In-store driving forces behind the purchase decision-making process for high-end designed tableware products

by

Sunyoung Kim, Tanya Gergova

May, 2016

Master's Programme in

International Marketing and Brand Management

Abstract

This thesis intends to investigate what are the driving forces behind the shopper's decision-making process in high-end designed tableware products and what is the role of the in-store marketing in the process. The authors of the research have found that there is a lack of knowledge about the consumer's buying behavior in that segment and therefore it was decided the empirical part of the research to be made in collaboration with *Villeroy & Boch* – international company presented in 125 different countries around the world offering high-end designed products. The data gathering is through a qualitative research method. This approach is intended to give an answer to the question of how the market actors interact with consumers today and what triggers the consumers to buy products in offline shops. Therefore, the data was gathered by conducting observation and interviews with consumers visiting the *Villeroy & Boch*'s shops as well as with staff representatives in two different locations – Oslo in Norway and Stockholm, Sweden.

The study is focused on the interaction of the three streams – decision-making process, in-store marketing, and high-end designed tableware products. Furthermore, conducting a research focused on a specific practical problem will contribute to theoretical advancements as well as to the business aspect. The paper ends with contributions and the main discussions that treat the entire sector, including both *Villeroy & Boch* in particular as well as their competitors in the SMCG sector. The conclusions could be taken into consideration in order for the companies to take advantage of new opportunities.

Keywords: Decision-making process, In-Store Marketing, High-end designed tableware products, Driving forces, Consumer Buying Behavior

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

1   Introduction

The introduction of the research paper will set the stage to all who might be interested in the topic and will clarify the problems in the tableware industry. In this part, a general idea is given about the existing situation in the SMCG sector, about the reasons for investigating certain products as well as the problem, which the research is aiming to solve.

1.1   Background

Our world has developed together with the consumer culture over time. Our daily life is occupied with a series of choices between and thought about consumption of a variety of products and services (Ekström, 2010; Sekozawa et al. 2011). Desires for consumptions are now a part of the life and people show their identity and their wanted identity – who they are and who they want to be through consumption (Marufuzzaman and Ashan, 2009; Ekström, 2010). Regardless of whether people choose what to buy, they are continuously making a conscious or unconscious explanation for or against something (Ekström, 2010).

Consumer's buying behavior is the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services (Blackwell et al., 2001). According to Hoyer et al. (2012), consumer buying behavior means not only "more than just the way that a person buys tangible products" but also "products, services, activities, experiences, people, and ideas" (p.3). It is a dynamic process with many factors involved affecting on a different level over time. It is important for retailers to understand the consumers' behavior and attitudes in terms of making efficient marketing decisions. In order to make consumers satisfied with their needs, retailers try to classify them firstly. Goworek and McGoldrick (2015) state that "[u]nderstanding the process of consumer decision-making and the various factors that influence consumption decisions are key aspects of Consumer Behavior theory" (p.56). This is because consumers' attitudes are linked to their opinions concerning products and brands (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). According to Sorensen (2009), when studying the consumer's behavior, two perspectives should be included – the reasons for buying and the consumption process. Today, retailers need to consider not only selling products or service, but also experience in terms of strengthening stimuli to fulfill shopper's increasing demand during their purchase step.

Today, in terms of increasing online shopping, brick and mortar retailers struggle with attracting customers to physical stores (Morse, 2011). It is an interesting aspect that the

change of the consumer's priorities in terms of shopping habits has a direct impact on retailers (Morse, 2011). Therefore, retailers need to consider new ways of attracting customers to the stores in order to maintain their market share, since customers today expect retailers to offer a more engaged and personalized in-store experience (Tynan & Mckechnie, 2009).

Last, but not least, is the fact that nowadays the companies are much more sensitive when it comes to satisfying the consumer's needs and wants. The concern of being consumer-oriented and focused on the consumer as a center is often highlighted in their marketing communication (Ekström, 2010). Also, the importance of strong brands has been identified more recently by both industry and research (Ekström, 2010). Hence, for the success of designed brands, focusing on consumption patterns and situation in relation with consumers is more than necessary.

1.2   Problem Formulation

The aim of this research is to investigate the forces that trigger the shopper to make a purchase, or vice versa – what keeps shoppers from shopping. The decision-making process is a complex issue, however, the research is focused on the slow-moving consumer goods sector (SMCG) and the aim is to investigate the high-end designed products and then to generalize for the sector. The study is about the decision-making process at the moment of the purchase, in order to get a better understanding of it. Without at least a rudimentary knowledge of these issues, it cannot be claimed that the understanding of the shopper's behavior is deep and thorough. Outside-the-store factors still will be valid for what goes on inside, but the real challenge for the retailers is to keep the shoppers inside the store. That knowledge is useful to get the information on how the company, the brand image, and the products are perceived by the consumers.

Good design alone is not the only factor of high-end designed brands but there also should be a demand (Ekström, 2010). Nowadays consumers are available to compare and choose between products, prices, and shopping channels, and the competition has become fierce. Thus, it is not only important developing new forms and functions but also well-planned and distinct marketing is a vital key in order to reach out to boost sales with potential consumers. However, it is not easy to communicate the preferences of the consumers by simply asking what they want and why they choose certain objects (Belk and Zhou, 1987).

High-end designed products like tableware are not categorized into the fast moving consumer goods (hereafter FMCG) (statista.com). According to the same source, since they are more durable goods, with a useful life longer than a year, they have a lower sales frequency that is not rotating as rapidly as FMCG. Today, our society has become faster to consume products, it is noticeable that FMCG market has been of a particular interest and therefore, most of the research for consumer buying behavior has been focused on this segment. That is the reason,

it should be examined whether the consumer's buying behavior towards the slow moving consumers goods (SMCG) is the same as for the everyday purchases or not.

Furthermore, many theories regarding retail market are focused on an understanding of the complexity of the shopping experience. There is a lot of research, which were interested in what actually shoppers do inside and outside the store (Sorensen, 2009)**.** In addition, there is a big amount of information about the FMCG, in contrast with the SMCG sector and more specifically – the high-end designed tableware products. Once the shoppers enter the brick-and-mortar high-end brand store, they have made the first step into turning from regular visitors to shoppers and when they leave the store they are not shoppers anymore. In this situation, very little of the knowledge derived from the outside-the-store measures or the grocery stores could be used and it is more reliable to observe what people do rather than to ask them what they do (Sorensen, 2009).

1.3   Research Question

The main objective of this research is to find out the patterns of the consumers' behavior in the store and the role of different store environment factors which are influencing the decision-making process. Therefore, this research will focus on answering the following research question:

Main Research Question: What are the factors influencing the purchase step and what is the role of different store environment factors in the decision-making process?

1.4   Outline of the Thesis

The structure of the report consists of the following main parts: theoretical review, methodology, empirical result and analysis, conclusions/recommendations. Chapter 1 provides an initial and deeper understanding of the underlying background and concepts. It aims to introduce the research overview with the purpose of bringing up research questions. The theoretical part which forms a framework to understand consumer's buying behavior is in Chapter 2. In this chapter also, a literature review of relevant theories about consumer buying behavior in connection with decision process is given, as well as the model based on which the research question is investigated. Various ideas from academic books and articles are included in support of the model used to describe the consumer's buying behavior.

The following Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach and the research design based on the philosophical positioning. In this part, the arguments and explanations of the choice of the methods for collecting primary data are stated. In-depth interviews were conducted with

ten (10) randomly selected respondents who were shoppers of the research places and their answers to the questions have been used in this study. Furthermore, the empirical data is enriched by interviews with the sales representatives from the two different locations – Oslo in Norway and Stockholm in Sweden, as well as passive observation of the shoppers in the stores. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the empirical discussion and to the data analysis. At the end, Chapter 5 focuses on the influence mechanisms and lessons of the projects as a conclusion.

2   Theoretical Review

The theoretical review provides the framework of the research. The main attention is given to the following topics: in-store consumer's buying behavior in connection with the decision-making process. The focus is set on the purchase stage of the decision-making process before the consumption. There is evidence that some decisions are made during the purchase stage of the shopping cycle, so the chapter gives the background of how different elements influence the decision-making and thus they modify the overall consumer's buying behavior.

2.1   Decision-Making Process

The overall consumer's buying behavior is modified by the decision-making process. Understanding how consumers make their buying decisions is vital because it explains the reasons behind how and why consumers buy products and services (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). The consumer decision process model by Blackwell et al. (2001) presented in *Figure 1. The consumer's decision-making process model* is a widely used one regarding consumer's behavior in connection with the purchasing process. It has served as a base of the researches and is one of the most common since it clearly illustrates and explains how the consumers make a purchasing decision (Blackwell et al., 2001). Furthermore, the same authors point out the comment that this model is more "precise and clear" than the others since it focuses on motivational factors. Thus, it is easier the reasons behind the purchasing decision to be understood (Blackwell et al., 2001). The model has been expanded to the seven stages model and was developed from an original version called the "EKB model" by the names of its authors: Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). The addition of stages 5 and 7 reflects the importance of awareness of social impacts of the consumption and disposal of the products, as well as the impact of the society on the environment (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).
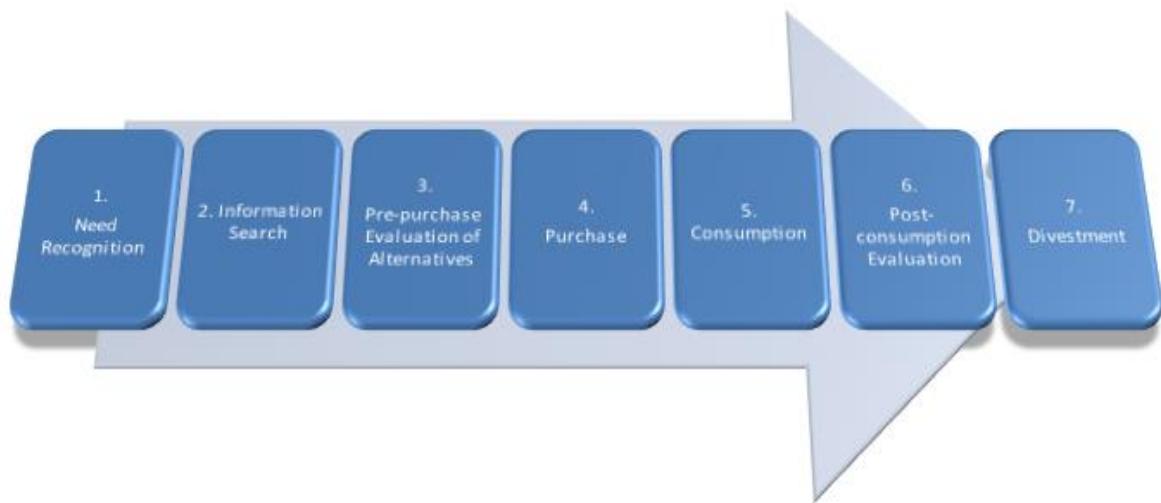
Figure 1. The consumer's decision-making process model (Source: Blackwell et al., 2001)

Although there are factors modifying the whole decision-making process and having an impact in every step, the light will be set mainly on the purchase step. A lot of authors claim that the most of the buying decisions are made inside of the stores. For example, Hein (2009) published a report according to which almost 32 percent of the 999 shoppers polled online in March of 2009 said that in-store marketing is "very effective" ("The Elements Report", 2009). In addition, previous studies (Kotler, 1999; Turley and Millinam, 2000; Hoffman and Turley, 2002; Keller, 2003) showed that the appeal of in-store marketing supports the spontaneous purchases as well as making the final decisions inside the store. Also, it has been of a particular interest for some authors (Pierre, Wesley, Bradlow and Young, 2009) and they have been focused on the in-store environment and stimuli and how the latter help increasing the sales at the point of purchase. Malte, Michaela and Plessner (2006) believe that the in-store promotions are a factor which benefits the sales as well. On the other hand, Michael Chevalier (1975) argues that in-store display affects the purchase behavior. Therefore, in this chapter, the most common factors of the consumer's buying behavior according to the different authors will be reviewed and later on – by the empirical research the theory will be tested and trough the analysis – will be proved.

2.2 Factors, influencing the purchase step of the decision-making process

Researchers have been interested in understanding why people do what they do when they shop (Sorensen, 2009) and what are their motives. In other words, a deeper focus should be put on what are the driving forces that turn the visitor into a shopper. Sorensen (2009) also claims that it is an intriguing phenomenon what people do as opposed to what they say. That means that at the moment of purchase there are different types of decision-making and sometimes in contrast with the initial intention. Furthermore, Keller (2003) believes that the in-store marketing is at the base of the final decision making. In support of the fact are also the studies of Kotler (1999) and Hoffman and Turley (2002) who claim that creating a specific atmosphere is an influential marketing strategy. In his article, Iyer (1989) claims that the in-store marketing creates opportunities for more purchases. It is also the reason for selling more products rather than the initial customer's intention.

For decades, the marketing leaders are questioning how they can influence the purchase decision process and thus to increase sales. They try to find which the key factor is: is it the store layout, the navigation, the promotional displays, the packaging, or something else. The main aim of the research is also to find out how they modify the consumer's decision in order to choose a specific brand and to buy a certain product (*Figure 2. Factors influencing the purchase decision-making).* More deep, since previous research on consumer's buying behavior, has been focused on the FMCG, the positioning of this paper is to investigate the factors in view of the high-end designed tableware products as a representative of the SMCG segment.
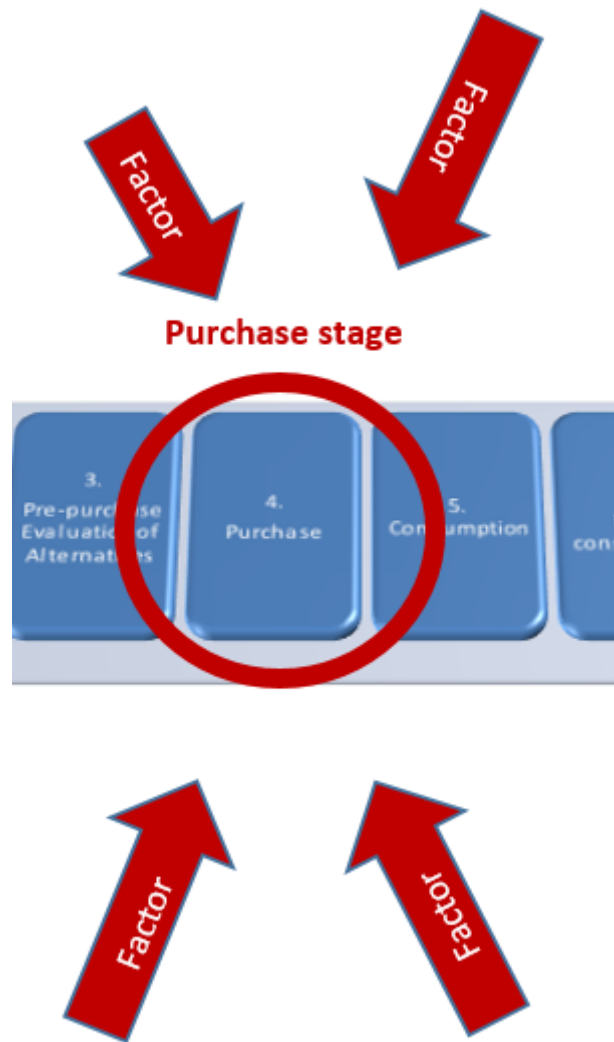
Figure 2. Factors influencing the purchase decision-making (Source: Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2001)

