we were **two researchers working** on this study, we individually conducted the analysis and selection of the data, and eliminated the findings on which we could not find a mutual agreement. Specifically, prior to the analysis process, we created **a shared systematic approach** to review the data, which was based on the definitions of store image dimensions and attributes found in previous literature. Thus, by agreeing on the meanings of the various store image characteristics included in our initial theoretical

framework, we developed a mutual "pair of glasses" to spot in the interviews' transcripts insights and themes linkable to the existing store image dimensions and attributes.

Data selection

Following our data collection, we reviewed the interviews' findings and customers' responses about store's image dimensions. Specifically, as mentioned above, we searched for words and expressions that were linkable to the store image attributes included in the initial theoretical framework we have established through the literature review, but also linkable to the store image dimensions definitions that were collected. Since through the specific literature review, we have established a shared knowledge on what each store image dimension stands for, but also on the attributes that characterize them, we managed to be consistent in the way each of us approached the data. **For instance**, when we were observing the **store environment and layout dimension,** we had in mind its attributes included in our initial framework, such as atmosphere or physical arrangement. Thus, we were looking for words and expressions that were around those attributes such as **"relaxed, calmer, friendlier, spacious, compact, little"**. Accordingly, when customers were jumping from discussing a certain store image dimension (i.e. Store Environment & Layout) to expressing their perceptions about a different characteristic of the store (i.e. Store personnel), we divided their perceptions and beliefs in view of what was applicable to our initial set of image dimensions found in the literature.Consequently, we were able to identify and collect attributes that were both similar to the ones we already found in the literature but also different.

Specifically, by utilizing the same "glasses"/shared frame of definitions, we spotted new themes/insights that were not linkable to the existing store image attributes, but were instead linkable to the image dimension in view of its meaning (e.g. *"...It's*easy to jump from one point to another*..."* (Shaun) → **New Attribute:** Freedom of movement → Existing Dimension: Store environment and Layout). Finally, based on the overall store image definitions reviewed in Chapter 2, our selection frame/glasses were also spotting customers insights which were not clearly linkable neither to existing store image attributes, nor dimensions (e.g. *"...we have been **expecting IKEA to settle here for many years**... (...) ...we have to drive like 10 hours to go to the closest traditional IKEA store."* (Rolf) → New Attribute: Being where customers' want you →**New Dimension: Customer Orientation**).

Pattern Generation

Following the data collection process mentioned above, we proceeded with the pattern generation, and thus, by identifying possible commonalities and similarities expressed among customers' responses, we selected the attributes to include in our updated theoretical framework. Specifically, **for each theme found** and selected from the interviews' transcripts, we focused on understanding towards which target/trend the insight was directed, in relation to the commonalities shown with similar themes and insights from other interviewees.

For example, in relation to store's personnel dimension, we identified various commonalities and similarities in pick-up points' customers' perceptions. Specifically, when customers claimed that in the pick-up point *"...they (i.e. store's personnel) got **more time to chat to you**...and always there is **someone saying can you come here, can you help us"** (Lisa) and *"I feel it's **easier** to find somebody to ask here that makes for me a huge difference."* (Clare) and *"They are very **helpful** and because they are **in a small area they are accessible**."* (Andrew), we realized that there was a specific pattern among the responses that could be expressed by the **following codes** we generated: helpful, accessible and with enhanced time availability on an individual basis.

As already discussed, after having defined the codes, they were encapsulated within the applicable store image dimensions. However, **when the detected patterns generated codes that were not applicable to any of the existing dimensions**, a further step was employed. Specifically, we created a record of these codes and

attempted to identify patterns among them that could lead to a new store image dimension, which we assumed could encapsulate some of the unique attributes/codes found in the interviews' transcripts. For example, when customers said that *"They (i.e. IKEA) built this (i.e. pick-up point) store here so **for people to buy a kitchen or bathroom or wardrobe it's much better to go here** and have a look and **have someone to help you decide**..."* (Bergliot) → New Attribute/Code: Facilitate complex purchasing decisions →**New Dimension: Customer Orientation**

4.3 Customer Interviews - Pick-up point Image versus Traditional Image

4.3.1 Questions asked during semi-structured interviews

Part of the process of data collection and customers' interviews in the pick-up point formats in Norwich and Tromsø, was to present to interviewees a video, as already discussed in Chapter 3 earlier. The video showed the consumers' journey inside the specific store, highlighting its layout, its merchandise and describing what customers can find inside the store. At the end of the video, we asked participants to comment on what they saw based as well on their own experience inside the store. In addition to that, we asked them to characterize and describe the pick-up point. Following customers' general description of the way they perceived the store, we asked them to tell us their opinion and comment on specific characteristics, in relation to their experience with IKEA traditional format or possible other pick-up points. These characteristics were the store image dimensions we have collected through our literature review, and included in our initial theoretical framework. During the interviews, we observed that a number of customers found difficulties in understanding what they were asked to comment on since it was sometimes complicated for them to realize it by just listening only to the dimensions' names (e.g. extra facilities). For that reason, and **in line with our qualitative methodology**, we decided to adapt and revise our initial plan of stating the dimensions by their exact name. Specifically, in case we noticed that customers did not understand, we added an explanation or gave examples in order to clarify what we are asking and thus enhance the quality of answers we collected.

Consequently, the dimensions were also presented and explained to participants in the following way:
- **Communication & Advertising:** *"The way that this store communicated to customers or citizens around that it is a new store, that they opened."* or *"The way they communicated and informed people about the store and when they launched."*
- **Experience:** *"Your experience in this store, you know every customer has an experience when he/she enters a store."* or *"Customers when entering a store they establish, built some kind of experience..."*
- **Extra facilities:** *"We mean the facilities that the store offers to ease and comfort customers inside the store, additionally from the products they offer. An extra facility can be the parking for example."* or *"What is your opinion on the facilities offered here in relation to the facilities offered in traditional IKEA store. The facilities that make your stay as a customer in the store more comfortable, easier..."* Sometimes we gave examples to understand the extra facilities (e.g. elevators, toilets).*
- **Merchandise:** *"The options that you have, the things that they offer in the store. For example, are there a lot of products, quality products, modern or not modern?"*
- **Location:***"This pick-up store is placed in this shopping area of Norwich/ Tromsø whereas the traditional stores are placed in other areas. What is your opinion on the location selection and choice of this store?"*
- **Price:** *"What do you think about the price of products and services they offer in this store?"*
- **Extra services:** *"Services can have to do with the delivery of products, pricing options, post-transaction assistance"* or *"We are not referring to extra facilities but to the services offered to the customers like for example after you purchase something, the service you are provided by the store."*

Additionally we provided examples of extra services, such as self-service, pricing options, and delivery options.

- **Store's personnel:** *"What do you think about the people who work here?"*
- **Clientele:** *"What do you think about the customers of this store, meaning their status, age, gender and their profiling?"* or *"What do you think about the customers you see in the store, meaning their profile, status etc.?"*

4.3.2 Dimensions of Norwich pick-up point

In the following section, we are going to discuss each store image dimension by highlighting some representative examples of the selected customers' responses that enabled us to generate the respective codes/ attributes. Furthermore, **additional cases of interviewees' claims** per dimension can be found in the Appendix 1. Finally, the same structure will be followed for Tromsø Dimensions.

Dimension of Store Environment & Layout

One of the dimensions we discussed with interviewees was the **store's environment and layout**. Customers of the pick-up point in Norwich characterized the **pick-up store's** environment as "not cramped", "easier", clear", "more relaxed" and with a "better overview", comparing to the traditional IKEA "blue box" format. Moreover, they mentioned that the new pick-up point format provides with "freedom of movement" and enables customers to "get ideas".

On the other hand, when they were asked to compare their view on store environment and layout of the pick-up point to the one they have for the **traditional store,** respondents described it as "too big" which resulted in making them feel it as "overwhelming" and "stressful". At the same time, they acknowledged that in the traditional format they "almost follow a path", making it difficult for them to get to the rooms they only wanted to visit.

Finally, customers believe that the store looks more like a "**showroom**" based on the following reasons:

- *"I have a **better overview** in this shop (i.e. pick-up point) than I have in a big IKEA shop, I **enjoy my trip** here (i.e. pick-up point)." [...] "I like it (i.e. pick-up point) because it's so **little**, it's **small** and I can do it within a very **brief time**. I find that store **easier** (i.e. pick-up point)."* (Clare)
- *"In the larger store they **sort of guide you to a particular direction**. I like the layout of this (i.e. pick-up point) because you can **look around** and it's a lot of **easier** to find what you are **looking for**."* (Andrew D.)
- *"In the big store they have a bigger layout but you can get the **inspiration** here (i.e. pick-up point). It's easy to find things and it's easy to jump **from one point to another** and you can go back and find what you were looking for. I just like this (i.e. pick-up point) the whole thing is more **relaxed**, and **not big time consuming**."* (Shaun)
- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) probably a **showroom**, I think that the best description because it **doesn't have the full range but you get an idea**."* (Chris)

With regards to store environment and layout associations mentioned by customers, the attributes developed for the **pick-up point in Norwich** are what comes next: panoramic view of the store, spacious, freedom of movement, short journey, drives inspiration, showroom, bright and airy.

In addition, the characteristics associated with the **traditional store** are the following: time consuming, forced routes, full range product display, limited overview, stressing atmosphere.

Dimension of Communication & Advertising

In addition, customers were asked to share their opinion about the **communication and advertising** dimension of the pick-up point in relation to the traditional store they have visited. "Word of mouth", "social media and Facebook" but also "local newspapers" were the main means customers were aware of the launch of the new format. Interestingly, the location of the pick-up point played an important role in informing customers about the opening of the store since a number of them stated that they saw the store as they "passed by the road" or "came to buy in this little shopping area". Alternatively, they would not have known about the store which stresses the fact that communication was not extensive.

Namely, customers discussed the following factors that generated awareness about the **new store (i.e. pick-up point)** :

- *"I only came across **by accident** by noticing they were building the IKEA store as I was **passing** since it's my route to work, but honestly I **didn't see any marketing or advertisements about it**."* (Gosia)
- *"I've seen it through advertising in the **newspaper** but not in the local one of my hometown but in the **local newspapers** here and also from my **sister** but also because we **passed by the road and we see it**."* (Jennifer)

On the other hand, customers were informed for the existence of the **traditional format** either through "mouth to mouth" or just because "everyone knows it" in view of their strong "reputation", as it is supported by their answers depicted below.

- *"In other traditional IKEA stores mostly through **word of mouth and recommendation**."* (Jennifer)

Based on the selected customer responses in relation to communication and advertising, the attributes generated about the **pick-up point** are what comes next: word of mouth, social media, limited advertising, awareness generated thanks to popularity of location, poor communication of store's functionality, lack of ongoing communication.

Moreover, the **traditional store's** attributes were developed as follows: high awareness, strong reputation, word of mouth.

Dimension of Customer Experience

With regards to **customer experience**, customers of Norwich **pick-up point** feel that it is "calmer" and "not big time consuming", which seems to be a result of the way they perceive the store's environment and layout as mentioned earlier (i.e. smaller, easier). On the contrary, the **traditional format** made customers' experience feel like "out of control because it was so big" and more like an "adventure", which resulted in making customers feel that the store's approach was more impersonal in comparison to the pick-up point's. Thus, customers believe that the new format creates a "more personal" atmosphere and experience in relation to the traditional store:

- *"It (i.e. pick-up point) doesn't feel like a huge shopping experience it just feels something **local** where I can come pop in, have a rest, have a lovely meal, get what I want, ask the questions I want if I have any or not, something more personal rather than **impersonal** in a bigger scale (i.e. traditional format), just smaller."* (Lorraine)
- *"It's **smaller** here (i.e. pick-up point), it's more **intimate** coming in here, in the big store it is so **busy** and you feel more of a **number and here you feel more personal**."* (Jennifer)
- *"The whole thing (i.e. pick-up point) is more **relaxed**, and not **big time consuming**."* (Shaun)

In view of interviewees' responses, the attributes generated for the customer experience dimension of the **pick-up point** are the following: relaxing and smooth shopping experience, homey and cozy feeling, local feeling, inconsistent activities offered among store formats, duration spent in the store, personal approach feeling, do it yourself experience, meeting point with friends.

In addition, the attributes revealing the **traditional format** are what comes next: impersonal atmosphere, busy and crowded, overwhelming and time-consuming shopping experience, daily adventure and complex decision to visit the store.

Dimension of Extra Facilities

In relation to the **extra facilities** offered in the pick-up point store in comparison to the ones in the traditional format, customers were able to identify the majority of the facilities available but also recognize the variations between the two formats.

In the **pick-up point**, although customers mentioned about the existence of the "parking", they supported that it is "small" and "tricky to park near the store", as there is no "dedicated parking". Moreover, they appreciated the existence of the coffee shop even though it's "tiny", and enjoyed as part of their shopping experience to "come and seat with friends, have a chat and look around."

In comparison to the **traditional stores' facilities**, although they acknowledged they are more or less the "same", they, at the same time, identified their differences. First of all, the fact that the traditional store has "escalators" as it is split on "different levels", but also that it has a "restaurant compared to the little area here" (i.e. referring to the cafeteria of the pick-up point). Last but not least, they discussed about the "place for children to play" in which parents can "leave them for an hour".

- ▪ *"The facilities here (i.e. pick-up point) are **small**, the **parking is small**, **narrow** and the **little caf is tiny** whereas the **big restaurant** of IKEA were you can have a proper meal - here (i.e. pick-up point) is like a **sample** of IKEA. But they (i.e. pick-up point) have **toilets** etc. and it's good that they remembered about **kids** here."* (Gosia)
- ▪ *"In the traditional stores I always like that they had **a kids room**, to have **an hour where I could just go shopping without having the children with me**."* (Clare)

Regarding the responses of participants in relation to the extra facilities of the two formats, the characteristics/codes generated about the **pick-up point** are the following: smaller scale facilities, complicated parking, small cafeteria, toilets and kids interactive play area.

