



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
School of Economics and Management

# One More Cup of Coffee

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- Mundane Consumption of Everyday Consumer Goods

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24/05 2017

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# Abstract

**Title:** One More Cup of Coffee – Mundane Consumption of Everyday Consumer Goods

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**Keywords:** Consumer Culture Theory, Coffee, Mundane Consumption, Social Identity, Social Distinction, Ritual, Rhythm, Low & High Involvement

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to investigate how consumers relate to coffee, and what the consumption means to them. Existing research is demonstrating two contradictory perspectives of coffee as a mundane product. Due to the inconclusive research results this paper seeks to generate a more advanced understanding of how consumers relate to mundane coffee consumption as well as to understand its embedded meanings from a consumer's perspective.

**Method:** The study is qualitative in nature with a relativist and social constructionist view. The study uses semi-structured interviews with observations that were used as a complement to the interviews in order to capture how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within the consumers' mundane coffee consumption.

**Theoretical Perspective:** The theoretical lens that will be applied throughout the analysis in order to capture the embedded meanings of coffee consumption and how consumers relate to their everyday coffee consumption are Social identity, Social distinction, Rituals and Rhythms.

**Empirical Foundation:** 13 semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted which will serve as the empirical material for the study. The informants of the study varied between age, gender and more specifically high and low users of coffee. The empirical material was analysed by using the Hermeneutic Circle in order to capture the embedded meanings of consumers' coffee consumption and how they relate to their coffee. The analysis is divided into two main themes: Mundane Coffee Consumption as Identity Creation, and Mundane Consumption as a Way of structuring their Everyday Life.

**Conclusions:** This study focused on investigating how everyday consumers are relating to coffee and what meanings that are embedded within their daily coffee consumption. Previous research shows two opposing perspectives. This study proves that these perspectives are neither correct nor wrong. This is made evident from the findings, which show that consumers are relating differently to coffee, and thus generate various functional and symbolical meanings depending on the consumers' level of involvement to the coffee product. Furthermore, the different level of consumer involvement depends on several identified factors, such as; the contexts, rhythms, and product attributes.

## Acknowledgement

First, we want to thank Jon Bertilsson for giving us great support and help during this process. Without his help this academic journey would not have been as fun as it has been and we have really appreciated his commitment to guide us during the entire process. Also, we would like to thank all the people who participated in our study. Thank you again for all the lovely “fika“ we were given during the interviews, and the valuable insights we were provided with in order to make this study possible.

Additionally, we would like to give our gratitude to Kajsa Söderberg for taking her time to give us her precious feedback.

We would also like to acknowledge our programme which has given us advanced knowledge within marketing and brand management. Personally, this time has been one of the most enjoyable years of our lives.

Further, we would like to thank our families and friends for their support and their understanding, since we not have been available recently, mum and dad!

Finally, we want to thank all kinds of different coffee the latest period, which have gained us a lot of energy to not fall asleep during some of our late night sessions.

*This study is dedicated to Rosa Lindén who always said how important school is and encouraged me to take on the challenges I would face during my university studies. - Jacob*

*This study is dedicated to my sisters who always support me in life. - Elin*

Lund, Sweden, May 24th 2017

Jacob Lindblad

Elin Svensson

*Coffee is my friend*  
(Jannie, April 6, 2017)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

*Coffee is a lot more than just a drink; it's something happening. Not as in hip, but like an event, a place to be, but not like a location, but like somewhere within yourself. It gives you time, but not actual hours or minutes, but a chance to be, like be yourself, and have a second cup.*

*Gertrude Stein (Stein & Von Vechten, 1990 p. 348).*

To most people, a typical day starts with a cup of their regular morning coffee, either at their home, with a cup of coffee to go, or by just dropping by the nearest coffee corner to grab a quick Espresso on their way to work. Coffee is today a phenomenon intertwined in many Scandinavian's everyday lives, and is available throughout all social strata (Sassatelli, 2007; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Thus, coffee for many individuals is a common routine, despite that it is consumed in many different ways depending on *who*, *what*, and *how* the person consumes it. This human practice is something that has been remarkable to many companies, which has resulted in new brands, as well as innovative subcategories, as *Espressos*, *French press coffee*, *Nespresso*, *Lavazza*, *Macha Lattes*, and many more. Today, coffee is a multi-billion industry and employs more than 26 million people worldwide (Nationalencyclopaedia, 2017). Also, it is not unusual to recognize a recent trend where coffee is utilised as a complementary and appreciated service in many luxury boutiques, department stores, as well as in ordinary supermarkets. As a result of this, coffee has lately transformed into a fascinating product that is consumed in many varying ways depending on the consumers.

In contemporary society, “*let's get a coffee*” has now converted into “*let's have a chat*”, and the venue is often intended to be consumed privately, *but* is however usually taken place in a public sphere (Gaudio, 2003). Moreover, consuming coffee involves social and interpersonal dimensions beyond the act of drinking (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). However, researchers do not agree upon what coffee really means for consumers. There exist some researchers that argue that coffee is a mundane product utilised only due to its functional qualities and comprises a low level of consumer engagement. On the contrary, other researchers argue that everyday coffee consumption is embedded with symbolic meanings and contains a high level of consumer involvement (see literature review). In regards to these opposing perspectives, it is interesting to investigate how consumers actually perceive products that are consumed on a daily basis and that often is enclosed with certain routines. As previously

outlined above, the researchers consider coffee as such a product, which therefore will be examined in this study. In order to understand coffee as a phenomenon, mundane consumption will be enlightened, which is an underexplored area that coffee is considered to be strongly connected to. Therefore, the following section contains an extensive literature review of mundane consumption and coffee, as well as its contradictory perspectives.

## 1.2 Literature review

The research field within mundane consumption are a limited field, especially in the consumer good of coffee. As previously mentioned, two existing fields are presenting a contradictory assumptions regarding the meanings individuals give to mundane products such as coffee. The following chapter will review the two contradictory fields in order to provide the necessary background to further understand the phenomenon of consumers' mundane coffee consumption. Hence, first a review of the existing research on mundane consumption which will be followed of a historical journey of coffee and how different meanings have been applied to coffee by individuals through history. In conclusion, the different literature reviews will serve as the necessary background information in order to create a problematization and a study question.

### 1.2.1 Mundane Consumption

The word “mundane” or “everyday” refers to activities that include the bulk of consumers' everyday lives. Thus, mundane consumption appears as an essential part of negotiating individuals' everyday tasks (Gronow & Warde, 2001). In order to focus on ordinary consumption, it is essential to include how objects are used and appropriated in consumers' everyday routines and practices (Araujo, Finch & Kjellberg, 2010). Mundane consumption is defined more by routines rather than conscious actions made by consumers (Gronow & Warde, 2001). Ordinary consumption was coined by Gronow and Warde (2001) and refers to the practices and items that are made and consumed by little or no decision-making, and hence are not seen as anything special to consumers. Thus, these types of consumption are mundane and are rooted in inconspicuous social routines and systems (Watson & Shove, 2008).

To continue, food consumption constitutes occasions that are part of individuals' everyday lives, which is a category that coffee can be connected to, and is therefore representative to mundane consumption (Holttinen, 2014). Food choices are often repetitive and contain



routines and habits (Lupton, 1996; Ilmonen, 2001). Despite this, it has also been made evident that food is considered as symbolic since it reflects discourses and cultural ideas (Holttinen, 2014). Further, Holttinen (2014) has explored how consumers depict cultural ideals of food in mundane consumption. In addition, some researches argue that the symbolic value of mundane consumption reflects individuals' identity projects (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993). Even though ordinary mundane products do not involve high level of consumer engagement, they are according to Kleine et al. (1993) still self-expressive. Kleine et al. (1992) further argue that greater amount of people's daily consumptions involve social identity constructions. In a study by Sartre (1943) it was made evident that consumers are using products to facilitate their everyday activities, and that these combined mirror consumer's sense of self. As a result of this, it was showed that the mundane consumption had an effect on consumer's sense of well-being. In addition, Bourdieu (1984) stated that even the most mundane and functional goods bear symbolic significance. However, contemporary consumer research only include these elemental concerns regarding mundane consumption to a limited extent (Kleine et al., 1992). Along with this, Kernan and Sommers (1967), Solomon (1983) and Holbrook (1992), demonstrate that one's consumption further reflects and contributes to one's sense of identity, and is connected to both *what we are* and *who we are*, even from one's everyday consumption practices of mundane products. Furthermore, it is also argued that mundane and inconspicuous consumption involve subcultures in order to distance their group identity from mainstream co-optation (Cronin, McCarthy, & Collins, 2014). However, Belk (1988) on the contrary, argues that products that are interpreted as *too* mundane cannot be seen as part of consumers' extended selves. Additionally, Mittal (2006) also demonstrate that products that only are purchased due to its functionalities cannot be seen as part of consumers' extended selves.

Kleine et al. (1992) demonstrate that mundane consumption within consumer research contain inadequate attention. Within consumer research, there has been surprisingly little attention given to mundane consumption, even though consumers constantly engage in mundane, routine and repetitive consumption practices most of the time. Furthermore, the focus has mostly been on extraordinary or spectacular consumption within research of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) (Kravets, 2011). Addressing mundane consumption, it has been made evident in the past that ordinary products that usually are consumed inconspicuously, as laundry, sugar and bottled water, are tied to social and cultural systems

and processes (e.g. Mintz, 1985; Miller, 1998; Boym, 2001; Shove, 2003; Wilk, 2006). In conclusion, mundane consumption is an underexplored area with conflicting and inconclusive research results that needs to be investigated further. One product that both is considered as a mundane, low involving, as well as a self-expressive product, is coffee. Therefore, coffee will be used as an empirical example of an everyday product in this study, which consists of contradictory perspectives of both being considered as a mundane as well as a symbolic commodity. The next section will consist of a literature review about coffee.

### **1.2.2 Coffee**

Coffee is an interesting product to explore because it has undergone a remarkable transformation along with its historical origin. From previous studies, inconclusive research results can be found. Due to the opposite findings, it is therefore unclear what coffee actually means for the ordinary coffee consumer. In order to understand the paradoxical views, a literature review will therefore be presented.

To start with, Scandinavia contains a historically long-established coffee culture with one of the world's largest consumption of coffee per capita (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). The coffee consumption per capita was 141,9 liters in Sweden during 2015 (Statista, 2015). Additionally, on an average level, Scandinavia constitutes a daily consumption of three and a half cup of coffee per person every day (SVD, 2016). During the 17th century, coffee was spread to the upper class in Europe, and it did not take long time before it was trickled down to the lower social classes. Compared to the higher social class, the latter were consuming coffee for its practicalities as to cure flatulence, hangovers and to strengthen the stamina (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; Sassatelli, 2007). Today, it is however made evident that previous research about mundane coffee consumption shows conflicting results of what coffee means to various consumers. On the one hand, there exist researchers who argue that coffee has transformed into a remarkable product that contains a consumption culture made by coffee connoisseurs (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Although, Laaksonen (1994) argues that coffee is seen as a product with low level of consumer involvement that is consumed on a routinized basis everyday. Coffee is an example of a commodity that rather is expressed with an on-going negotiation of necessity and taste, which reconstructs class, national differences, generational and gender (Sassatelli, 2007). Thus, the contrary findings that can be found around coffee lead to open questions whether consumers really perceive everyday coffee consumption as mundane or symbolic practices, and how these different perceptions affect the

overall meanings of their daily coffee consumption. This leads to the suggestion that consumers use coffee in various ways due to the contradictory findings. In order to illustrate the opposite views of coffee, they will be presented in the section below.

### 1.2.3 Coffee as a Symbolic Marker

To begin with, there are researchers who argue that coffee is a product that contains underlying symbolic meanings. A study made by Thompson & Arsel (2004) shows how consumers are using coffee as a resource in order to demonstrate against certain companies. In addition, it is argued that coffee also is used to build and to communicate various lifestyles (Bosman, 2006) and is a way to align with others (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Additionally, coffee has also been seen as an important structure to create order in the everyday life, as for example to have the morning coffee at 7 a.m., the afternoon break coffee at 13 p.m. and the formal meeting coffee at 3 a.m. (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Today, coffee has become a public ritual (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Historically, coffee shops have been linked to cultural enrichment and intellectual engagement (Sherry, 1995), and were during the seventeenth century used in order to socialize between the classes and were connected with communal spaces and egalitarian conversational practices (Gaudio, 2003). Today, coffee is seen as a way to show hospitality in people's homes and is involved in many social events (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Thus, coffee in these forms is consumed as a high involvement product (Laaksonen, 1994) and embedded with symbolic meanings (Sherry, 1998). One high involving coffee culture that has emerged and is very strong within today's society, is the connoisseur coffee style (Utterström, 2005; Grossman, 2006; Sohlström, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Coffee connoisseurs possess a complex repertoire of knowledge and generate aesthetic assessments of the coffee they drink via appreciation of its qualities (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Thus, connoisseurs are mastering these products (Sassatelli, 2007), and consequently are highly involved in their consumption practices.

This goes along with researchers who claim that consumption of certain commodities are identified as an essential part in individuals' lives (Belk, 1988; Shankar, Elliot & Fitchett, 2009; Perez, Castaño & Quintanilla, 2010). Further, Belk (1988) argue that these goods are not only consumed for their practical functionality, but they are also seen as important to consumer's identity processes, and are utilised as resources for the symbolic construction of their self. This enables consumers to communicate and establish essential cultural categories, as for example *cultural values*, *social status*, *age* and *gender*. Thus, consumers reinforce these symbolic values through their consumption (McCracken, 1988). Consequently, the

consumption practices of different products are able to demonstrate what social group individuals identify with (Wattanasuwan, 2005). How you take your coffee is part of how you construe your social identity and allineate with others (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Also, there are marketers who claim that coffee is a simple way of figuring out who belongs to your “tribe” (Bosman, 2006). The aspiration to establish the self is seemingly inseparable from consumption in the postmodern society, which have been of a great interest to many researchers within the field of social science (Gergen, 1991; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; White & Hellerich, 1998; Elliot 2001; Wattanasuwan, 2005).

#### **1.2.4 Coffee as a Functional Product**

Compared to researchers who claim that coffee is embedded with symbolic meanings, there exist researches that demonstrate the opposite. Furthermore, there are researchers who have intended to not exclusively focus on consumption as symbolic attributes and meaningful practices, and instead have studied the consumption of materiality (Warde, 2005; Watson & Shove, 2008; Molander, 2011a; 2011b). Because coffee is consumed intensively and frequently and is rarely substituted with other beverages, Sigfridsson (2005) argue that coffee is a necessity and an important commodity in people’s lives. Further, she demonstrates that coffee has become a mature norm in our everyday lives. According to Laaksonen (1994), coffee is in general only seen and consumed as a daily necessity. Thus, coffee contains of a low level of consumer involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Laaksonen, 1994). This is notably true for instant coffee (Batra & Ray, 1986; Te’eni-Harari & Hornik, 2010). Further, low involvement products are seen as bulk commodities, which are sold at relatively lower costs and are connected with faster purchase decisions (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). They are also considered as nothing special or exciting for consumers since they are consumed on a daily and routinized basis, and consequently not involve much time for their purchases (Kassarjian & Kassarjian, 1979; Ekström, 2010). Thus, researchers argue that such products do not contain any similar symbolic meanings for consumers (Kassarjian & Kassarjian, 1979; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Instead, coffee is seen as a commodity that is purchased and consumed frequently (Radder & Huang, 2008). Hence, coffee is a daily habit to many consumers and can also be considered as a mundane product. Mundane products are characterized with consumption made by routines rather than conscious actions (Gronow & Warde, 2001). For this reason, they are therefore connected with low consumer engagement (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Thus, mundane consumption appears as an essential part of negotiating our everyday tasks (Gronow & Warde, 2001), and

coffee is consequently an important daily routine to many consumers that includes the bulk of our everyday lives. From this perspective, coffee is therefore a mundane product that consists of low consumer involvement that is consumed only for its practical qualities. Such bulk commodities are demonstrated to not contain any symbolic meanings for the consumers (Kassarijan & Kassarijan, 1979; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Despite that coffee is a mundane product that is consumed on a regular and daily basis in our lives, it is also seen as an important temporal ritual to many consumers (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007).

### 1.3 Problematization

Taking the two opposing literature streams about coffee into consideration, previous research is inconclusive and needs to be further investigated in order to understand how ordinary consumers actually are relating to different types of coffee, and what meanings that are embedded within their coffee consumption. Thus, coffee is an interesting product to investigate because of the inconclusive research results that the phenomenon consists of where the different narratives are clashing. On the one hand, coffee is seen as a mundane product or a bulk commodity that is utilised only as a functional necessity through individuals' everyday life (see literature review). On the other hand, coffee is recognized as a product that is consumed with embedded symbolic meanings despite that it is consumed on a daily basis (see literature review). For these reasons, coffee is paradoxically considered both as a low as well as a high involvement product. Furthermore, different types of coffee might be connected to provoke different levels of consumer involvement. Also, context and situation might have significant effects on how consumers engage with coffee. In addition, coffee is especially relevant to examine due to conflicting findings about mundane products in general (see literature review). With regards to coffee as a phenomenon in society, it can also be understood as coffee has empirically paradoxical ties. This is due to the fact that coffee can be interpreted as a very simple and monotonous product that is only consumed on an everyday and routinized basis, at the same time as it seems to play a great importance to many consumers' everyday lives. Therefore, it could be questioned of what coffee really means for the daily consumers and how the ordinary coffee consumers are relating to coffee?