There is a lot of information about the in-store marketing, focusing on the in-store stimuli and displays (Chevalier, 1975; Wilkinson et al., 1982) and point-of-purchase displays (Blackwell et al., 2006). However, the previous researches have been made mainly for the FMCG-sector and there are not so many studies which have paid enough attention so far to the SMCG sector and in particular the high-end designed tableware products. Because of the lack of the extensive empirical data and the theoretical gap this research was designed to generate knowledge. Blackwell et al. use a model of the factor which influences the decision-making process. The four general categories include merchandise, service, promotion and store. We also agree with them that all of these factors modify the customer's buying behavior; however, it would be an extensive work to test all of them. Furthermore, the focus from the very beginning has been set on the in-store interaction between the brand and the visitors and the tools used to transfer the latter to customers. Therefore, only a part of the model of the factors will be used as shown in *Figure 3. The variety of in-store factors*.
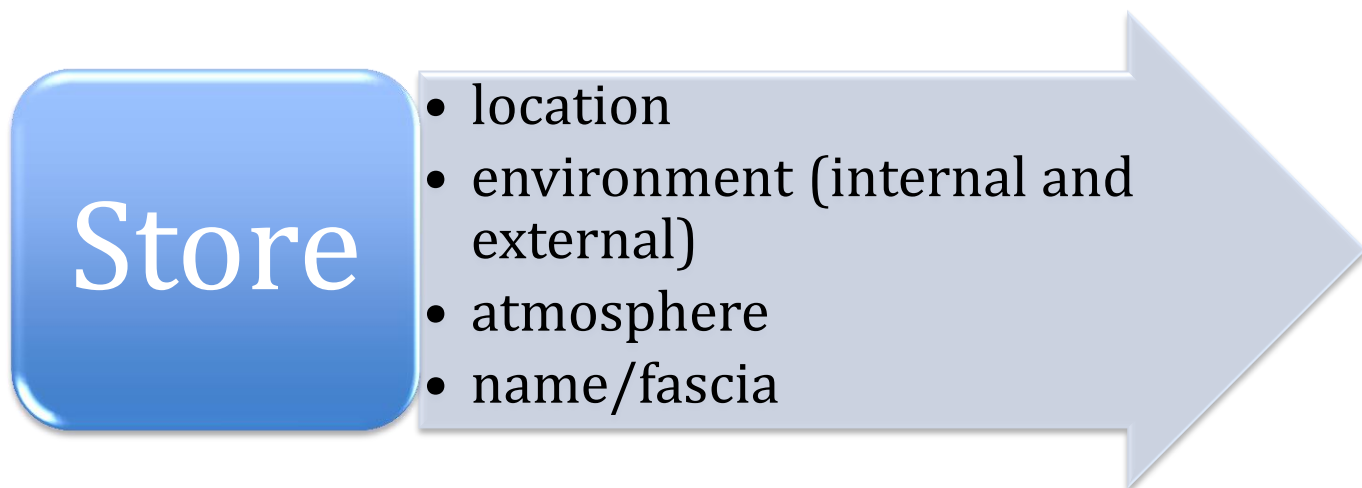
Figure 3. The variety of in-store factors (Source: Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2001)

Although this model is not an extensive one, some authors use it as a base and believe that the different aspects have a different influence on the decision-making process. Nordfält (2005) points out that the same look of the products and the same display can lead to the choice of buying the same thing every time. He claims that a right mindset and associations in the consumers can be made by displays, themes, exposures how a product can be used. On the other hand, putting some products on a special display may discriminate the rest. He also adds that using a non-conscious cognitive influence might be unethical if it leads to a decision contradicting with the consumer's values. Other authors like Chevalier (as cited in Nordfält, 2005) are fond of the idea of putting some products on a special display and thus gaining the consumer's attention. By setting the light on certain items this may increase the sales. It could be done either by arranging them on the eye level, or next to another popular product (Drèze et al. 1994) or simply by ensuring more shelf space (Nordfält, 2005). The latter according to the Nordfält (2005) is a mean of increasing impulse sales of products.

- Location

We are living in a digital era when everything could be checked, compared and purchased online. The IT technologies are influencing every aspect of our lives and with their development people tend to spend even more time online. Despite the fact that the online activity is increasing nowadays, the traditional physical stores are still a major shopping channel for the consumers. It seems that there are some features of the offline stores which the new online ways could not substitute to full extend (Dajiba, 2010; Zentes et al., 2012). In addition, as Ghosh and McLafferty (1987:2) claim "the store location is a long-term fixed investment". Some other authors (Dunne & Lusch, 2008; Alt, 2009; Dabija, 2010; Abrudan, 2012; Zentes et al., 2012) also consider that the store location is an essential part of the marketing mix. It also serves as a strong instrument for the retailers to create the brand image.

According to them, there are sub-factors which modify the location choice. They could vary from parking, transport, and logistical issues, to storage, accessibility, convenience etc. Furthermore, these attributes of the store location create an image for the whole brand as they modify the customer's overall perceptions. Others, like Pinto and Leonidas (1994) have studies especially how the location and parking are connected with the perceptions of the quality of the brand and its products. It seems that the positive attitude could be transferred easily to the whole brand when on the other hand the negative image might have the snowball effect (Pinto and Leonidas, 1994). Ghosh and McLafferty (1987) also add that the disadvantages of a poor or changed location during the time could be extremely harmful to the business. Even more, if not handled properly, the issue might transfer into a problem, which might be difficult to be overcome with the time.

Retailers in different sectors and offering different types of products have their own target groups of consumers. The companies are trying to be more close to their targeted customers not only with the products, the creative ideas but also physically. Therefore, the location could be perceived as the most important attribute (Dabija, 2010). That is why the companies select their specific types of locations according to complex variables, including the buyer's characteristics, the competitors and the market as a whole. It is necessary to be estimated in advance what the optimal location means for the potential customers and how they will perceive it according to their perspective (Zentes et al., 2012). High-end designers products are usually focused either on the busiest shopping centers/malls or on popular up-market (i.e. more expensive) site co-located with similar retailers (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).

- Internal and External Environment

In this part, factors such as design and layout, visual merchandising, window display and in-store display are included. The significance of each is taken into consideration and furtherly described in the following paragraphs.

- Design and Layout

The store environment as a factor in the consumer's behavior is extensively researched so far (e.g. Bitner, 1992; Baker & Parasuraman, 1994; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). This is the "physical" appearance of the brand including the store design (exterior and interior) and the layout of the products in it. The overall environment makes an impact on the consumer's emotions and thus contributes to the business success through increasing the loyalty (Turley and Milliman, 2000). According to Davies and Ward (2005) design and layout play a major role in the relationship with the consumer and by using them as a tool the brand may create a special environment and a sacred place, which the consumer would like to visit again (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). For some authors store environment means decorations (Ismail, 2011), for others – colors and wall covering (Baker & Parasuraman, 1994), and for the third – it is equipment, furnishing, and decor (Rosenbaum

& Massiah, 2011). In general, as Bell & Ternus (2006) claim, this is the key to making the store visually appealing to the customers and thus to encourage them to spend more time inside and as a sequence – to increase their willingness to spend more money. Brüggen et al. (2011) believe that the more appealing the store environment is, the most positive influence it will have on the attitudes, satisfaction, perceived quality and value, and also the total store image. At the bottom line, all these authors focus their research on the link between the environment, emotional devotion and long-term consumer's loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). This will be also the focus on the research – is the store environment among factors influencing the decision-making process.

Store design could be changed quite often in some cases, depending on trends or dynamic changes since it combines knowledge from different fields. Many aspects should be taken into consideration in order the presentation of the brand through its stores to appeal the consumers and to their lifestyles. Specialists within design, architecture, geography and psychology should contribute to the final decision about the store design (Turley and Chebat, 2002; Greenland and McGoldrick, 2005). This is especially essential for the luxury and high-end brands (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015) as the store design should correspond with the brand image and the expectations of the customers.

As part of the overall store design, the exterior design is the one that initially attracts the consumers and distinguishes the brand from the competitors (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). It is the way the store looks like outside and the positive impression and appeal is created by colors, signs, fonts, windows, entrances. All of them are used quite carefully to display specific information, to present some triggers by which to invite the consumer to come inside. Again, different authors have a different understanding of the interior design which divides them into groups. For some, the interior design includes flooring and walls (Davies and Ward, 2005), and for the others – lighting (Turley and Chebat, 2002), and decor (Ismail, 2011). It may also include additional fittings such as movable items and arrangements, which will help to display the products in a better way (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). Mirrors used on the back of the shelves and racks with products make the impression of luminous atmosphere and strengthen the feeling of luxury.

The last point – the layout plays a significant role as well. The freeform layout is used for creating enough space for the consumers to wander around the products (Lusch et al. 2011). In the case of the high-end designed products, it is the most preferred way of displaying the products since they are grouped into clusters (Turley and Chebat, 2002). Quite often it could be combined with the boutique layout where some products are stacked on shelves by the walls (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). This creates a clear pathway and a traveling direction for the consumers and they could experience the shopping activity as well as the products to full extend. Iyer (1989) also agrees with the fact that the layout helps the customers to focus on the shopping and to divert it into a routine behavior. On the other hand, the more unknown the layout is, the more focused the visitor is and therefore it is more prone to the in-store stimuli. The attention is focused on the environment and this enables the retailers to influence the decision-making process.

- Visual Merchandising

As stated earlier in the text, nowadays, our everyday live is influenced by the technology. Digitalization is a great part of our life and it is still developing and rapidly changing further. Today receiving, sharing and searching for information is easier than ever. On the other hand, the human brain is limited. It is proved that the human beings could receive 11 million information bits per second (Nordfält, 2005). This is the information we perceive through all the senses – sight, hearing, and touch. After that the information has to be interpreted by the brain and based on the analyses a uniform picture of the world to be built (Nordfält, 2005). However, according to Baars (as cited in Nordfält, 2005) the brain has the ability to select the information. That means that it excludes a very big part of it and stores only small amount which finds relevant. Therefore, marketers should consider this specific psychological characteristic. In order to reach their customers directly, the brands are trying to create easy to remember images in the media, printed materials, ads etc. with recognizable and easy to understand messages.

Not only in the marketing materials, but the visual effect is the sought one in the stores as well. Once the customer is in the store, due to the "proper display" of the products the visual merchandising manages to "stimulate the shopping behavior" (Berman and Evans, 2010). In addition, it is an important remark that not only the product and the prices are displayed but a whole picture is created, including the company's culture, values, and style (Nieminen, 2010). The world has become "visual" and the traditional ways the retailers were using to influence the customer's behavior has reached the next level where they try to create a reaction and to form a purchase decision (Campbell, 2013). Some authors, as Pegler (1998) for example stated that the visual merchandising is used to support the sales process. This means that it is a tool to "maximize the volume of product sales".

Furthermore, by displaying the products in a specific way the brand creates a certain look. The skillful layout and the visual merchandising play an active role and therefore a lot of authors consider them as a big part of the sales tools (Lohse, 1997; Janiszewski, 1998; Bell & Ternus, 2006). The way the products are displayed and the image that the brand has managed to create have a major impact on the decision-making process at the point of taking the decision. There is a lot of evidence for this in the literature, available thanks to the numerous researches in the area (Inman, Winer, and Ferraro 2009).

At the bottom line, the overall result is that the visual area strongly increases attention (Lohse, 1997; Janiszewski, 1998). For the brands, the latter means that it is a sales trigger. In other words, acting as a stimulus at the point of the purchase the visual merchandising is one of the factors forcing the decision-making process.

- Window Displays

The window display is another visual stimulus and could be taken as a part of the visual merchandising. Again, the brand uses the window space to create images, special messages or represent real-life situations. Furthermore, since it is the first contact between the store and the customers, by the window display the consumers get the most of the influence from the visual merchandising (Janiszewski, 1998). It is the first appearance of the brand and usually represents the brand image. By putting certain products on the window and arranging them in a specific way, the brand catches the consumer's attention. The goal is to act as an inspiration and to make them want to get more of the experience. The role is to welcome the customers into the store even before the sales staff to interact with them (Campbell, 2013).

In the focus of the window display are arranged the most actual, seasonal, thematic for the period or interesting products. Since the role is to create a clear message and distinguish the brand from the competitors, the window displays build quick associations of the desired image (Hirvi & Nyholm, 2009). This is a powerful tool of the overall visual merchandising which uses the combination of the light and the colors. By the window displays the marketers manage to form a subconscious purchase intention and the will to buy even before the consumer has physically entered the store (Hirvi & Nyholm, 2009).

What is more, in order to increase the power of the window displays they are in many cases made with open back and themed according to the season. Thus, the window displays, on one hand, offer a view of the store atmosphere and layout and on the other – make a connection between the products and consumer's needs (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).

- In-store Displays

The in-store display is the physical feature of the brand and its products that have been highly used the past decades both from manufacturers and the retailers (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). On the other hand, it is a channel for communicating, promoting and selling since it connects with the visual comprehension of the consumer and therefore it has been considered as a strategically important factor. By displaying the products in a way to have both a good range of items and enough space between them (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015) the customers gain a unique shopping experience, as well as an image of the quality of the brand and the products. Furthermore, it appears that the increases in the shelf space increase the brand sales and this process is valid even when the price and location of the products are the same. This phenomenon could be explained by the potential influence of the in-store displays on the emotions and feelings of the customers and the effects on various aspects of the purchase behavior.

A recent study made by Campo and Gijsbrechts (2005) disclosed that the majority of the decisions are made in the store, due to the impact of the in-store displays. This is because the display draws the attention and urges the customers to spend extra time inside the store. On

the other hand, the more time spent inside, the more money than initially intended are also spent since it increases the likelihood of the impulse purchases (Inman, Winer, and Ferraro, 2009). The positive effect of the in-store display is deeply researched in combination with its effect on the decision-making process (e.g. Wilkinson, Mason & Paksoy, 1982). Upmarket stores are usually focused not that much on the quantity of the products rather than the overall interior space and décor, providing more luxurious atmosphere. Therefore, the overall layout and style of the stores form the brand image and should correspond to the products and their price range.

- Atmosphere

Not surprisingly, the store atmosphere creates the overall image of the brand (Berman & Evans, 2010). It has a big impact on the personal perceptions, affects the mood of the consumer and modifies the "psychological feeling the consumer gets" when visiting the store (Berman and Evans, 2010:508). Even Kotler et al. (1999) pointed out that the atmosphere can "produce specific emotional effects in the consumer" in a way that this would enhance the purchase probability. He also defines three levels of interaction between the atmosphere in the store and the customer's perceptions. These are attention-creating, message-creating and affect-creating. The three levels are the combination of the elements – both visual and nonvisual, such as smell, lighting, cleanliness, space etc.

Other authors also claim that the influence of the store atmosphere is on the psychological level since it interacts with the senses – hearing, sight, touch and smell (McGoldrick, 2002:460). Previous researches for the FMCG have concluded that visiting the store is made because of the atmosphere inside and it may unexpectedly increase the likeability of spending more money because of the positive mood created (McGoldrick, 2002). In addition, consumers may review the products online and still to visit the brick-and-mortar store to make the purchases after that (Kim et al. 2007). Even more, the results of these researches showed that even if the customer is not in a positive emotional state upon entering the location, it could be changed by the in-store factors and thus the spend amount to be increased. This is due to the fact, that brands and retailers create factors connecting with the emotional state of the consumer, arousing the pleasure, using visual navigation and facilitating the consumer decisions (Ståhlberg and Maila, 2010).

On the other hand, stores have the power to enhance the image of the brand through aesthetics, design, location, music and aroma (Davies and Ward, 2005; Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015) and thus to enhance the purchasing process, increase the store traffic and to differentiate from the competitors (Gagliano & Hathcote, 1994; Pradhan, 2007). This also helps to stimulate the confidence and the trust in the offline stores and to keep them as a shopping channel by creating a long-term relationship with the customers (Davies and Ward, 2005). The latter creates a strong sense of attachment for the consumer and emotional moments that would add extra value to the brand (Mitchell, Kahn, and Knasko, 1995). In the long term, this would increase the purchase intention since it can generate strong emotional

14

devotion and love (Aaker, 1997), passion and positive emotions towards the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). And store love turns out to be a significant predictor of store loyalty (Kim et al. 2007; Johnson, 2010). With the time, the store loyalty has a spillover effect since happy customers are more willing to make repeat purchases and also to recommend the brand and new customers to be attracted by the positive word-of-mouth (Kim et al. 2007).