On the other hand, the attributes of the **traditional store** are the big dedicated parking, big kids' indoor play security area and the big restaurant.

Dimension of Location

Another important dimension of store image that customers commented is the pick-up point's **location** in comparison to the traditional store. Customers seemed satisfied with the selection of the pick-up store's area, as they said they "find that store easier" and that it is "more accessible" comparing to the traditional stores, which are "out of town". However, they accepted that "public transport is not so good", so it serves better customers who have a car.

In general, they perceived visiting the pick-up point in Norwich more a "door step" solution due to its closeness to their home, whereas the traditional store was perceived more like a "day trip" since they are "out of town, more in a bigger industrial type of area":

- *"The location of the traditional IKEA stores **are too far**, for Norwich are like **a day trip**, a couple of hours drive like a special occasion, whereas this one (i.e. pick-up point) is on the **door step**, you are more like to visit more instead of choosing elsewhere."* (Lorraine)
- *"This (i.e. pick-up point) one is a lot **easier** to come because of the **city center**, the one in Cardiff (i.e. traditional format) is a little **out of the way**, is in a big shopping district, is **not part of the main city center** but this (i.e. pick-up point) one is nice it's passed the high traffic area there are **a lot of stores nearby** that a lot of people come to for this business park."* (Andrew D.)

In relation to that dimension, customers additionally recognized that the pick-up point's location provided them with the opportunity to "combine it with something else" since the area surrounding the store has "other stores around".

Overall, customers' perception about the **pick-up point's** location created the following attributes: ability to combine visit with other obligations, easy access, shopping park, area's traffic congestion, convenient. Additionally, the **traditional store** is consider to have the following characteristics: complex accessibility, outskirts of the city center, long distance.

Dimension of Merchandise

Customers perceive the **merchandise** offered in the pick-up point and in the traditional store as "the same". They have a positive perception towards the products offered as they consider them as "very good" and of a "good quality". However, in view of the pick-up point's layout and its limited size (as described above), customers realize that "there is not that much to choose from" but also that "they don't have small stuff you can take away immediately" in contrast to the traditional format.

Therefore, as revealed from participants' responses, customers have a fairly consistent image about the products offered from both formats with which they are satisfied. At the same time, they are aware of the main things they believe are varying between the two types of stores.

- *"The difference in two stores is not in anything in the quality or in anything, it's just only in the **variety and fact that they** (i.e. in the pick-up point) **don't have small stuff you can take away immediately**."* (Jennifer)

In relation to the merchandise dimension, **both store formats** have a common attribute which is the quality products. However, the **pick-up points** are characterized by the limited product range presented and stock, the restricted items for immediate purchase, and the update and rotation of merchandise. On the other hand, the **traditional format** attributes are the full product assortment and the immediate purchase products.

Dimension of Price

Concerning the **price dimension** of the Norwich **pick-up point's** products, the associations customers generate are quite similar to the ones established for **the traditional store**. Specifically, customers believe that the prices are "cheap" and "very good" but most importantly "value for money", as shown in the below answers:

- *"I find the pricing **very good** in either stores, **very easy** to understand and **value for money**. The same exists for their services."* (Jennifer)

At the same time, customers recognize that visiting the **traditional store**, due to its location outside the city center as mentioned earlier, they have to "pay for fuel for getting there and back" which creates some additional transportation costs. Additionally, the **pick-up points'** order and collection service includes some fees for the orders' delivery in the store that customers perceive as "quite high if you order one item but if you order more items its better".

- *"The prices in the traditional shop you have to pay for **fuel** for getting there and back so it's **good value for money** here."* (Gosia)
- *"The prices here (i.e. pick-up point) for the **services of the delivery are ok for a large amount** of products but for a few itemsit's a bit strange."* (Lisa)

Following customers' associations and perceptions about the price dimension, the attributes developed about the **pick-up point** are the following: value for money, fair pricing, price ranges, high delivery fees for small order, in-store delivery costs.

Furthermore, for the **traditional store** the price attributes are what comes next: value for money, additional transportation cost, fair pricing.

Dimension of Extra Services

Regarding the **extra services** of the **pick-up point** in Norwich, customers seemed to be satisfied as they said it offers them "anything" they want. Precisely, they mentioned the "home" delivery option the store provides, the payment "by card or cash" and the ability for the "small and the big delivery" based on customers' amount of purchased. In relation to the after sales service, they like the fact that they can be suggested to certain "contact points" that will assist them with the installation of the furniture upon their delivery.

- *"Very **easy**, you can go to the desk, you can **pay by card or cash**, we find that (i.e. pick-up point) very easy and helpful, we paid the delivery charge and the delivery was scheduled at a certain time and they came on time and they were very helpful not problem, very good service."* (Jennifer)
- *"If I don't like it I can **return** it (i.e. in the pick-up point) because before I had to either order someone to collect it (and pay someone to do it) or go back to the store again."* (Lisa)

On the other hand, customers characterized the **traditional stores'** services as "self-service" since as they claimed that they had to do everything mainly by themselves. For example, they said you had to do "your owncheckout and you scan", but also to independently "wheel everything out" due to the fact that they normally "bought only quite small things".

- *"In the traditional stores, there was the **self-service**. You know you had **your own checkout and you scan**, and there will be **someone standing there** making sure you scan everything and you might have to bring the trolley."* (Joshua)

In summary, the attributes that are revealed through customers' opinion about the **pick-up point's** extra services include: suggested assistance for installation, payment options, order and fee alternatives, product return, home delivery, lack of availability of printed tools to navigate products.

On the other hand, the **traditional format** is characterized by the following attributes: autonomous product selection and collection, self-service product check out.

Dimension of Store's Personnel

The **store's personnel** of the specific **pick-up point** is perceived by customers as "helpful" and "friendly". Moreover, due to the fact that the store is "small", customers realize that this enables an easier "access" than in the traditional stores. In addition to that, customers receive a more "personal" approach since they might remember the staff they consulted during their previous visits.

- *"I feel it's **easier** to find somebody to ask here (i.e. pick-up point) that makes for me a huge difference."* (Clare)
- *"Very **helpful** here (i.e. pick-up point). Very nice in both stores but here (i.e. pick-up point) they got **more time to chat to you** whereas in the **big store are much busier**, and always there is (i.e. pick-up point) someone saying can you come here, can you help us."* (Jennifer)

In relation to the **traditional store's** clerk, customers noticed that, possibly, due to its large size and the high traffic nature of the stores (as explained in the layout's and customer experience dimension in sections earlier), it is "very hard to find somebody" and the staff seems "busier". Furthermore, due to the nature of the traditional store's purchases and self-service experience mentioned earlier, customers responded that they did not have any particular interaction with the staff, until they approached the "till" at the end of the journey.

- *"In the traditional IKEA I don't recall any interaction with the employees, **very busy and busier** and bigger than here (i.e. pick-up point). I remember that you have to **walk for a little bit before you see somebody** versus here (i.e. pick-up point) you can notice the stuff immediately."* (Gosia)
- *"In the big stores you **don't have that much contact with the personnel** until the moment you get to the teal (i.e. cashier)."* (Chris)

Based on the aforementioned store's personnel associations of customers, the developed attributes for the **pick-up point** are the following: helpful, accessible, personal approach, enhanced time availability on an individual basis.

On the contrary, the **traditional format** store's personnel features involve: busy, difficult to locate and approach, short interaction.

Dimension of Clientele

Last but not least, customers expressed their opinion on the dimension of **clientele**. In general, not a lot of differences were identified amongst the clients of the **two store formats** (i.e. pick-up point and traditional format). Namely, the profile of the people visiting both stores is perceived as "mixed" including both "families with children and older people". Regarding the status of the **pick-up point's** visitors, customers supported that they seem more "reasonably dressed" and with "a little bit more money". Moreover, in view of the size and the less traffic of the pick-up point, customers described visitors as more "relaxed".

Parallel to that, there were respondents who claimed that in the **traditional stores** they noticed "more couples", which didn't mean that young couples were not visiting the pick-up points, but the ratio in the traditional stores was bigger.

- *"I feel people here (i.e. pick-up point) are more **relaxed** than in the big ones. Maybe in the big shop its attracting **younger people mostly**, here (i.e. pick-up point) **it is very mixed**, a lot of **families** and **older people**."* (Clare)
- *"I think is a **wide range of people** here (i.e. pick-up point). I see here (i.e. pick-up point) **single** people like me, **couples, families with kids**. People here (i.e. pick-up point) look more **relaxed** because they are not trying to move on and they can pause around between everything."* (Shaun)

- *"I think it (i.e. pick-up point) has **a wide range**, it looks quite **diverse** it's difficult to put people in one category, you see people from **different ages and background**. In the **big IKEA it's just everybody** it's packed."* (Chris)
- *"I think people with **a little bit more money** might come **here** (i.e. pick-up point)."* (Lisa)

Taking into account participants' responses, the attributes linked to the dimension of clientele is the mixed profiling of customers, which is linked with both formats.

Moreover, in the **traditional format** the additional attribute developed is the large volume of younger audiences and couples, whereas in the **pick-up point** the attributes are upper-middle class status, families, older/ retired people, and relaxed.

4.3.3 Dimensions of Tromsø pick-up point

In this paragraph, by following the **same** ratio and **process explained for the Norwich pick-up store**, we demonstrate through customers' quotes our findings regarding the comparison between the Tromsø pick-up point's store image, and the traditional IKEA format. Furthermore, the type of questions we posed to customers during the interviews are not stated in each store image dimensions, as they were already presented at the beginning of this chapter. Finally, additional customers' quotes on pick-up points' store image dimensions can be found in Appendix 1.

Dimension of Store Environment & Layout

In terms of **store environment**, customers of the Tromsø pick-up point agreed that the format is "more welcoming" than the traditional IKEA store. Specifically, they often referred to the atmosphere of traditional IKEA shops with the word "stressful" and they identified the new pick-up point in Tromsø as "warmer".

In terms of **layout**, customers describe the Tromsø pick-up point as "smaller", "little shop" but with "more things in one room". Furthermore, they think the layout is not "forced to follow a route", when compared to the traditional IKEA store. Finally, customers tended to describe the new format as "not just a simple pick-up point".

- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) **smaller**, it's **more narrow**, it'skind of **warmer**, it's a **better atmosphere**. In the regular IKEA (i.e. traditional format) it's a **big warehouse** and you get a different feeling and in a way you are in way **forced to follow a route** to go through it...this (i.e. pick-up point) is much **more convenient** in that respect but on the other side the **selection is very small**..."* (Rolf)
- *"This is **not just a simple pick up point**. I used Elkjop that it's just a pick upstore, you order online and just pick up from there and if you are not happy you can return it there."* (Abul)
- *"I think it's **so clear here** (i.e. pick-up point). The big store offer too much and too many choices."* (Benedict)

Based on customers' insights, the attributes of the **pick-up store** characterizing its environment and layout dimension are the following: small and narrow store, warm and welcoming atmosphere, additional future to pick-up point concept, freedom of movement, IKEA feeling and panoramic view.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: big warehouse, cold and stressing atmosphere, forced routes, IKEA feeling.

Dimension of Communication & Advertising

With regards to this store image dimension, customers of the Tromsø pick-up store shared their concerns about the poor communication of the new format. Specifically, even though they received information about

the store through newspaper and, mostly, word-of-mouth, they were "not impressed by the marketing" and still wonder what benefits are offered by this new format. Furthermore, they believe that the new format is not yet well-communicated and integrated on the IKEA website, and that communication through local newspapers might have excluded foreigners living in Tromsø. In comparison with the traditional IKEA format, respondents recalled bigger opening events and expressed the feelings that "you just know about IKEA" because most people go there.

- *"I am **not impressed by the marketing** because I **only read it** (i.e. pick-up point) **in the newspaper** but I haven't got any other information. I am here to get this information about it, **could we save money by ordering it from this place?"** (Rolf)*
- *"When the **IKEA big stores** opened in Norway they **had a big opening** and people know about it."* (Bergljot)
- *"I think all **people know about IKEA** (i.e. traditional format) **because most people go to IKEA**."* (Jostein)
- *"Maybe people here (i.e. pick-up point), those who are native, read the newspapers and they understand that IKEA concept is coming, but for **foreigners maybe we don't read all these newspapers**... They (i.e. IKEA) **advertise more the big stores** (i.e. traditional format)... I knew a lot of **friends** who live here that they **didn't know about it (**i.e. pick-up poin*t)."* (Abul)

In view of participants' responses, the attributes of the **pick-up store** that characterize its advertising and communication dimension involve: anonymity, poor use of local newspaper and online channel, word-of-mouth and poor communication of store's functionality.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: bigger openings event, word of mouth, good advertising and high awareness.

Dimension of Customer experience

Regarding customer experience, respondents in Tromsø recall the IKEA feeling when visiting the new pick-up point. However, they also perceived the new format as "more like shopping" in comparison with the traditional format which was described as "an expedition". Furthermore, the traditional IKEA offers a more stressful experience which seems to be connected to the size of the store. However, customers of the new Tromsø store expressed complaints about the "waiting for orders" aspect of the pick-up point formula, which still seems to be not positively experienced by clients.