In addition, the literature review that has been outlined above, leads to the suggestion that the everyday consumption of coffee are embedded with underlying meanings that vary to different consumers in various forms and contexts. Thus, coffee is an example of a mundane

commodity that has undergone transformations linked to processes of value constructions that are deeply connected to *social, cultural, material* and *economic* ramifications (Sassatelli, 2007). Despite this, there is a lack of research about mundane coffee consumption and its underlying meanings to consumers. Therefore, it is interesting to understand how consumers are relating to a mundane product, as coffee, that has transformed into a commodity available for all social strata (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; Sassatelli, 2007) and what it means for them.

Great amount of knowledge within the field of CCT and Consumer Research already exists in regard to the embedded symbolic meanings of luxury and conspicuous forms of consumption (Veblen, 1994; Gronow & Warde, 2001; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Molander, 2011b). However, it still puzzles consumer researchers how to explain the inconspicuous and mundane forms of consumption (Kleine et al., 1992; Kleine et al., 1993; Kravets, 2011, Molander, 2011b). Therefore, mundane products, such as coffee, is an interesting phenomenon worth investigating further.

## 1.4 Purpose and Study Question

The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate how consumers are relating to coffee, and what the consumption means to them, which still is underexplored due to the inconclusive findings outlined above. Based on previous literature, this paper seeks to generate a more advanced understanding of how consumers relate to mundane coffee consumption as well as to understand its embedded meanings from the consumer's perspective.

This study will first and foremost contribute on a theoretical level to enclose the knowledge gap with regards to the conflicting research about how consumers relate to coffee and what the consumption means for them. Concerning the previous studies, the study will also contribute with a deeper understanding to the lack of research of mundane consumption within the field of CCT and Consumer Research. Lastly, this study also attempts to enable with practical contributions to marketers and retailers who are able to increase knowledge with regards to mundane commodities and its embedded meanings that vary among different consumers. In accordance with the above purpose, this leads to the paper's study question which is as following:

*How do everyday consumers relate to coffee and what meanings are embedded within their coffee consumption?*

In order to understand this phenomenon, this study will take use of the research field CCT, since these studies are taking into account the consumer's behavioural practices and choices as cultural and social phenomena (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Thus, this study considers CCT appropriate to investigate mundane and symbolic consumption. However, from the field of CCT alone, researchers are limited in fully explaining how consumers relate to coffee as a mundane and symbolic product. Thus, field that involves theories concerning *Social identities, Social distinctions, Rituals, and Rhythms* need to be included. In addition, Kleine et al. (1992) argue that social identity theories could be used in order to study mundane consumption.

## 1.5 Delimitation

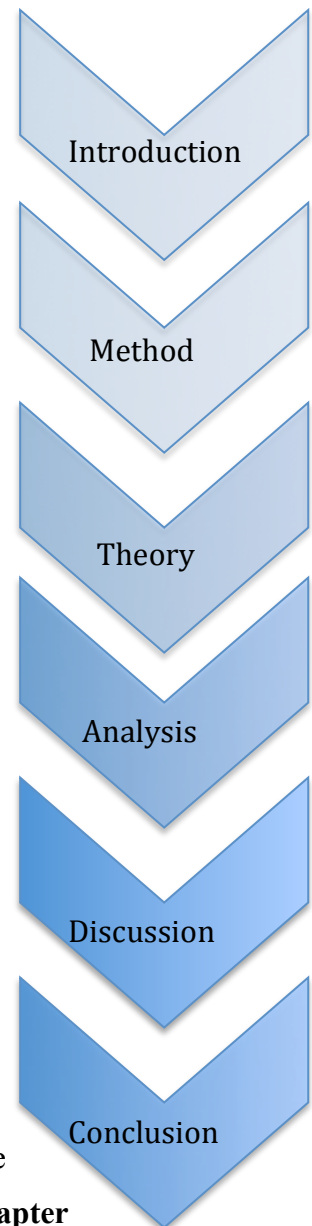
The aim of the study is to generate a more advanced understanding of how everyday consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are behind consumers' mundane coffee consumption. Due to the purpose, this study will not take into account to coffee connoisseurs. Coffee connoisseurs are able to participate in the study because they consume coffee, however a main focus on this specific consumer will not be taken into consideration during the study. The purpose is to understand the meanings behind mundane consumption of coffee and how everyday consumers relate to coffee, which includes everybody who drinks coffee on a daily basis, rather than a specific subgroup within coffee consumption.

Furthermore, this study will take on a consumer perspective where the study will acknowledge the specific phenomenon within the research field of CCT and Consumer Research. With this taken into account, this study will not have a company or business perspective due to its focus in understanding how everyday consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption. However, the practical implications from the study are still of interest for companies in order to understand how consumers relate to and place meanings in mundane products. Hence, the consumer's perspective is of more relevance on behalf of the study's purpose and with regards to the lack of existing research that concern mundane products with a consumer focus. Therefore, a company or business perspective is irrelevant.



## 1.6 Disposition

The study has been structured as following; **The first chapter** in the study will present the reader with a necessary background of the subject of the study. A discussion is created by acknowledging the gap of two paradoxical perspectives in the existing literature about mundane consumption. In addition, the chapter presents the study's problematization, the purpose and the study question. In order to answer the study question, a well-crafted methodology is necessary in order to provide reliability and replicability of the study. The **methodology chapter** gives a description of the philosophical stance and method design of the study. Thereafter a review will be presented of relevant ways of collecting the empirical work were semi-structured interviews complemented with observations will serve as the tool to collect data from the informants. Further, a discussion about ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study will be presented. Throughout the chapter, information and details will be presented about how the research and the empirical collection were conducted. The following part describes the **theoretical chapter** in order to create a lens where the researcher can look through the empirical work with this specific perspective. The chapter is divided up by four different theoretical perspectives that together will create one lens for the study, *Social Identity*, *Social Distinction*, *Routine* and *Rhythm*. Consider the theoretical lens in the study, the next chapter will be the analysis where the empirical work and theoretical lens comes together. **The analysis chapter** is divided into two main themes; *Mundane Coffee Consumption as Identity Creation*, and *Mundane Coffee Consumption as a Way of Structuring the Everyday Life*. Consequently, the outcome of the analysis will serve as the foundation for the **discussion chapter** where the findings will be discussed with contemporary literature from mundane consumption in order to draw out conclusions. **The final chapter** will sum up all the conclusions that have been drawn during the study which will provide answer to the research purpose and question, also recommendation for future research.





## 2. Method

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*To answer the purpose and study question, this study has to design a research method in order to capture how consumers relate to coffee and to grasp the embedded meanings of their mundane coffee consumption. In this chapter the researchers explain, argue and discuss for the relevant choices of methodology for this study. The chapter contains the philosophical stance of the study, research strategy, empirical collection, and data analysis. The chapter ends with an argumentation of the reliability and replicability of the study and the ethical considerations.*

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### 2.1 Research Philosophy

To understand the philosophical views of this study, one has to be aware of the two major ways of thinking about research philosophy, which are ontology and epistemology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). If the philosophical view is not presented, other researchers will struggle in understanding the result, since it is connected to the philosophical views of the researchers.

The ontology perspective needs to be taken into consideration before conducting the research, because every researcher has different beliefs about the world and the research itself (Bryman, 2011). “*Ontology is about the nature of reality and existence*” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2015 p. 46). Within the ontology view and positioning, this study will use a relativist position. In a relativist position, there is no single truth. Rather there are many different truths, which are created from different viewpoints of individuals and their discussions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The choice of relativist position is seen as the most relevant, due to the study’s purpose of seeking to understand the reality from different individuals where the truth varies. The participants of the study are not a homogeneous group because of their diverse assumptions and opinions regarding their world and their actions within it. Therefore, a relativist position is of great relevance to this study.

Coffee is consumed by individuals and the purpose of the study is to understand how individuals relate to coffee and the embedded meanings of consumers’ mundane coffee consumption. This phenomenon is in the study viewed as a social phenomenon which can be interpreted subjectively. With this taken into consideration, this study finds its roots in the social constructionist epistemology which will serve as one of the philosophical stances in the study. As Campbell (2004; 2005) states, people learn what to like and dislike from individuals’ different tastes, which is how social identity is constructed, and individuals have

different tastes. Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) emphasize a social constructionist point of view, where knowledge is constructed through people and produced through what people individually and collectively think. The intention of this study is to use a CCT perspective and within this field numerous articles are using a social constructionist epistemology when conducting their research (Elliot, 2001; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007). Taken into consideration the attributes of using a social constructionist view and that theorists use the same view in their research in the field of CCT, the study believe that this philosophical standpoint fits the study purpose the best. Therefore, the study wants to make sense of the consumers' assumptions when consuming coffee.

## 2.2 Research Strategy

The study will conduct an exploratory research of individuals' daily coffee consumption to create a deeper understanding of how consumers relate to coffee and what the embedded meanings are behind their mundane coffee consumption. Thus, an exploratory approach is well suited due to the nature of the study question, which seeks to capture valuable insights in order to increase the understanding of mundane coffee consumption as a phenomenon. Malhotra (2010) emphasizes that an exploratory research method is fruitful to use if the aim is to get insights and understanding of the human and social phenomenon. With this taken into account, the following section will present the research strategy that the study will follow during the empirical collection and analysis.

As presented earlier, regarding the philosophy of ontology, this paper takes the position of a relativistic stance. Considering the study of knowledge, a social constructionist view will be applied. Because of the social constructionist viewpoint and the exploratory approach, a qualitative methodology is best suited. With this taken into consideration together with an exploratory approach, this study will take on a qualitative methodology. Many researchers have utilised qualitative methods to understand individuals' consumption behaviour, as for example Kjeldgaard and Ostberg (2007). Furthermore, a qualitative path suits this study because of the advantage of using a qualitative method. McCracken (1988) and Jacobsen (2002) refer to a qualitative methodology as a good approach to clarify or to get a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or situation. Qualitative methods are rather orientated around words by individuals, which is contrasting to the numeric approach of quantitative methods (Bryman, 2011). Since the purpose of the study is to understand the embedded meanings of consumers' mundane coffee consumption and how they relate to coffee, the study is in need

of a method that is capable of capturing the in depth meanings. Qualitative methods offer an effective way of focusing on individuals' actions and to create an understanding, which means that words and actions are vital to collect in order to generate an understanding of the phenomenon. Due to the nature of quantitative method, where focus relies more on numbers rather than words, the method are not suitable for the study. Quantitative method cannot gather the necessary depth of the consumers that the study needs in order to understand the embedded meanings of consumers' mundane coffee consumption and how they relate to coffee. Further, CCT takes an interpretive stance and qualitatively studies the social and anthropological dimensions of consumerism (Ekström, 2010).

By acquiring a social constructionist stance in the study it will leave space where informants can express their different realities, which is why this study will have an abductive method approach. Bryman (2011) presents deductive and the inductive approach as the two main different approaches regarding the relationship between theory and practice. However, Björklund and Paulsson (2003) emphasize the importance to keep an open mind regarding the realities that are presented by the informants, and from there formulate theory. The authors argue that researchers should maintain an open relationship to theory by using it for interpreting and understanding the empirical findings, by using an abductive method approach. During the process of this study, the researchers do not want to lock themselves into a cage, rather free themselves and have an open mind-set with regards to the use of practice and theory.

In order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and the embedded meanings of the informants' daily coffee consumption this study aims to collect consumers' narratives. By collecting personal narratives, the researchers can create insights of individuals' realities, which in turn create insights into individuals' lives. Furthermore, one strength of collecting consumers' personal narratives, is that it enables the researchers to provide a holistic perspective on the individuals' behaviours (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). In order to collect their personal narratives, this study will use Thompson, Locander and Pollio's (1994) phenomenological interview technique as a tool to capture how consumers relate to coffee and the embedded meanings of consumers' mundane consumption of coffee. Hence, when analysing the empirical data, a hermeneutic (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989) interpretative approach will be combined with the phenomenological interview. When trying to capture the embedded meanings and how consumers relate to coffee, the hermeneutic

interpretation can assist the researchers when analysing consumers' narratives and get a deeper understanding of what they are actually describing. The phenomenological interview approach and the hermeneutic interpretation and their application to the study will be further discussed later in the method chapter.

Additionally, in order to get a deep understanding of consumers' mundane coffee consumption the study will only collect and proceed from primary empirical research. Primary data, is empirical material which purpose is connected to the aim of the study, and is created only for the study (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). Regarding the aim of this study, primary data will be more valuable due to that the information comes directly from the relevant sources.

## 2.3 Data collecting Method

### 2.3.1 Interviews and Observations

The intention of this study is to create an understanding of how consumers relate to coffee and what meanings that are embedded within consumers' daily coffee consumption. As presented earlier, a narrative approach where oral stories are of relevance for this study, will be gathered through collecting primary language data from relevant informants. In order to capture primary information for this research, interviews will be applied as the main method with observations as a complement in order to capture how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' daily coffee consumption.

There are numerous amount of ways in collecting data in the field of qualitative methods, however the advantages of interviews fit the aim of the study, which is to get in depth information from informants. May (2011) argues that if the intention is to make sense of a social world and of how people behave within it, interviews are the correct choice of method. Additionally, Widerberg (2002) acknowledges that interviews are a good approach if the intention is to create an understanding of how individuals reason and perceive the world. As presented earlier in the text, the study is interested in the subjective opinions from the informants in order to answer the study's question. Interviews are a way of getting subjected opinions from respondents in order to understand their attitudes and behaviours (Kvale, 1994; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Considering the advantages of applying interviews, the empirical collection from the informants can be highly valuable since it strives to get the meanings of a phenomenon. Gathering subjective opinions are essential for this study.

In the qualitative method field, there are different approaches of how to conduct interviews with informants. For this study, semi-structured interviews are seen as a useful approach. According to Bryman (2011), semi-structured interviews are a favourable tool in order to gain deeper understanding of the informants' world due to its flexibility. With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is able to guide the conversation through different themes through a prepared topic guide. The interview guide contains themes that the participant can answer openly without getting the feeling of being controlled by the interviewer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This study chooses semi-structured interviews with a topic guide due to its ability of creating a more open conversation. By applying a topic guide, it also creates security for the interviewer to stick to a relevant discussion for the research purpose (Appendix, A). Instead of a limitation, it is rather seen as a security for the interviewer to stay on point to the topic, due to the many factors that has to be taken into consideration in the study.

Despite that the study will use semi-structured interviews, the conversations between the informants and the researchers will be applied by a phenomenological approach. According to Thompson et al. (1989), a phenomenological approach sees the interview as a conversation where the researchers maintain a first person's descriptions of a certain experience for the interviewee. The interviews intend to create a conversation and discussion, rather than a question and answer session. The role of the interviewer is to provide a context where the informants can freely describe their experience in detail (Thompson et al., 1989). In order to capture the informants' experiences of their daily coffee consumption, the researchers have to provide questions that create a conversation with a first person description of the informants. This will create an open conversation where the informants feel comfortable.

Thompson et al. (1989) further emphasize that asking questions that involves to ask "*why*" questions, not is seen as relevant because of its semi academic nature. Contrary, this goes against Easterby-Smith et al.'s (2015) *laddering up* approach, where "*why*" questions instead are the focal ones in order to get the deep explanations of a phenomenon. Considering the both perspectives, this study will not exclude "*why*" questions to the informants. Instead, this study will limit the extent use of it, and rather make the informants to explain and discuss the themes that will be provided during the interviews.

As presented earlier, the study will use observations as a complement to the interviews in order to extend the captures of how consumers relate to coffee and what the embedded

meanings are within the consumers' daily coffee drinking. One weakness in using interviews as a method, is that the informants occasionally might state one thing, which does not reflect what they actually do in reality (Alvesson, 2010; Bryman, 2011). Due to this weakness of using interviews as a method, this study will also use observations as complement in order to get a deeper understanding and reliable information of the daily consumers' coffee drinking, since the interviews are not enough to capture the phenomenon. By using observations, the researchers can collect more reliable information, since the informants can be observed if they actually do what they say they do (Bell, 2000). The advantage of using observations is that the researcher can create a full picture of the informants, by studying their actions as a complement to their putted words (Fangen, 2005). Due to the study question, how consumers relate to coffee and what meanings that are embedded within their everyday coffee consumption, interviews will not be sufficient to get the information the study needs. Therefore, observations will be applied, because by only using interviews as data collection, only one side will be generated of the reality, when in fact the study needs both sides in order to understand the phenomenon.