- Name/fascia

The brand name as a store factor, we believe, corresponds with the brand awareness and the brand image. According to the researchers Alba and Chattopadhyay (1985) the brand awareness is the strength of the brand and it is connected with the ability of the consumers to recognize it among other brands. The same authors explain that this is the key to the consumer's buying decisions (Alba and Chattopadhyay, 1985). They also add that the more well-established the brand is the more stable attitudes it has and is less affected by a single advertisement. This phenomenon they connect with the previous opinion the customers have already formed rather than the new information that is gained.

Furthermore, other authors like Aeker & McLoughlin (2010) say that the brand awareness creates familiarity and drives buying decisions. A brand can be said that works as an information carrier, a guarantee, a catalyst and an image creator (Melin, 2002). Therefore, a highly-reputed brand name adds attributes even to the new products before their actual consumption. Urde et al. (2013) also believe that "the brand may morph into an unconditional response to customer needs and wants (p.2)." Hence, it can be said that the brands bring trust since they reduce perceived risk (Kapferer, 2012). They are not just a name on products but they guide a choice cue and a source of added value and they can bring pleasure, empathy, and joy that stimulate function (Kapferer, 2012).

Kapferer (2012) also says that the role of the brand is performed more comprehensively by this categorization of sought-after qualities. He even adds further that the brand is a symbol which guides its function to reveal the hidden qualities of the product that are unattainable to contact: sight, touch, hearing, and smell. These hidden qualities might be accessible through experience but the consumer tries to reduce the risk from just trying the product. Once the brand is rooted in the customer's memory through seeing, hearing or thinking about it, the brand name becomes more recognizable (Radder and Huang, 2007). Furthermore, the brand adds an aura of make-believe if the brand is well known, when it is consumed (Kapferer, 2012). Together these qualities of the brand help to create value for the consumer. By using the brand as a point of reference, the consumer can simply compare the different products with each other, in order to evaluate which product is the "best buy". The brand saves the consumer both time and money (Underhill, 2000). Consumers normally have a goal so they rush in, look what they need, and rush out, with little to no interaction with a salesperson (Sorensen, 2009; Ståhlberg and Maila, 2010). In view of this, it is vital to know the role of the brand in the consumer's decision-making process.

2.3 High-end designed tableware products and the factors, influencing the decision-making process for their purchases

European high-end designed product's brands are rooted back in the centuries and started as a craftsperson-based tradition. They are perceived as offering rare and unique pieces of work, which places a considerable emphasis on the actual product as a factor of the success. According to the literature tableware crystal and porcelain are among the fourteen categories of luxury goods, including also haute couture, prêt-à-porter, perfume, jewelry, watches, leather goods, shoes, cars, wine, champagne, spirits (McKinsey & Co., 1991; Dubois and Duquesne, 1992). Those goods and services have been classified as the highest level of a prestige brand, above upmarket and premium brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

When it comes to the decision-making process of slow-moving consumer goods in comparison with the fast-moving consumer goods, there are significant differences in terms planning in advance, spontaneous purchases and rationality of the decision. Although there are various models, trying to explain the buying behavior and the decision-making process a significant remark should be made. First of all, when the purchases are not made on a regular basis (as it is the case with the FMCG), the decision criteria is considered at the time of choice (Hoyer, 1984). According to the same author, the complexity of the decision-making process is directly correlated with the importance of the product for the consumer. Thus, the latter seeks as much information as possible and is engaged with characteristics search in order to reduce the risk of the decision (Kapferer, 2012). The models could not be applicable to all kind of products. In the case of the high-end designed products goods, the models should be more adjusted to some specific features. For example, the purchase decision is rather conscious than spontaneous, more complex rather than just rational, and as Boundless (2015) points out the price could be very inelastic since the higher prices may not decrease the demand (McGee 2004; Heine 2012; Arora 2013). On the other hand, living in the world of unlimited access to information gives the customers the option to compare products, prices, and brands. For that reason, the authors of the research will make the empirical data gathering in view of one additional factor – the price and the sales promotions.

The price of the brand can also create strong quality associations, with a high price implying high quality. Expensive products are likely to involve a lengthy information search, as there is a high perceived risk with such purchases. This longer-than-average decision-making process for buying high risk, relatively expensive goods, is known as extended problem-solving. More straightforward decisions with less risk attached involve a limited problem-solving approach. Even more basic is the habitual or routine decision, which requires little thought on the part of the consumer and is, therefore, swift and repetitive (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).

In the retail marketing communications, the price and the sales promotions are used as triggers to the consumers and to create willingness for making a purchase of a specific

product within a fixed time span. It is said that the sales promotions make the product "more attractive" (ASA, 2010:38). Furthermore, sales promotions are an important marketing activity deeply rooted in the marketing programs of the retailers (Gedenk et al., 2006). And as every other tool in the marketing for modifying the buying behavior, there are constant changes in the sales promotions techniques as well. Sometimes, the consumers got used to and familiar with sales promotions, which make the retailers be more innovative in creating new ways to implement them and to gain consumers attention.

At the bottom line, although the buying behavior models are applicable for the retail, it seems that the consumer purchase decision-making for the high-end designed products goods has some differences due to the high involvement and long durability of the products. Okonkwo (2007) for example tries to find out how consumers make a decision to spend their time and resources. It is noticeable that solely the products could not be the trigger for the purchase. Additional experience, emotions, and external factors play a significant role as well. Although some (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2012) argue with that, there is evidence for external stimuli affecting the sales – music in the store, feelings, and experience of the product. Furthermore, it appears that the latter is more important in the high-end designed products segment since these products are not connected with functional needs, convenience or a rational decision (Okonkwo 2007; Chevalier and Mazzalovo 2012). For that reason, the research is focused on finding what are the factors modifying the decision-making process in the store for the high-end designed tableware products.

3 Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and an explanation of the ways through which the primary data is collected. It presents and explains the methodology, the method and the research process used for the thesis. Thereafter, the method of the data collection is explained, followed by a discussion about the quality of the research.

3.1 Research Design

Researchers have always tried to understand shoppers and to have a deeper knowledge about what the consumers are thinking. There is a lot of theory, empirical data and examples of the shoppers' behavior gathered by making surveys outside the store. However, when it comes to the purchase decisions for the high-end designed tableware products, the existing data does not measure the real experience the consumers actually have in the store. It appeared that the focus so far has been in the fast moving consumer goods, mainly in the food, cosmetics or apparel sector. In addition, it was decided the behavior to be studied in the most natural way and therefore the observation had to be done as it was an unintentional and unplanned activity. This meant to become actively engaged with the consumers and to understand how and where they were spending their time. Once the research is focused into the store, there are plenty of interesting questions to be studied – about the behavioral patterns, shopping activity, interaction with the brand and/or sales representatives etc. Another point is that data is usually summed up on a daily or weekly basis and at a store level. In that gathering of the data, the details and the individual features of the shoppers' behavior in the store are usually lost. In other words, examination and observation of the in-store consumer's behavior will help to see beyond the surface and the focus should be beyond the collective data rather than on an individual level.

All the Nordic countries are internationally well-known for the development of design products and there are many examples of both older and famous contemporary design brands which come from these countries (Ekström, 2010). That is the reason, people who live in the region to be more interested in consuming and collecting designed products. In addition, the purchasing power in Nordics strengthens as their welfare strengthens, so they have not only more money to spend, but also more time to consume (Ekström, 2010). Therefore, emphases on values for the emotional and human in regard to consuming products are also more noticeable in the region.

This research was designed in cooperation with the company Villeroy & Boch and they provided the researchers unlimited access to their premises and direct contact with end customers. The case study was conducted in Villeroy & Boch offline shops in Oslo, Norway, and Stockholm, Sweden, and the research were done with reference to the complexity and particular nature of the subject (Stake, 1995 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.59). Apart from this, the study was designed and conducted independently, without any other involvement of the company or their representatives. Also, the case study approach is extensively used as well as the popular research design in the business research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.59). Furthermore, this is a single organization case study and the design is corresponding with the case study design. In that situation, there is a major issue considering the quality of the theoretical reasoning. Nevertheless, according to the Eisenhardt article (1989 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.62), the case study has been "highly influential in promoting a view of case-based theory building that relies on strategic".

The company Villeroy & Boch was selected as a representative of the SMCG industry, offering high-end designed products. It is an international company presented in 125 different countries around the world, with a long history, dating back in 1748. In addition, it is popular in the Nordic countries not only with the tableware products but with the other product lines – bath and wellness. Therefore, it was believed that it is a good reputation brand with a rich product variety, well-known with a high level of brand awareness, loyalty, and values among its customers. The research was aiming to focus on buying behavior of the shoppers in the mono-brand stores in big cities. That limited the choice of the location to two options – Oslo in Norway and Stockholm, Sweden. Furthermore, since it was expected the majority of the consumers in those locations to be good English speakers, this was important for the research process in order to reduce the language barriers during the interviews. The day was chosen to be the same in the both cities and thus the results to be comparable and/or complementary.

3.2   Design of the Interview Questions

In this research, a one-to-one in-depth interview approach has been applied. It was considered as a relevant method since it was known what information was needed from the beginning (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The two authors – Sekaran and Bougie, do not specify if the structured interview is typical for a quantitative or a qualitative research method. However, some other research method has been considered initially but later on – categorized as not fully suitable because of different limitations. The disadvantages have been, for example, not expressing the exact and personal point of view (a questionnaire with multiple-choice answers), time restrictions (a focus group with pre-selected customers invited on a particular date to participate in a discussion), or gathering data from customers not included in the target group (online surveys). Finally, after considering all these specific features a qualitative method with individual face-to-face interviews has been selected. The expectations were the respondents to give an answer to the main question about the driving forces behind their

purchase. However, they were supposed to participate in a longer session consisting of altogether ten questions. By doing this, the authors aimed to get richer insights and to reveal the complexity of the topic. An extensive discussion with the sales staff has been made as well, covering the aspects of the typical customers, their shopping behavior, and usual patterns when visiting the store. The full list of the interview questions is presented in *Appendix A. Interview Questionnaire*. The aim was to prove if the respondents had an identical consumption pattern as the literature claims. In term of dynamic dimension, since the interview was intended to be more like a free conversation in a relaxing atmosphere, it was highly possible that there would emerge new situations. If so, the adjustments and changes of the interview questions were decided to be made simultaneously in order the whole process to seem like a free discussion rather than a scientific process.

The formulation of the interview questions was focused on asking "open" questions in order to stimulate the participants to extend their answers. It means that the focus was on the "why", "what", and "how" questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p.134). In some cases, in order to predispose the interviewees to be more talkative, additional and follow-up questions have been added to the conversation. In this situation, it was possible for complete information to be obtained and the respondents were enabled to refrain from giving standardized answers rather than their own opinion (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p.134). It was interesting to analyze what actually caught the attention of the customers initially and what brought them into the store. Secondly, the questions were focused on the product choice and preference and lastly, the in-store stimuli. Furthermore, it was believed that the face-to-face interviews contributed to gathering information by other means as well – like nonverbal communication and the body language (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Thus, the interviews were made in a way to seem like a dialogue and an informal chat since for the data collection, it was important to perceive the respondent's behavior during the interview process.

In addition, the interview questions have been tested in advance with randomly selected people, not involved in the research process. The aim was to use completely unprejudiced participants in order to verify if the questions were clear enough and easy to understand. The point was that the interviewers are not native English speakers and supposedly the respondents would not be either. In order misunderstanding or confusion to be avoided due to the language barrier, some adjustments were made after the test. The literary style of the text of the interviews has been used in order to include the original grammar and pauses with the specific ways of expressing feelings and thoughts. The text includes not only the answers of the interviewees but also the overall impression from the conversations, the body language and additional details as face expressions, unconscious gestures or pauses which have an impact on the research. After selecting the method and determining the questions, the action of collecting data was executed.

3.3　Data Collection

In order for the problem to be investigated thoroughly, the selected research strategy of this paper was the qualitative research that emphasis on collecting in-depth detailed data. Since this research focus was on the individual behavior and to obtain an understanding of the individual's interpretation within the social context, the qualitative research has been selected as an appropriate strategy to collect deep and rich data. Bryman and Bell (2011) explain that words are more valued than numbers if understanding the studied phenomenon within its social context is a purpose. Thus, authors of this research believed that a qualitative research facilitates to understand essential reasons behind the complexity of the individual consumer behavior and the observations and interviews were considered as the most appropriate method for this. It was discussed in advance and finally decided that a survey with predefined answers of the questions may influence the interviewees. On the other hand, a multiple choice questionnaire could also limit the possible options. Thus, the final decision was in favor of the semi-structured one-to-one interview with open questions which seems more like a free discussion rather than a research process to the participants. The data collection was made in two different locations of the Villeroy & Boch's network. It was important the stores to be their own and not retailers or outlets. The selection was limited to the following options – Oslo in Norway and Stockholm in Sweden – and upon the cooperation of Villeroy & Boch, the research process has been processed in one and the same day. The detailed implementation of the data collection will be described in the following parts.

- Observation

The two authors of this research separately made the passive observations of the shopper's behavior in the two stores stated above in one and the same day during the opening hours of the stores – between 10:00 and 18:00. The observation schedule was used to have the predetermined structure of the observation of the shopper's behavior and to systematically note demographics, purchase information and the outstanding behavior of the shopping process. While the two researchers observed shoppers in the stores, they pretended to be a part of the sales staff in the stores so the shoppers do not expect to be a research object and they behave naturally. In the case of the passive observation, the observers are not perceived as intruders (Eysenbach and Till, 2001, pp.1103–1105) as it would change the data collected and they pretend to be a part of the crowd and of this particular social group. The authors of this paper argue with ideas that market-oriented ethnography is an "intentionally and unavoidably intrusive method" (Kozinets, 2002:62) as the intention is the data to be gathered from the subjects of observation without realizing that they are analyzed. However, Kozinets is right that this method is time-consuming and elaborate. On the other hand, that type of gathering information was helpful to understand the tastes and desires of the consumers, relevant decision-making motives, and influences of particular social groups.

- Interviews

The most commonly employed technique within qualitative studies is the one-to-one in-depth interviews. This method is also very suitable for the purposes of this research since it allows focusing on the consumer's point of view and personal opinion (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Also, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2004) claim that using this method will explore deeply and reveal new dimensions of a problem and will ensure accurate accounts based on personal experiences. In this way, insights into what the interviewees see as relevant and important (Bryman & Bell, 2011) will be made.

For the type of interview, a semi-structured interview was used that allowed the researchers to follow the prepared questions but also to feel free to ask follow-up questions to the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This avoids too structured interviews and leaves room for additional questions and remarks. The latter was needed in order to understand the complex framework of the respondents' personal values and perceptions, and to explain issues that are seen as important (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews took into account the actual opinions, but also included respondents' reactions, speaking manners, a form of the speech, speed, pausing and other modes. It is not merely what is being said but also how it is said. Thus, it was also important to notice what was happening in and through the interview as that was a conversational interaction that contains a lot of implicit information (Wästerfors and Sjöberg, 2008).

In total, ten interviews with randomly selected consumers were conducted: two people in Oslo and eight in Stockholm were willing to participate on that day – 28th of April, five females, and five males in total, between the ages 30-60. The total number was not predefined in advance as well as the number of the representatives from each of the two different locations. The consumers have been randomly selected among those who visited the two stores and made a purchase. It was interesting to find out what was their idea of the driving forces behind their behavior. Therefore, those customers were firstly observed from entering the store until they have made their purchase. After closing the deal, and when they just have finished their shopping experience were asked to participate in the interview and answered the questions. Among the customers, there are some who declined due to a language barrier or time constraints. In view of this, only those who were willing to participate in the research process were interviewed.