- *"It's (i.e. traditional format) more like **an expedition**. This (i.e. pick-up point) is **more like shopping**."* (Rolf)
- *"It's **much smaller** here (i.e. pick-up point) whereas in the **traditional store it's so much**, so many people **and it's stressful**."* (Benedict)
- *"The main problem here (i.e. pick-up point)...We **never get what we ordered**, before a long time after they promised...**How long I should wait to receive my order**?"[...] "In the traditional store it always been ok. Of course **sometimes they don't have what you want but usually they have it**. Here (i.e. pick-up point) you know immediately if they don't have it but yo**u have to wait until the order is delivered**."* (Jostein)

Based on customers' perceptions, the attributes characterizing the Tromsø **pick-up point** customer experience dimension are the following: local feeling, comfort, waiting for deliveries.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: busy and crowded, rewarding, overwhelming and time-consuming shopping experience, daily adventure & complex decision to visit.

Dimension of Extra Facilities

In relation to this dimension, customers in Tromsø expressed their appreciation for the smaller parking of the new format, which includes the loading place for pick-ups "right outside the door". At the same time, they evaluated positively also the "large" parking space of the traditional format. Furthermore, respondents identified the restaurants, snack bar, food store and bigger children playground as elements characterizing the traditional format extra facilities. Finally, the "use of the computers to order "inside the store was recognized as an extra facility of the new pick-up point.

- *"...**parking space is superb** because it's **right outside the door** (i.e. pick-up point). I really like the **sit down area because buying here is a process** because I think people here often buy bigger stuff here like kitchens, whole living rooms and then you need to sit down and **have your coffee**..." (Geo)*
- *"In the big store (i.e. traditional format) you have the cafeterias, **you can have a meal, you are invited to stay there for a longer time** because it's bigger." (Geo)*
- *"I think the facilities for **parking is good** and also **you can stop your car outside in this special entrance** (i.e. pick-up point) and you can easily pick up your things." (Bergljot)*
- *" They (i.e. pick-up point) have a **toilet**, there is a parking outside also **you can park close when you have to pick things** but also they don't have a play area but **they have this little thing for children** and it seems quite popular." (Maria, M.)*
- *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) you can **use the computer here to order**, I haven't seen that in the traditional IKEA." (Jostein)*

Based on customers' insights, the attributes characterizing the Tromsø **pick-up point** extra facilities dimension are the following: special loading spot for pick-ups, sitting area to reflect on purchases, small playground, toilets, visible computer order area.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next:big restaurant, facilities for longer stays, big dedicated parking and big kids' indoor play security area.

Dimension of Location

In terms of store location, customers of the Tromsø pick-up store claimed that it is "very central" and "easy to access". Furthermore, respondents also underlined the closeness of this new format with other stores that are usually visited by people of Tromsø. On the other hand, customers think that they need a car to reach IKEA traditional stores located "outside of the town". At the same time, they believe that "within one hour" distance they would still go to the traditional store because "you just go few times a year" there. Finally, they recalled and appreciated IKEA free shuttle service to get to the bigger store in Oslo, and also expressed some concerns about the "traffic jam" that a traditional IKEA format would generate in Tromsø.

- *"The location of this store (i.e. pick-up point) **is very central**, it's not far either you live in one part or the other part of town." (Morten)*
- *"**You need a car mostly to get there** (i.e. traditional store) so people mostly drive...but..if you wanna go to IKEA you can drive half an hour. **Within one hour I would still go because u don't go shopping often at IKEA** you just go few times a year." (Jostein)*

Based on customers' perceptions, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** location dimension are the following: very central/popular location, accessible, surrounded by other local shops.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: out of town, traffic generator, free shuttle (when applicable) and need of a car/bus.

Dimension of Merchandise

With regards to this dimension, consumers in Tromsø highlighted that the new format has the same products as the traditional IKEA stores but, "of course", the merchandise to see and touch is less. Furthermore, they miss the fact that it is not possible to buy anything without ordering in the pick-up point. However, they also realize that the store is "more like a showroom" with a limited display from where you can then order your goods.

- *"I accept that if you have a **pick-up point** and its smaller then you **can't have this great variety of things** to choose from and to look at, **to touch**... I think it'svery good but ofcourse I would like the store to be bigger... **But when I accept that it is a pick-up point I think it's ok** apart from the fact that it could have been organized better... the **products are similar to the traditional store** here."* (Geo)
- *"They (i.e. pick-up point) **do not have that many things here** but especially when you want **to buy a kitchen, bathroom or bedroom it's good**."* (Bergliot)
- *"The difference is that this one (i.e. pick-up point) is **more like a showroom**, you can have a look, you **can't buy anything**. That's the main difference but also the size it's much smaller."* (Bergliot)

Based on customers' insights, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** merchandise dimension are the following: IKEA style and quality, limited variety in store, focus on main rooms in the house, no products for immediate purchase, and wide variety of products to order.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: IKEA style and quality, full product assortment and immediate purchase availability.

Dimension of Price

Regarding to the price dimension, respondents characterized the two stores as "same" and "affordable". However, they expressed the particularity of the transportation fee which needs to be paid when collecting goods in the pick-up point. Specifically, this leads some customers to postpone their purchases until they think they have enough goods to justify the delivery price.

- *"IKEA offers a combination of a **low price combined with up to date merchandise** and that's excellent and the quality of certain items are quite good and this is the **same for both stores** (i.e. traditional and pick-up point)."* (Geo)
- *"The **only difference is the transport cost** they have (i.e. pick-up point) which is understandable but it's a problem if you want to go and buy some small piece. If you have a **big order is not a problem but if you want small things you have to wait**... My impression is that the prices in all IKEAS are the same..."* (Jostein)

Based on customers' opinions, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** price dimension are the following: affordable quality, bulk purchases, affordable modernity, in-store delivery costs, high delivery fees for small order.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: affordable quality, affordable modernity, small and bulk purchase.

Dimension of Extra Services

In terms of extra services, Tromsø pick-up point's customers appreciate what is offered by the store and define it as "a very good service". At the same time, they also positively recalled previous service experiences with the traditional IKEA format. However, they expressed the need for some extra services which might be neededin view of the characteristics of the new format (e.g. car trailers for pick-up to borrow, oil for wood). Finally, they seemed to have noticed more services in comparison to the traditional IKEA, such as availability of "extra screws or small things" in case something was lost.

- *"I need a plumber for the sink of the bathroom I will order and they offered me this service here (i.e. pick-up point)... that's a **very good service** because I was worried about it... I called IKEA and they helped me on this, they offered a plumber that they recommend. **In other IKEA stores I called them to ask for some things and they helped me."** (Bergliot)
- *"I ordered once before from this shop (i.e. pick-up point) and I got to know that **they have extra screws or small things if you have lost something** you can just come here and get it and that **felt very luxury** and I **didn't know about that before."** (Maria, M.)
- *"I think it (i.e. pick-up point) **worked fine** when we got to receive something **sent directly to the door**, otherwise it would be nice if they could have some trailers that you could borrow for free when you go and pick up. When I ordered a kitchen there were tiny details that were missing and **you needspecial equipment** (ex: oil for the wood) and I think **they would score very much if they could offer here a small assortment here** in the store to help you with instalment or if you miss something to provide it here instead of having to order again."* (Jostein)

Based on customers' insights, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** extra service dimension are the following: very good service, easy returns, available extra tools to borrow, and lack of basic equipment for customers.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are what comes next: very good service and low awareness of extra services.

Dimension of Store's personnel

With regards to this dimension, customers of the new pick-up point in Tromsø characterized the stuff as more pro-active and available than in the "busy" traditional IKEA stores. Furthermore, they felt that the smaller size of the pick-up point affects this dimension as it makes it easier to "contact" with the personnel". Finally, customers also underlined how in the bigger IKEA they tend to seek less help when they buy "small things" ,and they liked the attention they received in Tromsø pick-up point for more complicated items.

- *"In the **normal IKEA store you have to look for service** you have to ask for help and probably this is because they are two different concepts. When you go to **the big store you are more left alone** and you have to look for your stuff in order to get out. **Here** (i.e. pick-up point) **the stuff is more proactive.** Here you have opportunities to go around and look so it's more convenient here to ask the customers if they want any help."* (Rolf)
- *"In other **IKEA stores I wasn't too much in need of help because I was buying some small stuff** but **since I am going to buy some things for the bathroom I needed some advice here and they helped me** and I was very satisfied about it. I told my colleague that I am so amazed by IKEA they help me so*

*much and **Ididn't receive that help from other stores I visited** so I am very pleased by the help here (i.e. pick-up store)."* (Bergliot)

- *"It's **better service here** (i.e. pick-up point) **because it's smaller** and it's very easy to talk to someonewho works here. It's**very easy to contact with the personnel** here, they are very nice. They are **more busy in the traditional store.**" (*Maria, E.)

Based on customers' perceptions, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** personnel dimension are the following: easy to spot and accessible, proactive and available.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are busy and difficult to locate and approach.

Dimension of Clientele

In relation to the clientele dimension, customers of the Tromsø pick-up point noticed that there are more women, less family and fewer people in comparison to the traditional IKEA store. Finally, they expressed that people seem calmer in the pick-up point and they are interested in "complete solutions", such as a new kitchen or bathroom.

- *"I think **customers that visit this store** (i.e. pick-up point) **are more calm** compared to the traditional store that they are more busy."* (Maria, E.)
- *"**Maybe here** (i.e. pick-up point) **it's less family** than on usual IKEA **and its less people** here in general than in the big IKEA because people **maybe come to just pick things here.**" (*Maria, M.)
- *"I think **people here** (i.e. pick-up point) **are more about to change kitchen, bathroom** etc. In the **big store they are shopping more small things**… Here in this store (i.e. pick-up point) I can see **more women**."* (Benedict)

Based on customers' feelings, the attributes distinguishing the Tromsø **pick-up point** clientele dimension are the following: calm, looking for big products, orders collector, more women, and older/senior.

With regards to the **traditional format**, the attributes depicting this store image dimension are as follows: noisy, interested also in purchasing small products and mixed profiling.

4.4   New Dimension - "Customer Orientation"

In this section, we present the new store image dimension found through our study. Specifically, as previously mentioned, we have been encapsulating all codes (i.e. store image attributes) we found through the interview transcripts into the existing dimensions of our initial theoretical framework. However, some of the customers' perceptions we analysed, were not clearly linkable to any of the store image dimensions found in previous studies and, thus, could not be included in our initial theoretical model. Examples of these attributes are presented below:

- *"**Tromsø has been without IKEA for so many years** so when it (i.e. pick-up point) came, I think people were happy with this solution although it's not the same as the warehouse."* (Jostein)
  (New Attribute: Need fulfilment [e.g. Being where customers want you])

- *"They built this (i.e. Tromsø pick-up point) store here so **for people to buy a kitchen or bathroom or wardrobe it's much better to go here** and have a look and **have someone to help you decide** instead of looking at a catalogue especially when you want to buy a kitchen for example its difficult so I think that's a good thing."* (Bergliot) **(New Attribute: Facilitate complex purchasing decisions)**

- *"Another good point is that up to 90 kg they (i.e. pick-up point) give 490 NOK which is also good part and very nice. **When I want to buy some bed or something it cost a lot to deliver at myplace so I choose now to come to the pick-up point** (i.e. Tromsø) **in order to avoid the 2000 extra for the delivery** so now I have more options now."* (Abul) **(New Attribute: Complementarity with other format)**

- *"Nice things around (i.e. Norwich pick-up point) you and **dream**, go in the kitchen area and dream of having a nice kitchen, sit on the sofas and think I might buy that one day..."* (Joshua) **(New Attribute: Inspiration source)**

- *"We **purely come here** (i.e. Norwich pick-up point) **to order so we look for bigger items** but if we look for small items it would be nice."* (Chris) **(New Attribute: Reason to visit the store)**

After reflecting on the new attributes indicated in blue and analysing the possibility for them to be included in existing store image dimensions, we assumed and concluded that the above examples can all be related to a new dimension of image, namely, customer orientation.

Finally, as depicted throughout the analysis, in view of customers' store image associations on **the new pick-up point format, we were able to identify some unique characteristics of store image.** These characteristics are included in our new framework (Table 6) and some interesting examples can be found on Appendix 2.

4.5   Other Pick-up points Customer Experience

As we explained at the beginning of this chapter, during the customers' interviews we were asking participants to reflect on their IKEA's pick-up point experience in comparison to their reference point stores. Specifically, we asked interviewees to express their opinion on the pick-up point's stores image dimensions and to compare it with their perception of the IKEA's traditional stores, or possible other pick-up points they might have experienced (i.e. from other companies).

Through participants' insights, we realized that they either have not purchased from other pick-up points, or they have purchased mainly from Argos, TESCO or possibly some local furniture, electricity, grocery or clothing pick-up points. Customers claimed that the pick-up points they experienced were not comparable to the IKEA's pick-up points. **In particular**, they supported that the latter is like an actual store while the other pick-up points serve only the purpose of orders' pick-up.

To conclude, we realized that the comparison of the IKEA's pick-up point to customers' experience in similar types of stores was not providing any particular insights. For that reason, we did not include it in our revised model (i.e. our study outcomes).

4.6   Outcomes of Findings' Analysis

Following the above presentation of the process behind the generation of patterns and codes/ attributes representing customers' perceptions of both new pick-up points and the traditional format, we developed the following Table 6, which represents **our revised framework**. Specifically, in this model, we compiled the aforementioned pick-up points' unique attributes within the existing store image dimensions found in Chapter 2, as well as the characteristics of the IKEA traditional format that customers' used as their reference point. Furthermore, we added the new customer orientation dimension, as well as the attributes that can be grouped

into it, to the existing set of store image dimensions found in previous studies. Moreover, in view of our abductive approach and in order to present how our initial theoretical framework evolved with the findings, we added a **column showing the attributes found in our literature review**.