In the field of qualitative methods, there are different ways to do observations in order to gather information. This study will take on a participant observation approach in order to observe the informants' daily coffee consumption. With participant observations, the researchers can get close to the informants and are able to study the activities the informants start by themselves, without the researchers having to say anything (Fangen, 2005). Due to the advantages of participant observations, this method is seen as being of great relevance to this study. Hence, what needs to be considered is the role as researchers, which can have affect on the observations. Researchers are not only observing others, they also observe themselves and how they engage with their environment, and hence they have to be aware of how they are acting (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). When conducting the observations, researcher therefore have to be aware of their actions, which can have affect in how the informants consume their coffee, and therefore affect the validity of the gathered information.

### **2.3.2 Sampling Method and Participant Selection**

Sampling from a constructionist view is not about gathering a huge sample, rather it is identifying a few number of relevant informants for the research's aim (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). McCracken (1988) reflected on the fact that a small sample does not represent the larger world, rather it is a look through the keyhole on the door in order to see how groups are

acting and expressing their culture. As presented earlier, the informants are small in numbers but are regularly coffee drinkers, which makes them relevant to give a glimpse of understanding how they relate to their everyday coffee and what their embedded meanings are from their coffee consumption.

The study is not aiming to understand a particular subgroup or coffee connoisseurs, rather the study is looking for daily coffee users. If the case was to understand coffee connoisseurs, the access to that community could be a problem, since Burawoy (2009) argues that one of the biggest challenges as researchers can face is the accessibility. However, this study will not encounter such problem due to its purpose of finding ordinary informants that drink coffee on a daily basis. Rather, the study considers it as a strength. By using this advantage the study will apply maximum variation sampling. As Rubin and Babbie (2010) argue, using this sampling strategy will capture the diversity of a phenomenon within a small sample group. By using a heterogeneous sample, it is more likely to generate more useful insights about the phenomenon. Since access is not an obstacle in locating informants, this study will find different informants that consume coffee on a daily basis. Differentiation from age, gender and how much coffee the informants consume per day will be considered. By gathering different informants with various experience of consuming coffee on daily basis, this study will get valuable insights of how consumers relate to coffee and the embedded meanings of mundane coffee drinking.

| Name      | Age | Amount of cups p/day |
|-----------|-----|----------------------|
| Agnés     | 24  | 2 Cups               |
| Åsa       | 35  | 6 Cups               |
| Boel      | 54  | 3-4 Cups             |
| Josefin   | 23  | 2 Cups               |
| Elin      | 25  | 1 Cup                |
| Linda     | 25  | 4-5 Cups             |
| Rasmus    | 27  | 8-10 Cups            |
| Rebecca H | 25  | 3-4 Cups             |
| Rikard    | 34  | 3-4 Cups             |
| Sven      | 34  | 2 Cups               |
| Rebecca D | 23  | 4 Cups               |
| Mikaela   | 25  | 5 Cups               |
| Jannie    | 28  | 2-4 Cups             |

Figure 1: Table of the Informants

### 2.3.3 During the Interviews

When conducting the interviews, the researchers have to be conscious of the complexity of the situation between the informants and interviewers. An interview is a socially complex and linguistically rich situation, which can be better when adopting a reflexive pragmatic mind set (Alvesson, 2003). By applying a reflexive pragmatic mindset the risk of naivety will be reduced since one is aware of the fact that data does not simply reveal reality. Working with a reflexive pragmatic approach, is to working with alternative lines of interpretation and reinterpretation of the interview in order to understand if certain elements have an effect on the interview (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). This study will adopt a reflexive pragmatic mindset in order to remove the assumption that data simply reveals reality.

Alvesson (2003) lists a numbers of obstacles during the interview situation that might affect the results from the data collection. One obstacle is the situation itself during the interview. The situation of being interviewed as an informant from a researcher can create stress and as a cause of this the informant can adopt a different identity and not act as himself. In order to prevent this adoption, the researcher has to frame the situation in a way that encourages and helps the informants to show their authentic self to make as genuine responses as possible (Alvesson, 2003). Hence, Easterby-Smith et al. (2005) argue that making the informants feel comfortable and establish trust in order to open up to the researchers, is a demanding task that needs to be taken in consideration before the interviews. In order to establish trust and to reduce the risk of identity-adoption during the interview, the researchers asked if the interviews could take place at the informants' homes. By conducting the interviews in the informants' homes it serves two purposes. First, it establishes comfortability for the informants to be home, which can also make them to show their authentic selves. Second, additional observations over a cup of coffee will be conducted in the informants' homes, in order to capture their authentic coffee practices.

When conducting the interviews within the informants' homes, both researchers participated during the interviews, one researcher held the conversation and the second researcher was observing and gave follow up questions. Two researchers were needed in order to collect both the observational material and to hold a conversation with the informants, since it ease the researchers to focus on one thing. During the interviews, the researchers asked the informants for coffee, in order to observe how the informants made and drank their coffee. In addition, both methods enabled the researchers to capture contradictory claims from their statements



and their practices. During the interviews, a sound recording was made in order to document the conversations. After the interviews, the sound files were stored and later transcribed in order to further document the interviews. When transcribing, the researchers transcribed every word that was spoken during the interviews in order to get a full description of the conversations. The transcription was made by both of the researchers with the purpose of not missing any words when transcribing. When completed transcribing, an estimation of around 200 pages were transcribed, which the researchers later used in order to analyse the conversation with the informants. The transcribed material has been translated from Swedish to English due to that all of the participants were from Sweden. The quotes have been translated as accurate as possible to the informants' narratives in the study.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

In order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and the embedded meanings within consumers' mundane coffee consumption, this study will adopt a hermeneutic approach when analysing the empirical material. The main aspect of hermeneutics is that the focus is not to generalize, rather to interpret in order to create an understanding of a text (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2007). When working with the analysis, the researchers emphasise interpreting the interviews in order to create an understanding of how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within the consumers' daily coffee consumption.

The foundation of hermeneutics is that a part, for example a part in a text, can only be understood from its whole, but on the other hand, the whole can only be understood if the parts are interpreted (Thompson et al., 1994). This creates as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2007) state as the hermeneutic circle, where the whole and the parts are the foundation of understanding a specific phenomenon. In order to create an understanding of how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' daily coffee consumption, interpreting the small parts can create an understanding of the whole picture behind consumers' actions. Further, a second hermeneutic circle occurs, which are made by researchers' understanding and pre-understanding of the phenomenon that is researched, which can influence when analysing the text (Thompson et al., 1994; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2007). When working with the analysis, pre-understanding of relevant theories existed among the researchers, and through the analysis of the empirical work, new understandings were made. Hence, as previously mentioned, this study works from an abductive approach, where the researcher moves back and forth from theory to data. Pre-understanding and moving back

and forth from theory to data was necessary in order to understand the parts of the interview transcriptions, in order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' daily coffee consumption.

When interpreting the interviews, the researchers found different repeating themes that were common among the different informants. The informants continuously referred to coffee as an adult product, which was understood as a symbolic value for the informants. Another repetition was how the context matters for the informants when consuming their coffee and how different meanings arise when consuming the coffee in various contexts. When interpreting the different repetitions in the empirical collection by the informants, two main themes will serve as the analysis of the study; *mundane coffee consumption as identity creation* and *mundane coffee consumption as a way to structure the everyday life*. Within the first theme, *mundane coffee consumption as identity creation*, different sub-themes are made; coffee signalizes adulthood, transform children to adults, the black social macho marker, the community and the group identity, uniqueness and individuality. Further, within the second theme, *mundane coffee consumption as a way to structure the everyday life*, different sub-themes are also presented; correct coffee for the right context, different context - different rhythms, regulate one's state of mind through rhythms, and finally, coffee as a tool to structure meanings. In sum, the two main themes and its sub-themes will generate findings in the analysis, which later will be used in the discussion in order to answer the study question.

## 2.5 Trustworthiness

In order to provide trustworthiness of this research, this study will use Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework to ensure trustworthiness. The authors provide four criterias that the researchers have to address in order to create trustworthiness to the study; *transferability*, *credibility*, *dependability* and *confirmability*.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) transferability is referred to the extent which the findings can be applied to other situations. This study has used a qualitative method. One of the constraints of using a qualitative method, is the limitation of the ability to transfer the study to different situations and replicate the study by others (Bryman, 2011). This study was conducted in the interviewees' homes where the interviews and observations were conducted over a cup of coffee. The replicability of this setting can be a struggle because of the specific setting at the informants' homes. Hence, due to the purpose of the study, which is to

understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are behind daily coffee consumers, the replicability of finding relevant informants will not be an issue. Since the topic of the study is mundane coffee consumption, there will not be any specific obstacles to getting access to participants in a similar study.

Credibility refers to how the findings are corresponding with the reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) argue that the empirical collection does not have to reflect the reality, which is naive of researchers to believe. Therefore, to enhance the credibility of this study, the researchers increased their knowledge around the topic of mundane consumption before the empirical collection took place. For doing so, the researchers found it easier to collect credible information from the participants. In addition, the researchers wanted to build trust with the participants in order to strengthen the credibility. For this reason, the interviews were conducted at the informants' homes, which are considered to be their comfort and safe zone. The study's credibility is also strengthened considering that the researchers are at the informants' homes, where the researchers in addition can see with their own eyes how the informants make their coffee and how they drink it. In sum, the credibility of the findings in this study is high because the analysis and discussion of the study are based on empirical collection that have a strong connection to the reality of consumers' daily coffee consumption.

Dependability is referred as Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, to the issue whether the study could be repeated in a same context, with the same informants and obtain same results. The study has been working with a relativist position where the reality between the informants vary and also the belief that there is no absolute truth. It is impossible to obtain absolute the same results because of the reality of the study. However, this study has described the research design in order to enable future researchers to repeat the study. Since the aim of the study is to investigate daily coffee consumers, access to relevant informants should not be difficult. On the other hand, access to the informants' homes could be an obstacle, where trust is vital to create to the participants in order for the researcher to get access. By showing courtesy to the informants and by being honest regarding the study purpose, trust can be established. Taking all this into consideration, the participants' realities will vary, even though it is possible to repeat the study due to its research design.

Finally confirmability, constitutes to which degree the results are biased and intruded by the

researchers' own values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A weakness of working with qualitative method are the subjectivity in describing, interpreting and understanding a specific phenomenon. The researchers have to stay objective when interpreting the empirical work. As Alvesson (2003) argues, the researchers have to be aware of their own personal bias when conducting interviews, because otherwise there is a risk of being too naive and the researchers adopt self-positions. In order to manage these risks, this study uses, as previously mentioned, a reflexive approach in order to be aware of the opinions and values of the informants, but also from the researchers' own values. To not establish one single and favour angle when conducting the interviews with the informants, multiple researchers are participating in order to create a reflexive dialog. Additionally, information about the study purpose was presented to the informants, however specific details were restricted to the informants in order to create bias free answers. For the researchers, an interview guide with themes that are relevant for the purpose and aim of the study will help the researchers to stick to the subject and look at the phenomenon from different angles. In sum, to strengthen the confirmability of the study a reflexive approach is constituted in order to understand that different values differ from the researchers and the informants.

## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have to be taken seriously in research in order to protect and respect the privacy of the informants (Bryman, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The authors pointed out the main ethical issues that can occur during research, in which they claim are; harm to informants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. One of the advantages in this study is that the subject is not controversial because the aim of the study is to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption. Nevertheless this study has been working carefully in order that these three issues, previously mentioned, will not occur.

In order to prevent the issue of harming the informants, one can work with hiding the participants' names to be confidential. During the interviews, the last question was asking consent to use their names in the study. All the informants gave their consent to use their name in the study. Considering the risk of harming the informants by using their full names, the study will only use the informants' first names. Further consideration was made by stating to the informants during the interviews, that the interview material will only be in the care of the researchers, where nobody else will have access to the material. This approach serves two

purposes. First it serves as a way to protect the informants. Second, by stating this to the informants, trust to the researchers can be created because it signals to the informants that the researchers not are there to harm them. In sum, respect to the informants is of high priority during the study, and by showing respect, the researchers will not judge the informants answers.

The researchers have been giving information of the study purpose before the interviews started, in order to give the informants their consent. By giving information of the study the informants are able to make a decision to participate or not, and by participating, a clear signal is given to the researchers that the informants give their consent to be a part of the study. Hence, the information to the informants was restricted in order to not bias them, which in turn would alter the empirical data and make the study findings questionable.

Finally, during the study the researcher have to consider the issue of invasion of privacy in the informants' private world. The aim of the study is to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption. In order to capture this phenomenon the researchers have to conduct an in depth conversation with the informants. Due to the nature of the in depth conversations, the researchers have to consider to ask questions that are relevant for the study and not go too deep and ask too personal questions. If too personal questions are stated, the informants will feel uncomfortable which will hinder the trust and casual nature of the interviews the researchers are trying to create. Further, the interviews are conducted in the informants' homes, which purpose of locating in their homes is to observe how the informants make, drinks and serve others coffee. When conducting the observations, the researchers will not take pictures or touch the informants' private goods, rather respect them and their homes.

To conclude, in order to answer the study question, the participants of the study are of key importance in order to answer the phenomenon of consumers' daily coffee consumption. Due to their vital role, the researchers have to give them the respect they are obliged to and deserve. That is why the three issues are important to acknowledge in order to protect the informants from individuals that have other interest.

### 3. Theory

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*This chapter contains of the theoretical framework with a description of the chosen theories. Four different theoretical themes will be taken into consideration in the study: Social identity, Social distinction, Rituals and Rhythms. The theoretical framework will serve as the scientific lens that the researchers will use as a tool to analyse the findings.*

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In order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption the study needs to work from a theoretical viewpoint where the meanings can be captured and understood. As previously mentioned, coffee is being seen as a mundane product, and mundane consumption is a research field that has been under-theorised. In order to further develop the mundane research field, this study will utilize the theoretical field within CCT, but also complement with broader literature concerning sociology. The theoretical field within CCT and sociology provide the study with relevant tools in order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are behind consumers' daily coffee consumption. Although the theories are focused on understanding why and how individuals consume coffee.

The study has chosen an eclectic theoretical approach, which highlights different theoretical perspectives in order to aid the study to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what the embedded meanings are behind consumers' mundane coffee consumption. A common feature of the chosen theory is the focus on the individual and the individual's consumption actions, and also how the individual relate to the external, for example the group or society.

Four main theoretical themes will be used as the theoretical lens; *Social identity, Social distinction, Rituals and Rhythms*. Social identity theory entails how individuals use consumption in order to create their social identity and how the group is affecting the identity project by individuals. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Douglas Holt (1998) will be the foundation of the second theme, social distinction, where individuals' taste signal distinction between people in society. Four theoretics within the field of rituals will be used in order to understand individuals' daily rituals in their ordinary lives. Finally, rhythm theory will feature as a tool to describe how consumers relate to coffee on a daily basis, which everyday rhythms serve as a good explanation to illustrate. The following theories are touching different areas that combined can generate a more advanced understanding of coffee as a phenomenon. This will be achieved by discussing different theoretical concepts from CCT, and by adding an

explanatory dimension through the use of rhythmanalysis to generate a more advanced understanding of mundane coffee consumption. The study argues that by combining these different theories, this study will go deeper in order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there exists within consumers' mundane coffee consumption, and further explore the field of mundane consumption.

### 3.1 Social Identity

What we consume, in order to perform our mundane actions, both contributes to and reflects our sense of identity of *who* and *what we are* (Kernan & Sommers, 1967; Solomon, 1983; Belk, 1988; Holbrook, 1992; Kleine et al., 1992). Therefore, the connection between mundane consumption and social identity theory is related to each other. Taking this into consideration, and the study's purpose, social identity theory will serve as a theoretical lens when analysing the empirical work.

Goffman (1969) and Bourdieu (1990) argue that social identity represents how individuals see themselves as unique human beings which is being expressed by various activities. The balance of the individuals will affect their sense of who they are and how they should be acting if change would occur in those habitually activities (Goffman, 1969; Bourdieu, 1990). Identity and actions from the individual are two inseparable phenomenon that are intimately linked together; identity cannot be expressed without the action (Weber, 1976). The term social identity has evolved over time, and the theory can be seen through different aspects, for example; the creation of social identity in the sense of belonging to a group, or creation of social identity through consumption.

#### 3.1.1 Social Identity: Group

As presented earlier, the identity creation is not only an action made by the individual, but also a way of belonging to a certain group that the individual wants to be a part of. Tajfel (1978) studied the purpose of the creation of social identity and came to the conclusion that social identity is about belonging to certain groups that are filled with conjoined emotions and values. In order to become a member, the individual has to gain knowledge regarding the group's values and emotions. Knowledge could be the way people talk, behave or consume goods. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that people categorize themselves and others as belonging to different social groups and evaluate these categorizations. Additionally, social identity is how members within a group should behave, think and feel, and how people try to

fit into different groups (Turner, 1982; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). In sum, social identity is an action performed in order to belong to a certain group where norms and rules of behaviour dictate what it constitutes to be a part of that group. As Hogg et al. (1995) confirms social identity theory is about intergroup relations, group processes and the social self.