In order to conduct the face-to-face in-depth interview with each interviewee, a separate room was provided in the store in Oslo and a special table was arranged in one of the corners in the store in Stockholm. These interview environments were considered for the one-to-one in-depth interviews as the most appropriate since the risk when interviewees were influenced by others was avoided. Researchers met each interviewee one at the time that made it easier to create an individualistic atmosphere of confidentiality where interviewees were more likely to reveal themselves and express their individual opinion. The time length of the interviews varied between 30 to 40 minutes. After each interview both of the researchers followed the steps in order to ensure the best quality of data. It was important after each meeting notes to

be made about the general overview, the body language of the interviewee or any additional information that might be considered as relevant later on (Cicourel, 1974; Witzel, 2000; Helfferich, 2009). Thus, the most important information was preserved right in the moment when the impressions of the conversation were still fresh. It was a good time as well to check if the flow of the interview was smooth and whether the interviewees understand the questions correctly or not.

Additional information and a general overview of the customer's buying behavior were gathered from the interviews with the sales staff at the points of sales. Since the research process was limited within one day, this extra-empirical material also contributed to the answer of the question – what are the behavioral patterns of the consumers in the store? The purpose was again to focus on the typical buying-behavioral patterns but from another perspective. Furthermore, since the research was done on one particular day, and it was more like a snapshot of the whole process, the sales staff also provided some insights based on their everyday communication and interaction with the customers. One interview with a sales staff in Oslo, Norway, and one interview with the sales representatives in Stockholm, Sweden were conducted in accordance with their free will of cooperation. Interviews were conducted while the stores were quiet so the staff did not get stressed to participate. These interviews lasted around 40 minutes. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcript afterward. At the end, the text was converted into a literary style, including all the additional information, such as nuances, gestures, general body language and expressions. Again, the text includes the sales staff's responses enriched with additional information, taken as relevant for the research purposes such as body language, pauses, mood and tone of the speech.

Thus, data from various sources was collected. As the empirical evidence plays an important role in confirming, revising, or discrediting existing theory and in guiding the development of new theory the plan was to investigate the points of view of both consumers and sales staff. By using that approach the problem was covered from different perspectives. Furthermore, all the interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcript the day after in order to prevent that any information is missed or important points were forgotten from the conversations. Only after that, the data was interpreted and by doing this the pitfall of jumping directly to wrong conclusions was avoided.

3.4   Data Analysis

The company Villeroy & Boch and its consumers were used as a case study and based on this, conclusions were made for both industry and firm (Pettigrew, 1988). It is said that a theory could be built on a case study, either single or multiple and by doing this the aim is to shed more light on the consumer's buying behavior of the high-end products in offline channels in Nordics. The aim was to check what the drivers behind their purchases were. The interviews consist of several questions in order to reveal the motives for visiting the particular store/location as well as the reason for choosing the specific product. For research purposes, it was interesting what modified the process of buying a product and the main research question to which the answer was looked for was concerning the driving forces and the motivation behind the buying behavior of the consumers.

As Sekaran & Bougie (2010) claim, "the analysis of qualitative data is not easy" (p.370) since, in that case, the researchers are dealing with data "in the form of words" (p.369). The interview questions have been set to ten (10) although due to the extensive answers of the respondents to some of the questions, some changes during the interview process have been made. In addition, a test trial has been made in advance aiming to refine the formulation of the questions to make them easy to comprehend and understandable.

As a result of the analysis, the two authors of the research followed the below steps to analyze the data:

1.   Documentation and the process of data collection

2.   Categorized of the data into concepts

3.   Connection of the data to show how one concept may influence another

4.   Corroboration/legitimization, by evaluating alternative explanations

5.   Representing the account

It is important since the analysis of qualitative research start from the research notes, the authors of the research made notes at the time of the observation and interviewing together with voice recording. This was the first step to finding out/identify important statements in connection with the research questions by simply reading the notes. After finishing the observations and the interviews, the digitalized documentation of the research was made for both observations and interviews. After the documentation process, it was examined to categorize the data into various factors. Lastly, the categorized data was evaluated to find out correlations how each factor may influence on consumers and how all other factors were interplayed.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

As Churchill and Iacobucci (2005, p.294) claim "a measure is valid to the extent that variability in scores among objects reflects the true differences of the characteristics being measured" and also "to the extent to which judges are able to use category definitions to classify the qualitative data" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010, p.384). For the responses to be valid means that they should match the aim of the research question to a full extend. Only, in that case, it could be deducted that the research has met the purpose. On the other hand, a research could not be measured as valid in case the questions have not been asked correctly or not been understood but are analyzed in the results.

The research for this project could be treated as valid due to the fact that the research design process has been polished and refined with the time. First of all, the interview questions have been finally formulated after the extensive literature review. In addition, non-active participants in the project such as friends and family members have been consulted for more insights. Furthermore, a test trial has been done to check the time management and the understandability and question formulation and a last consultation with the thesis supervisor have been made before conducting the interviews. During the data collection process, the aim of the researchers was to be sure that the questions were correctly comprehended by the respondents and only after gathering all the necessary information the analysis was made.

Another cornerstone for the reliability of the research is the belief that consumers should be studied in their native environment (Sorensen, 2009). This set the focus on the idea that in case the research would like to investigate the real consumers of the high-end products, they could be found within the four walls of the mono-brand dedicated stores. In the data gathering process the shoppers have been observed and thus, they have been converted from "users" into "testers". It was believed that by studying what shoppers actually do in the stores, what they look at, how they move through the store and what they buy would contribute to the answers to the research question. What is more, a relevant study of the shoppers' behavior, motivations and perceptions at the point of purchase could be conducted.

Last but not least, during the data collection from each individual respondent, the audio records were repeatedly listened and carefully handled for the data to be transcript appropriately. Later on, the focus was on presenting and analyzing the data precisely and accurately. Thus, the scientific dishonesty, such as fabrication (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.137), was avoided. Based on the all the points stated above and the fact that different data collecting methods were used it can be considered that the overall reliability and validity of the study is high.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The ethical principles of business research are regarded as an important area in which the role of values come into play during the research process and ethical issues concerns such as "how should we treat the people with whom we conduct research?", and "are there activities in which we should or should not engage in our relations with them?" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.122).

Diener and Crandall (1978) grouped the ethical principles into four main areas such as whether there is any risk of harm to participants, a lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. Since our research took the form of a case study of Villeroy & Boch, the entire research process has been discussed with the Managing Director of Villeroy & Boch Nordic. Therefore, in the process of considering ethical principles in this research, it was considered as essential to connect with the company's image. Above all things, whether this research could cause harm to participants or not was the factor that had the highest priority.

Since research participants were actual consumers of Villeroy & Boch and the research was conducted in their store, therefore, the general practice was to immediately respect the consumer's opinion if they did not wish to participate in the interview, regardless the reasons. Also, it was considered that researchers should try not to bother consumers during the shopping process, and thus the observations were made in public places but in a way the observers not to be perceived as voyeurs or intruders (Eysenbach, 2001, pp.1103–1105). Especially, the research checked the consumer buying behavior including what factors brought them into the offline shop. Moreover, the interviews were anonymous and among randomly picked up consumers from the ones in the stores. This was discussed with the participants in advance that they are randomly selected, the data gathered will be absolutely anonymous and used only for the research purposes. Only after gaining their confirmation, the interviews with the customers have been conducted. Lastly, the interviews with the sales staff were also conducted according to their will for cooperation and their personal choice did not affect any aspect of their performance as Villeroy & Boch's employees. The aim of all these considerations was not to embarrass them or cause any other disadvantage (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In addition to the four main ethical considerations, the practice of sharing and storage digital data raises new concerns about confidentiality and other ethical issues today (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The issued question might be to what extent the information can be used legitimately for research purposes. A further consideration was also given to the cooperation between researchers and the company. It was agreed that it was of high priority for both sides considering the data from the interviews and internal data from Villeroy & Boch should be handled in a confidential way. Therefore, no personal information was gathered and all the data from the interviews was stored separately and used as a database for the analyses in this paper.

4 Findings and Analysis

The chapter contains a detailed description of the observation place, presents the findings and aims to analyze them through the prism of the theoretical framework discussed in the previous parts.

4.1 Description of the Place

4.1.1 Villeroy & Boch in Oslo, Norway

The Villeroy & Boch shop in Oslo is close to the subway station called Majorstuen. It is about 200 meters away from the station and takes three minutes by walk. Majorstuen is a downtown shopping area in the western part of Oslo in Norway and is well known as an affluent neighborhood. The shop is located on the corner where the main street Kirkeveien and the side road Majorstuveien meet. There are no other retail stores next to the Villeroy & Boch shop on this street. Because of the fact that the location is around 100 meters away from the main shopping district, it is a pretty secluded place. Thus, it is relatively calmer than other shopping places, however, at the same time, it sets off the blue sign of Villeroy & Boch which is the standard sign of the brand.

The door is settled at the corner of the two streets, and a banner of the new season collection is displayed in the window on the Majorstuveien Street. The shop consists of two floors whereof one goes down to a basement, which is widely used as a storage place and is not meant for visitors. The main floor is the place where the shoppers can have a look around the displayed items. Inside of the store, the atmosphere seems bright and open because there are big windows on two sides. As soon as the shopper enters the door, a city cup section and a section containing a BBQ collection with a sale promotion were displayed. On the right side of the door, a table for coffee cups was arranged with a big tag indicating the sale promotion. Next to that, new season collections were set by windows and each collection was displayed on one table with a bit of light. The table was decorated with a vase with flowers in it, also with candles etc. This table displays not only gave an elegant and luxurious feeling but also a personal touch. On the other side of the wall were the sections for original China plates. To the left side of the door, there was a section for serving bowls, and for baby and children items. Next to that, decoration items such as glass vases, candles, table mats followed. Around the counter, there were more side items for tableware such as cutlery, napkins, etc.

4.1.2   Villeroy & Boch in Stockholm, Sweden

The Villeroy & Boch store in Stockholm is in the heart of the city. It is downtown, located on the pedestrian street in the area Östermalm, which is the old part of the city. It is situated among other stores of high-end brands as well as business offices of international companies. Although situated in the downtown, the store is in a communicative place, reachable through all means of transport – buses, trams, subway and by a car. The central station is only 15 minutes away on foot.

The area is popular either among tourists as it is a pedestrian street surrounded by a lot of hotels part of international brands (Crystal Plaza, Elite Hotel Stockholm Plaza, Hotel Kung Carl, and Scandic Anglais) or among the locals since the building is among other business buildings and offices. At the bottom line, the area is known as the heart of the city and it is a typical affluent neighborhood. The shop is a part of a series of stores all along the street of well-known brands for luxury products. Furthermore, the store has not changed its location since the very beginning when they opened it and has never moved from the top location for the last 20 years. Due to the fact, it is a preferred location both for the old shoppers and attracts a lot of new ones.

The store is visible at both ends of the street due to the sets of the standard blue sign on the façade. The entrance is in the middle of the store face and on the windows on both sides new-collection products have been displayed. On the left, products from the new BBQ series have been arranged on a table with a typical summer style and on the right window products with spring and flourish decorations have been displayed. The store consists of three levels although not really separate floors. The basement is used as a storage place and it is not meant for shoppers. The main floor is the main store place, where different themes of products are displayed. On the back side, there is stairs with several steps for the second level of the store with more specific products and children's collection. This semi-floor leads to a separate showroom for hotel and restaurants collections. The place is meant to be used with corporate shoppers purchasing products for their business rather than for their homes and personal needs.

Once the shopper enters the store it is easy to navigate between the sections of different products. On the right wall, all the glass and crystal collections were displayed. On the back, specific porcelain sets were arranged and on the left wall porcelain plates and cups were shown. In between again on both sides – right and left two tables with products on sales were placed. The tables were fully decorated representing a real-life home atmosphere with flowers, candles, and small items. These table displays gave at the same time elegant, stylish and personal atmospheres in the store.

4.2   Description of the Interviews

The researchers selected participants for interviews at two different stores on the same day –
28th April 2016. One of the researchers was in Oslo, and the other – in Stockholm between the
working hours of the stores (10:00-18:00). The interview respondents were found among
randomly selected consumers who purchased items and were asked for their cooperation at
the end of their shopping process. The interviews aimed to investigate consumers and to get a
deeper insight into the reasons behind their decision-making process, both in the pre-purchase
step as well as the purchase step in the shops. The interviews made it possible to get the
individual insights of each participant since they were conducted as a one-to-one free
discussion. In addition, a special place was provided in both locations which made more
relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. In that case, the participants behaved naturally and
freely, not feeling as research objects. Furthermore, the personal conversation with each of
them avoided the influence of other participants or visitors in the store.

In general, the chosen method – in-depth interviews allowed flexibility (Bryman & Bell,
2015) and at the same time – gathering good qualitative and rich information for analysis.
Although there was a predefined list of questions, in some cases additional explanation was
made and further questions were asked. The challenge was that some people in the beginning
of the conversation were more likely to give short and mainly one-word answers. They were
not very talkative and open for a conversation, but rather expecting a questionnaire with
multiple-choice answers. Shortly after asking the follow-up question the speed of the
conversations slowed down and the participants felt more relaxed and willing to share their
personal ideas and insights. Even though those who initially firmly stated that could devote
not more than five minutes for the interview, stayed longer and answered all the questions till
the end. None of the ten participants decided to quit in the middle of the conversation and
what is more, at the end some admitted that they really enjoyed it. They shared personal
memories and stories happened years ago. Therefore, it is believed that the interviews were a
suitable method for both – allowing flexibility and gathering rich data at the same time.

As complementary information to the customers' interviews, the sales staff in each location
was also interviewed. This allowed the researchers to obtain the other perspective of the
interaction between the store/brand and the consumers. It was believed that the interviews
with the customers are like a snapshot of the specific moment – one particular day, whereas
the staff in the store could enrich the data with their personal reflection based on the everyday
contact with the visitors of the two locations. These interviews were also conducted with
questionnaires prepared beforehand (can be found in Appendix A). Typically, they were
preceded in a semi-structured way as well. Afterward, the interviews were conducted in a
conversational way between interviewer and interviewees but transcripts were made in a
literary style using the interviewee's own narration using their own words in their storytelling.
In that case, all the additional non-verbal information was also implemented and used in the
analysis.

4.3 Description of the Observations

Another mean of gathering information were the passive observations. They were made in the two locations where the interviews were conducted and on exactly the same day. The aim of this research is to find out and to understand what the driving forces behind the shopper's decision-making process in the stores for high-end designed tableware products are. Therefore, it was important to observe patterns of shoppers and factors in the store that have an influence on the shoppers. The observations complemented the research with the information about the unconscious behavior of the visitors and revealed aspects of the interaction between the brand and the customers which the latter are not always aware of. Since the customers did not realize they have been watched they behaved naturally and unintentionally.

The researchers were focused on the buying process and the typical customer's behavior of the shoppers who were visiting the two stores described above. Overall around 60 visitors, spread almost evenly between the two stores, have been observed. At the end, some of them happened to convert into shoppers and eventually, some of them – interviewees as well. Hence, the researchers had a look at the behavior exactly right after entering the shop until the end of the shopping process for each person in the two different places. The focus has been set on the following aspects: whether they seem to buy items intentionally or not, how much the factors of the store environment such as visual merchandising, display and layout play a role in the overall shopping experience and whether the promotions and services are influencing the purchase decision.

On the other hand, since from the very beginning, it was discussed that passive observations could give extra information but not an in-depth data for the purposes of the research. Therefore, it was used as a supplement method but not as a base as it reveals the unconscious buying behavior for the trained observer. In any case, this information alone is not rich and sufficient enough for a qualitative research and the following analysis. In addition, the aim was also to make a discussion with the participants and to predispose them to share insights, ideas and personal thoughts.