With regards to the instructions for the reader, highlighted in **orange colour** there are the common/similar attributes among the two pick-up points**.** Moreover, marked with a **red asterisk** are the attributes identified in both the pick-up point and the traditional format.

Finally, this table will be our base for the next section in which we will analyse the effect on store image of the pick-up point format development (i.e. research question), and also compare the possible differences and similarities among the two pick-up points (i.e. sub-research question).

Table 6: **Store Image - Our new theoretical framework**

DIMENSIONS	INITIAL Theoretical Framework attributes	NORWICH Pick-up point attributes	TROMSØ Pick-up point attributes	TRADITIONAL Format attributes
Store Environment & Layout	▪ Physical arrangements ▪ Design, symbols and colour variations ▪ Layout and atmosphere ▪ Quality of display	▪ Panoramic view ▪ Spacious ▪ Freedom of movement ▪ Short journey ▪ Drives inspiration ▪ Showroom ▪ Bright and airy	▪ Small and narrow store ▪ Warm and welcoming atmosphere ▪ Additional features to pick-up point concept ▪ Freedom of movement ▪ IKEA feeling* ▪ Panoramic view	▪ Time consuming ▪ Full range product display ▪ Limited overview (e.g. section by section journey) ▪ Big warehouse ▪ Cold and stressing atmosphere ▪ Forced routes ▪ IKEA feeling* ▪ Lack of facilitation of customer's decision inside the store
Communication & Advertising	▪ Communication activities/mediums ▪ Promotional activities (e.g. sales promotions) ▪ Displays of promotions	▪ Word of mouth* ▪ Social media ▪ Limited advertising ▪ Awareness generated thanks to the popularity of the location ▪ Poor communication of store's functionality ▪ Lack of ongoing communication	▪ Anonymity ▪ Poor use of local newspaper and online channel ▪ Word of mouth* ▪ Poor communication of store's functionality	▪ High awareness ▪ Strong reputation ▪ Bigger openings events ▪ Word of mouth* ▪ Good advertising
	▪ Unique happenings/events taking place in the store	▪ Relaxing and smooth shopping experience ▪ Homey and cozy feeling	▪ Local feeling ▪ Comfort ▪ Waiting time for deliveries	▪ Impersonal atmosphere ▪ Busy and crowded ▪ Overwhelming and time

Customer Experience		▪ Local feeling ▪ Inconsistent activities offered among store formats ▪ Limited duration spent in the store ▪ Personal approach feeling ▪ Do it yourself experience* ▪ Meeting point with friends	▪ Need satisfaction postponement (e.g. postpone purchases until the shopping list is enhanced)	consuming shopping experience ▪ Daily adventure & complex decision to visit ▪ Rewarding (e.g. you find what you look for) ▪ Do it yourself experience*
Extra Facilities	▪ Extra services that facilitate consumers in their store experience (e.g. parking and elevators) ▪ Cafeterias, restaurants or the option of a bistro ▪ Opening hours	▪ Smaller scale facilities ▪ Complicated parking ▪ Small cafeteria ▪ Kids interactive play area ▪ Relaxing area for break during shopping* ▪ Toilets*	▪ Special loading spot for pick-ups ▪ Sitting area to reflect on purchases ▪ Small playground ▪ Toilets* ▪ Visible computer order area	▪ Big dedicated parking ▪ Big kids indoor play security area ▪ Big restaurant ▪ Toilets* ▪ Facilitates longer stays ▪ Relaxing area for break during shopping*
Location	▪ Store's accessibility (e.g. travelling time, parking, transportation means availability) ▪ Store's area of operation (e.g. urban vs. suburban)	▪ Ability to combine visit with other obligations (e.g. go to another shop nearby) ▪ Easy access ▪ Shopping park ▪ Area's traffic congestion ▪ Convenient	▪ Very central/popular location ▪ Accessible ▪ Surrounded by other local shops	▪ Outskirts of the city center ▪ Long distance ▪ Complex accessibility ▪ Traffic generator ▪ Free shuttle (when applicable) ▪ Need of a car/ bus
	▪ Quality of products and services ▪ Product assortment and portfolio (merchandise	▪ Quality products* ▪ Limited product range presented and stock ▪ Restricted items for	▪ IKEA style and quality* ▪ Limited variety in store ▪ Focus on main rooms in the house	▪ Quality products* ▪ Full product assortment ▪ Immediate purchase products ▪ IKEA style and quality*

Merchandise	mix) ■ Product style ■ Unique products ■ Private labels ■ Contemporary assortment (style /fashion)	immediate purchase ■ Update and rotation of merchandise	■ No products for immediate purchase ■ Wide variety of products to order	
Price	■ Pricing strategy (i.e. competitive prices, value for money, price range)	■ Value for money* ■ Fair pricing (e.g. in relation to the market)* ■ Price ranges* ■ High delivery fees for small order ■ In-store delivery costs	■ Affordable quality* ■ Affordable modernity ■ High delivery fees for small order ■ Bulk purchases ■ In-store delivery costs	■ Value for money* ■ Additional transportation costs (e.g. gasoline) ■ Fair pricing (e.g. in relation to the market)* ■ Price ranges* ■ Affordable quality* ■ Affordable modernity ■ Small and bulk purchases
Extra Services	■ Payments procedures and options (e.g. credit policy) ■ Dispatch and delivery alternatives (e.g. home shipment) ■ Option for product return (e.g. merchandise return services) ■ Post transaction assistance (e.g. guarantee) ■ Self-service option for	■ Suggested assistance for installation ■ Payment options ■ Order and fee alternatives ■ Product return ■ Home delivery ■ Lack of availability of printed tools to navigate the products	■ Very good service* ■ Easy returns ■ Available extra tools to borrow ■ Lack of basic equipment offer for customers (e.g. oil for kitchen's wood)	■ Autonomous product selection and collection ■ Self-service product check out ■ Very good service* ■ Low awareness of extra services

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	customers			
Store's Personnel	▪ Quality of personnel's assistance (i.e. level of customers service offered by the store's clerk) ▪ Product demonstration	▪ Helpful ▪ Accessible ▪ Personal approach ▪ Enhanced time availability on an individual basis	▪ Easy to spot & Accessible ▪ Proactive ▪ Availability	▪ Busy ▪ Difficult to locate and approach ▪ Short interaction
Clientele	▪ Characteristics that form store image are compatible with the way consumers perceive themselves (i.e. consumers show their ideal self-image through shopping and store selection) ▪ Clientele (i.e. social class and demographics) ▪ Consumer's imaginations and expectations	▪ Mixed profiling* ▪ Upper-middle class status ▪ Families ▪ Older/ retired people ▪ Relaxed	▪ Calm ▪ Looking for big products ▪ Orders collector ▪ More women ▪ Older/senior	▪ Mixed profiling* ▪ Large volume of younger audiences and couples ▪ Noisy ▪ Interested in purchasing small products as well
➔ Customer Orientation (New Dimension)	▪ Not found in previous literature	▪ Inspiration Source (e.g. customers can visualize and dream how their kitchen will look like) ▪ Reason to visit the store (e.g. for bigger items)	▪ Need fulfilment (e.g. being where the customer wants you) ▪ Facilitate complex purchasing decisions ▪ Complementarity with other format*	▪ Complementarity with other format*

4.7   The effect on store image of new format development – The answer to the RQ

In order to answer our research question (i.e. *"How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?"*), we compared the attributes illustrated in the above table. Specifically, for each store image dimension, customers' perceptions (i.e. codes developed through the interviews' transcriptsanalysis) of the IKEA traditional format, which was the respondents' reference point during each interview, were compared with their opinions of the new pick-up point format (i.e. Tromsø [Norway] and Norwich [UK]).

Thus, with regards to the **store environment and layout** dimension, Table 6 shows how the new pick-up points significantly altered customers' perceptions in relation to the traditional format. In fact, besides the "IKEA feeling" that remained consistent with the new format's environment and layout, all the other customers' perceptions for the new pick-up points are contrasting those of the IKEA traditional format. For example, while consumers' perceive the new pick-points environment and layout with attributes such as "freedom of movement", "warm and welcoming experience" and "short journey", their comparison with the traditional format resulted in opinions such as "forced routes", "cold and stressing atmosphere" and "time-consuming", which indicated that customers felt overwhelmed in the traditional format.

Moving on to the **communication and advertising** store image dimension, Table 6 shows how the new pick-up points are perceived in this sense as "anonymous", while the traditional format is considered well-known and well-advertised. Thus, besides the attribute of "word of mouth", which remained consistent with the new format, the effect on the communication and advertising dimension of format development seems to be negative.

Regarding the **customer experience** dimension, Table 6 shows a positive effect on store image of the new pick-points. Apart from the shared attribute labelled as "do it yourself experience", the traditional IKEA format is perceived differently when compared to the experience offered by the new pick-up points. In fact, customers perceive the new format as a "relaxing" and "local" experience, while the traditional format, despite being "rewarding" since customers can always find what they are looking for, is seen as "overwhelming" and "time consuming".

In relation to the **extra facilities** dimension, Table 6 shows that the new pick-up points resemble the facilities offered in the traditional format but are perceived as smaller. Specifically, this means that the facilities of the traditional IKEA store allow longer stays for customers. Finally, it is important to underline that clients of the new pick-up points appreciate the availability of a "special loading spot for pick-ups", and that they easily spot and use the computer order area.

With regards to the **store location** dimension, our updated framework (Table 6) shows that effect on store image is significant. In fact, when comparing the traditional format with the new pick-up points, customers did not express any similarities between the two types of stores. Specifically, the traditional IKEA store is perceived as a "traffic generator" and located in the "outskirts", which implies the need of car/bus. On the other hand, the new pick-up points are considered as "very central", surrounded by other "local" shops, and allowing the combination of the visit with other obligations.

Regarding the **merchandise** dimension, customers similarly perceive both the new format and the IKEA traditional store. However, Table 6 shows how the effect of the new pick-up point on store image is characterized by the perception of a more limited assortment in the new stores, by the clear focus on more

complex products (e.g. kitchen, bathrooms), and by the restricted or absent availability of products to purchase and bring immediately home from the pick-up points.

In relation to the **price** dimension, respondents equally perceived both the traditional store and the new pick-up points (i.e. value for money). However, customers' clearly underlined that the only and significant difference is the in-store delivery cost in the pick-up points, and the subsequent high delivery fee for small orders.

With regards to the **extra service** dimension, customers believe that an excellent service characterizes both the new pick-up points and the traditional IKEA format. However, Table 6 shows that the new pick-up point format developed an increased customer awareness of the extra services in comparison to the IKEA "blue box". Furthermore, respondents underlined how products' returns are perceived as an easier process in the new format, and how they can borrow tools for their products' installations.

Moving on to the **store personnel** dimension, the effect on store image of the new pick-up points is evident. In fact, customers perceive the staff of the traditional IKEA store as "difficult to locate and approach", "busy" and only available for "short interaction". In contrast, they perceive the personnel of the new pick-up points as "easy to spot", "accessible", "proactive" and with a more "personal approach", which results in an "enhanced time availability on an individual basis".

In relation to the **clientele** dimension, customers noticed a certain consistency between the two formats, in the sense that mixed profiles are recognized in both store types. However, respondents underlined how in the new pick-up points they noticed older, calmer and less "noisy" people, with somehow a higher social status, and a bigger ratio of the female gender. Furthermore, they described the clientele as people looking for bigger products (i.e. kitchen), or simply visiting the store to collect their orders.

Finally, regarding the **new dimension** that we labelled as **customer orientation**, customers expressed the feeling of "complementarity", which characterized their perception of the stores under investigation. Moreover, for the specific pick-up points, respondents underlined that they finally find IKEA to be where they wanted (i.e. need fulfilment), and that these stores help them better in the buying process of bigger products (i.e. inspiration source for buying kitchens and wardrobes). Thus, as already mentioned, the new dimension represents the result of a combination of attributes that could be included in some of the existing dimensions, but that can be better grouped in the overall respondents' perception of increased "customer orientation" of the new format.

Having analyzed the content of Table 6, which represents the outcome and revision of our initial theoretical framework we built from previous literature, **we can now summarize the answer to our research question** "*How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?"*. Based on Table 6 and the above discussion, we feel confident to state that the effect on store image of the new pick-up point format is positive, significant, and it is clearly shown by our new model (i.e. outcome of our study). In fact, despite some unchanged store image attributes, such as "IKEA feeling" or "value for money", several store image dimensions (e.g. Store location, Store personnel, Customer experience, Store Environment and Layout) are now perceived by clients of the pick-up point in a very different way. Furthermore, even for those dimensions that respondents similarly perceived in the pick-up points and in the IKEA traditional format (e.g. price), our revised framework shows how consumers underlined the presence of in-store delivery fee, which make them perceive the pick-up points as stores to buy bigger products, or order more than one item. Finally, a major effect of the new format development is represented by the new customer orientation

dimension, which, as already mentioned, resulted in perceiving the pick-up point and the traditional IKEA format as complementary.

To conclude, the outcome of our study (i.e. Table 6) shows that when a retailer introduces a new format, new dimensions and attributes might arise. Specifically, the introduction of the new pick-up point format generated in the home furnishing sector a new dimension, which combines a number of attributes that could be included simultaneously in a number of existing dimensions found in previous literature, but, at the same time, are not clearly bounded to any of them. In our opinion, this could be explained by the fact that existing literature on store image is built around the traditional formats and, consequently, it does not completely fit new and innovative stores. In fact, besides the new dimension and unique attributes found with our study, several store image attributes perceived by the pick-up points' customers confirm what found in previous literature, but they also show unique features that traditional retail formats did not evoke in customers' minds.