In contemporary research, social identity creation is defined by Stryker and Burke (2000), along with previous research, to belong to a certain group as the most important incentive. In addition, Stryker and Burke (2000) further claim that the individual want to be united with a specific group, thus being similar to the other group members, and view the world from the group's perspective. Ransome (2005) complements this study by stating that identity is about acting or behaving in one way rather than another. A successful expression of identity requires to get active recognition or approval, and confirmation of the correctness of the individual's behaviour by others in the group.

Abrams and Hogg (1990) express the self-concept as the creation of a social identity. The self-concept is typically linked to an individual's definition of oneself, which the social settings are able to create meanings to and is highly influencing one's creation of social identity. Jenkins (1996) argues that the social context has consequences for the identity projects, because the various occurring social areas furnish one with useful indicators of what one should be doing, how one should behave, and what expectations a person reasonably should have when occupying that particular area. By acknowledging the social context and its impact, this study attempts to understand how consumers construct their social identity creation when individuals consume their coffee.

### **3.1.2 Social Identity: Consumption**

The construction of an individual's social identity, can be recognized in many forms where individuals use different tools in order to fit into a certain group. Belk (1988) integrated consumption of products in individuals' identity work, where the author claims that consumers are understanding and expressing their identity through consuming products and people's possessions. The possessions that are consumed by individuals are a part of their extended selves. According to Belk's (1988) theory of the extended self, consumers have a core identity, which they are able to expand when they consume products. The author emphasizes that internal processes, ideas and experiences are a part of one's core identity, whereas products that individuals have an attachment to are seen as a part of their extended



selves. In order to understand consumers' consumption, it is important to understand the meanings that consumers give to their goods. Researchers cannot understand consumers' consumption practices without getting an understanding of the meanings that the consumers give to their possessions (Belk, 1988).

In addition to Belk's (1988) theory, Lee (1993) further develops this by arguing that by consuming possessions, the consumers are able to manage their sense of place in society, their social position, as well as their identity in the social context. In sum, there are symbolic meanings behind the products when they are consumed. Elliot and Wattanasuwan (1998) claim that products have symbolic meanings that are consumed in order to reflect individuals' desire of connecting to other societies and to create their social identity. Following a similar trend, Wattanasuwan (2005) further argues that *we are what we buy*. Hence, the process of social identity through consumption of goods, is a conscious action as presented earlier. Additionally, people judge others based on their possessions in terms of who they are and would like to be (Banister & Hogg, 2007).

As a whole, the literature is emphasizing that the social identity is linked to individuals' consumption of goods that express who we are. Banister and Hogg (2007) turns this statement around and highlight that the goods that consumers do not consume have even greater effect in how individuals construct their identities. Further, Campbell (2004; 2005) is critical to Belk's (1988) view and gives an alternative explanation on how individuals create their social identity. The identity of an individual is recognized from the reactions of the consumed products, and not on the goods itself. People learn what they like and dislike, which is how identity is constructed. Campbell (2004; 2005) emphasizes the taste rather than the product itself.

### 3.2 Social Distinction

As presented in previous section, individuals consume products in the creation of a social identity, and to create a sense of belonging to a certain group. Research that concerns why consumers buy certain products has evolved over time. Formerly, individuals bought a collection of goods for future security, whereas now individuals are purchasing products for social distinction and self definition (Belk, 1988). This following section will explore the theory of social distinction, which will provide as a theoretical lens in order to research how

consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings exist of consumers' daily coffee consumption.

The sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1994) argues that social distinction is created through consumption. Further, the concepts of *conspicuous consumption* and *conspicuous leisure* entail to display one's social status and social distinction through luxury consumption. In order to gain status and social distinction, one must consume appropriate and in seemingly as a wealthy individual. By consuming expensive products, members of a higher social class show and maintain their social position and create a social distinction from others in society (Veblen, 1994). Due to the study purpose, where mundane and everyday consumption is the opposite to exclusive and expensive consumption, this theoretical lens can still be useful in order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are of mundane coffee consumption.

In Bourdieu's (1984) theory he rejects the traditional notion described as the *Kantian aesthetics*, where the taste and consumer choices are the results of the intellectual and individualistic choices of one's aesthetic appreciation. Instead Bourdieu (1984) argues that the objects, which are chosen by the consumers, reflect a symbolic hierarchy that is determined by the social class structure and enable individuals to distinguish themselves based on their upbringing. Thus, taste becomes a tool, in which consumers distinguish themselves from others. In other words, it becomes a social weapon in order to mark people with high and low social status. In contrast to Veblen (1994), Bourdieu (1984) argues that even the most mundane and functional goods for consumption, bear symbolic significance, where taste can be used as a tool to socially distinguish oneself from another.

In order to understand how individuals and groups distinguish from each other, Bourdieu (1984) investigates the everyday practices such as eating, shopping and athletics. The author states that individuals compete to obtain distinction through three different capitals: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital is the monetary wealth that the individual possesses, which can be conveyed to goods. Cultural capital is understood as the general cultural competence from one's education and family background, as well as the ability to feel comfortable in sophisticated contexts. Finally, social capital refers to the social resources, which are connected to the social network. Together, the capitals represent the embodied taste the individual possesses, which serves as a tool in how individuals socially distinct themselves

from others. Taste remains stable in time, and affects how individuals consume different goods. According to Adams and Rainsborough (2008), Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of social distinction is relevant in order to explore the actions of everyday class distinction through consumption and taste which is of great relevance for this study.

Douglas Holt (1998) adapts Bourdieu's (1984) theory of social distinction concerning taste, and further develops it. Holt (1998) confirms that the social class is reproduced through consumption, and further investigates how individuals with high and low cultural capital distinguish themselves through different tastes. Further, Holt (1998) argues that cultural capital has a strong influence in what individuals consume, and also a strong influence on individuals' tastes. He distinguished six dimensions regarding consumption and taste among consumers with high and low cultural capital; *material versus formal aesthetics*; *referential versus critical appreciation*; *materialism versus idealism*; *local versus cosmopolitan taste*; *consumer subjectivity as local identity versus individuality*; *leisure as self-actualisation versus autotelic sociality*. Holt's (1998) findings confirm that social distinction is recreated through consumption, and consumers with high or low cultural capital distinguish themselves through various tastes. Due to the purpose of the study, Holt's (1998) six dimensions will not be used in the analysis, because the study does not try to identify consumers with high or low cultural capital. Rather, the use of Holt's (1998) work is the phenomenon of individuals' tastes, and how it differs from individuals and is used as a tool to socially distinguish from others.

Both Bourdieu (1984) and Holt (1998) argue that the creation of social distinction is possessing three different capital. Further, both emphasize the cultural capital as the most influential one, when referring to individuals' tastes. Further, Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) state that the cultural capital is the most vital one, which influences social distinction and also the social identity creation. In order to create a further understanding of how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are behind consumers' daily coffee consumption, taste has to be taken into consideration. Taste is seen as a tool for individuals to socially distinguish from others, and is therefore a crucial part to consumers' consumption.

### 3.3 Rituals

Weber (1978) claimed that the sociology's mission is to understand the social actions and its meanings that individuals create. A ritual is an action that has many different symbolic meanings depending on the individuals. Weber (1978) argues that there are four different social actions; *traditional action*, *affective action*, *value rational action* and *instrumentally action*. Traditional action has its origins in customs and traditions. The actions of the individuals are build on the assumptions that "this is how we have always done it" because of its tradition. Affective action is made by individuals' affections and emotional states, which mean that the individuals do not think of the consequences of their actions. Value rational action is made by a conscious belief in the inherent value of a type of behaviour, for example once religion. Finally, instrumentally action is carried out from individuals in order to achieve a specific goal, the action is made because it leads to a result. Weber (1978) believed that these four actions are ideal and serve as a tool to understand individuals' rituals. The rituals are grounded on the social actions, and can be used to understand the social actions in a rational way. These different actions are essential to understand, because they create an understanding of the individuals' actions and the values they give to them.

Victor Turner (1969) also states that rituals are actions, but argues that rituals are saturated in shared symbolic meanings, which consequently create other meanings. By investigating African tribes, the researcher came to the conclusion that rituals serve as symbolic meaning to transfer one person to a higher level in society. According to Turner (1969) a ritual is a process where an individual transform oneself to another individual, from other individuals' perspectives, which are referred as a *passage rite*. The passage rite contains three stages; *separation*, *transition* and *incorporation*. The first stage, separation, indicates that an individual is separated from the social structure, which one once were identified with, where the purpose is to eliminate the individual's past identity. The second stage, transition, then the individual's condition is between the previous identity and the identity that the individual will become. During this stage, the individual is expected to act humble and obey the leader in the group that the individual is aiming to be a part of. Additionally, the individual will be tested to see if the person is ready to advance within the society. The last stage, incorporation, is when the individual is regained back into the structure of society with a new identity as well as with new values. From these three stages, an individual evolves from the past identity and the social structure, and transform to a different identity with a higher social structure (Turner,

1969). A typical ritual that was common within tribal societies, is according to Turner (1969), the rite of passage from a child to adulthood.

In contrast to Turner (1969), McCracken (1988) emphasizes the individualistic rituals, which he characterizes as four different types of consumption rituals: *exchange, possession, maintenance and divestment*. The exchange ritual is referred to as a link between people and objects, which contains some form of personal trust or ceremonial propriety. The ritual of possession focuses on the personalization of objects and creates their own meaning to objects. The ritual of maintenance helps to maintain the personal meanings of objects over time. The final ritual, divestment, concerns dismissal of the good. In this study exchange and possession rituals will be considered as central in this specific social setting.

The cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (1978) was interested in researching the everyday life of individuals and acknowledges the role of rituals in the everyday life. Douglas (1978) argues that different forms of rituals and symbols play crucial meanings for the production and reproduction of social relations. Further, she claims that rituals are a way of communicating a language and to communicate social information. When individuals communicate, the performance of the linguistic rituals confirms the collective emotions and assumptions, at the same time as they reproduce social relations and their collective values. Language and rituals are common functions to express and transfer collective information to confirm and strengthening the social union.

Douglas (1978) states food as an example of a cultural phenomenon, which can be recognized as a language and a ritual to communicate social information. Individuals eat different meals at specific times during the day, and every meal is organized in its own way by social rituals that are created collectively. In this social context, individuals' consumption of food is a cultural coded activity that is only understood by those who are qualified to use the code. A code can be acknowledged as a cultural pattern that consists of collective assumptions within a group or a society. Due to that coffee consumption can be considered as a ritual, theories concerning various rituals are therefore seen as important to investigate mundane coffee consumption.

### 3.4 Rhythms

Rhythmanalysis was coined by the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (2004) and is a tool to study *rhythms* in order to describe the meanings of individuals' everyday lives. Lefebvre (2004) demonstrates that rhythms emerge whenever time, place and energy interact. Additionally, he demonstrates that time and space are intertwined with energy, and that those are inseparable. Thus there is a rhythm “*everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy*” (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 15). Lefebvre (2004) means that the everyday life contains various rhythms, which contain three main characteristics: *repetition, movement and measurement*. The everyday life thus establishes from rhythms, which are inseparable from repetition. For this reason it means that all rhythms must involve movements, since repetitions require movements. The third main attribute, measurement, is either made of cyclical or recurrent repetitions. Furthermore, Lefebvre (2004) means that various rhythms contain different measure of consistency, speed and frequency. However, Lefebvre (2004) argues that there is no repetitive rhythm that could be absolute identical to one another, since it always contains changes in the everyday rites, laws, rules and ceremonies.

Rhythmanalysis explores how social practice is related to repetitive and habitual routines, as well as focusing on the infusion of socially or discursively adjusted differences into such routines. Lefebvre (2004) focused on the everyday life through space and spatial rhythms. Rhythms are further interconnected to other rhythms and can only be fast or slow in relation to the others. Lefebvre (2004) means that the human body composes different rhythms, and in order to understand the rhythms outside from one's body, rhythmanalysis needs to be used by starting with one's own rhythms as the reference point.

Everyday life rhythms take various forms as *natural, social, and biological*, and are all subjectively perceived. Those rhythms can further be divided into *cyclical rhythms* and *linear rhythms*. In our everyday life, linear and cyclical rhythms are overlapping each other, which make rhythms even more complex to examine. The cyclical forms are an example of the human body, which in itself is a producer of rhythms as for example our heartbeats and our breaths. Cyclical rhythms are thus example of movements, processes, returns and rotations on a cyclical basis that are of natural essence. These rhythms could take form in simple intervals as for example, birth or death, or as historic recurrences. Also, it could be recurrences as seasons and years, day and night. Therefore, cyclical rhythms have fixed periodicity and

frequency that always starts over again and again (Lefebvre & Régulier, 2004a; 2004b). Linear rhythms are movements or actions of monotonous sequences, or as series of identical facts that have been separated by short or long periods. Those rhythms are therefore only of linear recurrences. The linear rhythms contain for example the broadcast that shows on the television, which starts and ends. These rhythms are created from social practices as social and human activities. Social rhythms could for example be tourists that are visiting the same spot. Further, social rhythms are made of predictable or unpredictable events in the form of linear sequences of activities. In contrast, the natural and biological rhythms take form of cyclical rhythms. Natural rhythms are regularly changed and are for example the sunrise and the sunset that is having impact in the light and darkness during the day. Biological and linguistic rhythms refer to the everyday life, where the first mentioned are a crucial part in reference to the consciousness of social, personal and physical space, and whereas the latter are the key to the social spaces. In addition, cultural rhythms are codes, gestures and rituals. It could for example be men that are wearing their black suit early in the morning.

In order to understand the everyday lives, all rhythms need to be examined. In our everyday lives, both cyclical and linear rhythms are constantly intertwined with each other, which form complex rhythmic fields. However, these rhythms can never be identically repetitive, due to that the circumstances are never identically and exactly the same. To continue, it is the *dressage* that determines the majority of all rhythms. The *dressage* is what Lefebvre (2004) describes as the superordinate rhythms he states are able to form even the smallest gestures due to its superior power. Lefebvre (2004) argues that the biological rhythms always subordinate the social rhythms, which he demonstrates as to be the superordinate ones. Therefore, Lefebvre (2004) further explains that everywhere there exists rhythms, he also means that there exist expected and calculated obligations, due to the *dressage*. This is because all biological rhythms need to subordinate the social ones, since they are seen to be the dominant rhythms (Shove, Trentmann & Wilk, 2009). Rhythms are seen as a tool to describe the meanings of the everyday lives (Lefebvre, 2004), therefore, the theory is considered as applicable to this study to examine the meanings of everyday consumption. In order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within their daily coffee consumption, rhythmanalysis will be of relevance to this study.

## 4. Analysis

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*In this chapter theory and the empirical material comes together. The empirical material will be analysed through the theoretical lens in order to understand how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption. The analysis is divided into two main themes; Mundane coffee consumption as identity creation and Mundane coffee consumption as a way of structuring the everyday life.*

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The empirical material has shown that coffee is more than a mundane product that individuals pay little attention to. When conducting the interviews and observations with the informants, one could acknowledge that coffee is an important factor in their everyday life. The informants in the study have shown both coherent and different opinions regarding their everyday coffee consumption. However, all the informants argued that coffee plays an important role in their lives and structures their everyday life in various ways. Rebecca H points out:

*Rebecca H: If I would have invited my grandmother, then I would have taken out the old and tiny coffee cups. But if my close friends came over, then I would not have done that, because then I want to be a little bit cool. I would feel a little bit old fashioned if I would have taken out the old cups to my friends. Our generation is not used to drink from those cups, it would feel weird to drink from them with my friends. It would be in the wrong context.*

Rebecca H's description shows the effort and thinking process behind her coffee consumption where she has to evaluate the coffee cups. Her statement shows multiple meanings where she wanted to be identified as cool and modern in front of her friends, whereas she wanted to fit into the social world of her grandmother when she came over for a visit. Furthermore, it is argued that the social context plays a significant role in how the coffee is interpreted by her and from others. Thus, if the coffee is consumed in the wrong context it would consequently feel wrong. Therefore, the statement displays that mundane coffee consumption is a tool in the creation of a social identity. Also, it shows that the context plays an important role for the consumer's' identity creation and signifies the diverse contexts that structures their everyday lives. The study has discovered that consumers' daily coffee consumption are embedded with meanings to individuals and it can be divided into two dimensions: *Mundane coffee consumption as identity creation* and *Mundane coffee consumption as a way of structuring the everyday life*. Mundane coffee consumption as identity creation is composed of how individuals use coffee in a way to be a part of a social group or to create individualism by being unique. Mundane coffee consumption as a way of structuring the everyday life, is



composed as what meanings individuals give to their coffee depending on the context and how it gives structure to individuals' everyday lives. All in all, the findings arguably show that coffee is a product used by consumers to convey meanings and create identity within a specific community where the social context plays an important role.