In view of all these arguments, the 60 observed visitors were a good sample for showing the main patterns of the typical customers' behavior and the decision-making process in the store at the moment of the purchase. Also, the combination of the information gained from both interviews and observations gave the reliable amount of data used for analysis after that. It could be said that the observations gave limited but still – relevant and additional data to the interviews.

4.4　Analysis

- Location

Although, we are living in the digital revolution and people are able to surf freely and to search through the net whatever information they might need, the traditional brick-and-mortar stores still exist and have their own customers. Furthermore, it appears that the shoppers of the high-end design products still tend to be big fans of the offline shopping. Thus, the traditional shopping still plays a major role in the contemporary customer's life. Even more, people use to opportunity to surf the net for information which is not automatically followed by a purchase after that but by a store visit instead. As Interviewee 2 explains, even the search to be made online in advance, the purchase is still made in the physical store:

"I could check online shop but I do not like waiting and I am here today" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

The same customer admits that she is quite active online, searching for a particular product, compare prices, brands etc. At the end, however, she thinks that there is not much more effort to come to the offline store and get even more information than the online shopping could provide. Furthermore, the brick-and-mortar offers experience connected with personal perceptions, feelings or other senses. The most important factor for the interviewee was the feeling of the product – *"how much it will be comfortable actually when I hold it".*

In addition to her statement, the researched group claimed that they prefer the offline shopping since there are some features and product characteristics which cannot be obtained online. As the authors Alt (2009), Dabija (2010), Dunne, Lusch (2008), Abrudan (2012), Zentes et al. (2012) also explained. For both – the researchers and the interviewees it seems quite normal to check the information online in advance, based on it partly to create a purchase decision, which to be fully developed at the point of purchase:

"I check the design of wish listed products and price information via online in order to have pre-information" (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

In different ways and with their own words, the same case was explained by almost all of the people we met on the day for the interviewees in both locations – Oslo and Stockholm:

"...I made a research the last days... In this case, I searched some information about the products online. I wanted to compare. But on the other hand, it is nice to be offline, to come into the real store" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

This discussion with Interviewee 5 was elaborated even more in that direction. Some of the follow-up questions have been about the personal habit of the search process online and for the need of specific information. At the end, the person reached the conclusion by herself, that in the majority of the situations she goes to the physical stores. For her, that was the preferred

shopping channel although not thinking about it so far but doing it subconsciously and unintentionally.

In addition, for the interviewed people the location means a lot which proves the Ghosh and McLafferty (1987) saying that it is a "long-term fixed investment". First of all, the customers explained that they visited the stores because they knew they will find what they are looking for and secondly, they needed a geographically convenient rooftop with an easy access. In the busy everyday life, shoppers tend to prefer locations close to either their home (Interviewees 6, 7, and 9) or their office (Interviewees 5 and 10). The majority of the researched group pointed out one of those two locations as a factor influencing the choice of the store.

"We visit this location because it was on our way... we live quite close and when we need something we usually come to this store" (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"I live nearby. My home is very close to the store. That is why I chose this particular store" (Interviewee 7, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"...it is close to my home. I live very near, just down the street" (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

For other people, who commute every day, the location is also important although not close to their homes but to their office or close to the subway for example as it was the case for the Interviewee 10:

"My way from the subway to the office is exactly by the store. I chose this location because it is close. It is actually between my office and the station" (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"I actually work very close. My office is just down the street. So I was thinking about Villeroy & Boch's store and this was the nearest location" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

There was also a third group, which explained that visiting that particular store has a completely different meaning. Their personal reason had a slight difference. They chose the Villeroy & Boch store not because it is in the area of their home or office, but of another important for them place. The Interviewee 2 and 8 said that they do not live in the city at all. Also, they do not tend to pass by the location regularly, since it is not on their regular way. However, when they come to the city they always make a plan to visit the store as well. Also, they both were sure that when they come next time will find the store in the exactly same place. So they use their trip which is originally made for other purposes and combine it with a visit to the store and doing some shopping:

"I live outside of the city, but today I visited my dentist that is nearby here. If I know I will be in this area and if I have time, then I always stop by here to look around" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"Today I was in Stockholm. Actually, I live in Uppsala. I was in Stockholm and I have been to this shop before" (Interviewee 8, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Another important remark about the location is that changed location might affect the business in terms of sales (Ghosh and McLafferty, 1987). Shoppers are used to certain habits, which repeat constantly with the time and they tend to visit locations on a regular basis (Interviewees 6). Although there are some interviewees who admitted that they visited the store spontaneously, it is more likely for the targeted customers to make their choice in advance and to select the location based on strict criteria:

"We live quite close and when we need something we usually come to this store" (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

In addition, for Interviewee 3 the location visit is more like a ritual, made also as a habit. Even if he is not looking for a particular item or a product of a strong need, he visits the location regularly to see the new arrivals:

"I come when I need to buy some new stuff." (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

Something similar experienced another participant – Interviewee 2 but she connects it with different background factors. For her, visiting the store might not have a particular idea for purchases, but rather showing the strong connection with the brand. She combines the store visit with getting some ideas, insights, and inspiration. Thus, she combines the location with other factors which as a whole modify her decision:

"I always like to look around to get an idea how to set a table with a mixture of plates and cups, etc." (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

Last but not least, when it comes to the location issues, certain brands have a specific target group of customers. For the high-end design products, this is of a particular interest since the companies are focused not only to be close to the customers but to be located between similar retailers (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). Therefore, the majority of their locations are in the busiest shopping area of the cities or in the most popular one. This affects to a great extend the unplanned purchases. The statement was proven by the explanation that some of the researched people gave during the interviewees – that they were just walking around or looking for a present for a precious or loved person, or just wanted to purchase a quality product as a reward for themselves. Although, the location seems a generic factor and its importance is obvious, the interviewees explained it in a combination with some other factors – the unique design, the rich in-store display or the special atmosphere contributed to the conclusion that the location is a significant factor itself, but is extremely powerful in combination with the other factors analyzed in the following paragraphs.

- Design and Layout

Apart from the location, the other "physical" feature of the brand is the external and internal store design and the layout of the products. According to the existing literature, all of them have a significant role in the relationship between the brand and the shopper (Davies and Ward, 2005; Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). Brüggen et al. (2011) also explained about the store appeal and the positive influence on the total store image. Stores are designed to entertain, but also to inspire and to tell stories. Thus, not only the product's characteristics matter in the consumer's decision-making but the whole communication and the interaction with the brand modifies the purchase behavior. Luxurious environment, décor, and fashionable layout may also support the brand image of offering high-quality and designed products. This was confirmed, for example, by the couple which was the Interviewee 6:

"We prefer to come here just for what we have seen inside it." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

And later the same people admit their emotional devotion and long-term loyalty to the brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). They connect the in-store design and layout with love and commitment:

"We have visited the store so many times and we liked it…. when we need something we usually come to this store" (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

In addition, the design and the layout can contribute to creating a special place, which corresponds to the image of the brand in the shopper's mind and to become a preferred place for regular visits (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). For Interviewee 4 it is like a regular or scheduled activity: *"I come here from time to time"* (Interviewee 4, Stockholm, April 28, 2016). Turley and Milliman (2000) also say that the design and layout are a factor that impacts the consumer's emotions. Some of the interviewees deliberately admitted that they are regular visitors even when they do not need something particular, but need some leisure and free-time activity. All of them explained that this is their preferred brand, not only because of the products but because the place and the environment which encourages them to visit it again. The overall impression is made by the pleasant atmosphere which includes the decor, the equipment, and the decorations but also the combination between all of them. Thus, the visual appealing and the positive brand image are created.

"I come here from time to time and I know what they are offering… I know... They will have exactly what I want." (Interviewee 4, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"...we liked it – the products, the atmosphere, and the service." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Another group of participants was, on the contrary, looking for something particular. It was not a specific product but they needed ideas, ready-made solutions and images that they could easily transfer into their homes. They consider the store as a similar place and looking alike

their own homes – cozy, relaxing and comfortable. Although not mentioned in all the interviews with the customers, the body language, gestures and the other non-verbal signals contributed to the conclusion that the design and layout is a cornerstone in the decision-making process in the offline shopping.

"I always like to look around to get an idea how to set a table with a mixture of plates and cups, etc." (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

On a subconscious level, this factor interacts with the senses of the visitor makes a positive influence and as a sequence – increases their willingness to spend more money. Even more, the regular shoppers know that the store design is changed according to the new trends of the products which make them come to the place on a regular basis to check the new arrivals. They use the store layout also for an inspiration for decoration and it triggers their decision-making. A single product itself or a picture of a product on the net might not be as influential as a whole displayed set or an arranged table. Therefore, the regular shoppers admit they tend to accidentally drop-by and to see how the new items could fit in their personal lifestyle and home design:

"I know the store and I know the products. When I need something new, I just come by" (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

It seems that not only the brand, the products or the previous experience may force the decision-making, but inspiration from the interior as well might create associations for a home decor and to inspire ideas for improvement. In addition, the design of the store seems to be a distinguishable and competitive advantage of the brand (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). As Interviewee 6 said, they fully trust the brand and based on their previous experience they are sure that whenever they need to buy a new product, they will find it exactly in that store:

"When we need something we usually come to this store." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

In that case, it is necessary the design and the layout of the stores appeal the consumers and to correspond to their lifestyle. It is essential for the luxury and high-end brands (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). Another important consideration is also that the interaction starts even before the customer to enter the store – from outside. Thus, the external environment in acting as a trigger and attracts the customers to come in. This happened to some of the representatives of the researched group who admitted in the interview, that they have been driven to visit the location by the positive impression they got from the outside, due to the visual merchandising and the window display.

- Visual merchandising and Window Displays

The decision-making process is highly influenced by the visual marketing and communication since the customers experience the whole environment with their senses. As part of this interaction, the visual merchandising and the window displays are important factors as this is what the customers see when they pass by, reach or enter the store. Furthermore, the decision for entering the store is made far away before reaching the location based on the window, the entrance or the other customers coming in. In that case, the window display and the creativity used in it play a very important role in attracting the customers. Although the effect is not measurable in exact numbers, but in the long term the negative image created by a poor window display or a visual merchandising could be significant.

As a part of the visual marketing, window display was the focus of the research as well. The window display is like an ongoing advertisement of the brand and a competitive advantage and a way to distinguish from the others. It gives a clear message what the customers could expect to find out inside the store. Usually, the most actual and trendy products are arranged on the window with a clear idea and easy to understand the message.

"First, I saw the glasses on the window. This made me come inside and have a look" (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Furthermore, it was empirically confirmed that among the researched customers they were influenced by this type of visual marketing. Since it is the first contact between the brand and the visitor, it is really important to represent correctly the brand image. During the day of the research, the observations and the interviews confirmed that the right products on the window arranged in a proper way increase not only the footfall but the number of the purchases as well. This was the first thing that caught the shopper's attention and invited them to enter the store:

"We looked at it; we saw it through the window. We liked it and that is why we came in." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The next respondent also explains that she has been attracted by an appealing image and visually pleasant picture seen through the window. This was the main trigger not only to enter the store but to modify to a higher extend the decision process:

"…I saw those glasses on the window. And they are really nice shape…So when I first saw the glasses on the window I liked them very much." (Interviewee 7, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

On the other hand, the same person explained a bit more – that she saw the products on the window one day but took her time and discussed with her friends for a couple of days before buying the products. Although senses are subjective and by stimulating the customer's feelings and emotions they can create either positive or negative effects, by using this tool properly, the brand could successfully create a unique shopping experience for its customers.

In her case, however, not only the appealing appearance of the image created was the factor but the product attributes as well – such as the shape. This specific cognitive motive could also be found in the case of the Interviewee 8, who admitted with a smile at some point of the conversation that is not a regular offline customer. However, he spends more time online, also reading printed materials and only when he happens to see on the window the products which previously attracted him, he makes a purchase.

"I am very poor shopper …and when on the streets I see things on the window and then maybe I recognize it…" (Interviewee 8, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

It is also important the window display corresponds with the visual merchandising in the store. The promises should be kept and the messages to continue the logic and the sequence from outside to inside the store. Not only this, but the messages should be very clear and recognizable. It is also connected with all the information the brand publishes on the social media and different platforms as well. Very often the brands use similar visual effects online and offline and thus create a connection in the memory of the customer. Some product combinations available online could be found in the physical store as well and thus it is easy for the customer to recognize them. The bestsellers or seasonal products are displayed right after the window display. This makes the customers slow down the speed, to experience the atmosphere and to be influenced through all their senses. Very important fact, which should be kept in mind, is that the people react to around 70 percent of what they see and only 30 percent of what they hear. We use our eyes to gather information, which influences our behavior, forms a reaction and modifies the decision. Therefore, the special arrangements and displays impress the customers, grab their attention, they are a trigger to touch and interact with the product, to create a clear picture what it would be like to have this product at home which is a stimulus for the purchase decision.

"…we prefer to come here just for what we have seen inside it." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The idea of the visual merchandising is to act as an external stimulus for the shopping behavior (Berman and Evans, 2010), to interacts with personal perceptions by creating clear images (Nordfält, 2005) which will lead to higher levels in terms of sales (Pegler, 1998). This worked successfully for the Interviewee 2 for example:

"I get inspired from table setting at the store, if the setting is nice, then I want to buy something from the setting" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

The visual merchandising is also used to display the products in the best possible way and to create a specific image. In addition, for the Interviewee 6, the interaction with the brand started even earlier and as Campbell (2013) claims, it created reaction and forced the purchase decision:

"We saw it through the window. We liked it and that is why we came in." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

These two factors – window display and the visual merchandising engage the customers' sense – sight and interact with the personal perceptions and judgments. This is a trigger and a very efficient way to engage the customers starting from the moment of passing by the store. By special arrangements or different messages on the window the brand influences the individual's emotional reactions connected with a pleasure, excitement and interest. Depending on how different people react to this stimulus, they can behave differently. For example, Interviewee 10 said that the window display in combination with the product, the shape, and the design made him enter the store and almost immediately to make an impulse purchase:

"First, I saw the glasses on the window. This made me come inside and have a look" (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

In this case, the visual merchandising acted as a tool for increasing the sales at the point of the purchase (Bell & Ternus, 2006). As the marketing literature says, the visual merchandising helps a lot to the decision-making process at the point of taking the decision (Inman, Winer, and Ferraro 2009). Since we are living in a visual world, customers are forced to make fast buying decisions based on what they see and manages to grab their attention as Janiszewski (1998) and Lohse (1997) claim.

In addition to the information derived from the interviews, the observations also contributed with evidence that the window display urges the customers to make the first step and to enter the store. Some of the visitors spend a significant time in front of the window and then due to the positive image they got attracted to come inside. It was confirmed later on by the people who we observed initially and then agreed to participate in the interviews:

"They were on the window when I saw them… these glasses and I liked the shape of them… and it was clear." (Interviewee 7, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

On the other hand, since the research was made only on one particular day, some might decide that it was not a repeated action but an incident customer's behavior typical of the people who happened to come to the store on that day. That is why the phenomenon was discussed once again in the interviews with the sales representatives. In these interviews, the staff was asked to think about the broader picture and to describe the behavioral patterns of the traditional customer. All of the sales representatives concluded that the customers initially got influenced by the window display and then they enter the store to get more of the shopping experience:

"The reason for why customers visit the offline store, because we focus displaying. We have standard guidelines that focus mainly on window" (Interview with sales staff, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

The same Interviewee also talked about the fact that *"people like to check real products by their eyes"* and continues: *"As soon as customers come into the store, they go around to the right to look around and check the window display."* Thus, the interaction with the window

display does not end upon entering the store but the customer is looking for more similar products inside. The branch manager on the other researched location starts explaining the same thing: *"In the beginning, they come in attracted by the window"* and later adds on: *"What is on a display is of a great importance"* (Interview with sales staff, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

All these discussions show that the visual merchandising interacted with the customers and even more – the window display as a part of the visual marketing was a factor for their decision-making process since it is the first interaction between the brand and the shopper. Since the high-end designer tableware products are bought not only for rational purposes but for aesthetic and hedonistic ones, the visual appearance is highly important. It also may create positive image and associations with a pleasure time and based on this – a decision for a purchase even before the shopper to enter the store.

