The influences of physical environment of multi-brand fashion retail store on consumer's behavior

Master thesis

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The influences of physical environment of multi-brand fashion retail store on consumer's behavior

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior can be influenced by the different surroundings that are created by retailers. Multi-brand fashion retailers have existed in the market for years. Different from concept stores or flagship brand stores the multi-brand concept store physical environment is more difficult to plan and design. Thus it is also more interesting to study and investigate.

The aim of the following study is to combine literature review and empirical work and find out how multi-brand fashion retail stores based on their marketing strategy determine their physical environment merchandising display and space layout as well as how consumers perceive the store image and generate their attitude and knowledge that eventually will dictate and influence their behavior.

MQ, JC and CARLINGS are the typical and most popular multi-brand fashion retail stores in Sweden. Through observation in these three case studies along with customer interviews our results have demonstrated that the marketing oriented physical store environment by means of interior and exterior visual merchandising will affect the consumer’s attitude both positively and negatively. Hence retailers may consider these results as indicatory in how one may enhance and improve their store physical environment in order to meet the satisfaction of the consumer/customer.

Keywords: Multi-brand, fashion, retail store, physical environment, consumer behavior, needs, satisfaction, positive attitude, negative attitude, interior, exterior, visual merchandise, display
# Table of Content

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................................................. 2

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. 3

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 6

1.1 Research background .......................................................................................................................... 6
1.2 Research Questions ............................................................................................................................. 9
1.3 The purpose of research .................................................................................................................... 9
1.4 Research Limitations ......................................................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................................. 12

2.1 History of fashion store development ............................................................................................... 12
  2.1.1 Craftsman’s workshop .................................................................................................................. 12
  2.1.2 Department store ......................................................................................................................... 13
  2.1.3 Chain store ................................................................................................................................. 14
2.2 Physical environment ......................................................................................................................... 15
2.3 Fashion consumer behavior ............................................................................................................. 16
  2.3.1 Internal factors ............................................................................................................................. 16
  2.3.2 External factors .......................................................................................................................... 18

CHAPTER 3: MARKET RESEARCH .............................................................................................................. 20

3.1 Methodology ..................................................................................................................................... 20
3.2 The definition of a multi-brand fashion retail store .......................................................................... 20
3.3 Case study: Multi-brand fashion stores in Sweden ........................................................................ 21
  3.3.1 Introduction of MQ, JC and Carlings .......................................................................................... 21
  3.3.2 Store physical environment: MQ, JC and CARLING ................................................................ 24
3.4 Interview .......................................................................................................................................... 31
  3.4.1 The designing of questionnaire .................................................................................................. 31
  3.4.2 Customer Interview .................................................................................................................... 32
  3.4.3 Store interview .......................................................................................................................... 33

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ................................................................................................. 34

4.1 Evaluation of Interview ..................................................................................................................... 34
4.1.1 Method ................................................................................................................................................................................. 34
4.1.2 Result and analysis .............................................................................................................................................................. 35
4.1.2.1 Demographic and social factors: ............................................................................................................................. 35
4.1.2.2 Consumer perception ................................................................................................................................................. 37
4.1.2.3 Consumer knowledge ................................................................................................................................................. 45
4.1.2.4 Consumer attitude ..................................................................................................................................................... 47
4.2 Discussion .............................................................................................................................................................................. 49
4.2.1 Perspective from the retailer .............................................................................................................................................. 50
4.2.2 Perspective from the consumer ........................................................................................................................................ 51

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .............................................................................................................. 53

5.1 Recommendation .................................................................................................................................................................. 53
5.1.1 Improve visual communication in store ......................................................................................................................... 53
5.1.2 Increase sending positive knowledge for consumers .................................................................................................. 53
5.1.3 be aware of the visual merchandising in a professional approach ................................................................................. 54
5.1.4 Improve lighting design .................................................................................................................................................... 55

5.2 Summary and conclusions ...................................................................................................................................................... 56

5.3 Future Researches .................................................................................................................................................................. 57
5.3.1 How to reduce energy and approach the best environment friendly multi-brand retail .................................................. 57
5.3.2 The difference of consumer behavior between traditional multi-brand retail and multi-brand E-retailer .................. 58

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................................................................................. 59

Literatures .................................................................................................................................................................................. 59
Websites .................................................................................................................................................................................... 61
Figures ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 62

APPENDIX ................................................................................................................................................................................ 63
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The force driving us to write this paper is the strong interest for understanding the consumer behaviour under different physical environments and how consumer perceives the shopping atmosphere by varied store concepts.