Figure 2: The structure of the analysis

## 4.1 Mundane Coffee Consumption as Identity Creation

*Boel: Yes, for example afternoon coffee, only the word “afternoon coffee”, as it was called back then before you called it “fika”, which means that you should drink coffee, and imagine if you then said “no thank you, I don't drink coffee” What? Would you rather have a glass of water or lemonade? No, a glass of lemonade is for children.*

By studying consumers' daily coffee drinking, one will interestingly find many different embedded meanings of such simple everyday practices. One of the main aspects of the meaning of coffee is that it signifies adulthood. The informants refer to coffee as a substantial product in order to be classified as an adult. As Boel mentioned above: “*You don't turn down a coffee when it is offered and if you do, what should you drink instead? Lemonade? Lemonade is for children*”. This statement signalizes that coffee is more than a drink that is only consumed on a daily basis. It is a product that signalizes adulthood and maturity. As adulthood serves as the main symbolic theme, coffee also has other meanings, where the product is utilised in order to fit into a specific group and also to stand out from others. This following chapter will explore how coffee is embedded with different meanings and how individuals use coffee in an expressive way.

### 4.1.1 Coffee Signalizes Adulthood

When discussing why the participants started drinking coffee, the answer to the question is frequently the same; the curiosity of knowing what the adults where doing and drinking:

*Sven: The first time I liked coffee was one time on a party, when all the adults after the dinner where and should drink coffee and the goal back then was to be and do like them, But actually you were curious what are they really doing? Why do they drink this so much?*

*Agnès: I was curious /.../ I don't remember everything, but I was just curious and thought it was good. It also felt like a fun thing to do, you sat together and it was like nice.*

The curiosity of what the adults where drinking and doing was an influencer when the informants started drinking coffee. By being given a glimpse into the adult world from a child perspective, a curiosity was developed of what to expect from getting older. Further, this curiosity of what the adults where doing came to influence them in the attempt to belong to the adult group. The informants noticed that the adults are drinking coffee, which was a ceremony they also wanted to be a part of. Thus it required them to also be introduced to the coffee drinking. Dennis Rooks (1985) discusses that social introductions can be seen as rituals that involves certain intricate etiquettes. Further, Rooks (1985) is distinguishing between

habits and rituals where he states that rituals are embedded with greater meanings for the individuals compare to the habits. Therefore, the adults' mundane coffee consumption can be seen as an important ritual that the children wanted to be a part of due to that they saw it as an adult and vital activity. In order to participate in this ritual, they needed to follow the social etiquettes along with the adults, which thus can be understood as drinking coffee. Further, this moment can be coupled to the social introduction when the children need to be introduced to the adult product and taste the coffee in the interest to be part of the adults' ritual. Thus, by consuming coffee, the informants will be accepted by the adult group and consequently transform from a child to a grown-up. Additionally, in order to be accepted by the group, one must also behave and act similarly as the members inside of it:

*Linda: I can equate coffee and wine, that is my two most adult drinks and I don't know why. I think its social and like a big part of our living, something big, you do not serve kids coffee, you just don't do that, that would be really weird. A children's party where everybody is having coffee with refills? I don't know but there is an adult stamp on coffee. Then it is the taste very different, it is a taste that children do not like.*

*Jannie: I remember the first time I drank coffee. For some reason I got to the perception that now I am going to drink coffee. I don't know why. In the morning, there were always coffee at home and I was thinking now I am going to start drink coffee because now I am becoming an adult and that you should drink coffee. /.../*

The informants in this study frequently stated that coffee is a product connected to adulthood; a product when consumed transformed you from a child to an adult. One underlying meaning behind why they started drinking coffee is understood as the desire of belonging to another group i.e. to the adults. Therefore the coffee can be interpreted as a useful possession that Belk (1988) argues as a way to extend one's personal self. Also, it can be understood as that the informants wanted to create a new social identity equal with adulthood, rather than to be coupled to as a child. This can be connected to Elliot and Wattanasuwan (1998) who claim that products are consumed in order to reflect a desired identity, which in this case means to be an adult. Thus, the coffee can be interpreted as it is consumed due to that it signalizes symbolical meanings both outwardly and to the person itself. Further, similarities can be drawn between how the informants consumed their coffee in order to belong to a certain group with Tajfel (1978) who argues that social identity is about belonging to a certain group, which in this case refers to the adult group. The decision to belong to another group through consuming coffee is a conscious action made by the informants. By drinking coffee they were

able to express the social identity they wanted to be connected to. In order to gain knowledge about the group, the informants stated that they kept attention to the adults' behaviour and actions, which generated insights in how to be accepted to it as Sven stated: "*When I started drinking it for the first time, then you just emulated how the adult did it*". The learning process can be connected with Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Turner (1982), who argue that in order to be part of a social group, individuals have to gain knowledge about how to behave, act and what values dictates within the group. By observing how the adults drank their coffee, the informants increased knowledge of how they should act in order to belong to the adult group. As Boel stated: "*In order to be accepted by an adult, then you have to do adult things, do like everybody else in that age, for example drinking coffee*".

One of the main factors of being accepted to a social group is to get active approval from members within the group that the individual is striving to be a part of (Ransome, 2005). In the beginning of the process, the informants struggled with how to get active approval due to the specific coffee taste which many disliked:

*Jannie: It was right in the beginning when I needed to have a lot of sugar and milk, that my mother was laughing at me and thought it was silly. It counteracts the taste and the feeling of becoming an adult when she laughed at me, then I felt like a child again.*

The empirical work confirms Ransome's (2005) theoretical view of the importance of achieving active approval from individuals within the group in order to be part of it. Jannie's story expresses that negative comments can have opposite effects, since the informant afterwards felt more distant from the group that she strived to belong to.

Taking all this into consideration, both positive and active approval from group members, the adults, plays a significant role in the favour of feeling accepted by the group, but it also shows that the way in which informants drink their coffee is of relevance.

#### **4.1.2 Transform Children to Adults**

As previously presented, informants identify coffee as a product with symbolic meanings which are connected to adulthood when consuming it. One interesting finding is the process when the informants undergone the transformation from being a child to an adult. During this process, the child has to go through different steps before one can be truly accepted as an adult. This transformation could be referred to as a ritual that shows similarities that Turner

(1969) describes as a *passage rite*. The first stage in the passage rite is *separation*. In this stage, the informants have decided to abandon its old social identity in the purpose to become something else and more respectful. Jannie and Rebecca H symbolise this first stage by stating:

*Jannie: I remember the first time I drank coffee. For some reason I got to the perception that now I am going to drink coffee /.../ I poured a cup and in the beginning I had to pour in plenty of sugar and milk because I did not really think it was tasty*

*Rebecca H: When I was little then I drank it with a lot of milk and sugar and then comments came, how can you drink that, when it is so sweet. I think my father drank his coffee black. In general I have been told to not add milk.*

In the separation stage, the informants have decided that it is time to become an adult and leave their identity as a child. During this process the informants try coffee for the first time, which usually is the informants' parents that offers them to taste from their cup of coffee, or by pouring a cup themselves. Due to that the informants are still children, the informants have not got used to the adult and bitter flavour of coffee. Consequently, they refer to the coffee taste as disgusting and not drinkable. In order to be able to drink it, the informants proceed to the next stage of the transformation, *transition*, which could be symbolised as a process where their coffee consumption contain a lot of milk and sugar:

*Mikaela: It is like this, the first time you drink coffee then I didn't like the taste, it was not like I said wow this is really good, you have to learn to be able to drink it.*

*Jannie: It counteracts the taste and the feeling of becoming an adult when she laughed at me, then I felt like a child again. I can not even drink coffee, I have to stop drinking it with sugar, I could choose to add milk because that was accepted because she drank her coffee with milk. I felt back then that it was not okay to have both sugar and milk, then I cannot have that. I could stand up for myself and say I don't give a shit what you say about how I drink my coffee I do what I want. But I wanted to do it right as the adults.*

In the transition stage the informants are trying to consume coffee identically as the group, which is the adults. However, they struggle because of the taste that they do not like. In order to be able to drink coffee, the informants put a lot of milk and sugar with the purpose to hide the distinctive coffee flavour and to make it more bearable to drink. Hence, the cover of the flavour is noticed by the adult group, where they give comments about how wrong and childish it is to drink it in that way which generates the effect that the informants are not yet accepted to the adult world. In this stage the informants are neither feeling like an adult nor a

child, rather a limbo stage between the two diverse groups occurs. In order to be accepted, the informants have to drink their coffee as the adults do; without any sugar or a lot of milk. It is a learning process. In the interest of drinking coffee, the individuals consciously decided to learn consuming it without any sugar and milk, especially sugar since it symbolises a sweeten and childish flavour. Rasmus argued that this was how he learned to drink coffee before he learned to drink it black: “*I started drinking with milk but I taught myself to drink it black*”. Mikaela also confirms that it is a learning process:

*Mikaela: It is like this, the first time you drink coffee then I didn't like the taste, it was not like I said wow this is really good, you have to learn to be able to drink it.*

The informants feel pressured to learn to drink their coffee the right way in order to feel accepted. Individuals that had mastered their coffee drinking, by drinking it without sugar or milk, gained acceptance from the adult world. Even though the individuals were at the same age as one who had not completed the transition stage, they felt much older according to Rikard:

*Rikard: Those who drank coffee were seen as more adult, it felt like they were one or two years older even though they were in the same age.*

If they managed to get through the transition, the final stage is the *incorporation stage*, where the informants are accepted by the adult group and are feeling no connection with the former identity and the group it once belonged to. In this stage Rikard had taken away the childish behaviour of putting sugar and a lot of milk in his coffee and developed an adult and sophisticated taste of plain black coffee. The black coffee is now tasteful to the informant and an enjoyable experience to drink, and also a social aspect to drink with people that are in the same respectful stature. The new taste and the incorporation have developed a distance to the old group by not drinking the coffee the way the informants used to. Therefore, when the informants drinks the coffee in same way as during the transition stage, it only taste sweet and undrinkable because of the informants developed taste according to Linda:

*Linda: I started drinking maybe in seventh grade, then you started to drink coffee, not black, you mixed chocolate and coffee, Moccalatte it was called, then you started with Moccalatte and then after a while when your taste buds changes then you thought that was too sweet and then you drank Latte and then you felt it was too much milk in that. I have really gone from Moccalatte to Cappuccino to coffee with milk to black coffee. I have really gone from that order, now I can't drink that*

*anymore, I don't like it when there is too much milk, you want to feel the taste of the coffee flavour.*

To conclude, individuals' mundane coffee drinking is carrying different meanings when it is consumed and becomes a ritual to convert from a child to an adult. Thus, everyday coffee is seen as a product that symbolises adulthood. The informants state that coffee helped them to transform from a child to an adult. This transformation implies that the informants have to go through different stages in order to transfer from a child to an adult. Milk and sugar are seen as obstacles for the informants to proceed in the ritual, due to the taste and habits that needs to be practiced and taken away. When the informants drink their coffee black or with little milk, the transformation has been completed. As presented earlier in the text, this ritual shows similarities to Turner's (1969) theory regarding the ritual's three stages. Hence, the ritual transformation from a child to an adult can be further analysed by applying Rook (1984) who argued that ritual behaviours are symbolic expressions through which individuals articulate their social and physical affiliation. The informants arguably showed an affiliation to the adult world, since they consciously went through the different steps of the ritual to be part of the adults. Taking this into consideration, it confirms that coffee is more than just a cup off coffee and rather is embedded with symbolic meanings that individuals strive to reach through their daily coffee consumption.

#### **4.1.3 The Black Social Macho Marker**

As presented earlier, coffee is a product that signalizes adulthood where individuals go through a ritual from being a child to an adult. In addition, interestingly it was shown that coffee also bears different meanings to various consumers depending on the type of coffee that is consumed. A number of the informants argued that drinking black coffee was seen as *cool* and *tough*, and by drinking their coffee black they felt *cooler* and *tougher*. As the following text will discover, the way consumers drink their coffee can therefore be utilised in various ways in order to socially distinct oneself from another. This is shown from Mikaela who states as following:

*Mikaela: Those who are the coolest are those who drink it black. It is just cool, bad to the bone. Because the flavour is so strong. You appreciate others who like raw things and there is no additives, it is just raw. It's the same with people who drink vodka shots straight up and down, it is raw, it feels so authentic.*

This statement exemplifies how a certain type of mundane coffee, the *black coffee*, signalizes roughness and toughness outwards. Therefore, it is clear that different coffee products signalize diverse meanings depending on what coffee type that is consumed. Due to that

Wattanasuwan (2005) argues that *we are what we buy*, one's identity could thus be shown from one's coffee consumption. In the case of Mikaela, it is shown that black coffee couples her with roughness and coolness. Thus, one's cup of coffee creates attention, and works a test since it evaluates the person dependently on what type of coffee and how the coffee is consumed. Therefore, it is further interpreted as it characterizes one's personal traits. This was attested from Rasmus due to that he was confronted by the way he drinks his coffee:

*Rasmus: When I lived in Canada, they thought it was different to drink it black. The culture in Canada is to have both cream, milk and sugar, it has to be plenty of both parts so the coffee flavour is barely recognized. I worked as a roofer and approximately half of the people I worked with were ex-criminals, I would class them as rough barked types, and one of them said, "do you drink your coffee black? Yes! Ohh That's pretty John Wayne of you".*

The ones who commented on his coffee, is described as ex-criminals and tough guys. When they saw him drink his coffee black, they coupled him as a tough and as a badass guy, as if they equated him with the fictional cowboy John Wayne, who represent a masculine and tough person. Hence, not only should cultural differences between Sweden and Canada be considered, which additionally goes in line with Josefine who explained that Danish people commented on her coffee and said that it was very strong: *"They comment that I make strong coffee. But I think it is a Swedish thing. Because every Dane I know drink very weak coffee"*. But it is also understood as the coffee function as a possession that signalizes one's social identity. As Banister and Hogg (2007) argue, individuals judge others based on their possessions in terms of who they are. Despite that Rasmus action not was a conscious decision to signalize an identity outwardly, it clearly shows that the coffee nonetheless coupled him as a tough and masculine person. The comment shows that the way individuals drink their coffee, black or with cream, with a lot of milk or with sugar, are embedded with different meanings not only to the person who consumes it, but also to the people around. Drinking black coffee serves as a signal to the individuals around the person, a signal of masculinity because the coffee flavour is strong and as Mikaela referred that the flavour is *raw*. Thus, one is able to create an identity from one's consumption practices, which consequently generate several reactions from the surrounding people. This is something that goes along with Campbell (2004) who states that one's consumption causes different reactions, and that it is the reactions that create one's identity rather than the product itself. From the reactions, individuals learn what *to like* and what *not to like* (Campbell, 2004). In the case of Rebecca H, it could be seen as that she started to drink coffee because of the



impressive reactions her classmate received from it, which accordingly taught her was something cool:

*Rebecca H: When I was in seventh grade there was a girl in my class and she was the coolest girl in the class and I remember when she once said “yeah yesterday I drank five cups of coffee”, and I was like “ohh wow how cool”, so I started to drink a cup of coffee when I got home /.../ Back then I thought it was a little bit cool.*

Here it could be understood, as Rebecca H constituted a desire to become cooler, and as a result started to drink coffee. Rebecca H felt that if she did not drink coffee, she would be judged by the cool girl who drinks coffee and consequently be classified as not cool. As Banister and Hogg (2007) describe, individuals judge others based on their possessions, which signalizes who they are and who they want to be. The desire of being seen as tough and cool is therefore connected with the longing for belonging to a certain group. Further, it is seen, as that Rebecca H not started to drink coffee because of the product itself, rather it was the symbolism and the reactions behind the product that was the main reason for her to start drinking coffee. As Ransome (2005) argues that to be identified with a specific group, the individual has to act and behave as the same way the group are, and getting active recognition or approval by other within the group. As Rebecca H stated, she followed the behaviour of the desired group by drinking coffee with the purpose of be seen as cool. Hence, the important aspect of the informant to become cooler, was to get the recognition and actively approval of the members inside the group. Consequently, one could argue that getting approval and recognition from members within the desirable group, serves as an important factor in order to be seen as cool, and a part of the group. Hence, this means that the active members within the group also play of great importance if one can be a part of a group or not.