- In-store Displays

The in-store display includes both the functional aspect, i.e. the availability of the products and the aesthetical aspect – how they are arranged and displayed. Thus, the needs of the customers are fulfilled by finding what exactly they are looking for and offering the right product for them. On the other hand, the overall image through the display is positive, attractive and aesthetically appealing. The interviewees admitted that the internal environment evokes feelings and emotions and thus influence the reactions, modifies certain patterns and the overall buying behavior. It was believed that the way the products are arranged and displayed will affect the shopper's buying behavior and will urge the decision-making process (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). Not surprisingly, the interviewees also confirm that belief explaining it from their own experience.

"I just come by and see the products that are displayed" (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The in-store display interacts not only with the sight of the customer but with other senses in a way that they can touch, feel and experience the product (Campo and Gijsbrechts, 2005) and then to evaluate it and make a purchase decision. The product attributes are the factor in this case. The customers take their time to look for the right product which will fit their specific home décor and will be the right piece of art perfectly matching with the other decoration. Although the experience is subjective as the perceptions and feelings are, the overall impression might be a pleasant and meaningful visit which will act as a trigger for future visits as well. By focusing on the in-store displays the brands could create a positive image, leading to a word of mouth or a brand loyalty. This also plays a role as a competitive advantage between brands and their products. One other aspect is that customers tend to visit stores where their needs, inspiration, and ideas are satisfied. This means as a long-term effect that they will tend to turn back only because the in-store display managed once to create entertainment and satisfaction. The in-store display has also the power to convert the

impulsive visitor into a buyer who did not have any purchase in mind before entering the store.

"I like to come and check the kitchen things and I like to handle…" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

It was discussed in the theoretical part as well (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015) that the combination of the diversity of the displayed products and the space between them will offer the shoppers both a wide range of options and at the same time good space to be viewed, checked and experienced. It seems that from customer's point of view this is extremely important before making the final purchase decision.

"I go directly to the shop because then I can see the product. And the quality… I rely on my senses – these are the main factors that I take into consideration" (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Furthermore, this is also a competitive advantage when it comes to choosing between the offline and online shopping channel.

"In general, I prefer to buy in the store. I just come to see the products… And feel the quality. This is the main factor I consider when I am making a purchase at a shop" (Interviewee 4, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

This was one of the reasons the interviewees to prefer offline rather than the online shopping. In addition, they admit that online shopping is not very secure, takes some time to wait for the goods to be delivered and sometimes for precious, fragile and expensive products the transportation might not be preferable. Sometimes the order might be delayed. Some of them had a previous experience of not liking the product once it had arrived and it took them more time and effort for returning, a problem which never occurred with the offline shopping. On the other hand, some mentioned that the store availability is at times limited. It happened sometimes to like a product online and then to visit the physical store, but the specific good to be out of stock at the moment. In any case, they still could experience the shape, the form, the design and if they are satisfied to order it and to come back in few days to pick it up. This case is considered as a less disadvantage compared to the online orders. In addition, judging by the body language, the specific words and the way the whole situation was explained, people even consider it as a positive option, rather than a disadvantage. In that case, the product will be delivered especially for them and they feel like being specially treated and pampered as valuable customers.

"You can feel and touch the products, to choose the best one and to see what it really is... The feeling is different… I prefer to come to the store because it is better and it is easier to decide between products" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"You have to feel the product. For example, here you can see two different but very, very similar colors" (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The other detail, mentioned in some of the discussions, is that the in-store display and availability of the products have the competitive advantage of taking the purchased product immediately. This is also a trigger to the decision-making since ordering online means more time for waiting for the delivery, inconvenience of visiting the post office or in some cases – dissatisfaction of returning the product and waiting the amount to be refunded:

"You have to wait some time the product to be delivered. And sometimes you have to go to the post office to get it and so... it is a long process for me." (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

When it comes to the SMCG sector and the up-range brands it seems that the overall interior space and décor form the brand image. It seems that for the high-end designed products online shopping is not so popular, even though the digital activity is influencing the pre-purchase steps. Some of the consumers said that they made some search in advance and compared products and prices. However, the final decision was not able to be made without adding extra information from the real experience. Almost all of the interviewed people mentioned that they were missing something before deciding to buy and that is why they included their senses – they wanted to feel how comfortable the usage of the product is, to touch it and see the quality, or to see the difference in colors and choose the best one.

I prefer to buy from the store instead of online because I prefer to see what I buy" (Interviewee 8, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"In general, I prefer to buy in the store. I prefer to come and see and feel and touch the products..." (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

As it is obvious from the answers of the interviewees, they all describe the decision-making process by impressions from their senses. They all admit that the experience of the product through sight and feel is the factor making them buy or not. In the beginning, the authors and the literature discussed the in-store displays as important. As we believed, the theory got proven by the research to a full extend by almost all of the interviewees we met on the both locations on April 28th. What is more, the empirical findings not only proved the fact but showed that the factor has, even more, strength than expected when it comes to making a purchase decision based on it. In addition, the in-store display should correspond to the products and the price range and create a luxury atmosphere. Thus, it will strengthen the positive effect of the brand image, will draw the attention of the customer and increase the probability of making unplanned purchases of extra products.

- Atmosphere

The atmosphere is the way the brand communicates with the customer. Not only this, but it creates an outstanding and memorable experience which is connected with the long-term brand awareness, customer loyalty and continuing purchases of the products. This factor was

mentioned by almost all of the interviewees. They admit that the real purchase is usually preceded by an online search; however, they need some other stimuli in order to make their purchases. In the discussions we made with every one of the group, they explained about the need to feel the life and the spirit of the brand at the store. As a main disadvantage of the online store, they pointed out that it seems monotonous, boring and not live rather than artificial. Even sometimes the different web-stores resemble each other and the comparison is difficult since the price is the only distinguishable characteristic. The enjoyment and the personal pleasure of the shopping are missing. In that case, the quality, material or the shape could not be valued and they hardly play a role in the decision-making process. Therefore, it is necessary the brands focus on the engaging experience through a personalized atmosphere since the customers demand more stimuli and differentiators rather than quality, price or characteristics.

On the other hand, when visiting the offline store, interviewees are talking about the brand as a human being – they can feel the soul and the spirit in the store and use characteristic features as they describe a real person. The special and personalized experience mean a lot and it seems that customers are looking for not only products or services, rather than full interaction with the products, brands, and sales representatives. They search for a holistic experience, including touching, feeling and other in-store stimuli. Only, in that case, all their needs are fulfilled, and they feel satisfied by the purchase decision. Furthermore, the strong emotional devotion could transfer into a store love and a long-term consumer's loyalty. Since it is a general trend, the business should focus on understanding what a unique experience means for the customers, which stimuli are the most influential and thus to modify the decision-making and the consumption process. This will have a great influence on the brands' competitiveness and may serve as a distinguishing characteristic between them.

Thinking about the new digital era, we have to admit that nowadays the competition in sales and marketing has become severe. With the unlimited access to information, the customer is well prepared and with an almost fully modified decision about the needed products. In view of this, the decision-making process has been almost finalized through the online channel. Still, retailers might have the final word over the decision-making process taking advantage of the store atmosphere they offer. The store atmosphere is the factor that influences the personal perceptions and subconsciously modifies the decision-making process as Kotler et al. (1999) say. It interacts with the subconscious impression and it is believed that this is the main reason for the "psychological feeling the consumer gets" from the store (Berman and Evans, 2010:508). On this level of "communication" between the brand and the shopper the latter trusts on the senses – hearing, sight, touch and smell (McGoldrick, 2002:460). The aim of the brand is to create stimuli for all the senses and to facilitate consumer decisions (Ståhlberg and Maila, 2010). This successfully worked for the Interviewee 3:

"I rely on my senses – these are the main factors that I take into consideration." (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Not only this customer but few more the in-store atmosphere with their emotional state and pleasure, inspiring them and influencing to make a purchase. The traditional offline store is

not only a place for purchases but a source of information and an influential channel for decision making. It is a strong tool used by the retailers to provide as much product information as possible in order to promote and offer their products to the customers:

"I always like to look around to get an idea ... get inspired..., then I want to buy something from the setting." (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"It is nice to be offline, to come into the real store. Only in that way, you can feel and touch the products, to choose the best one and to see what it really is." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016). Later on, the same woman adds: *"The feeling is different."*

On the other hand, it appears that the in-store experience is something subjective and for different customers interrelates with different stimulations. It is a psychological factor that sometimes is described with a specific sense or a feeling that creates within the customer. The atmosphere creates individual sensory and emotional values. Therefore, it is a subjective and internal response following the interaction with the brand. As mentioned in the theoretical part, the stimuli could be created by visual navigation in the store, aesthetics, design, music and aroma (Davies and Ward, 2005; Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015). The aim of the research was to uncover that and the participants in the research claimed that the store atmosphere has an impact on them. Almost all of them explained that they were impressed by one of or the complex of the following features. For one group, the most important factor was to touch and feel the products:

"For me, it is so important to touch and feel products before buying." (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"...you can feel and touch the products, to choose the best one and to see what it really is" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

"I prefer to come and see and feel and touch the products." (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

For others, the personal experience and the interaction with the goods are connected with the other sense – sight. They prefer to see the products:

"I prefer to buy it via offline shops to see and check the products" (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"I go directly to the shop because then I can see the product" (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

Interviewees 4 (*"I just come to see the products"*), 8 (*"I prefer to see what I buy."*) and 10 (*"I just come by and see the products that are displayed."*) confirmed the same – for them how the product looks like acts as a strong stimulus and triggers the decision-making process.

There was a third group as well, for which not a single product mattered but the comparison between several. They have made a pre-search in advance, have selected a few items and then came to the store to compare sizes and colors. Only after that they were able to choose between different combinations:

"...it (the product) should be comfortable when I hold it" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"...here you can see two different but very, very similar colors. You cannot see this on the screen." (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Part of the atmosphere is also created by the sales staff and the interaction with it. Due to the service quality, the customers may form an image of a prestigious brand and preferable location for future visits. A store with knowledgeable, friendly and helpful sellers is always preferable than understaffed and not very skillful personnel. Their cooperativeness and willingness to give personal attention to the customers are connected with the pleasurable shopping experience and appealing atmosphere. The interaction starts with the greeting and a smile or an eye contact in the first few seconds when the customer enters the store. The interviewees categorized the fun and enjoyable interaction with the sellers as part of the high quality of the brand and the products. Furthermore, for some of them the helpfulness and the knowledge of the sellers was the thing that makes them return again in the store. Thus, the salespeople as part of the atmosphere of the store influence the decision-making process and play a role in the buying behavior. They can influence the customer's mood and overall satisfaction.

Apart from all these discussions, another comment contributed to the theory that the positive mood created by the store atmosphere could increase the regularity of the visits, the duration of each of them and thus to stimulate the purchases (McGoldrick, 2002). As Interviewee 9 explained, for example, this was the accelerator to spending more money than planned in advance:

"I also [bought] more things than planned before." (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The preceding examples showed that the atmosphere plays a big role in the buying process by creating special moments (Mitchell, Kahn, and Knasko, 1995). It seems that the brand through the store environment and the atmosphere managed to make emotional moments which lead to attachment with the consumer. In fact, the atmosphere could be used as a competitive advantage by the brand and for that reason, the managerial focus should be on what buying experience the target group is seeking and what emotions are needed through the decision-making process. In that sense, the atmosphere succeeded in its role to increase brand love (Aaker, 1997) and loyalty (Johnson, 2010; Kim et al. 2007) as the authors claim.

- Name/fascia

The brand name is awareness, the specific knowledge and the image that comes to the mind of the customer when thinking about the brand. It is the special relationship created between the customer and the product which in long term affects the purchase behavior and evolves to customer's loyalty. As explained earlier in the chapters, a brand can be an information carrier, a guarantee, an image creator (Melin, 2002) since the product alone is not sufficient for the consumer's purchasing decision and could distinguish the certain brand from the competitors (Alba and Chattopadhyay, 1985). Almost all of the participants in the interviews confirmed that they rely on the brand, the name, and the image more than anything else:

"I know this brand has good quality" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"I have heard about the quality of the products even before" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"And I know the brand. Villeroy & Boch is one of my favorite brands" (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The brand also serves as a way to distinguish from the others, to show the desired lifestyle among friends, to catch their attention and approval. SMCG products are not only characterized with the longer live, but also with high involvement of the customer and not so fast decision-making process since they are connected with symbolism and status (Kapferer, 2012). It means that purchasing specific products and linking to a particular brand creates special identity and form an image:

"And our guests always also say "What nice porcelain"." (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016)

Another aspect, which we discussed with the participants, is that the purchases are made for specific purposes – to buy a present and to make other people happy or buy a good quality and branded product for special occasions. As the Interviewee 1 said, he is a traveler and wants to make a present for his wife. He is not sure what exactly he is looking for, but he knows that she loves the brand. This is enough for him to make a preference. Some other interviewees also explained that regularly buy presents for special occasions and for their beloved ones from this brand.

"last year, my wife found Villeroy & Boch shop and bought some products, since then she started to collect the products from this brand" (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"...I use a lot of their products at home. Looking back in time and thinking about purchasing my first V&B product it was many years ago." (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"...we have so many products at home." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

In addition, the brand value and the brand loyalty play an important role in the decision-making process and the product itself is not enough for the consumer's purchasing decision. According to the researched group, the interviewees answer that the products from Villeroy & Boch have good qualities and nice design, but most of all – they trust the brand unconditionally (Urde et al, 2013). In terms of this, they perceived the brand value as the product value because they do not evaluate only one particular item, but the whole brand which adds extra value to the single item (Kapferer, 2012).

"Villeroy & Boch is one of my wife's favorite brands..." (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"I prefer a Villeroy & Boch shop because I think they have really nice designs." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"We knew that Villeroy & Boch is a very good brand. They have a nice design and good quality" (Interviewee 6, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

As Radder and Huang (2007) described, the brand has been rooted into the memory, a positive image has been created and it spreads over all the product lines. Even when the customers were not sure what exactly they need, the brand name is the first one that comes to their mind and they visit the store. They do not know if the specific product exists but they know the brand and by visiting the store they will find a product matching their needs. Kapferer (2012) also talks about the reduced risk and the aura of the brand, which we also discussed with the participants.

"I and my wife prefer Villeroy & Boch brand among other similar high-end designed brands..." (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"...I love Villeroy & Boch products because they are very elegant and classic but at the same time, they have a modern look and nice quality" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

Furthermore, some of the interviewees explained that they have many experiences to purchase the products more than few times. These strong bonds with the brand can be explained that they have the strong brand loyalty to attach with their personal life and identity:

"...[she] bought some products, since then she started to collect the products from this brand" (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"In general, it is not my first purchase from Villeroy & Boch. I have bought a lot of other products from the brand." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

"I have bought several sets during the years...I remember my first purchase from Villeroy & Boch... The first product I bought about 20 years ago. Such a long time ago. And we were very happy with the family" (Interviewee 9, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

- Sales Promotions

Gaining a marketplace is the main objective of the companies. This is even more essential when we are talking about specific products such as high-end designed tableware products. In that case, the sales and marketing strategies are challenging due to the numerous factors influencing the decision-making process. The buying behavior is modified by the customers' values, personal preferences, perceptions for quality and price. Usually, the higher price is perceived as a guarantor of a higher quality. However, due to the competition between brands and products and the price wars, it forces the business to lower the prices or to use different promotional strategies. Considering the whole picture – the market, the competitors and the customers, the brands are exploring new ways of competitive advantage in the crowded marketplace by intense price competition. Although, the customers still tend to be product focused and the product attributes are important, not only the characteristics and the features rule but the price as well. On the other hand, the price is not only a value of the product, but it is connected with the perception of the pleasantness of the shopping, the satisfaction of the visit and to what extend the purchase fulfilled the customers' needs.