4.8 Answering the Sub Research Question

Following the answer of our main Research Question presented and discussed above, we are going to review the findings depicted earlier in the revised framework we developed, in relation to our sub research question. Specifically, our sub question is *"Are there any similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between two different versions of pick-up points?"*. In order to answer this question, we examined and compared the dimensions, and the respective attributes (i.e. codes) that were generated from customers' insights acquired during the data collection in the pick-up points in Norwich (UK) and Tromsø (Norway).

As we already mentioned in Chapter 3, the study was conducted in the format of pick-up points and, specifically, in two different types of pick-up points operating in the home furnishing industry, and belonging to IKEA company. Although both stores are part of the same new format under investigation, they have a number of similarities and differences that were presented in detail in the methodology section, and are related to their layout, facilities offered, merchandise and others (see section 3.3.1). In view of those variations, our aim was to examine whether they have an impact on the store image attributes generated from a customer's point of view.

- To begin with the **store environment and layout** dimension, it is important to highlight from Table 6 that customers in both stores acknowledged the fact that the layout inspires "freedom of movement", and gives the opportunity to walk around the store based on their needs and wants. In addition, as it is depicted in our new framework, customers in both pick-up points realized that despite the "small and narrow store" size, and the "short journey" inside the store, the store's environment gave the perception of a different offering with "additional features to pick-up point concept" that is often viewed as a "showroom". However, as we notice in the revised framework, customers in Tromsø supported that the pick-up point's environment has the "IKEA feeling" whereas in the Norwich store they asserted that the pick-up point "drives inspiration". Thus, we can assume that despite the two different, but not contrasting mentioned associations, customers perceive the environment and layout of the two stores **in a similar way**.

- In relation to the **communication and advertising** dimension, Table 6 depicts that customers evaluated the communication delivered by the two stores as "poor" since they recognized that they were not promoted that much during their launch, and they got mainly informed through "word of mouth". Linked to that, the table shows that customers did not characterize the information of the stores' functionality as adequate either (i.e. "poor communication of store's functionality). Interestingly though, customers in Norwich claimed that they realized the existence of the store by either passing by or visiting the specific shopping area (i.e. "awareness generated thanks to popularity

of the location"). To conclude, there are **no differences** between the way customers perceive the specific dimension **apart from the fact that** the popularity of the location played an even more important role in Norwich, in letting the customers know about the store.

■ With regards to the **customer experience** inside the pick-up point stores, Table 6 shows that both similarities and differences are observed in customers' store experience associations. Specifically, both stores are linked to a "relaxing and smooth shopping experience" that offers customers' "comfort" during their stay in the store. Accordingly, both stores' customers associate the stores with a "local feeling" and atmosphere. Nevertheless, customers in Norwich recognize that their in-store experience has a "personal approach feeling" that makes them feel "homey and cozy". This can be a possible result of the next unique attribute of the specific pick-up point, which is the fact that they perceive the store as a "meeting point with friends", where they can chat, relax, have a coffee, and look around. On the other hand, Tromsø's customers feel that sometimes they have to face "need satisfaction postponement" due to delivery charges and, consequently, delay their purchases until their shopping list is enriched. Likewise, customer experience in Tromsø store is also labelled with "waiting time for deliveries". To sum up **apart from some main similarities** regarding the feeling attribute of the store, we assume, based on the table's data, that the customer experience dimension **of the two stores is different**.

■ Regarding the **extra facilities** dimension, both stores' customers identified a number of common attributes related to the two stores, namely the "small playground", the "relaxing area for break during shopping", and the "toilets", as it is highlighted in Table 6. At the same time, customers in Norwich acknowledged the existence of a "small cafeteria", which is not available in the Tromsø store, but also the "complicated parking" availability. On the other hand, Tromsø clients recognized a "special loading spot for pick-ups", which facilitate them during their collection process in contrast to the issue on the specific matter in Norwich. In conclusion, the two stores have **some main differences** in the store image attributes formulated with respect to the specific dimension.

■ The attributes associated with the **location** dimension of the two pick-up points reveal several similarities, as presented in the Table 6. Customers perceive the two stores as "accessible" and located in a "shopping park", which justifies that they perceive them as "very central/ popular location". These associations resulted in another common attribute customers developed, which is the "ability to combine visits with other obligations" and the fact that they are "surrounded by other local shops". Thus, clients can visit IKEA pick-up point in combination with other possible shopping they might need to do. Finally, one main difference is the "area's traffic congestion" that Norwich customers associated with the specific pick-up point. To sum up, there are **no great dissimilarities** in location's store image attributes.

■ Although both pick-up points' customers' characterized the **merchandise** dimension of the stores with "limited product range presented and stock", we observe that there is a difference on the remaining features they linked to the two stores. Specifically, as we notice on Table 6, one main difference is the "restricted items for immediate purchase" that customers recognized in the Norwich pick-up point. This option was not available in the Tromsø store since customers do not have the opportunity to directly purchase something, but they have to order it first. Additionally, people visiting the Norwich store realized that there is a frequent "update and rotation of merchandise" in the store. On the other hand, Tromsø customers claimed that the merchandise of the pick-u point has an "IKEA style and

quality". Based on the aforementioned differences, we can conclude that the attributes associated with the merchandise dimension of the two stores are **contrasting**.

- In relation to the **price** dimension's attributes, they are perceived the same in both stores as we can conclude from the Table 6. In particular, both stores' customers identified that the stores offer "value for money" and "affordable quality" products. Moreover, both stores have "in-store delivery costs" since people have to pay to order and collect their products from the pick-up points. Linked to that, they also characterized the pick-up points with "high delivery fees for small order", as they supported that the fee was quite expensive when they wanted to buy a small number of products. On the other hand, regarding the dissimilarities among the two store's attributes of price, Norwich store has the feature of "fair pricing" in relation to other offerings in the market. Parallel to that, a different attribute that was generated for Tromsø, is the "affordable modernity" since customers acknowledged that they could buy modern and stylish products at affordable prices. In conclusion, the vast majority of the price dimension attributes **are the same despite the small mentioned differences**.

- One common attribute connected with the **extra services** dimension of the two pick-up points is the option of "product return". Apart from that, customers have identified varying characteristics among the two stores. Specifically, as we observe in Table 6, Tromsø pick-up point has the unique attribute of "available extra tools to borrow" that assist customers in the installation of their furniture. Moreover, the "lack of basic equipment offer for customers" is another characteristic customers noticed when parts of their order was missing, or when they were in need of extra equipment (i.e. oil for the kitchen furniture) and wanted to avoid making an order again. On the other hand, customers in Norwich acknowledged the feature of "suggested assistance for installation". In particular, customers were able to ask for experienced personnel in case they needed help for the furniture installation. In conclusion, although the basic services can be found similar, the extra services offered from each store **are considered dissimilar**.

- In relation to the **store's personnel** dimension, we could clearly notice from the Table 6 that there are not big variations among the two pick-up points. Both stores' customers characterized the stores' clerk as "accessible" and with enhanced "availability" in view of the store's nature and smaller layout. Parallel to that, some differing attributes that we could highlight, are the "personal approach" that Norwich customers experienced from the store's staff, and the "easy to spot" personnel that customers in Tromsø were able to identify whenever they needed assistance. Overall, we can say that there are **both similar and different attributes** associated with the store's personnel dimension of the two stores.

- With regards to the **clientele dimension**, we can detect from Table 6 that both stores' customers characterize the profile of the stores' visitors as "older". In relation to the mood of the visitors, they perceive it as more "relaxed" and "calm". However, customers in Norwich recognised that the visitors' profile of the specific pick-up point is also "mixed", with a lot of "families", and with an "upper-middle class status". On the other hand, Tromsø's respondents noticed that the main reasons people visited the specific store was due to the fact that they were looking for "big products" or they were "collecting their orders". Thus, the two stores have **both similar but also different** store image attributes in relation to the respective dimension of clientele.

- Last but not least, as discussed earlier, through our data selection we identified a number of attributes that were not clearly classifiable in any of the existing dimensions found in the literature. For those

attributes, we generated a new dimension named **"customer orientation"**. As we highlight from the Table 6, the attributes **among the two stores are different**. Specifically, customers in Norwich tend to link their visit to the store (i.e. attribute "reason to visit the store") with the nature of their purchases. In particular, their aim is to buy bigger items for which they need advice for the planning process (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms). However, customers in Tromsø focused more on the claim that they have been expecting IKEA for several years, and they are finally satisfied by the pick-up point solution. Thus, linked to that, the attribute "need fulfillment (i.e. being where the customer wants you)" was generated. In addition, Tromsø store is also characterized by the "complementarity with other format" feature, which is linked to the fact that customers can now satisfy their need to purchase and pick-up furniture at a lower cost than the home delivery option, or the long drive to the traditional format.

In conclusion, the reason we compared the two pick-up points is to understand if there is a difference in the way customers perceive the new format through two different versions of pick-up points.

Based on Table 6 and the above analysis, we conclude that the two pick-up point stores generate **both similarities and differences in customers' minds**. This is attributed to the fact that both stores are pick-up points offered by the same retailer, and both serve the same purpose of the new format, which is to order and collect products from a store that is placed near the city center. At the same time, the two pick-up points are different due to the fact that they are two dissimilar types of stores with variations in their facilities, services, and merchandise, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. In conclusion, in view of the above review of the stores' image attributes, we realize that the dimensions that tend to be **similar** among the two stores are the store environment and layout, communication and advertising, location, and price. Moreover, the dimensions essentially **different** are the extra facilities, merchandise, customer experience, customer orientation and extra services. Finally, the dimensions that have **an equal share of similarities and differences** are the store's personnel and clientele.

5   CONCLUSIONS

In the last chapter of our study, we summarize the whole process that allowed us to answer our research and sub-research question. Furthermore, in addition to our conclusions, we discuss the theoretical contributions and managerial implications of our research. Finally, we present the limitation of the study and provide recommendations for future research.

5.1   "Looking back" & Conclusions

Our thesis focused on **exploring the effect on store image of new format development**. Accordingly, in **Chapter 1** we depicted the background and problematization of our topic to provide readers with information on the field of the issue under investigation. Specifically, we described the themes of retail growth strategies with special focus on format development. Moreover, we presented the link between format development and the wider phenomenon of multi-channel practices in the retail sector. In line with that, we depicted the background of the pick-up point format antecedents and the possible effect on image of this type of customers' touchpoint. Consequently, we offered an extensive overview of the concepts of image and its components (i.e. product, store and company image). We conclude the discussion of the areas of literature relevant to our topic by explaining the problematization of our study. Specifically, **we argued** that when retailers confront transitions such as the development of new and innovative stores (i.e. pick-up points in the home furnishing sector), **each single store format generates a different store image** and, thus, the attributes created by customers should be investigated. For this argument, through the support of previous researchers,

we demonstrated that current literature is strongly tied to traditional formats and to the grocery sector. Accordingly, previous studies could not exclude the possibility that new and unique store image attributes could be developed by consumers visiting the new pick-up point stores in the home furnishing sector. In view of our problematization, we presented our purpose to evaluate and compare the effects on store image of two different versions of the new pick-up point format, recently launched in the home furnishing retail sector. Accordingly, our research and sub question were depicted as follows:

- **RQ:** *How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?*
- **Sub-question:** *Are there any similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between two different versions of the new pick-up points?*

Following the above introduction, **in Chapter 2** we selected the tools available from the literature that could help us in building an initial theoretical framework to conduct our study. Specifically, we focused on reviewing related studies on the concept of format and its development. Moreover, as already mentioned, we linked the establishment of new formats to the fact that retailers are engaging in multi-channel strategies, which can result in new store formats such as the pick-up points under investigations. Accordingly, previous studies on pick-up points were reviewed in order to clarify why the new stores in the home furnishing sector differ from what existed in the past. In the next stage, store image was identified as the empirical instrument of our study, which was then extensively reviewed. Specifically, this lead to the development of our temporary theoretical framework, which included all store image dimensions and attributes found in previous studies, from Martineau (1958) up to recent years. Hence, existing attributes were also reviewed and we concluded the chapter by explaining how previous studies measured store image, and underlining which of those methods would be discussed in our methodology section.

In Chapter 3, we explained the research philosophies affecting our methodology (i.e. interpretivism, social constructionism and pragmatism), as well as our abductive research approach and case study strategy. Furthermore, we presented in detail the methods we chose for the data collection (i.e. documentation, direct observation, and video elicitation in combination with semi-structured interviews), our study time horizon (i.e. cross-sectional design), the procedure employed for the data analysis (i.e. three steps model with a hermeneutic approach), the limitations of our methods and the ethical and political considerations. Importantly, throughout each section of our methodology chapter, we discussed the link between our choice and purpose of the study.

Finally, **in Chapter 4**, presented and analysed the empirical data and findings we collected through the combination of video-elicitation technique and semi-structured interviews, which had as a starting point our initial theoretical framework. Specifically, the findings were indicated through customers' quotes representing their perceptions of the Norwich and Tromsø pick-up points' store image, in relation to the traditional IKEA format. Based on that, and in line with our abductive approach, we generated a new framework with additional and unique store image attributes and dimensions, which depicts and highlights the contrast between the image of the two pick-up points and the traditional IKEA store. Hence, in line with the purpose of our study, we describe the effect on store image of the new pick-up point format development, and answered our research question. Furthermore, the same framework was used to underline the possible store image variations produced by the implementation of two different versions of pick-up points, and thus enabled us to answer our research sub-question.

Having reviewed the various steps we followed in this study, we are now going to present our conclusions.