On the contrary to stick into a group, coffee can also be utilised to distance from a group by disregarding the group's norms and behaviour, which is something that Rikard exemplifies with:

*Rikard: I started to drink it black. Everybody was drinking it with milk. Cappuccinos and Lattes started to become a trend at that time, and I wanted to be a little bit more old fashioned and unique, so then I drank it black. I wanted to stand out from the crowd.*

*Rikard: There was some people that observed when I drank it black and that was the purpose to why I drank it black. When you were sitting on a big dinner table and when is was time to drink coffee after the dinner, most people drank it with milk. When the milk pitcher came and asked if you would like some milk, then I said “no thank*

*you". "What? Do you drink it black?" "Yes I do" Then you felt unique. They thought it was very unusual.*

With regards to this, it could be interpreted as that the black coffee is embedded with other meanings to Rikard. The informant refuses to put milk in his coffee like his age group around him drank it. Milk was not a line with the values that the informant was striving to be referred to, since the informant wanted to be more unique. Milk can signal different meanings, similar with Roland Barthes (2012) who argues that milk can signal innocent and purity like a child. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, milk is seen as an antagonist by the informants in order to become an adult. For Rikard, consuming coffee with milk was not only an unacceptable product to consume, since he considered it as mainstream, but also because one could interpret it as to be childish, which the informant not wanted to be referred to. Instead of the pursuit of belonging to a group with too mainstream characteristics, Rikard in contrast consumes it in order to be unique and old fashioned outwardly by drinking it black. In that way, the coffee can be seen as an extension of his personal self, since it helps him to mark an identity of uniqueness that deviant from the on-going trend of consuming Lattes and Cappuccinos. Further, this could be connected to Belk (1988) who states that consumers have a core identity but are able to expand it by consuming certain products. In addition, Lee (1993) demonstrates that goods are able to signify one's social position, which here could be seen as Rikard does by taking distance from the mainstream by exposing another social identity. During the observation, Rikard did however contradict his statement of drinking black coffee, since he actually had some milk in his cup. Therefore, it could be interpreted as that Rikard chooses the contexts where he wants to display a special social identity, since he is conscious about what his coffee signalizes outwardly. In this case he was chosen not to drink it in order to not achieve such attention, due to that it was a context that meant that he not needed to distinguish himself from the mainstream.

#### **4.1.4 The Community and the Group Identity**

One could interpret that even the very ordinary types of coffee have some underlying subtle meanings. Drinking coffee serves as a tool in order to be identified as for example an *adult*, *cool*, *tough*, or *unique* as outlined in the section above. The common characteristics in these findings are that coffee is utilised in order to belong to a certain group, or, to distinguish from another. Thus, it could be understood as coffee contains underlying meanings that differ from person to person. These meanings not only stand apart between individuals, but they also differ within diverse groups. Therefore, each group contain unique values and rules, which are

important to gain knowledge about in order to fit (Turner, 1982; Hogg et al., 1995). If an individual is acting distinctively, exclusion of that individual will be the case. An example of this is Rikard when he refereed back to his time at the sugar beets factory. At that time he started to drink coffee to be part of the group. However, he at one time broke the cultural code within it and thus deviated from the *correct* behaviour:

*Rikard: The old men drank it black, very rarely with milk. I drank it black to be part of the group, but not to be like them. It was more like this. At the sugar mill, there was a group behaviour, where every old man drank coffee, which meant that you also did it only to be a part of the group. And if you didn't, then you felt that you missed out on something. There was a lot of people in the sugar mill that made me drink coffee. I think I would felt like an outsider if I didn't drink coffee and that was what tempted me to become one of the group. I remember one time when it was my turn to buy the coffee and I bought the wrong coffee brand. I was thinking to spice things up and bought Löfbergs Lila and should have bought Zoégas Skånerost. I came back to the coffee room where everybody was sitting and waiting for their coffee. "Have you bought the coffee?" "Absolutely" I pulled out the coffee from the bag and then Kronwall came, who was the leader there, he walked to me and took the coffee and threw it on the ground and it was spread all over the ground. And then Kronwall said "go back and buy the right kind!" so I had to go back to the store to buy Zoégas Skånerost. Then I felt really small.*

Rikard argued that within the sugarbeets factory there was a group thinking among his fellow co-workers, especially during their coffee breaks. At that moment, everybody were drinking coffee, which led to that Rikard felt that if he not drinks it as well, he would not be part of the group and consequently be classified as an outsider. However, Rikard tried to distinguish himself by purchasing another coffee brand, *Löfbergs Lila*. The traditional way had always been to buy *Zoégas Skånerost*. Thus, it can be seen as a ritual coupled to Weber's (1978) *Traditional Action*, since this is the traditional way in which it always has been done. *Löfbergs Lila* coffee were seen as Douglas (1966) would refer to as a dirty product, were *Zoégas Skånerost* were seen as a pure coffee product due to the values the individuals have given to the product. The group at the sugarbeets factory had created a strong emotional connection to *Zoégas Skånerost*, and by breaking this habit and rule, Rikard deviated from their traditional codes. The leader who threw the *wrong* coffee on the floor, therefore dismissed Rikard. The radical action was made in anger not only because of the wrong coffee brand, but also because Rikard not was respecting their traditional ritual that is embedded with strong emotions, which thus got abandoned by him. The informant broke the common social contract, a specific social code that was implied into the group and the informant had to

play the consequences when breaking the contract. This example clearly shows that rituals and values that have been developed within the group must be followed. To be a part of the group, Rikard consequently needs to behave in the same way as the people inside of it do. Therefore, it is important for Rikard to know what existing values and rules there are within the group in order to act *accordingly* with them. Further, this goes along with Tajfel (1979) who states that individuals need to gain knowledge of a group's values in behalf of being a member of it. In this case, it could be seen, as Rikard not had full knowledge about how much the specific coffee brand was valued in the group, and therefore he got rejected from it due to that he not corresponded accordingly with the tradition within the group.

Another example that shows how one deviates from a certain tradition of consuming coffee, is Agnès:

*Agnès: I really don't like ordinary plain black coffee, so I went and bought an ordinary Cappuccinos and that was more expensive. So then people commented "ahh so you are going with the more luxury kind of coffee" /.../ But when you are going out to a café then I don't notice those comments. Then it's not like "why are you buying a Cappuccino?"*

According to Agnès, people in school give comment about her coffee consumption since she buys Cappuccinos in contrast to drink the cheap black coffee like all the other students. The comments come from students that argue that Cappuccino is more luxury, and for this reason they couple her as a gourmet. It is not an unknown fact that the lifestyle and identity of a student are striped of monetary expenditures. Therefore, Agnès draws attention when she is consuming *wrong* type of coffee and differentiators from the people around her by not drinking what is expected for her to drink. However, Agnès states that she on the contrary not achieves such comments when she for example is at a café, even though she still is a student and orders the same type of coffee. On account of this, it could be seen as that the contexts around coffee is of great importance. Why these comments do not occur at the café could be understood is because of that she then is in a situation where she not is expected to behave as a student anymore. Instead she expects to act like all the other café guests in order to fit into the social environment. At the café, the student behaviour is not suitable anymore, and for this reason she does not gets comments about her coffee drinking, even though it is the same as in school. Going backwards to the school, it can be seen as Agnès has created, as she puts it herself, a *subculture* that deviates from the others:

*Agnès: When I and Samira went and bought this more luxury coffee after lunch, I guess that we created like a little subculture as we had.*

*Because everybody else went to the cheapest coffee, but then I was like no we want to have Cappuccinos. So it became like a small tradition for us and we had our own little culture. Because we knew that this is what we do. It became like a little thing that made us to stand out from the crowd.*

In this case, it can be seen as that Agnès and her friend created a subgroup for themselves where they were able to set their own rules and values, at the same time as they differentiate themselves from others. Due to the fact that Agnès is aware of that she is breaking the normal behaviour at school, it could be interpreted as Agnès does it consciously in order to distinguish herself from the others by Veblen's (1994) concept *conspicuous consumption* to signalize luxury. In contrast, Rikard wanted both to stick into the group, but also be unique inside of it and therefore he fails since he not followed the rules that already have been set.

To conclude, both the brand and coffee type play a significant role and bear different symbolic meanings to the group. What is seen as correct coffee types and brands, thus depends and differ from group to group and context to context.

#### **4.1.5 Uniqueness and Individuality**

Drinking coffee in order to be coupled to a certain type of group also means that one must establish a social identity. This was reflected from the interviews were the various informants are seen to establish different social identities from diverse coffee consumption. To start with Agnès, she stated as following:

*Agnès: I drink it both to reward myself because it is more expensive, and because it is tasty. And for the third reason it's because, you know, it looks pretty good, everybody is sitting with the same cup and then when you had bought this from a different place, this sounds so ridiculous, but anyways, first it looks nice because the product is nicer. And of course it feels more luxurious and then I feel more luxurious. And then you feel that people around thinks that "man she feels alright".*

This could be interpreted as that Agnès not only consumes this type of coffee because she considers it to taste good and to reward herself, but also because she wants to distance herself from others with conspicuous consumption. To continue, it seems as Agnès' coffee consumption is embedded with symbolic meanings since she is stating that the coffee makes her feel more luxurious and because of that she believes people around her sees her as a more admirable person. Due to the fact that Agnès is conscious of her conspicuous consumption, it can also be seen as she knows that this coffee signalizes a *good* taste outwards. This is something that could be connected to Bourdieu (1984) who states that one's taste can be

utilised as a social weapon in order to mark one's social class. Consequently, Agnès establishes a social identity which couples her as a *gourmet* due to her specific coffee taste. Further, this goes along with Belk (1988) who demonstrates that certain products can be utilised in the favour to extend one's personal self, which thus can be seen as Agnès with her luxurious coffee. In the same way as Agnès choose to consume a certain type of coffee, it also means that she abstains from purchasing another. This avoidance is something that Banister and Hogg (2007) state has even a greater effect in how consumers construct their identities.

In contrast to mark a social identity through a conscious action, one is also able to construe one's identity because of an old habit deeply rooted from one's childhood. One example of this is Rikard. When asking Rikard what kind of coffee he has grown up with and what type of coffee he drinks today, he starts laughing after he mentions the brand Zoégas Skånerost:

*Rikard: Always Zoégas Skånerost, and that is what we buy now as well. The thing is, I am pretty sure that there exist a lot of others different coffee brands that are much more tasty, but it is like a sentimental feeling because your parents have bought it and it becomes naturally in a certain way. It feels good to buy it for some reason. But when I am out travelling, then I gladly try something different, different kinds of coffee, but it has become like a habit that I buy Zoégas Skånerost, always. But also I always buy Skånemejeriets 3% milk as another example, and that is connected to a part in my childhood that feels safe. So you get different feelings when you buy these products.*

From Rikard's quote, it is understood as if his family have always been purchasing the brand Zoégas Skånerost, and is something that his new family also have taken after. If going further, it is clear that Rikard is aware of the fact that there exists other coffee brands that he without a doubt would like even better, but because of the sentimental bound he has to the brand itself, it could be interpreted as there exist some embedded symbolic meanings that grounds on his childhood that means more to him than the coffee taste itself. This consumption could be explained by Giddens (1991) who refers to the concept as *ontological security*, which is described as a sense of continuity in regard to a person's experiences in one's life which one creates meanings to. This sense has been created from a routine in their daily life. It is not until these routines are being broken, as they get noticeable. In Rikard's case, it can be understood as he purchases Zoégas Skånerost due to a routine he has developed from his childhood. Further, this routine is embedded with symbolic meanings to Rikard, which takes him back to his childhood. Therefore, it could be understood as Rikard continues to buy the brand in order to create a structure in his everyday life, even though he is aware of the fact

that there exist other brands which might taste even better. In addition, this could also be seen as if Rikard is identifying himself and his family to the brand due to this routine that he has developed from the ontological security. In Rikard's case he has developed a certain taste from his childhood that connects him to a specific coffee brand, which is Zoégas Skånerost. Therefore, it could be seen as if Rikard's family has affected his specific coffee taste, which consequently could be coupled to Bourdieu's (1984) theory regarding one's taste that has been developed from one's cultural capital, which in this case comes from Rikard's family.

However, Rikard is on the contrary also demonstrating that he wanted to be unique as he states the following:

*Rikard: When I was most into this coffee thing, then you shouldn't mix it with milk, it should only be black. The famous baristas said it and all the other coffee nerds. When you are doing something or able to do something that not a lot of other people are able to do, then of course you feel unique. It makes everything more tempting. It is like when you had your favourite band, but when exactly everybody starts to listen to the band, then you start to feel that it's not your band anymore. Then I started to drink it black. Because everybody else drank it with milk /.../ Because I wanted to stand out from the crowd.*

Rikard explains that if you do something that nobody else in your surrounding is doing, it gets more exciting. In addition, Rikard compares this to a situation when listening to a favourite band that not a lot of people know of. However, when everybody starts listening to the same band, the excitement fades and the quest of finding something new and unique starts. In Rikard's case, it is understood as he wanted to stand out from the crowd with a unique social identity and therefore abstained from the trend that involved of consuming Latte and Cappuccino, and for this reason started to drink his coffee black. On behalf of this, it could be seen as Rikard purchases the same brand as his family always has done, because of this ontological security, but tries to distinguish himself by being unique through consuming the coffee black. In addition, it could also be interpreted from the observation, that Rikard wanted to be unique in the way he retains his mainstream Zoégas coffee. Rikard showed his coffee can that he had bought from a second hand store many years ago originating from the 19th century. In doing so, it can be understood as if Rikard transforms the mainstream brand to a unique coffee powder. In that sense, the unique coffee can is utilised as McCracken (1988) demonstrates as a possession ritual, since Rikard personalize his coffee in order to create a personal meaning to it.

In contrast to growing up with a certain brand one is also able to tie a relationship with a brand because of the symbolic meanings it signalizes outwards. This can be seen from Agnès coffee consumption of a specific brand where she explains the following:

*Agnès: It's like, when people come over to my place, then they will get a Nespresso coffee, and then they think like this, "oohh God how luxurious". It's like, they feel that it's a little bit, you know better and tastier coffee. So I have heard few times that I'm a gourmet.*

According to the statement it could be interpreted as the Nespresso brand fulfils a symbolic value to Agnès because of the comments she gets from consuming the specific brand. Due to the fact that Agnès has been coupled as a gourmet, it could be seen as that she wants to be identified with this social identity and thus she is offering Nespresso, which her friends sees as luxury. Agnès' gesture could be connected to what McCracken (1988) describes as the *exchange* ritual. Since Agnès is offering a coffee that she is aware of signalizes luxury, it is understood as Agnès wants to transfer meanings to her guests that couples her with a social identity that goes along with a gourmet. This is also something that could be strengthen from the observation, where the researchers noted that Agnès' Nespresso machine was displayed on a very visible place in her home. In addition, Agnès also had retained all her Nespresso caps in a see-through glass can, so it was notable to see that it came from the brand Nespresso. This can be understood as if Agnès wanted to show her gourmet taste by displaying it for herself and to her guests at her home.

To conclude, coffee can thus be utilised as a tool in order to show one's social identity. How individuals drink their coffee and also what brand that are purchased could also have a great importance for the expression of one's social identity and taste.

## 4.2 Mundane Coffee Consumption as a Way of Structuring the Everyday life

### 4.2.1 Correct Coffee for the Right Context

One of the aspects that were discussed with the informants was what type of coffee they are drinking and what it means to them. For many of the participants it interestingly turned out that the meanings differs depending on what type of coffee and when on the week the coffee is consumed. This is something that goes in line with Barthes (2012) who states that products can be very different in each use. Therefore, it could be understood as Barthes (2012) discusses, that the product is able to convert both situations and states. In the paragraph below



Linda indicates that the coffee she consumes is embedded with various meanings that depends on certain coffee types that are connected to specific days:

*Linda: But if it's weekend, then I rather have a French coffee press, because it's very tasty, nice and it's also a social thing when you are making the coffee. Because, then you place the coffee on the table and let it cool down a little bit while you sit and talk to each other, and it also looks nice on the table. French coffee press signals that you have time. If I was in a hurry, then I just take a cup and pour the coffee and run out. But if I have time, then I can wait longer, because the French coffee press has to be cooling down a little bit, and then it means that you have time for that. French coffee press also keeps the warmth longer, and then you also have more time to have a second cup.*

According to this statement, it could be seen as that the specific type of coffee, as *French coffee press* in this case, is something Linda associates with her weekends. Additionally, she implies that her coffee on the weekends should *taste good, be nice* and consist of some sort of *social* activity. This coffee type couples her with a *relaxation time*, due to the longer time it takes her to make it ready, and thus a longer time to relax where she not needs to be productive. Consequently, this type of coffee signalizes to not be productive to her. Further, in order to contrast her coffee consumption on her weekends from her coffee consumption on the weekdays, it could be interpreted as Linda's ritual involves to distinguish her coffee products.

This type of coffee, *French coffee press*, during the weekends, therefore contains of different product attributes, compared to the coffee she consumes on weekdays namely brewing coffee. Hence, the different coffee attributes are not consisting of the same meanings to her because of the different fulfilments they contribute with. Thus, it could be understood as Linda is having different coffee rituals on the weekday and on the weekend, in order to separate these from each other. This was made evident during the observation that took place on a weekday, which thus means brewing coffee, since Linda were serving this and not the French coffee press, as she normally drinks during her weekends. Further, it could therefore be understood as these various coffee types are important rituals to Linda. Despite that these rituals can be seen on the most mundane level, they are able to manifest dramatic dimensions as Rook (1985) explains it, since they generate different symbolic meanings to Linda.