As said before, the sales promotions are important factors influencing the decision-making process. Although in this research this factor is pointed as the last one in the list, it appears that for the researched group the sales promotions also act as a trigger. Some of the interviewees know in advance that there are regularly discount prices (Interviewee 2 and 8), other mentioned that the checked online the prices of the competitors (Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 7).

"I have been to this shop before ... and they have... the porcelain is a sell here... on a regular basis" (Interviewee 8, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Interviewee 1 who is a traveler checked the prices of the same products but in different countries. However, one other thing is valid for all – all the interviewed people knew the brand in advance – either by their own previous experience or by information through the worth-of-mouth channel. They are aware of the high quality and the classic design and admit that this is something unique and cannot be copied. As Interviewees 7 says:

"I have searched for this design a lot but I could not find it anywhere." (Interviewee 7, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Although the same participant explains later on that she has been thinking for a while before deciding to buy them, she has recommended the brand and the products to her friends as well:

"I have recommended them to my friends. And already bought twelve each…And now they have a sale for these glasses and the price is very good" (Interviewee 7, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

On the other hand, the purchase in that case is made not only to fulfil the personal needs or wants satisfaction (longing for a particular shape) but also belonging to a certain group, showing identity and self-esteem (the interviewee said that part of the decision was made because all of her friends also decided to buy the set of glasses). In that case, she bought not only a product but also a desired lifestyle and status. Thus, the purchase is more like irrational activity based on desires rather than actual needs. The other trigger is the price discount in the period. This is not the only evidence that the sales promotion is strengthening the purchase decision and make the products "more attractive" (ASA, 2010:38). Other interviewees also admit that the promotion at the moment created a strong will to make a purchase and acted as a factor of the impulse buying:

"Before entering the store, I was thinking whether going into the store or not because the price of Norway can be more expensive. And then, I saw the sale promotion, so I decided to check out those products…" (Interviewee 1, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"So when I first bought these here (set of knives and forks), it was an extra price. So I liked both the product and the price" (Interviewee 3, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

And what is more, this factor was discussed with all the participants – regardless their age, background, need or motivation. Also, it is valid for different product lines – crystal, glass, porcelain, and cutlery:

"If they do sales, I always take an advantage to find some products" (Interviewee 2, Oslo, April 28, 2016).

"And also they had a sale for this kit." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

The entire group of customers explained that they know the brand and admitted the quality of the product. However, the discount is an additional stimulus either for impulsive or intentional decision-making and by the sales promotion the brand persuaded them to spend extra money on purchasing additional items.

"I think today I decided because of the price and the product. The combination of both made me make the purchase today" (Interviewee 10, Stockholm, April 28, 2016).

Some of the observed people were also attracted by the messages for the sales promotion on the window. This made them come inside and to be focused on the discount products arranged right after the window displays. This was the case with the visitor, who later turned into an Interviewee 10. He was also surprised when realizing that this was his first purchase from the brand, although familiar whit it and its products by the word-of-mouth channel. In addition, he classified his purchase as unplanned and completely impulsive. Not only this, but he bought three sets of glasses, although not sure that he needs them all.

Due to all the pointed out evidence, it appeared that for the researched customers the price is also a factor in the decision-making process. Because of the different sales and promotions, the products seem "more attractive" (ASA, 2010:38) and this should be considered as an

important marketing activity (Gedenk et al. 2006). Although it has been pointed out as a second-level trigger after the product itself, still it seems that they influence the shopper's choice. What is more, the sales promotion in combination with the all the above-stated factors, the products, and the atmosphere make the decision-making process more manageable and prone to impulsive buys of additional products (Goworek & McGoldrick, 2015).

5 Conclusions and discussion

This section aims to discuss the main research question, to analyze the results of the study in view of the latter and to provide practical conclusions. The main goal of the project from the very beginning has been to make a theoretical contribution, to provide managerial implications, and suggestions for other future researches. The aim of the research project has been to investigate the decision-making process and the purchase behavior of the high-end designed products. Therefore, the interviews have been conducted with the customers who made a purchase in the offline store.

5.1 Conclusions

The objective of the study was to have a better understanding of the reasons and motivations laying behind the purchase decision and how the decision-making process is developed in the purchase step. By making one-to-one interviews with the customers and in addition – passive observation of the buying behavior the authors aimed to gain a better understanding of the driving forces – either for or against making a purchase.

Based on the answers of the interviewees we have noticed one general trend, valid for the two locations and regardless the gender or the background of the people. The phenomenon is that people tend to use both channels – online and offline when shopping. The main difference is that the Internet is usually used for search whereas the physical stores are preferred for the real purchase of the products. It seems that the online channel, although easy to use and simple to navigate is not enough to create a unique shopping experience. This concept was proven empirically by the interviews with the customers as well as the sells staff. Consumers prefer to visit the physical store for the high-end designed products and for that reason, accessibility of the retail location plays an important role. When discussing the location with the interviewees it was obvious that the traditional brick-and-mortar stores still have their own customers. Although all of the customers were more or less online active, they admitted that the final purchase is made in the physical store. The location itself includes additional subfactors, such as accessibility, convenience, parking and transport which were pointed as important for the interviewees.

Apart from the location, other physical features of the brand are also important. The store design and layout, visual merchandising including window displaying and store atmosphere were powerful guidance to drive customers to visit the store and impacted on their purchasing

decision. The design is also a complex factor, which in cooperation with the architecture, geography and psychological factors, is the key to making the store visually appealing to the customers. The aim is to encourage the visitors to spend more time inside. It was proven by the observations that this increases their willingness to spend more money. Some conscious actions could be detected which proved the power of the factor; however, subconscious actions were also noticeable. The connection was obvious – the more appealing the store environment is, the more positive influence it will have on the attitudes, satisfaction, perceived quality, and value.

Another sequence of the unlimited access to information is that the world has become "visual". This is the fastest way the brands to reach the customers – by clear messages and simple images. The skillful layout and the visual merchandising play an active role in that case. The way the products are displayed has a major impact on the decision-making process. The interaction with the visual stimuli starts with the window display. It is the first appearance of the brand and represents the brand image. It is the one that firstly welcomes the customers even before the sales staff to interact with them. Once they are inside, the in-store display draws the attention and urges them to spend extra time interacting with the products. Considering the complexity of all the in-store factors, they cannot be separated and interact with each other influencing the customer's perceptions. The overall atmosphere, for example, contributes to the positive mood and the likeability of spending more money. Almost all of the interviewees commented that the repetitive visits in the store are made because of the atmosphere inside. Therefore, the focus of the upmarket brands should be on the interior space and décor, providing more luxurious atmosphere.

Once, the aforementioned factors has played their role and ensured the unique shopping experience for the customers, it is easy to transfer the latter into loyal customers. Only one of the interviewees admitted that it was his first purchase, although he had a previous knowledge of the products and the brand. For the other participants, the brand name was enough to drive the buying decisions. Some of them has made their first purchases twenty years ago, other – have inherited the products from their parents. But for all, the brand name was equal to a guarantee for high quality, unique design and valuable products.

Surprisingly, one other factor seemed to rule this decision choice and it was the sales promotions offered on a regular basis in the offline stores. Although the SMCG sector is different from the FMCG, therefore in the existing literature it was said that there is less or no price elasticity. That means that sales and purchases are less or no dependent on the price. We also argued that the sales promotions may increase the demand for the high-end product's segment; however, it occurred that it is among the main triggers as well. Starting from the first interviews we noticed that among all the other factors, customers also point out the discounts and the promotions as a relevant one. This was a powerful insight, which was further developed and confirmed by all the interviewees we met on that day. One may suggest that the time or day was specific and the customers who happened to visit the two locations then were different from the typical customers. Later on, when discussing with the sales representatives, they also confirmed that the sales and promotions are a big factor influencing

the purchase decision. This is due to the fact that customers are well prepared with information in advance and make a pre-search online. They compare products, brands, and prices even in different countries. Therefore, the customers are more aware of the value of the goods before coming to the offline store.

As previous researches stated, the decision-making process is influenced by many factors and the final buying decision could be conscious or unconscious. Even in the cases when the customers visit the stores with a predefined list of their purchases and already made decision, it could be modified once the customer enters the store. Therefore, the in-store marketing plays a significant role in the decision-making process. It has been shown that in today's rapidly changing world, the retail is not only selling products or services. It has been developed to something more, something bigger. The society is looking for special stimuli in order to fulfill its needs for unique shopping experiences. The point for the traditional offline stores is to offer memorable and intriguing situation for the customers when taking their purchase decisions. Therefore, we focused on the factors which are important for creating an instore experience and we selected to test with randomly picked up customers the ones that seemed relevant.

5.2   Discussion

Nowadays, our life is connected with making several choices every day. By making personal preferences of products or services people aim to show their real identity or their wanted identity. Choosing a specific product or a brand makes the customer belonging to a certain group or shows a specific social status. Therefore, the retailers need to consider not only the products they are selling but the fast changing needs of the customers. These needs modify their purchase behavior and the decision-making process. Another challenge for the brands is the severe competition with the online shopping. Today, the consumers are able to compare and choose between products, prices, and shopping channels, and therefore the competition has become fierce. The traditional brick-and-mortar retailers are trying to make the physical stores even more attractive and appealing. This is possible by external stimuli which to fulfill shopper's increasing demand during the purchase step and to create a special shopping experience. Even though the online purchases are increasing with the digitalization, the offline shopping is still popular. What is more, it seems that the next era will not separate the two channels but on the contrary – will integrate them into one and the same process.

The aim of this study has been to dive deep into the customers' buying behavior. Not only this, but the point was to investigate it from the customer's point of view. The object has been explored in view of the SMCG sector, more specifically – the high-end designed tableware products. The issue was that the existing literature has been focused mainly on the FMCG. There is a lot of information about the industry and the products, especially food, cosmetics, and clothes. However, as explained in the previous chapters, the SMCG-studies could use

only part of this information in order to derive valid conclusions. On the other hand, since marketing is rapidly developing with the constant changes in patterns of the consumers' behavior it is interesting to find out to what extend the existing models are still valid and applicable. As the digitalization caused inevitable interaction between the shopping channels, it occurred that factors like sales promotions and discounts are triggers for the offline shopping as well. Initially, it was not considered as a typical in-store factor. However, almost all of the interviewees admitted being price sensitive for the aforementioned goods. It is not connected with the traditional price elasticity when the lower price triggers bigger sales volumes. On the contrary, this is a sequence of the interaction of the online with the offline channels, the unlimited access to information and the possibility to compare brands, products, and prices.

After considering different models, the classical EKB model for the decision-making process has been chosen. The focus has been set on the purchase step and the in-store interaction between the brand and the visitors as well as the transformation process of the latter to customers. There have been several factors influencing the customers – location; external and internal environment which includes the design and the layout, the visual merchandising and the window display, the in-store display; atmosphere; and name/fascia. Although some authors claim that the price and sales promotions are not a significant factor for the customers for the segment, we decided to add it among the research factors. The research method has been chosen as a proper one for a qualitative research among many others, which had some limitations. The personal face-to-face interviews were both flexible and a good way to gather the data for the analyses. The interpretations were made through the prism of the theory model and the factors which were said that play role in the store when doing offline shopping.

The research had three main pillars – decision-making process, the in-store factors, and the high-end designed tableware products. All of them are correlated and used as a base when doing the research and later on – the analyses. During the interviews with the customers, we discussed all of the in-store factors for the decision-making process and found out that more or less all of them play a significant role when making a purchase. In addition, one other factor seemed to be relevant for the customers as well. This was the sales promotion. Although not a typical in-store factor, with all the participants we discussed the influence of price discounts and to what extent this can serve as a trigger to the sales. Therefore, it was added as a factor in the model as well.

5.3   Contributions

When starting the project, the pre-search was aiming to find information about the segment of slow-moving consumer goods and the specific type of products – high-end designed tableware products. However, we discovered that there is a gap first of all in the theory about the SMCG compared with the vast majority of information about the FMCG. Secondly, the type of the products was also not so deeply investigated. Therefore, it was decided the current research to compensate the lack of the empirical information. On the other hand, the main contributions have been focused on the practical solutions and a development in the research. Thus, we believed that the research will be useful both for the business and the theory. The findings suggested specific factors the brands should focus on and implement in their business strategies in order to satisfy the increasing demands of the customers. The latter is focused mainly on the unique and positive customer experience.

Since the decision-making process for the high-end designed tableware products is not deeply analyzed in the researches so far, the design is of this study was exploratory and qualitative. This enables to gain rich and deeper insights about the topic. The aim was to explore the consumer decision-making process for a specific category of the SMCG sector. As a matter of fact, the decision-making process is a complex process made of several interrelated steps or levels. In each of them, there are factors which influence the step as well as the whole process. There are existing models, describing the process, such as the EKB model and the based on it we tried to develop a better understanding of the specific segment. Also, the EKB model is used as a basic one and for the exploration of the subject, only one step of it is taken as relevant for the research. In addition, the main factors which modify the decision-making during this step are used in the context of the specific products – high-end designed tableware products. All the models of decision-making, perfectly describing the FMCG sector are not directly applicable to the slow moving goods and therefore the latter should be explored further. From all the factors, making an impact on the decision-making process in the purchase stage only several were used and they were the main object during the interviews and the observations. The examination of the factors such as location, design and layout, visual merchandising, window display, in-store display, atmosphere, name/fascia, and sales promotions, gave a clearer picture and revealed the relationship between them and the development of the purchase decision.

On the other hand, we strived to make the paper useful for managerial implications as well. To our knowledge, this is one of the few studies on this specific product line. Although there is a significant amount of empirical data for all the steps of the decision-making process and the factors influencing each of them not everything is applicable for the segment. The conclusions from the research we expect to be useful for the market actors, and will contribute the latter to find opportunities for sales and profit improvement. The analyses and the conclusions are focused on professionals, managers and educated public and aim to be thought-provoking. The companies would benefit if make their future decisions for business strategies based on the knowledge from the discussion in this paper.

5.4 Research Limitations

The focus of the study has been set on the tableware products as a part of the SMCG sector. The results, therefore, could be treated as applicable for the representative part of the whole sector. Although some conclusions could be made for the market, we believe that they could be supplemented by additional data and the following limitations should be taken into consideration.

First of all, the data gathering has been made in two of the Scandinavian countries and only focusing on that market could not give an insight into the big picture of the consumer's buying behavior. It may seem that the sample group is not sufficient to derive general conclusions from (Bryman & Bell, 2015). On the other hand, the participants who accepted to answer the question vary as a gender, age, nationality and personal background. The interviews were extensive enough and covered different aspects of the study, therefore, the data was various enough for a qualitative study. Also, some of the answers were inspired by certain emotions, feelings or moods at the moment, so it may occur that in future researches there are different factors leading to different conclusions and results. Therefore, it would be interesting the subject to be enriched with extensive data from countries and cities different from the researched locations in the two cities. In that case, factors such as cultural, economic, technological level could be included in order the differences to be shown.

Another limitation of the study is that the interviews and the observation have been made in a working day. Therefore, the majority of the interviewees were among those doing the shopping on their lunch break or right after the working hours on their way back home. It was initially decided the interviews to be made in a working day due to the fact that the two locations are in the heart of the cities in the busiest pedestrian area, surrounded by offices and business buildings. On the other hand, doing them on a different day – non-working day or a holiday the results and findings might not be the same. Even if the results to be similar, the authors consider that having more perspectives and contact with various people could be a benefit for the conclusions.