The aim of our study was to explore and understand the possible effects on store image of a new format development. In view of the fact that previous literature mainly focused on traditional formats and, particularly, on the grocery sector, we decided to focus our research on a new and innovative store format (i.e. pick-up points) that was launched in 2015 in the home furnishing sector. Specifically, what made the new pick-up point format unique, is the combination of its characteristics (see "Arguments for the case study" at section 3.3.1) that resulted in a new and distinctive type of store for consumers. Accordingly, in line with previous literature studies that describe store image as sector and format dependent, we recognized the need to study the new format with "new glasses". Specifically, we decided to discover the effect of format development on store image with the help of an abductive approach and qualitative methodology. In fact, previous findings were neither unquestionable nor fully transferrable to the new format that we studied. Specifically, this is proven by the analysis of pick-up points' customers' perceptions that resulted in our revised theoretical model presented in Chapter 4. In particular, retailers launching a new pick-up point in the home furnishing sector (i.e. IKEA was selected for our case study strategy) generate a significantly different image for their customers, which could not be depicted by simply deducting the store image attributes from previous literature. In fact, **our new framework** shows that on a deductive point of view, all previous findings on store image dimensions are confirmed with the implementation of the pick-up point format. However, at the same time, our findings prove that the general store image dimensions are perceived in the new format with unique characteristics that could not be depicted by simply testing previous theories. Furthermore, our new model includes new store image attributes only linked to customers' perceptions of the new pick-up point format and, thus, not identifiable for traditional retailing stores. Finally, it also includes a new dimension (i.e. customer orientation) that is the most evident result of the new format development and its effect on store image depicted from our study. In fact, although it could be argued that the new customer orientation dimension combines a number of attributes relatively linkable to a number of existing dimensions found in previous studies, at the same time, those attributes are not clearly bounded to any of them. On the contrary, when they are encapsulated within our new dimension their fit is clearer, and better explains the result of the effect on store image of the development of new pick-up point format. In our opinion, this is due to the fact thatexisting literature on store image is built around the traditional formats and, thus, it does not clearly depict the image of new and innovative customers' touchpoints.

To conclude, the answer to our **research question** (i.e. "*How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' store image?*") is that the effect on store image of the new pick-up point format is positive, and it is evidently depicted by our new theoretical model (i.e. outcome of our study). Moving on to our **sub-research question** (i.e. *"Are there any similarities or dissimilarities in terms of store image attributes between two different versions of pick-up points?"*), we managed to find an answer by examining and comparing the dimensions and the respective attributes generated from customers' insights collected in the pick-up points in Norwich (UK) and Tromsø (Norway). Although both stores were part of the same new format under analysis, our new theoretical framework (i.e. outcome of our study) shows that significant differences can arise in customers' perceptions of the new pick-up point format. This might be attributed to the fact that the two stores were introduced with varying characteristics. Specifically, **we conclude** that different versions of pick-up point stores generate both similarities and differences in customers' minds. In fact, although the two pick-up points are offered by the same retailer (i.e. IKEA) and they both serve the purpose to allow customers to order and collect products from a store located nearby the city center, our new framework (i.e. outcome of our study) explains that variations in their facilities, services and merchandise generate different store images. In detail, the dimensions that tend to keep similar customers' perceptions are store environment and layout, communication and advertising, location, and price. On the

contrary, the dimensions that tend to be differently perceived by customers are the extra facilities, merchandise, customer experience, customer orientation and extra services. Finally, the dimensions that tend to have an equal share of similarities and differences are the store's personnel and clientele.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

Our findings enhance the understanding of the effect on store image of new format development. Specifically, our study contributes by developing a new store image framework that identifies the unique customers' perceptions of the recent and innovative pick-up point format launched in the home furnishing sector. Furthermore, our model highlights the contrast between the store image of the new format and the traditional store. Thus, it manages to explain the effect on store image of the development of new pick-up points store by a retailer which always relied on traditional store formats. Moreover, by comparing two different versions of pick-up points, our research provides a unique contribution in relation to store image attributes' variations within a single new format. Overall, our study can be considered relevant in view of retailers' recent attempts to pursue growth through multi, cross and omni-channel strategies, which are now resulting in the development of new store formats. In addition, our new theoretical framework confirmed our assumption that the way consumers develop store image vary across sectors and store formats and, thus, literature findings related to the traditional stores and grocery sector cannot clearly depict the store image of new and innovative formats. Finally, despite the fact that our study focused on the home furnishing sector, we believe it manages to increase the understanding of new format development's effects on image in the whole retailing industry, since the pick-up points stores we investigated might be easily implemented in other sectors.

To conclude, thanks to the abductive approach and qualitative methods applied in our study, we managed to confirm to a certain extent previous store image findings (i.e. **deduction**). Specifically, this is supported by the fact that all store image dimensions were also perceived by customers of the new format. On the other hand, new and unique attributes within existing store image dimensions were found through our qualitative methodology, which aimed to give importance to the deeper insights and perceptions expressed by customers, instead of relying on numbers that we assumed do not really fit a subjective and complex topic as store image. In detail, this was possible by using all previous findings as a starting base framework (i.e. abduction), which was then openly discussed with customers of the pick-up points. Accordingly, this allowed to **inductively** generate unique store image attributes and, also, a new relevant dimension (see Findings and Analysis in Chapter 4). Thus, the overall result was a new store image framework that offers a clear contrast (i.e. effect on store image of new format development) between the store image of the new pick-up points, and that of the traditional format. Finally, our new model also underline the contribution of our study by offering the comparison with what previous literature have found in relation to traditional store formats.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications. Specifically, the store image attributes and dimensions perceived by customers of the new pick-up point format can be used by retailers to improve these elements and develop stronger and unique store associations. Furthermore, our findings can be useful for retailers planning to adopt the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing sector and, to an extent they need to test, in the retailing industry. In detail, managers responsible for brand image and format development, but also practitioners of retailing, can benefit from identifying through our framework how their store image could be affected by the adoption of pick-up points, and what type of associations consumers develop. Moreover, by looking at the comparison of the two pick-up point formats and the highlighted similar and different attributes we showed through our revised model, they could benefit by understanding the effect on store image through the practice of two different versions of pick-up points and, thus, take respective actions.

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To conclude, in view of retailers' tendency towards multi- and omni-channel practises, our research findings can help managers to take strategic decisions and actions when engaging in format development and, therefore, assist them in ensuring that the new format image is expressed as intended and meets customers' expectations.

5. 4   Limitations of the study & Future Research Recommendations

Besides the methodology limitations discussed earlier in Chapter 3, in this section we will present the *limitations* of our study's findings but also provide readers with *recommendations for future research*. To begin with, even though we were able to answer both the research question and sub research question, we acknowledge that the study has a number of possible limitations.

The **weaknesses of our study** are mainly linked to the **qualitative nature** of our research. Our choice to use a qualitative method was proven appropriate to answer our research question since we studied the complex phenomenon of store image in view of the practice of a new format. Thus, we managed to gain deep insights on customers' perceptions and consequently describe the effect on store image. However, since our study was conducted **on a single new format** of the home furnishing sector (i.e. IKEA pick-up point) and, specifically, it focused on two different types of pick-up point stores, it is not possible to generalize the knowledge produced to other sectors, despite the fact that we compared two different country markets (i.e. Norway and United Kingdom). In view of that limitation, further research could focus on studying other pick-up points of the same case study, or even of different companies operating with a similar format. Furthermore, a study could be also implemented in other sectors that operate with pick-up points to identify the effect of the new format on store image. Specifically, **future researchers** could explore whether the findings of our study are relevant to other cases by quantitatively and deductively testing our new theoretical framework.

Another weakness of this research, since our focus was on collecting customers' perceptions until data enabled us to reach theoretical saturation, is the fact that the sample size of our study was limited comparing to the volume of participants of a quantitative study. Moreover, since our discussion was based on customers' verbal insights collected during interviews, the way findings were analysed and led to conclusions was influenced by the processes we adopted as researchers. This indicates that, despite our efforts to meet the confirmability criterion of research trustworthiness, the interpretations of participants' claims and the generation of codes/ attributes were, to a certain extent, **influenced by our own abilities and ways of thinking**. Furthermore, although during the interviews we were asking customers to express their opinion about the pick-up points' store image in relation to their own reference points (i.e. traditional IKEA store or possible other pick-up points from other companies), **we were not able to collect insights in relation to other pick-up points experience**. This is ascribed to the fact that not all customers have engaged in purchasing from other pick-up points. Linked to that, customers could not make any comparison with the examined pick-up points since they were perceived differently from other pick-up points in the market. Therefore, future studies could be conducted on markets where the new format is practised by more companies.

In addition, another uncontrolled limitation is attributed to the novelty of the two pick-up points we investigated. In particular, although we selected customers based on a specific number of criteria to meet our research purpose, and we utilized video-elicitation to reinforce their in-store experience, we realized that **customers have not yet established an extensive knowledge of the new format**. Consequently, in view of the newness and nature (i.e. home furnishing sector) of the store, customers had limited repeated visits. Thus, future research could examine customers who have repeatedly purchased from a pick-up point (or a new format), in order to assure that they have established a holistic overview of the process, and functionality of the pick-up point. Moreover, future studies might explore the effect of the pick-up point on store image from a

management point of view to verify whether there are variations between real and intended store image. In addition, another recommendation is to investigate the effect of a new format on brand image, in order to examine the extent of the effect of a new format on the overall image of the company. Last but not least, further studies could also be conducted on the way a new format complements with an existing established store since we found, through our analysis, that customers perceived the pick-up point as a complement solution with the traditional format.

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7 APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Other examples of customers' perceptions on pick-up points' store image dimensions

1.1. Norwich (UK)

Dimension of Store Environment & layout

- *"If you go to the big store you gonna be there **for an hour or two** and it's a **big thing**."* (Shaun)
- *"It (i.e. pick-up point) seems more **spacious** and **friendlier** everything is **not cramped**...This (i.e. pick-up point) type of store feels **right to me**. I think it (i.e. pick-up point) gives enough information you can **picture** the things in your own home." "It (i.e. pick-up point) is **inviting**, its **airy**, it's **very light**."* (Lorraine)
- *"I would describe this (i.e. pick-up point) as **bright, airy, easy to get around**."* (Andrew, 54)
- *"Everything is more **compact** here (i.e. pick-up point) than in the other one, although still similar (i.e. with the traditional format) in the way that you travel through the store and there is **a kind of journey in it**."* (Gosia)
- *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) is a bit more **relaxed**, the big IKEA can be quite overwhelming but is good, I love the big IKEAS but this one (i.e. pick-up point) seems more **relaxed** and **calmer** and **nice atmosphere**."* (Chris)
- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) a **small version** of the IKEA store **without the stress** of two hours of shopping. It's a **mini me IKEA here**."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Communication & Advertising

- *"I only saw (i.e. pick-up point) on the **internet**, **social media and Facebook**."* (Lorraine)
- *"It (i.e. pick-up point) was mostly through **mouth to mouth** communication and because I knew IKEA from Germany I was looking around to find them because I could find things there (i.e. traditional format) that I couldn't find in the traditional English shops."* (Clare)
- *"I don't recall knowing this store (i.e. pick-up point) opened until I saw it when I came to buy in this **little shopping area**."* (Andrew, 54)
- *"...But with the traditional IKEA **everyone knows it**."* (Gosia)
- *"For the traditional stores, it's sort of **reputation** I suppose."* (Joshua)

Customer of Experience

- *"The experience here (i.e. pick-up point) is that is **nice and light**, and I find it (i.e. pick-up point) **pleasant** to come here, and it's **calmer**."* (Clare)
- *"I didn't like the big ones, it made me **aggressive**, I felt **overwhelmed**, I felt **out of control** because it was so **big**, I couldn't decide now I go here (i.e. in the traditional format)..."* (Clare)
- *"It's more like a **home kinda feeling** here (i.e. pick-up point)."* (Lorraine)
- *"The other (i.e. traditional format) feel is like an **adventure** day out in IKEA big store, whereas here (i.e. pick-up point) is a smaller place."* (Gosia)

- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) a little bit **warmer**, it's **relaxed**, it's quite a nice place to come, it has nice lighting, nice things around you and **dream**...go in the kitchen area and dream of having a nice kitchen."* (Joshua)
- *"I love they (i.e. pick-up point) have a **coffee shop** you can come and seat and **come and seat with my friend, have a chat, look around**."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Extra Facilities

- *"The parking here (i.e. pick-up point) is a bit **tricky to park** near the store here if it's on a busy day there is no dedicated parking for this store (i.e. pick-up point), whereas in the big store they have **a dedicated parking** and the **escalators** to go in the store."* (Andrew D.)
- *"The **toilets** (i.e. in the pick-up point) are very nice because in England a lot of stores do not have toilets."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Location

- *"Coming here (i.e. pick-up point) I could **combine** it with something else, so I found the location very good because it's **on the ring road so I can just pop in**. The traditional stores are **outside in shopping centers so it wasn't easy accessible**."* (Clare)
- *"I think here (i.e. pick-up point) is very good because it's **on route to many motorways and also to the city**. It's (i.e. pick-up point) not in the city but it's located in a beautiful **industrial park** also with the M&S food hall so it's ideal for me because I travel through here. Traditional IKEA are located **outside bigger agglomerations**."* (Gosia)
- *"The location of the traditional IKEA they **are out of town**, more in a **bigger industrial type of area** but generally fairly easy to get in and the parking is very good, although the distance for me is quite away."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Merchandise