This ritual is also something that goes along with Agnès' weekly coffee consumption:

*Agnès: On weekdays, I drink coffee that I actually really don't like or find tasty, but I drink it to be alert. But on the weekends, then I do my*

*coffee in my Nespresso machine, and then it becomes more tasty. Or sometimes I usually go out and drink something when I am going for a “fika” or on a lunch or something similar. In that cases, then it is often Cappuccinos or Lattes or something other nice like that.*

This also shows that Agnès wants to drink *better* coffee during the weekends, which she considers are Latte, Cappuccino and Nespresso, compared to what she drinks during her weekdays. For this reason, it is seen as even Agnès is consuming different coffee products to attain order in her ordinary life. Consequently, it could be interpreted as the different coffee products thus are embedded with different meanings and functions to Agnès, due to that they contain different product attributes that are associated to diverse days. Thus, both of the statements show evidently that different coffee products are embedded with various meanings, which hence depends on the day it is consumed. In addition, it was also found during the observation and interview with Rebecca D, that her diverse porcelain also were connected to various days. On weekdays, she consumed her coffee in a smaller cup to consume it quick due to her constrained time limit before her work. In contrast, during her weekends, she instead consumed her coffee in a larger cup, since she had more time. For these reasons, various coffee types could be connected to different meanings in order to structure the ordinary life and to distinguish different days from each other as well.

#### **4.2.2 Different Contexts - Different Rhythms**

However, it was also made evident that some consumers were drinking the *same type of coffee*, thereof contain *same product attributes*, and despite this involved *different meanings* to them depending on *when* it was consumed. This is shown from Rebecca H, who is one of them who always drinks the same type of coffee but for different reasons:

*Rebecca H: On the weekdays, it feels like you drink it more to take it because to get energy. It's like to get yourself going, to be efficient. But during the weekends, it feels more like I'm drinking coffee because it's nice. Then it is more to calm down. Instead to peak the energy level, my purpose is then more to calm down yourself.*

With regards to this response, it is clear how the same type of coffee is utilised in various ways depending on what day it is consumed in the week. On the one hand, her coffee is consumed during weekdays in order to get energy and a tool to start off the day with, and thus she couples that specific cup of coffee with efficiency. On the other hand, her coffee is in contrast used in the interest of calming down. Therefore, the desirable symbolic meanings of the coffee interestingly distinguish remarkably even though they contain same product attributes. In this case, it seems to be that the circumstances around coffee play even a greater

role into what coffee means to the consumer, rather than the characteristics of the product itself. One way to explain how the same cup of coffee can involve different meanings is by using Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis. Even though that Rebecca H consumes the same type of coffee, her and the surrounding rhythms differ in her everyday life when she consumes it in the various contexts. In order to understand the different rhythms, multiple temporalities could be a useful tool (Shove et al., 2009).

Rebecca H couples her weekdays with being *effective*, and thus it could be seen as Rebecca H, needs to study or to be productive at work. At work, it could therefore be interpreted as that the atmosphere is hectic, stressful or busy, thus the rhythms around her contain such pace as well, which as a result will have an affect on Rebecca H's own rhythms. In that case, multiple temporalities takes place parallel with each other (Shove et al., 2009), which are Rebecca H's own rhythms and the rhythms that surrounds her at work. Another example of this is when Josefine is in school:

*Josefine: It's not that it's cosy to sit in the library with a cup of coffee, but still, it is anyway doing something. And I want to get alert! /.../ But on the weekends, then it's more like I can sit down, relax, and it's more cosy!*

Even though the context is different and might involve a silent atmosphere in the library, Josefine still needs to be efficient, and thus the rhythms also contain pace that goes along with productivity, but in another context. Due to the *dressage*, which means that the social rhythms always dominate over the biological rhythms, all individual rhythms consequently need to subordinate all social ones in order to not deviant from the cultural values and norms (Lefebvre, 2004). In this case it therefore means that Rebecca H and Josefine need to adjust their rhythms to the workforce's rhythms, or to the rhythms in the library, since they are understood as the dominant ones. Otherwise, it would mean that Rebecca H and Josefine would deviant from the social norms in such contexts. The multiple rhythms, both from Rebecca H and from Josefine combined with their surrounding rhythms, are thus in symbiosis. Therefore, it could be seen as Rebecca H's coffee on the weekdays, works as tool to adjust her own rhythms and align to the workforce's rhythms. Similarly, Josefine's coffee at the library works in the same way to adjust her rhythms with the rhythms concerning the library, and thus the cup of coffees then associates them with productivity that grounds on such rhythms. Consequently, Rebecca H's and Josefine's rhythms on weekdays are different compare to their rhythms on their weekends, which the coffees help them to adjust to. Hence, it means that their cups of coffees have different meanings during weekdays and weekends,

even though they contain the same product attributes, which can be explained by the different rhythms around them. Thus, the coffee works as a tool to handle various rhythms.

To continue, in contrast, on the weekends, Rebecca H associates her coffee with a relaxing time where, as she puts it herself, consumes it in order to *calm down* and because it is *nice*. Thus, it could be seen as if Rebecca H is either home alone, or in a situation that allows her to have a slow pace, where rhythms around her contain slower rhythms since some places and contexts are build upon slower tempos (Shove et al., 2009). However, the only rhythms that Rebecca H then is rivalling with is her own rhythms, which thus becomes the dominant one. Hence, the rhythms allow her to *calm down* and her coffee consequently allows her to align with such rhythms. For this reason, the coffee could be seen as a tool in order to align with slower rhythms, which she might associate with a *nice* time compare to the *productive* time at work. The situation is therefore different due to that they contain different rhythms. In that way the contexts then allow Rebecca H to relax and thus both her rhythms and the surrounded rhythms are in symbiosis.

#### 4.2.3 Regulate One's State of Mind Through Rhythms

In addition, it could also be seen as that the various rhythms not only differ on weekdays and weekends, but they also vary during the day. One example that illustrates this is when Rikard is at work. Rikard is explaining that he is always bringing one cup of coffee to his office desk in order to have something else to do while he is working, but he also states that he is drinking coffee to take a break from his work:

*Rikard: When I arrive to work, then I take a cup when I arrive to work. It's more like to have something to do. Because coffee works like in a similar way as "snus" and like a lot of other stuff, it's a thing to do when you have other stuff to do at the same time. You have a need to put some luxury into the moment, especially when I'm working with something that is not that particularly fun, then it's nice to have a cup of coffee, and you can sit down with a "snus" in the mouth and then I add luxury into that moment.*

*Rikard: It's also a small thing to do at work, when you take a small break, and then you go to the coffee machine and grab a cup of coffee. It is connected to that.*

Taking these into considerations, it could be seen as that the same type of coffee even here symbolises different meanings and functionalities. Further, these cups of coffees are connected to diverse contexts, as in this case; to *work* or to have a *break*. Thus, it is understood as these cups of coffees fulfil divergent functions to Rikard as he states the following above. Moreover, it can be interpreted as Rikard's work contains what Lefebvre

(2004) states as both *cyclical* and *linear* rhythms. Further, Rikard's work can be connected to the cyclical rhythms, since Rikard is working repeatedly on a cyclical basis from Monday to Friday. In contrast, Rikard's particular working days comprise rhythms that could be divided into different *sequences* and *interruptions*, which thus can be understood as the linear rhythms. Those contain sequences that are separated by short and long periods, which thus can be understood as his working time and his breaks. In order to separate Rikard's working time from his breaks, his working day comprises diverse rhythms that are divided into different sequences and interruptions. When Rikard is at work, he drinks coffee at his desk in favour of being productive, and thus the coffee is aligning his rhythms with productive rhythms. These productive rhythms could further be understood as a sequence of all rhythms at his work. Thus, a long sequence of linear rhythms. In contrast, when Rikard is having a break, his coffee is instead aligning with non-productive rhythms, which thus could be seen as that the coffee interrupts his productive rhythms in order to take his break. Hence, a short sequence of linear rhythms. Therefore, it could be interpreted as that rhythms also could be divided into different sequences and interruptions to align to different situations. Due to this, the rhythms look different when Rikard is working and when he is having a break, and so does even the coffee to him. In order to adjust and align to various rhythms during his workday, it could be understood as the coffee works as a tool to help Rikard to separate those from his work and from his breaks.

This is also something that could be drawn to other contexts, as for example to Mikaela when she is in school. During Mikaela's study sessions, she needs to be productive, and thus it could be seen as a long sequence of linear rhythms in school. On the contrary, when she is having a break, she interrupts the productive rhythms by aligning with short linear rhythms that comprises a slower pace, which allows her to take a break. Thus, various rhythms are dependent on contexts, which as a result determine the pace in different situations (Shove et al., 2009). As a result of this, different rhythms allow one to deviant or to blend into a situation (Lefebvre, 2004). This means that different coffee *attributes* and different *days* not only are the significant factors to create *diverse meanings*, as discussed previously, but it also goes along with different *sequences and interruptions* that are dependent on various *contexts*. Therefore, it could be seen as that the coffee works as a marker to align to different rhythms in various social contexts, and as a result of this the coffee's meaning varies for consumers even though they contain same product attributes. Consequently, the contexts play an

important role for the underlying meanings of the product, which are varying depending on the rhythms. Thus, coffee generates different meanings that grounds on such varying rhythms.

#### 4.2.4 Coffee as a Tool to Structure Meanings

With regards to the previous section, it is clear that rhythms are perceived differently depending on the contexts (Shove et al., 2009). It is also found that coffee aligns biological rhythms with social rhythms differently in order to blend in to various situations. Thus, it could be interpreted as the symbolic and functional meanings behind coffee differs remarkably in diverse contexts. Due to the fact that coffee sometimes is consumed in order to *calm down*, and sometimes used to *achieve energy*, it could be understood as that coffee is functioning and symbolising differently in divergent situations, and thus its underlying meanings transform as well. Coffee is in this way analogue to Barthes' (2012) analysis of the functional character of wine. Barthes (2012) demonstrates that several products are able to change meaning, depending on the context as he expresses following about wine:

*It is above all a converting substance, capable of reversing situations and states, for instance, making a weak man strong or a silent one talkative*

According to this statement, Barthes (1957, p. 58) means that wine can be utilised in different ways in order to generate several meanings. This is also something that goes parallel to coffee products. From the informants, it could be interpreted as that coffee fulfils various meanings depending on the context when it is consumed. To start with Boel, it could be seen as she is consuming coffee because of its functional practicalities:

*Boel: I am addicted to caffeine, and I notice that if I do not get a cup of coffee in the afternoon, or in the morning, then I get really slow in the head for the rest of the day.*

Boel consumes coffee on a regular basis in order to make her brain function since she is addicted to the product. This action could be connected to one of Weber's (1978) rituals, the *instrumentally action*, which is about to achieve a result. In this case, the result could therefore be seen as Boel wants to get her head alert, from her cup of coffee. Thus, it could be understood as Boel's coffee consumption is embedded with functional meanings in the pursuit of achieving a goal, which here is to not be *slow*. Contradictory, Boel also demonstrates that she consumes coffee because she sees it as a social beverage, where she states the following:

*Boel: It's a social drink. Everybody drinks coffee. That is how you socially integrate with each other, such as "fika" or afternoon coffee. So of course the social aspects, play a big part in the whole, because you do not want to be different.*

Here, Boel drinks it because she considers coffee as a social beverage and a social action that is connected to "fika". In this context, it could be interpreted as a ritual coupled to Weber's (1978) *traditional action*, since the coffee here is traditionally seen as the focal ingredient around "fika" and thus is consumed because it *always had been that way*. Additionally, Boel states that she drinks it in order to *not* be different. Therefore, it can also be understood as that this coffee is more enclosed with a symbolic meaning, rather than a functional, due to the fact that the coffee is seen as a tool to align to the social group. Thus, it seems to be an important factor for Boel. Further, this social aspect goes along with Douglas (1978), who states that food could be recognized as a language to communicate social information that contain a cultural coded activity that only are understood by those who are qualified to use the codes. In that sense, the coffee around Boel's "fika" could be interpreted as a social code that signifies that Boel and her surrounding people are having "fika". If Boel on the other hand not drinks coffee, it could be seen as she is breaking the social code and consequently deviates from the social group in that context.

Moreover, it can also be understood as Mikaela has different coffee routines that could be connected to various contexts:

*Mikaela: The morning coffee is the cup of coffee that I take that really makes a difference so that I wake up. It's my own special moment in the morning. I put a lot of my own values on that cup.*

This shows that Mikaela also consumes coffee every morning in order to be alert. Thus, it could be understood as the coffee is consumed because of its functional practicalities. However, it is also interpreted as that the coffee plays an important role for her in order to get some time for herself. In that sense, the coffee can be viewed more than just a functional product to her and are thus also embedded with a symbolic meaning. Additionally, this morning ritual could be associated to Weber's (1978) *value rational action*, due to its characteristics about an action where the activity of the ritual is valued in itself, rather than just the final goal of it. Thus, both the goal as well as the action to reach it are valued (Weber, 1978). These essences goes in line with Mikaela since she is aware of both to get valuable time for herself, as well as to gain energy from her cup of coffee. In this case, it could thus be interpreted as her morning coffee manifests her start of the day and couples her with valuable

time for herself. Notwithstanding, it also shows that her coffee means differently to Mikaela when she is present in another context, as for example at work:

*Mikaela: I believe it's an indulging thing. When I am at work and when I start working, then I will start thinking of coffee during the working hours. It is a little carrot, you know. It's like "how nice that I gave myself this treat". Because I know that coffee is really not good for you. Your teeth get yellow and it's addictive and many more bad things. But it's my own way of being nice to myself.*

Here, the coffee could be understood as Mikaela not consumes it because of its functional attributes since she states the negative effects of it. Rather, she consumes it to reward herself. In that sense, it could be presumed that the coffee brings her a symbolic value. In addition, this unites with Weber's (1978) *affective action*, in behalf of that Mikaela's emotional state wants to consume coffee without taking account to the consequences, as the negative effects of it as she is mentioning. Thus, when Mikaela is at work, it can be understood as her coffee signifies that she is in a context where she needs to work. Consequently, it can thus be interpreted as that her coffee works as a tool to structure meanings in her everyday life.

To conclude, the findings generated from the analysis clearly show that consumers relate differently to coffee, and that their coffee consumption is embedded with various meanings, which will be further discussed in the next coming chapter in order to answer the study question.



## 5. Discussion

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*The following chapter contains a discussion where the researchers go back to the existing literature of mundane consumption and apply the findings from the analysis in order to generate a more advanced understanding of the underexplored area. The chapter is divided into three different themes: How do everyday consumers relate to coffee? What meanings are embedded within consumers coffee consumption? and Functional versus Symbolic - An Inseparable Relation. The three themes serve to answer the study question.*

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To start, mundane coffee consumption has been found to serve as an excellent example to show how everyday consumers are relating to mundane products and how consumers' meanings vary between diverse people and situations. As already stated in the problematization, mundane products have paradoxically been considered with two opposing perspectives, and thus there exist inconclusive research results of the phenomenon. Therefore, this discussion will elaborate on the findings generated from the analysis in order to answer the study question. This study has identified that consumers are relating differently to mundane products, such as coffee, and that it also is embedded with different functional and symbolic meanings to consumers depending on their level of consumer involvement which will further be discussed below.

### 5.1 How Do Everyday Consumers Relate to Coffee?

This part of the discussion relates back to the findings stated in the previous chapter in order to answer the first objective of the study question: *How do everyday consumers relate to coffee?* To start, as outlined in the literature review above, mundane consumption, such as coffee, has inconclusive research results. Due to the two paradoxical perspectives on the phenomenon, there is a need to investigate how consumers are actually relating to mundane products, such as coffee. Furthermore, this study has identified that consumers are relating to coffee in various ways depending on different factors.

To begin with, mundane coffee consumption has been found as a tool many consumers are relating to in order to help them transform their identity from being a child to an adult. Also, it has been found that consumers are relating to coffee in various ways in order to separate diverse contexts from each other by consuming the *right cup of coffee* at the *right situation*. Even though that these mundane consumption practices are deeply rooted in habits and routines made by the consumers, which are consistent with the findings made by Gronow and Warde (2011), on the contrary this study shows evidence corresponding with Kjeldgaard and

Ostberg (2007) that the consumers actually are *highly* involved in their mundane consumption practices. However, this study also shows findings in accordance with Laaksonen (1994) and Ekström (2010) that everyday consumers also are *unremarkably* involved within their mundane consumption practices. Despite this, the study found that consumers are still consciously aware of these routinized and daily consumption practices of their mundane products, but are using different level of involvement in their everyday coffee consumption practices. What level of involvement the consumers have to their coffee further depends on the identified factors that will be discussed below. Taking these findings into consideration, the study argues that none of the paradoxically perspectives of the mundane consumption contain a *high* or *low level of consumer involvement*, neither are *correct* nor *wrong*. This is because the consumers are relating differently to various cups of coffees that depend on the several identified factors. However, it is found that *how* consumers *relate* to coffee is dependent on several *diverse factors* which will be further presented below.