A third significant issue that should be taken into consideration is that the interviews were made in English in countries where the English language is not the official one. Although the majority of the people in these locations were expected to be good English speakers there was some who refused to participate due to the language barrier. What is more, for a non-native speaker sometimes is difficult to express the exact emotions and feelings by using a word from another language. Therefore, right after each interview extensive notes has been taken in order any additional information in relation to the conversation to be put on paper. This limited the risk to miss different nuances such as pauses, body language, face grimace or differences in the voice.

5.5   Further Research

Based on the research design and the limitations it would be interesting some other areas to be included. One of them, for example, is to complement the research with empirical data from a quantitative method. Since in this paper only a qualitative method has been implemented, therefore the results might be limited. In order the high-end designed tableware products to be investigated to full extend and a general knowledge about the consumers' buying behavior about this segment to be gained, it would be helpful a further quantitative research to be made. In that way, the results could be enriched by considering a lot of variables and from all aspects.

Moreover, anonymous questionnaires in selected locations, which could be not only mono-brand stores but malls and outlets; or an online survey, will give additional empirical data. The survey, for example, would contribute with the information about how people perceive the brand when they are not in the store and factors such as environment and atmosphere are not interacting with their senses. In the current research, for example, people were surrounded by the branded products and the whole store atmosphere. Therefore, their responses might be somehow affected by this and once they are in a different environment their opinion might change. On the other hand, sitting in front of the computer, doing an online survey in a quiet homey environment might lead to different insights. By using different methods even with one and the same researched group, it could be measured the gap between what people say and how they actually behave in the store and during the purchase step.

Last but not least, in order the contribution and the findings to be useful for the whole SMCG sector, more goods from the industry could be included. This study considered only two stores of the total network of the company so clear picture of the whole chain cannot be firmly drawn. Moreover, since it is a single brand case study, and only for one of the product lines of the company, more cases and different companies from the SMCG will give a broader view of the factors influencing the consumer's buying behavior in the whole sector. Since it would be a broad investigation, with a vast majority of possible respondents, the current analysis could be considered as a guideline for the future actions expanding the research for the segment.

References

Aaker, D. (1997) Building Strong Brands, Free Press, New York

Aeker D., McLoughlin D., 2010 *"Strategic Market Management; Global Perspectives".* John Willey & Sons Ltd.

Abrudan, I.N. (2012), „Determinants of Shopping Centers' Image for Romanian Consumers", *Marketing from information to decision*, Vol. 4, pp.11-30.

Alba J. and Chattopadhyay, A., 1985 *"Effects of context and part-category cues on recall of competing brands"*, Journal of Marketing Research, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 340–349.

Alt, M.A. (2009), *Studiu privind aplicarea marketingului în comerţul cu amănuntul.* Universitatea de Vest, Timişoara, Facultatea de Economie și Administrarea Afacerilor, [Study on the application of marketing in retail, *in Romanian*].

Arora, R. (2013). 8 p's of luxury brand marketing. Available Online: http://www.luxurydaily.com/8-p%E2%80%99s-of-luxury-brand-marketing/ [Accessed 13 May 2016]

ASA (2010) *The CAP Code: The UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing,* Advertising Standards Authority. Available online: http://www.cap.org.uk/The-Codes/CAP-Code.aspx [Accessed 14 April 2016]

Baker, J., & Parasuraman, D.G.A. (1994). The Influence of Store Environment on Quality

Inferences and Store Image. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 22*(4), 328-339.

Belk, R.W. & Non Zhou (1987). Learning to Want Things, *Proceeding of Advances in Consumer Research*, Advances in Consumer Research, Toronto, Canada, Vol. 14, pp.478-481.

Bell, J. & Ternus, K. (2006) Silent Selling, 3rd edn, New York: Fairchild.

Berman, B. and Evans, J.R. (2010) Retailing Management: A Strategic Approach, 11th edn, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Bitner, M.J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. Journal of Marketing, 56, 57-71

Blackwell, R.D., Miniard P.W., & Engel J.F. (2001) Consumer Behaviour. Thomson. South Western

Boundless.com, Defining Price Elasticity of Demand. Available online: https://www.boundless.com/economics/textbooks/boundless-economics-textbook/elasticity-and-its-implications-6/price-elasticity-of-demand-54/defining-price-elasticity-of-demand-208-12299/ [Accessed 15 May 2016]

Bryman, A. & Bell, E., (2011) *Business Research Methods.* 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Brüggen, E.C., Foubert, B., & Gremler, D.D. (2011). Extreme Makeover: Short- and Long Term Effects of a Remodeled Servicescape. *Journal of Marketing, 75*, 71-87.

Campbell, K. 2013. Using Pinterest for Visual Marketing. http://webmarketingtoday.com/articles/109811-Using-Pinterest-for-Visual-Marketing/. [Accessed 5 March 2016]

Campo, K. & Gijsbrechts, E. (2005) Retail assortment, shelf and stockout management: issues, interplay and future challenges, Applied Stochastic Models in Business & Industry, 21 (4/5), pp.383-392

Carroll, B., and A. Ahuvia. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letter* 17 (2):79–89.

Chevalier, M., (1975): Increase in sales due to in-store display, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 12, November.

Chevalier, M., & Mazzalovo, G. (2012) Luxury Brand Management: A World of Privilege. Solaris South Tower, Singapore: John Wiley & Sons.

Churchill, G. & Iacobucci, D. (2005) Marketing Research. U.S.: South-Western

Cicourel, A.V. (1974) Theory and method in a study of Argentine fertility. New York: Wiley

Dabija, D.C. (2010), *Marketingul întreprinderii de comerţ,* Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, [Trade marketing company, *in Romaninian*].

Davies, B.J., & Ward, P. (2005) Exploring the connections between visual merchandising and retail branding: an application of facet theory, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management,* 33 (7), pp.505–513.

Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978) Ethics in Social and Behavioural Research. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dubois B., & Duquesne P. (1992) The market for luxury goods: income versus culture. European Journal of Marketing 27(1), pp.35-44.

Dunne, P.M., Lusch, R. (2008), *Retailing,* 6th Edition, Mason, OH, Thomson South-Western

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Lowe, A. (2004) Management Research. London: SAGE

Ekström, K.M. (2010) Design and consumption in Ekström, K.M (eds), *Consumer Behaviour: A Nordic Perspective*, Lund:Studentlitteratur, pp.515-529.

Ekström, K.M.(ed.). (2010) Consumer Behaviour: A Nordic Perspective, Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Eysenbach, G., & Till, J. (2001) Ethical issues in qualitative research on internet communities, *BMJ* 2001; 323: pp.1103–1105

Gagliano, K. B., and J. Hathcote. 1994. Customer expectations and perceptions of service quality in retail apparel specialty stores. *Journal of Services Marketing* 8, no. 1: 60-69.

Gedenk, K., Scott A. N. & Kusum L. A. (2006) Sales Promotion in Retailing in the 21st Century, Manfred Krafft and Murali K. Mantrala (eds), Berlin: Springer

Ghosh, A. & S.L. McLafferty (1987). Location Strategies for Retail and Service Firms. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Goworek, H. & McGoldrick, P. (2015) Retail marketing management – principles and practice, Pearson Education

Greenland, S. & McGoldrick, P. (2005) Evaluating the design of retail financial service environments, International Journal of Bank Marketing, 23(2), pp.132–152.

Hein, K. 2009: In-Store Marketing Beats Traditional Ads. Available online: http://www.brandweek.com/bw/content_display/news-and-features/shopper-marketing/e3i2dc689981e76ced1f4c0c68e43b8bf57 [Accessed 15 April 2016]

Heine, K. (2012) The Concept of Luxury. Berlin, Germany: Technische Universität Berlin.

Helfferich, C. (2009). Die Qualitätqualitativer Daten. Manual für die Durchführung qualitative Interviews. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Hirvi, A. & Nyholm, S. 2009. Visualistin työkalupakki. Zolan Oy.

Hoffman, K.D. and Turley, L.W. (2002): *"Atmospherics, Service Encounters and Consumer Decision Making: an Integrative Perspective"*, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 10 (3), 33-46.

Hoyer, W. D., Maclnnis, D. J. & Pieters, R. (2012) *Consumer Behaviour.* 6th ed. U.S.A.: Nelson Education, Ltd.

Inman, J. & Winer, R., 1998. Where the rubber meets the road: A model of in-store consumer decision-making, Cambridge: MA: Marketing Science Institute.

Inman, J., Winer, R. & Ferraro R. 2009, The Interplay Between Category Characteristics, Customer Characteristics, And Customer Activities on In-Store Decision Making, Journal of Marketing, 73 (September), pp.19-29.

Ismail, A. 2011, Experience Marketing: An Empirical Investigation. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 10¸*167-201.

Iyer, E., 1989*"Unplanned purchasing: Knowledge of Shopping Environment and Time Pressure". Journal of Retailing*, Spring, Vol. 65 Issue 1.

Janiszewski, C. (1998) The Influence of Display Characteristics on Visual Exploratory Search Behaviour. Journal of Consumer Research, 25(3), pp.290–301.

Johnson, M. (2010) The DMA's Retail Marketing Conference review. http://loyalty360.org/images/uploads/state of the industry-5.28.10.pdf.

Kapferer, J. (2012) *The new strategic brand management*. 5th ed. London: Kogan Page.

Keller K.L. A; 2003: *"Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity"*. Pearson, Upper Saddle River, N J.

Kim,Y. K., Sullivan, P. & Forney, J.C. (2007) Experiential retailing: Concepts and strategies that sell. New York: Fairchild.

Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J. and Wong, V. (1999): *"Principles of Marketing"* Second European Edition, Prentice Hall Europe.

Kozinets, R. (2002) The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities, *Journal of Marketing Research,* 39 (February), pp.61 – 72

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2008) Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research. 2nd. ed. USA: SAGE Publications Ltd

Lohse, G. L. (1997) Consumer Eye Movement Patterns on Yellow Pages Advertising. Journal of Advertising, 26 (1), pp.61–73.

Lusch, R.F., Dunne, P.M. & Carver, J.R. (2011) Introduction to Retailing, International/7th edn, South-Western Cengage Learning.

Malte, Micaela and Henning (2006); *"Implicit consumer preferences and their influence on product choice"* Research Article.

Marufuzzaman, M. & Ashan, K.B. (2009) Supplier selection and evaluation method using analytical hierarchy process: A case study on an apparel manufacturing organization. *International Journal of Value Chain Management*, 3(2), pp.224-240.

McGee, M. (2004) Economics – In terms of The Good, The Bad and The Economist. Victoria: IBID Press.

McGoldrick, P. (2002) Retail Marketing, 2nd edn Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

McKinsey & Co. (1991) L'industrie du luxe: un atout pour la France. McKinsey & Co., Paris.

Melin, F. (2002) The brand as value creator. In: Holger, L. and Holmberg, I. (eds.). Identity: Trademarks, Logotypes and Symbols. Stockholm: Nationalmuseum & Raster Förlag

Mitchell, D. J., Kahn, B.E. & Knasko, S.C. (1995) "There's Something in the Air: Effects of Ambient Odor on Consumer Decision Making," Journal of Consumer Research, 22 (September), pp.229–238.

Morse, G. (2011). Retail isn't broken. Stores are. *Harvard Business Review, 89*, 28-32.

Nieminen, T. 2010, Visuaalinen markkinointi. Helsinki: WSOYpro Oy.

Nordfält, J. (2005) Is consumer decision-making out of control, Stockholm: Stockholms Handelshögskola.

Okonkwo, U. (2007) Luxury Fashion Branding: Trends, Tactics, Techniques. New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan

Pegler, M.J. (1998) Visual Merchandising and Display, 4th edn, New York: Fairchild Publications.

Pettigrew, A. (1988) Longitudinal field research on change: Theory and practice. Paper presented at the National Science Foundation Conference on Longitudinal Research Methods in Organizations, Austin.

Pinto, Mary Beth, and Leonidas, Leonardo: The Impact of Office Characteristics on Satisfaction with Medical Care: A "Before and After" Study. Health Marketing Quarterly 12 (1994): 43–54.

Pradhan, S. 2007. Retailing management: Text and cases. 2nd ed.Nagar, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill.

Radder, L. and Huang N. W., 2007: *"High-involvement and low-involvement products: A comparison of brand awareness among students at a South African university"*, Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 232-243.

Rosenbaum, M.S., & Massiah, C. (2011). An expanded servicescape perspective. *Journal of Service Management 22*(4), 471-490.

Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R., (2010) Research Methods for Business. 5th. ed. Great Britain: Scotprint, Haddington, East Lothian

Sekozawa, T., Mitsuashi, H. & Ozawa, Y. (2011) One-to-One recommendation system in apparel online shopping. *Electronics and Communications in Japan*, 94(1), pp.51-60.

Sorensen, H. (2009) Inside The Mind Of The Shopper. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Wharton School Pub

Statista – The Statistics Portal. Statistics and market data on Consumer Goods & FMCG. Available Online: http://www.statista.com/markets/415/consumer-goods-fmcg/ [Accessed 28 march 2016]

Ståhlberg, M. and Maila, V. (ed.), (2010) Shopper Marketing. How to increase purchase decisions at the point of sale ISBN 978-0-7494-5702-0 , pp.75-81

Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000): *"Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence"*. Journal of Business Research, 49, 193-211.

Turley, L.W. & Chebat, J.C. (2002) Linking retail strategy atmospheric design and shopping behaviour, Journal of Marketing Management, 18, pp.125–144.

Tynan, C., & Mckechnie, S., (2009). Experience marketing: a review and reassessment. *Journal of marketing Management, 25*(5-6), 501-517.

Underhill, P. (2000) Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping, Simon & Schuster

Urde, M., Baumgarth, C. & Merrilees, B. (2013) Brand orientation and market orientation — From alternatives to synergy. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), pp.13-20.

Vigneron F, & Johnson L.W. (1999) A review and a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behaviour. Academy of Marketing Science Review 23(1), pp.1-15.

Wilkinson., J., B., Mason, B., J. and Paksoy, C., H., (1982): *"Assessing the Impact of Short-Term Supermarket Strategy Variables", Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 19, February

Witzel, A. (2000) Das problemzentrierte Interview [25 Absätze]. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 1(1), Art. 22, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0001228.

Wästerfors, D. & Sjöberg, K. (2008) Uppdrag: Forskning. Malmö: Liber

Zentes, J., Swoboda B., Foscht T. (2012), *Handelsmanagement*, 3rd Edition, München, Vahlen.

Appendix A. Interview Questionnaire

1. Interview questions for the shoppers

- Would you like to tell me more about the reasons for your visit today?

- Why did you choose this particular location/store for your visit?

- Would you describe your motives to choose a Villeroy & Boch shop?

- Did you come with the intention to buy a product from Villeroy & Boch?

- Did you change your initial intention of buying during the visit in the store (buy more/ different items than planned before) and what was the reason to do it?

- Have you done a research about the products in advance (i.e. through online information, or peer group, etc.)? If so, could you explain what is your impression/feedback?

- Do you prefer to buy from the store instead of online and why?

- How do you buy products in general – online or from the stores and why?

- What kind of factors do you consider when you are making a purchase at a shop? (price, display, atmosphere, the sales process)

- Is this your first purchase from Villeroy & Boch or you possess other items from the brand? What kind of factors made you buy the first Villeroy & Boch's product? And the second/next?

2. Interview questions for the sales staffs

- How would you **describe** the usual customers that visit the shop?

- What do you think is **the reason** for the customers to come to the store?

- How important do you think the store **location** is?

- Can you explain from your point of view how usually customers **behave** in the store?

- Do you have special marketing **strategy/sells tricks** in order to attract shoppers?

- Are there **trends** in products of this sector (tableware/SMCG)? How often the trends **change**? Is the SMCG **sensitive** towards trend? (Compared to FMCG)

- How do you consider the Villeroy & Boch's multi-channel marketing? Is online helpful for the in-store sales?

- What is your overall impression for the customers who buy a product as **% from all the visitors** of the store?