- *"The products **are fairly the same** between the two stores."* (Clare)
- *"**Very good**, the **standard** of them they **don't look cheap**. They look **good quality**, there is **variety**, **choices**, steady furniture (i.e. IKEA in general). Comparing to the traditional IKEA I think **they** (i.e. pick-up point) **are the same**."* (Lorraine)
- *"The things you get here (i.e. pick-up point) are **limited** in the amount of **stuff they can stock**."* (Joshua)
- *"**Fewer products** here (i.e. pick-up point) than in the big store."* (Joshua)
- *"Being **smaller** (i.e. pick-up point) there is **not that much to choose** from but that doesn't mean you can't have them because you can order them."* (Andrew D.)
- *"I wouldn't have thought that the products are different from here (i.e. pick-up point), **the same thing**, there might be a **bigger range** (i.e. traditional format) but if you know what you are looking for..."* (Shaun)
- *"It would be nice if they (i.e. pick-up point) could have **some more products for the small market they have to purchase immediately**, like cutlery and plates but I haven't seen anything like that like more everyday things like glasses etc."* (Chris)

Dimension of Price

- *"**Good** they (i.e. pick-up point) are roughly on part with everything else, I think the prices are **very good** and they tell you exactly what you will pay for each product they do not mislead you, everything is clear. Comparing to the traditional IKEA store are same they **are roughly the same**."* (Lorraine)
- *"I think in general the prices (i.e. in the pick-up point) are **very fair** and I **don't think they are different from the big IKEA**."* (Andrew D.)
- *"The prices here (i.e. pick-up point) are **really good** in this store, you got the **range** of the cheap and the expensive ones."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Extra Services

- *"I understand that they (i.e. pick-up point) have **people, contact points** to help you **install** your orders."* (Clare)
- *"**Anything I want to they have** (i.e. pick-up point), I can **pay by card**, they are going to deliver it, job done."* (Shaun)
- *"It's good that we can **come and order and then it goes home** because I don't want to come back again so it's nice that I can have them sent to my home."* (Chris)
- "I think it is **adequate** for the store because it got the **small and the big delivery**, I think they did a good job, I don't have any complaints." (Lisa)
- "In the big stores I had to **wheel everything out** but still there was **help** if you wanted." (Gosia)
- "In the traditional IKEA I don't remember anything about the services because **we bought only quite small things**." (Andrew D.)
- *"I think it would be **easier to have a better catalogue system** because you have the ipad that you can look at in the store but sometimes they are not working and we faced some problems. **Any printed media would be useful**."* (Andrew D.)

Dimension of Store's Personnel

- *"They (i.e. in the pick-up point) are very good we've only been a few times but every time we asked for some help they were **very helpful** and particularly the staff in the cafeteria."* (Andrew D.)
- *"They (i.e. in the pick-up point) are very **helpful** and because they are **in a small area they are accessible**."* (Andrew, 54)
- *"Because it's **smaller** here (i.e. pick-up point), I've only been here a few times but still I can recognize some of the same stuff, it feels smaller and **a bit more personal**."* (Lisa)
- *"In the traditional store, you **never found anybody**, it was very **hard to find somebody**, they were **very short**, **very abrupt** and it was different to here (i.e. pick-up point) which **when you need help there is someone to help you**."* (Clare)
- *"The employees in the big IKEA were the same and there wasn't very hard to find them because they were wearing yellow t-shirts."* (Andrew D.)
- *"In the big IKEA you **turn your head 5 degrees to see a member staff**, you just don't know where they are, not anything wrong with their attitude, **it's just too big to identify them**."* (Andrew, 54)
- *"In the traditional IKEA I felt **there wasn't as may accessible stuff** because the shops are big whereas here (i.e. pick-up point) **you can see someone straight away**."* (Lisa)

Dimension of Clientele

- *"It seems that there's **a lot more families here** (i.e. pick-up point) and their kids are calmer, they can play, they can touch things here, it's a more friendly environment for children for families here. When I went to the **big IKEA I saw more couples**."* (Lorraine)
- *"I think initially when they opened the store (i.e. pick-up point), **I saw all profiles** because all people where interested to see the store and it was **mostly families**. In the bigger ones I remember **families as well**."* (Gosia)
- *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) you can find a lot of people, you get **a lot of people over 40**, a lot of **retired people**, whereas in London (i.e. traditional format) you get a lot **more younger people**. But there are **young people here** (i.e. pick-up point) **just married**."* (Jennifer)
- *"I think here (i.e. pick-up point) you tend to **see quite a lot of young families** coming to the store but also see quite a **lot of people in their 50s** that are drawn to this kind of furniture because they want something a little bit new and fresh in their house. IKEA appeals to **a wide range of people**."* (Andrew)
- *"Most of the people you see at this store (i.e. pick-up point) are **reasonably dressed** and there is something at this store that attracts these kind of people."* (Andrew, 54)
- *"I thinks it's (i.e. pick-up point) a **good mix across the board**."* (Lisa)

1.2. Tromsø (Norway)

Dimension of Store Environment & Layout

- *"The moment you get in the store (i.e. pick-up point) **you can see its IKEA**…"* (Rolf)
- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) quite open, you kind of **feel welcome**, you feel **invited**… it's a **little shop** and they have to show a lot so then maybe they put **more things in one room** whereas in the **usual IKEA** they do not put those things together because they have **more space**."* (Maria, M.)
- *"I think this is (i.e. pick-up point) a good one, it's a **common environment** here, it's **not stressful here**"* (Morten)

Dimension of Communication & Advertising

- *"**I don't think they** (i.e. pick-up point) **communicated well** that is actually much cheaper to use this pick up point comparing to ordering it and getting your products arriving at home with their trucks."* (Geo)
- *"About the **big IKEA stores** I was informed through media and you **just know about IKEA**."* (Maria, E.)
- *"I think it (i.e. pick-up point) was **quite anonymous the communication**. Not that many people knew about it, **I knew about it because I like IKEA and I was searching for it**."* (Maria, M.)
- *"About the communication of the **traditional IKEA**, because I have just been on the usual IKEA that **have been there for a lot of times…so it's a normal thing to have IKEA there**."* (Maria, M.)
- *"I didn't know about this (i.e. pick-up point) store... I **heard from friends** about this store."* (Benedict)
- *"I read about it (i.e. pick-up point) **in the newspaper**… But I haven't heard about this (i.e. pick-up point) since last summer, so **maybe it should be more advertised**."* (Morten)
- *"It (i.e. pick-up point) was not turning up online, you still **cannot choose Tromsø online** because it's not a warehouse. But **I think they failed**. But we got a lot of **information through newspapers and the media** that's how we knew it (i.e. pick-up point) was coming... I was **a bit disappointed online.**"* (Jostein)

Dimension of Customer Experience

- *"I have a good experience in both stores. In the **big stores it's more crowded** but **here** it's **very comfortable**."* (Maria, E.)

Dimension of Extra Facilities

- *"In the big stores **they have a restaurant** you get something to drink and you can get a wine, beer and also they (i.e. pick-up point) **have a kind of snack bar in the exit**."* (Bergljot)
- *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) it's very nice also with the **small playground**, it's **very important** that they have it."* (Maria, E.)
- *"**You can eat** and have a coffee, you can **sit down and relax** and they (i.e. traditional format) have a **bigger playroom**."* (Maria, E.)
- *"It (i.e. traditional format) has a **restaurant**. They also have the **IKEA food store**. For example now I am a little bit hungry, it would be nice to walk and just buy a little thing but **they** (i.e. pick-up point) **can't have everything I understand**."* (Maria, M.)
- *"I saw a **loading place** outside (i.e. pick-up point) but not yet noticed much."* (Morten)
- *"They (i.e. traditional format) have a **large parking space** and good parking facility. They also have **restaurant** which seems to be part of IKEA."* (Abul)

Dimension of Location

- "*The traditional stores usually are in the **outside of the town** and it's **easier to access for me** for example that **I have a truck** or with a bigger car*." (Morten)
- "***It's** (i.e. pick-up point) **not** far for people in Tromsø* now, but if they open **a normal warehouse** it **will create traffic jam** and we are interested in that because we live here so **you don't wanna be late to work because of IKEA** but apart from that we like to have IKEA close." (Jostein)
- *"The **location is good** because it (i.e. pick-up point) is very **close to the big mall** here and there are a **lot of people going through the area** during the day and especially on Saturdays."* (Rolf)
- *"This (i.e. pick-up point) location is **pretty good**, I live pretty close to and also because it's **near a lot of other stores** so a lot of people come here."* (Bergliot)
- *"In IKEA in Oslo (i.e. traditional format) **is very easy to get** because they have their own **shuttle bus for free** every half an hour."* (Bergliot)
- *"In Tromsø (i.e. pick-up point) it's **very easy to come** because Tromsø it's not so big as Oslo so it's very easy to come here."* (Maria, E.)
- *"I think it was about time to open an IKEA here so North. It **wasn't difficult for me to come here** (i.e. pick-up point)."* (Benedict)

Dimension of Merchandise

- *"Maybe **I miss that you can't buy anything**, you can't buy a little food thing or something like that so it's a part that I miss (i.e. in the pick-up point). Ofcourse **it's much less products to see here** (i.e. pick-up point) than in the usual IKEA (i.e. traditional format), ofcourse I miss that **but I understand that this is a good alternative** until the usual IKEA come here."* (Maria, M.)
- *"The same but **not too much here** (i.e. pick-up point), not too many choices...the **same products but less choices** here... I don't like it when there are too many choices, I don't agree with myself."* (Benedict)

- *"You **can order everything** here (i.e. pick-up point) its **only about the display that is limited**, so it doesn't bother me much because I know most of the products from online or from being to other warehouses (i.e. traditional format) **sometimes you miss to see what you are buying** but for me it's not a problem its working fine."* (Jostein)

Dimension of Price

- *"The prices are the **same** (i.e. pick-up point) **with the traditional IKEA store**... I decided to buy more things because they told me that in order **to order and pick-up the things here I had to pay 500 NOK and you have to be lower than 50 kg so that's why maybe I need some more stuff** and maybe it's a good thing if you want to sell things to people."* (Bergliot)
- *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) I can **wait until my list is full to order** and pay 500 NOK for the delivery."* (Abul)
- *"The prices are **affordable** (i.e. pick-up point) comparing to other pick up points and comparing to the traditional IKEA the **prices are the same**."* (Morten)

Dimension of Extra Services

- *"**Very good service** (i.e. pick-up point), **we had to send back some kitchen** chairs and it was **very easy**. And now we need to change some textile for the sofa and it was very easy... **I prefer this one** (i.e. pick-up point) **for the service** comparing to the big store."* (Maria, E.)

Dimension of Store's Personnel

- *"**I haven't bought that much from IKEA before like we have done here in Tromsø,** so maybe I have met the personnel more here (i.e. pick-up point) than in other IKEAS (i.e. traditional format) **because otherwise I just bought small things** but when I moved in Tromsø we bought bigger things... **Maybe they have more time here because it has less people**."* (Maria, M.)
- *"They are fine here (i.e. pick-up point) I asked some questions **I got clarified so it was fine**. The **traditional IKEA its more crowded so I need to find someone** to talk to whereas here I can just look around and I see that this one is talking to this client and after I can talk to them, **it feel here (i.e. pick-up point) they are more available**."* (Abul)
- *"The people who work here (i.e. pick-up point) have a good time for me when I come here... **They have more time here comparing to the other IKEA** stores (i.e. traditional format)."* (Benedict)

Dimension of Clientele

- *"**People** here (i.e. pick-up point) are coming in **looking for a new kitchen, bathroom, wardrobe**, there aren't so many people and **it's much more quiet**."* (Bergliot)
- *"I think **here** (i.e. pick-up point) more **people**...come here and they **need a complete solution** maybe in **other physical stores they need more small things**. Here (i.e. pick-up point) they come to see some things and buy larger things. If they want to buy cutlery they go to the traditional stores. In **the traditional is mostly a mix of customers**."* (Abul)
- *"In **the traditional store** I noticed young people, **younger couples** just starting their family."* (Morten)

Appendix 2 - Additional customers' quotes on the unique store image attributes generated from the research findings

- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) **easy to jump from one point to another** and you can go back and find what you were looking for."* (Shaun) **(New attribute: freedom of movement → Existing store environment & layout dimension)**

- *"Which is nice to have that freedom of movement to go to where you want (i.e. in the pick-up point) and also to what you want to do, but sometimes (i.e. in the traditional store) you do want to kinda pop to a different section and you **kinda have to wait till the end**, unless you got a list and you may have forgotten one thing you may have to go right to the top at the back of the warehouse to find something else."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: forced routes → Existing store environment & layout dimension)**

- *"**Calming experience.**"* (Joshua) & *"**Warm and happy experience.**"* (Jennifer) & *"Nice and **relaxed** customer experience."* (Chris) (i.e. pick-up point) **(New attribute: relaxing shopping experience → customer experience dimension)**

- *"**Parking is difficult** as it's **not specific** to the store (i.e. pick-up point) and not always available"* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: complicated parking → Existing extra facilities dimension)**

- *"In the big store they have a **dedicated parking** and the escalators to go in the store. Which is important if you have large packages here and you have to load it to your car you are not guaranteed you are going to get a parking next to the opening there is no pathway."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: big dedicated parking → extra facilities dimension)**

- *"**Poor location due to traffic problems in the area** (i.e. pick-up point)."* (Chris) & *"Here (i.e. pick-up point) this location is very very **busy**, its fine to park but..the Warrington location (i.e. traditional store) was easier to drive in, to approach, easier to get things in the car. Here (i.e. pick-up point) is a **busy little area** because there are 5 - 6 quite popular stores around but it's typical Norwich."* (Andrew) & *"This (i.e. pick-up point) isn't the best location because it's on a particular **busy road** so especially in the mornings **traffic** or in rush hour this is a notoriously bad road in Norwich, in a really **bad traffic area**."* (Chris) **(New attribute: area's traffic congestion → Existing location dimension)**