One identified factor in this study has shown to be the *product attribute* of the coffee itself. What type of coffee that has been consumed has shown to be of great importance for how they relate to the product. This is due to the fact that consumers are connecting different coffee types to various contexts, and thus relate differently to the diverse product attributes. Consequently, it was also found that the diverse product attributes were able to *signify various contexts*. Thus, consumers are relating differently to certain coffee types, since the various contexts are embedded with different meanings. However, in contrast the study also found that the *same type of coffee* was also able to contain *different meanings* to the consumers. As a cause of this, they were also *relating differently* to the coffee despite that it contained the *same product attribute*. Furthermore, this could be explained from another finding made by the study, which is taking account into the *everyday rhythms*. Due to the fact that various contexts are build upon different rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004), the coffee can function as a tool in order to align consumers with the different rhythms. To exemplify, it was made evident that when the consumers needed to be productive in a working context, the coffee was consumed in order to be productive. Thus, the coffee helped the consumers to align with rhythms that were build upon productive rhythms. As a cause of this, the consumers relate to coffee in a way that helps them to be in *symbiosis* with the productive rhythms. In addition, when the consumers needed to take a break, the coffee helped them to align with non-productive rhythms, which thus involved taking a break. Hence, the coffee helped the consumers to be in symbiosis with relaxing rhythms. As a result of this, the consumers were *relating differently*

to the same type of coffee due to the *varying rhythms* that took place within the *different contexts*. Therefore, it is interpreted that consumers relate differently to various rhythms which the *coffee* is able to signify in order to *structure their everyday lives*. Consistent with Sartre's (1943) findings, this study also implies that consumers are using products both to *facilitate their everyday activities*, and also to *reflect consumers' sense of self*. However, this study also pinpoints that consumers are *relating differently* to these products and that they are able to *structure their everyday life* even from *mundane consumption*, such as coffee products.

## 5.2 What Meanings are embedded within Consumers Coffee Consumption?

This part of the discussion deliberates on findings from the analysis in order to answer the second objective of the study question; *What meanings are embedded within consumers' coffee consumption?* This study has interestingly found that even the most mundane forms of consumption practices are embedded with both *functional* and *symbolical meanings* despite that it is consumed on an *everyday basis*. Furthermore, with regards to consumers' identity creation from their mundane coffee consumption, various expressions concerning *individuality, sociality, contexts*, and the *transformation of identity* have been identified.

To begin with, in analogue to Barthes (2009) who states that products are able to transform essences, this study accordingly highlights that coffee is embedded with *various meanings*, dependent on several aspects. Moreover, the findings highlighted that consumers had different incentives for consuming their cup of coffee, which generated those various meanings. Consistent with the findings from Laaksonen (1994), who argues that in general coffee is consumed only because of its daily *functionalities* and thus contains a *low level of consumer engagement*, the consumers drunk their coffee in order to get energy from the caffeine and because of their daily and addictive habit. However, the findings also showed evidence aligning with Seargeant and Tagg (2014), that the coffee was consumed in order to demonstrate what *social groups* they wanted to *belong* to, *or* in other words, to *distinguish* from. In that sense, the coffee in contrast is used with *high level of consumer engagement*, and can thus be seen as more than just a mundane product that only is carrying *practical functionalities*, but also of *symbolical meanings*. Therefore, previous research concerning the *functional* and *symbolical* meanings is neither *wrong*, nor *correct* on this perspective either.

In accordance with Kleine et al. (1993), who state that mundane products are still *self-expressive*, this study's findings also support the idea that coffee contains *symbolic meanings* connected to their *identity construction*. This can be further explained by the other finding, which made it evident that consumers go through a process of rituals in order to learn how to drink their coffee *correctly* in order to *belong to the desired social group*, as for example adults. To continue, it was also found that what *type of coffee* that was consumed signalled varying meanings to both oneself, as well as to the people around. In contrast to Watson and Shove (2008), who state that mundane products only can be consumed in an *inconspicuous way*, this study therefore demonstrates the opposite. From the findings, it is shown that even the mundaneness form of consumption can be embedded with symbolic and *conspicuous consumption*. Thus, the findings also shows evidence in accordance with Cronin et al., (2014) who argue that mundane consumption involves *subcultures* made by *inconspicuous consumption* in favour to distance one from the mainstream. However, the study also adds on that even *conspicuous consumption* can take form within the subcultures that involve *mundane products*. As a result of this, the mundane products then become of *symbolical*. Along with the social group, another finding showed that the *brand*, or as detailed as the specific *colour* of the coffee, is seen of great importance for what it signalizes both outwardly, as well as to the consumers themselves. In addition, this consumption practices were also embedded with *social codes* connected to the *social groups* or to their *social identity creation*. In that sense, it is made evident that even as the smallest details on the most mundane forms of consumption contain symbolic meanings, even though they only are consumed on a daily basis.

Moreover, regarding the various contexts, the study also found, as stated in the previous section, that coffee is able to generate diverse meanings depending on different situations. Further, *different coffee types* were embedded with *diverse meanings*. Therefore, the *different product attributes* were able to *signify those diverse meanings* to the *various contexts*, which contained both functional and symbolical ones. However, it was also found that *same product attributes* were embedded with *various meanings*. This could be explained by, as previously has been stated, that the consumers were *relating differently* to their coffee depending on the *context*. Thus, the *same type of coffee* was *utilised differently* and varied remarkably depending on the situation and the incentive for *why* and *when* the coffee was consumed. To exemplify, when the consumers wanted to be productive their coffee were utilised in order to get energy and thus consumed due to its *functional practicalities*. On the contrary, when the

consumers wanted to for example have a “*fika*”, the coffee was consumed because of its *symbolic meaning* and to signify relaxation. Therefore, same product attributes are able to generate diverse *functional* and *symbolical* meanings to the consumers. This finding is consistent with Barthes (2012) who explains that the same products can be utilised in various ways and thus are able to transform meanings. However, one could also argue that these functional meanings contain symbolism, and vice versa, which will be demonstrated in the next-coming section.

### 5.3 Functional versus Symbolic - an Inseparable Relation

From previous findings outlined above, it is understood that coffee can be utilised as a tool in order to *structure* the consumer’s *everyday life* and their *social identity creation*. Thus, coffee is consumed not only in order to *signify various contexts*, but it is also embedded with *diverse meanings*. In addition, coffee consequently *engages* people in different ways. Occasionally, the consumers are drinking their coffee due to their embedded routines and because of their desire to feel energized. Thus, it can be seen as the coffee contains *low level of consumer involvement*. However, even though it is consumed for its *functional practicalities*, the coffee also functions as a way to signify a certain context, for example to be productive. Thus, it could be interpreted as that the coffee also is embedded with *underlying symbolic meanings* due to the fact that it signifies a situation where it symbolises that the consumer needs to be productive. Consequently, the coffee also becomes of a symbolic product. On the contrary, when the coffee is utilised in order to fit in to a certain social group, the coffee contains a *high level of consumer involvement*. Nevertheless, despite that the coffee is utilised because of its *symbolical attributes*, the coffee still fulfils *functional meanings* since it functions as a tool to align with others, or to *signify* a certain event. Therefore, it is made evident that coffee is embedded with both functional and symbolical meanings, which are *intertwined in different ways* depending on the *level of consumer involvement* of the product. For this reason, this study argues that previous research neither are *wrong* nor *correct*, since it shows that mundane products are embedded with both *functional* and *symbolic meanings*. Thus, these underlying meanings are *inseparable* with each other. However, these meanings *vary* depending on the *level of consumer involvement*.

## 6. Conclusion

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*In the final chapter the main conclusions will be presented, which serve to answer the study question and purpose of the study. The contributions generated from the study will be divided into two themes; theoretical contributions and practical contributions. Finally, a presentation of the limitation will be discussed, followed by recommendations for future research.*

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This study focused on investigating in how everyday consumers relate to coffee and what meanings that are embedded within their daily coffee consumption. In order to seek an answer to the study question, this study has positioned itself within CCT and taken use of a consumer-focused approach throughout the study. Nevertheless, the generated value from our findings benefits both marketers and academia simultaneously. The findings show that *consumers are relating differently to coffee in order to structure their everyday life*. In addition, it shows that *coffee works as a tool to align with various rhythms and that even the most mundane forms of consumption, as the colour of the coffee, are seen of relevance to one's identity creation*. Also it is found that the *coffee generates various functional and symbolical meanings that are intertwined with each other, depending on the level of consumer involvement* to the product that is consumed. Furthermore, the different *level of consumer involvement* has shown to be connected with the *various contexts, rhythms, and product attributes*.

### 6.1 Theoretical Contribution

The findings generated from this study, first and foremost contribute to the underexplored and minor attention given to mundane consumption in general within CCT and consumer research. Also, it contributes to the existing research of coffee products, where it is found that coffee can be utilised as a tool both to maintain a social identity, as well as to structure the everyday life. Additionally, it is found that even the most mundane level of consumption, such as the colour of the coffee, has underlying connotations, which not is possible to acknowledge without having completed this study.

In addition, our findings also enclose the knowledge gap concerning the inconclusive research results from the already existing literature, where our study argues that both of the opposing streams neither are *wrong* nor *correct*. This is made evident due to our findings that display that consumers relate differently to mundane consumption, and that it is embedded with both functional and symbolical meanings that are varying depending on the level of consumer

involvement to the product. Thus, our findings also extend and contribute to the existing involvement literature, which shows connection with consumers' functional and symbolical meanings.

Additionally, our findings likewise contribute to another theoretical framework, which is Lefebvre's (2004) rhythm analysis. Furthermore, our study shows that mundane products, as coffee, can be utilised in order to align with different surrounding rhythms, which hence generate diverse meanings for the consumers. Therefore, it could be interpreted as that mundane product also can be used as tools to regulate various rhythms in order to structure their everyday life and to signify various contexts.

Finally, another theoretical area that our study enhances is the use of the social identity theory. Also, this study shows that social identity theory can be applied to even the most mundane forms of consumption. This has been of great relevance in order to explain consumers' identity creation from even mundane consumption.

## 6.2 Practical Contribution

The findings of this study significantly enhance the understanding of consumers' mundane consumption practices, especially with regards to coffee products. Further, this additionally has a number of practical implications for both retailers and marketers, as well as on a societal level in general. Moreover, our study shows that even the most mundane forms of consumption are embedded with various meanings dependent on the level of consumer involvement. However, due to its mundane form of consumption, these meanings are forgotten on a daily basis, and are not understood until they are studied in detail, as this study has enabled. Further, this study has found that mundane consumption plays as an important role into consumers' daily lives on the behalf to maintain a social identity, as well as to structure their everyday life. Thus, it could be interpreted as that our contemporary consumer culture are embedded with meanings even from our most mundane consumption practices on an everyday basis, which are of great relevance to both marketers and retailers within the field of everyday consumer goods. Therefore, this study is able to provide valuable insights into marketers and retail managers' understanding of consumers' daily consumption practices.

In addition, this study is able to provide guidance and insights in the designing of marketing campaigns concerning mundane products, especially with regards to coffee. Further, this

study has identified that coffee is considered as an adult product for many people, which was consumed in the longing for becoming a grown-up. Taking this valuable insight into consideration, marketers should take advantage of this within their marketing campaigns when targeting to young people or extend product portfolios.

Furthermore, it is also shown that different products within the same product category can generate diverse meanings to the consumers. It is also made evident that the same product can be utilised in various ways and transform meanings depending on the context and the surrounding rhythms. Additionally, it is also clear that various colours on the coffee signalize diverse meanings. Hence, marketers and retailers should take advantage of how products can transform meanings with regards to the rhythmic dimensions and contexts, as well as the different colours of coffee that were seen of great relevance to consumers' social identity constructions. Thus, these aspects are of great importance for marketers and retail managers when designing diverse marketing campaigns, as well as when developing new marketing strategies since the same product is able to signal diverse meanings.

### 6.3 Limitations

During the writing process, several limitations were recognized and taken into consideration in order to make the study possible. By acknowledge the study's limitations and by presenting them, future researchers can take these into account when conducting a similar study.

One of the limitations in the study is directly linked to the chosen methodology, which specifically is the chosen epistemology. Despite this, the researchers still argue that social constructionist epistemology was the right choice of method, due to the study purpose. On the other hand, one of the weaknesses of using a social constructionist epistemology is that it does not accommodate with institutional and cultural differences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). During the process, it was enlightened that coffee is consumed differently from country to country. In order to decrease the weakness, the study was only focusing on consumers in Sweden and how they relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption. By acknowledging this limitation, it will create attention to the reader that the study findings can possibly not be applicable into different cultures.



Furthermore, another limitation is that the study only is focusing on one everyday consumer good, specifically coffee. As previously mentioned in the study, coffee has undergone a tremendous transformation from a luxury good to a working class product, and vice versa. In present days, coffee is consumed on an everyday basis, which makes it very interesting. Hence, by only focusing on one mundane consumer good, the study is restricted by acknowledging other mundane products. Despite that other mundane products were interestingly enlightened during the interviews, it was not seen of relevance for the study purpose and therefore not discussed in the study.

## 6.4 Future Research

Further investigation and understanding concerning the research field of mundane consumption is essential in order to further develop and advance knowledge around the phenomenon. The findings arguably showed that coffee is an interesting product that are embedded with different meanings and is a product that individuals relate to in various ways to structure their everyday life. This would not have been possible to acknowledge without having conducted this study. Therefore it would be of great relevance to further investigate other mundane products.

As previously mentioned, a limitation in the study is the cultural differences in how consumers drink coffee in different countries, which not was taken into consideration since the focus only was on Sweden. To further develop the phenomenon, future researchers could explore whether the findings of the study are of relevance to other countries and cultures as well. An interesting aspect could be to investigate if the findings are specific to Sweden or if similarities occur in different countries in how consumers relate to coffee and what embedded meanings there are within consumers' mundane coffee consumption.

Mundane consumption is a restricted research field due to the limited research on the particular area. Further, when conducting the interviews, the informants stated that other mundane products were important in their everyday life, but these were not used because of the study purpose. Therefore, future researchers could further investigate if the study's findings can be applied to other mundane products in order to investigate if similarities can be drawn, and if mundane products differ in how individuals relate to coffee, and also what it means for the consumers. Furthermore, when conducting the interviews, the brand Zoégas Skånerost was frequently mentioned regarding the informants' everyday coffee consumption.

The brand was tied with strong emotional and meaningful attachments to the informants. An interesting research topic would therefore be to investigate mundane coffee consumption on Zoégas Skånerost in order to understand how individuals relate to one specific brand and what embedded meanings there are within the brand. This perspective could be interesting and valuable for companies that produce the specific brand in order to advance knowledge about their consumers.

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## 7.1 Interview: Informants

Agnès, Stockholm, (04.11.2017).

Boel, Lund, (04.13.2017).

Elin, Stockholm, (04.14.2017).

Jannie, Malmö, (04.06.2017).

Josefin, Stockholm, (04.10.2017).

Linda, Stockholm, (04.10.2017).

Mikaela, Copenhagen, (04.15.2017).

Rasmus, Malmö, (04.09.2017).

Rebecca D, Stockholm, (04.16.2017).

Rebecca H, Lund, (04.09.2017).

Rikard, Malmö, (04.17.2017).

Sven, Malmö, (04.16.2017).

Åsa, Malmö, (04.16.2017).

## Appendix A

### Interview Guide

#### Warm up

- Ask the informant to introduce themselves, their name and what they do.

#### Coffee

- - Can you tell us a little about your coffee drinking?
- - Why do you drink coffee?
- - When and why did you start drinking coffee?
- - What did you want to achieve when you started to drink coffee?
- - What is it that is so tasty about coffee? How does it taste? When does it taste at its best/worst?
- - How did the process look like when you started drinking coffee?
- - What is important when you choose coffee?
- - Which coffee brands do you prefer and why?

#### Family and upbringing

- How do your parents drink their coffee? Has that affected how you drink your coffee?
- Have your parents a huge effect on the way you drink your coffee?

#### Rhythm

- When do you drink coffee during the day? Why?
- When you buy the coffee what do you do with it when you come home?
- How would you feel if you couldn't do that?
- Why is it important for you?
  
- Do you consume your coffee differently when you are at work? Why?
- The social context plays a difference? Why?
- Have people judged you on the way you drink your coffee? Why did they judge you? How did you act.
- Do you always drink the same kind of coffee or does it depend on the occasion?

- Describe your morning routine!
  
- What role does coffee play in your everyday life?
- Can you tell us how you start off a weekday?
- What would happen if you didn't get your cup of coffee in the morning, at noon and after dinner?
- Why do you take a cup of coffee to relax and indulge yourself?
- Is it different to have coffee with the parents than alone/with friends?

**External environment.**

- - When is coffee most important/unimportant to you and why?
  - Do many of your friends drink coffee?
  - How is the “coffee culture” at your school/work
  - How do you drink coffee at home? Who buys coffee for the home?
  - Is there any coffee that you would never buy or drink? Why?