- *"On opening (i.e. pick-up point) the advertising was good but **since then I have heard seen no advertising**"* (Lisa) **(New attribute: lack of ongoing communication → Existing communication & advertising dimension)**

- "Only in the **opening** (i.e. pick-up point) there was a unique happening, event. **Some activities not offered to the Norwich store.**" (Lisa) **(New attribute: inconsistent activities offered among store formats → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"...but still is interesting to get **inspiration** (i.e pick-up point)."* (Gosia) & *"Nice things around (i.e. pick-up point) you and **dream**, go in the kitchen area and dream of having a nice kitchen, sit on the sofas and think I might buy that one day..."* (Joshua) **(New attribute: inspiration source → customer orientation dimension)**

- *"It feels a little bit more **bespoke** almost coming in here (i.e. pick-up point) like it doesn't feel like a big department store, it feels a little bit **more bespoke product than a mass produced**."* (Joshua) **(New attribute: local feeling → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"It's more like a **home kinda feeling** here (i.e. pick-up point). I live in Norwich and IKEA here (i.e. pick-up point) is one of my favorite local stores it **doesn't feel like a huge shopping experience it just feels something local** where I can come pop in, have a rest, have a lovely meal, get what I want, ask the questions I want if I have any or not, something **more personal rather than impersonal**."* (Gosia) **(New attribute: homey and cozy feeling → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"It (i.e. pick-up point) doesn't feel so **claustrophobic**, it's a bit more **open you can see one end of the store to the other**."* (Lisa) **(New attribute: panoramic view → Existing store environment & layout dimension)**

- *"It (i.e. traditional format) made me aggressive, I felt overwhelmed, I felt **out of control** because it was so big, I **couldn't decide now I go here or there**."* (Clare) **(New attribute: lack of facilitation of customer's decision inside the store → Existing store environment & layout dimension)**

- *"In the store (i.e. pick-up point) with the people in the yellow you **clearly see who is IKEA** and who isn't, it's very easy to work with, and a place you can **see where the stuff are**, they are very helpful and because they are in a small area they are **accessible**."* (Andrew) **(New attribute accessible → Existing store's personnel dimension)**

- *"They are often **very busy** in the big stores."* (Lisa) & *"You just **don't know where they are**, not anything wrong with their attitude, it's just **too big to identify** them (i.e. in the traditional format)."* (Andrew) **(New attribute: difficult to locate and approach → Existing store's personnel dimension)**

- *"Because we **didn't know what to do next** (i.e. in the pick-up point). So we found some stuff that we liked and questioned what do we do now there **was not any clear instructions** and we kind stand around looking a bit lost and it took us 10-15 minutes to actually tell someone if they can help. So it **wasn't clear what was the procedure**."* (Chris) **(New attribute: poor communication of store's functionality → Existing communication & advertising dimension)**

- *"It's (i.e. traditional format) sort of **reputation**."* (Joshua) & *"**Everyone** knows IKEA."* (Lisa) **(New attribute strong reputation → Existing communication & advertising dimension)**

- *"You **don't feel you have to quickly rush in and out** (i.e. in the pick-up point), you can take a bit more time, everything is here, if you plan to do something major like a kitchen you can take a bit more time, **have a drink and see someone**."* (Lorraine) & *"I like in the big stores that the **restaurants are half way the experience** so you can have a **rest there and then carry on**."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: relaxing area for break during shopping → Existing extra facilities dimension)**

- *"...But it does take all day so here (i.e. pick-up point) **it's nice I can pop in for an hour**."* (Lisa) **(New attribute: limited duration spent in the store → customer experience dimension)**

- *"Coming here (i.e. pick-up point) I could **combine it with something else**."* (Clare) & *"If you have families there is no much time so you need to **use your time wisely**."* (Clare) **(New attribute: ability to combine visit with other obligations → Existing location dimension)**

- *"Make (i.e. the pick-up point) you feel **not like a number a very comfortable** shopping experience."* (Jennifer) **(New attribute: personal approach feeling → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"Can **recognize some of the same stuff**, it feels smaller and a bit **more personal**. (i.e. pick-up point)"* (Lisa) & *"It is so **busy** and you **feel more of a number** (i.e. traditional format) and here (i.e. pick-up point) you feel more **personal**."* (Jennifer) **(New attribute: personal approach feeling → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"...so **convenient** (i.e pick-up point)."* (Joshua) **(New attribute: convenient → Existing location dimension)**

- *"Have **small stuff you can take away immediately** like kitchen things, towels, sheets, utensils and choices and these are the things that people take without thinking they see them and they say that's nice and they put it in the trolley."* (Jennifer) & *"**Everybody likes to take home something to feel like they were shopping**. (i.e. referring to the lack of items for immediate purchase in the pick-up point)"* (Lisa) **(New attribute: restricted items for immediate purchase → Existing merchandise dimension)**

- *"I think it would be easier to have **a better catalogue system** because you have the i-pad that you can look at in the store (i.e. pick-up point) but sometimes they are not working and we faced some*

*problems. **Any printed media would be useful**."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: Lack of availability of printed tools to navigate the products → Existing extra services dimension)**

- *"It's (i.e. pick-up point) a good selection especially **if they change it regularly which I found out they do**."* (Lisa) **(New attribute: update and rotation of merchandise → Existing merchandise dimension)**

- *"...and **we don't have problems putting it together ourselves** that's **part of the experience**, you kinda building your room and you are **proud of your achievement**."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: do it yourself experience → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"The **delivery charges are quite high** (i.e. in the pick-up point) **if you order one item but if you order more items its better** because you have the limit of kg and amount of products under a same price."* (Chris) & *"Variation on delivery prices instead of flat rate!"* (Chris) **(New attribute: high delivery fees for small order → Existing prices dimension)**

- *"In the big store I recall the same but **it's mostly a day out**."* (Andrew D.) **(New attribute: daily adventure → Existing customer experience dimension)**

- *"We **purely come here** (i.e. pick-up point) **to order so we look for bigger items** but if we look for small items it would be nice."* (Chris) **(New attribute: reason to visit the store - New customer orientation dimension)**

- *"In northern Norway **we have been expecting IKEA** to settle here for many years, today we have to drive in the northern part of Sweden ,**we have to drive like 10 hours to go to the closest traditional IKEA** store."* (Rolf) **(New attribute: need fulfillment [e.g. Being where customers want you] → New customer orientation dimension)**

- *"I read about it[pick-up point] in the newspaper and **I think a lot of people in Tromsø is waiting for the big traditional store to come**. I think this store it's a nice place to come here and order and display some of the products."* (Morten) **(New attribute: Complementarity with other format → New customer orientation dimension)**

- *"The products they offer in the usual store and the pick-up points are the same but not too much here, not too many choices. The same products but less choices here. **I don't like it when there are too many choices, I don't agree with myself**."* (Benedict) **(New attribute: Complementarity with other format → New customer orientation dimension)**

Appendix 3 - Interviews' Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Research Interview

Subject: How store image if affected by the adoption of new formats

I agree to participate in a research project conducted by Researchers Irene Grimani and Alfredo Privitello from Lund University in Lund, Sweden. This interview is part of the Master Thesis of the researchers with the topic of "How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' Store Image?" which is going to be conducted in two IKEA's pick-up points in Tromsö (Norway) & Norwich (UK). I understand that the purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed. Moreover, I understand that the study is designed to gather information about store image characteristics from a consumer's point of view.

Profiling Questions:

Name: Age:

Sex: ☐ Female   ☐ Male   Nationality:

Job status:.

Family status: ☐ Married / Attached   ☐ Single   ☐ Divorced

Children: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Which IKEA stores you have visited:

Do you have a car? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

What is your net monthly income (in euros)? (Voluntary):

☐ <1000 ☐ 1000-2000 ☐ 2001-3000 ☐ 3001-4000 ☐> 4000

Consent's Details:

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to withdraw from the interview.
4. Participation involves being interviewed by two researchers from Lund University. The interview will last approximately 45-50 minutes. I allow the researchers to take written notes during the interview. In addition, I allow the recording (by audio tape) of the interview and the subsequent dialogues that will take place. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I entitled to withdraw from participation.
5. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by full name (only the first name) in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by Lund University. For research problems or questions regarding the research project, the participant may contact the researchers (please see contact information below).

7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form and the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____

Participant's Printed Name

Appendix 4 - "Proof" of participation in Research Interview

Participation in Research Interview

Subject: How store image is affected by the adoption of new formats

I agree to participate in a research project conducted by Researchers Irene Grimani and Alfredo Privitello from Lund University in Lund, Sweden. This interview is part of the Master Thesis of the researchers with the topic of "How does the new pick-up point format in the home furnishing retail sector affect consumers' Store Image?" which is going to be conducted in two IKEA's pick-up points in Tromsö (Norway) & Norwich (UK). I understand that the purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed. Moreover, I understand that the study is designed to gather information about store image characteristics from a consumer's point of view.

For further information, please contact:

- Researcher Irene Grimani, Master Student at Lund University
  [e-mail: gib15igr@student.lu.se, mobile: +46 076 202 98 07]

- Researcher Alfredo Privitello, Master student in Lund University
  [e-mail: gib15apr@student.lu.se, mobile: +44 745 667 2713]

Appendix 5 - Table of store image dimensions adapted for interviewees

Initial theoretical framework utilized during the interviews & adapted to meet all customers' language and understanding:

| TABLE OF STORE IMAGE ATTRIBUTES |

DIMENSION CHOICE	DIMENSIONS	CHARACTERISTIC CHOICE	CHARACTERISTICS/ATTRIBUTES	POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
**TABLE OF STORE IMAGE ATTRIBUTES**				
INSTRUCTIONS: Choose from the below list the dimensions and then characteristics/ attributes that in your opinion best characterize this pick-up store (circle your choice)				
PARTICIPANT'S NAME:				
	Store environment & Layout	_ _ _ _	_Physical arrangements (e.g. easy to find what you are looking for) _Design & decoration (e.g. symbols and color variations) _Atmosphere (e.g. warmth enviroment) _Quality of display (i.e. products well placed and presented)	
	Communication & Advertising	_ _ _	_Ways/mediums of communication activities (i.e. adverstising) _Types of promotional activities (i.e. sales promotions) _Displays (i.e. products on offers are well communicated and presented)	
	Customer Experience	_	_Unique happenings/events taking place in the store	
	Extra facilities	_ _ _	_Extra services that facilitate your store experience (e.g. Parking, toilets, elevators) _Cafeterias, restaurants or the option of a bistro _Opening hours	
	Location	_ _ _	_Limited travel time to visit the store _Available transportation means to visit the store _Parking availability	
	Merchandise	_ _ _ _ _ _	_Quality of products _Product assortment and variety _Solution for gifts _Product style and uniqueness _Modern assortment (e.g. stylish & fashionable) _Branded products options	

	Price	– –	_Price range (e.g. kitchen available from low to higher prices) _Competitive prices (i.e. value for money)	
	Extra services	– – – – – –	_Paying procedures and options (e.g. credit policy) _Dispatch and delivery alternatives (e.g. home shipment) _Option for product return (i.e. merchandise return services) _Guarantees _Post transaction assistance _Self-service option for customers	
	Store's personnel	– –	_Quality of personnel's assistance (helpful, knowledgeable, friendly, available when needed) _Product demonstration	
	Clientele	– – –	_The store reflects your lifestyle and personality _Variety of other visitors' profiles (e.g. age, gender, status) _Your overall expectations are met	

Appendix 6 - Interview Guide

Stages of customers' interviews (indicative sections):

1. Approach:
- Introduction, friendly greeting and explanation [e.g. who we are, verify sampling criteria selection (e.g. is it their first time in this IKEA pick-up point), what is the purpose and use of the interview, description of the process of the interview]
- Inform about the gift card prize to motivate them to participate in the interview
- Mention the duration of interview

2. Consent presentation & signing

3. Screening questions on past experience to understand their reference points:
- How would you describe your experience on shopping from the traditional IKEA store (e.g. could you name some IKEA stores that you have visited)?
- What is your experience on other pick-up and order collection points?

4. Projection of pick-up point video: (around 5 minutes)

5. After video discussion:
- What do you think of the video you just saw? (Discussion and commenting on the video's content)
- Could you tell us if you identify some characteristics ("attributes") for this specific pick-up point? (Discussion about attributes they associate with the store, and possible comparisons with their reference points)

6. Questions about specific dimensions based on the table:
Based on the initial theoretical framework, we ask consumers to comment and then to compare the specific dimensions to the traditional IKEA store and to other pick-up points

- Store environment & Layout
- Communication & Advertising - Customer Experience
- Extra facilities - Location - Merchandise - Price - Extra services - Store's personnel - Clientele

7. End of discussion:
Show participants a table of store dimensions and attributes and ask them to select the ones that for their personal opinion characterize the specific pick-up store, and/or comment if they perceive extra ones.

Appendix 7 - Template for researchers' note taking during interviews

<div align="center">

Interview Notes

</div>

Interview Number: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Location of interview: Tromsö (Norway)   or   Norwich (UK)

Time & Duration: _____

Notes:

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Appendix 8 - Audio Visual Material

8.1.   Links to customer interviews

Norwich (UK): https://drive.google.com/open?id=0By5xjZRoHw_xX183U1VPaVBGU1U

Tromsø (Norway): https://drive.google.com/open?id=0By5xjZRoHw_xNnVaX2RYdkp5MkE

8.2.   Links to video-elicitation utilized during customer interviews

Norwich (UK): https://drive.google.com/open?id=0By5xjZRoHw_xSEowLTd5dUp0Y3c

Tromsø (Norway): https://drive.google.com/open?id=0By5xjZRoHw_xTEZkVWtyZGhXUEE