It is also a combination of our previous and current study. It is an attempt in order to develop and apply the knowledge of interior design and architectural lighting design in fashion management study, from customers’ perception and sensation to describe psychological and physical needs in fashion retail store during the whole consuming process.

Lot of researches about consumer behavior and fashion store environment design have already been done by many professional researchers. However the consumer behavior in a multi-brand fashion retail store and the influence from the physical environment is still a very interesting topic for marketer and store designer to study and develop.

Today, under the pressure of fast speed of developing e-commerce technology and the increased number of internet based shops, new forms of retailing from internet are competing with the traditional operators for a share of consumer’s income. Thus to improve and enhance the store environment of traditional store is imperative.

1.1 Research background

The creation of a favorable environment is an art which requires considerable financial and time efforts. Once created, the general atmosphere is not easily modifiable (Tudor. 2008).

In the competitive fashion retail industry, to survive and keep the stability in a fast growing market situation, the retail store environment should be better designed, and focused on continuous improvement so as to provide a desirable store environment where consumers want to be during shopping. Thus, lot of retailers realized that the design of store physical environment is an important element of marketing strategy; retailers really aim to develop consumer oriented store environments nowadays.
Fashion retailers are striving for a differential advantage on variables that are most likely to be store choice factors as determined by expectations of consumer in the target market (Chu and Lam, 2008).

Today, people can easily find a concept store or well-designed flagship retail store in the city center or modern region. Usually these retailers are marketing for only one brand and many of them spend millions of dollars updating design and refurbishing their stores, because the central challenge lies in understanding the needs of consumers and hence providing the store environment those appeals to consumers’ needs (Hines and Bruce, 2007). However the successful retailers truly understand that the real meaning of “value” from consumer's thinking, and many other retailers and marketers misunderstand that the “value” means price. In fact “Value” should be the total shopping experience means the benefits that consumer can receive during and after purchasing.

Architectural and design of retail spaces may have covered their prestige as marketing tools but they are only really useful when not only the architectural and design wrapping but aslo the objects of consumer desire deliver what the architectural setting promises, so that the goods themselves are the real experience in the end(Riewoldt ,2000).

Physical factors can also create psychological influences to people. Since consumers enter the store and perceive the environment, psychological factors are been generated by customer’s perception and eventually become influences that will be recorded in the mind and affect the next decision making. Here expectation meets the perception.

The well-designed fashion retail store does not decide only by brand architectural or unique interior design concept, the well-being, comfortable and relaxing atmosphere which could be good lighting quality or ergonomic consideration in indoor visual merchandising also accomplishes to form a valuable store environment.
Parasuraman et al. (1990) noted, consumers compare tangibles of a store with what they think a store should look like. Thus, to increase consumer’s satisfaction by reducing the gap between perception and expectation through studying consumer behavior of the multi-brand fashion store should always be the job for retailers in order to be successful.

**Consumer in Sweden**

In the 1960s Sweden was the leading consumer country in Europe. Marketers were used to take Sweden as a test market for the new products and services. Sweden was regarded as the most advanced country in Europe. This position changed in 1990s, Swedish were no longer seen as the richest consumers in Europe. Incomes were also distributed relatively evenly, combined with rising values in other societal performance variables such as education, health care, media and communications (Wikström, 1998).

The economy, demography and cultural factors are the main environmental variables, which cause changes in consumer behavior.

In certain areas, Swedish consumers exhibit exclusive taste. For instance, consumers may drink champagne and buy luxurious products but also purchase second-hand clothing at the same time. Hence, a symbiosis of post-modern and materialistic behavior is taking place. This behavior has triggered a change in the marketplace. The traditional definitions of high, medium and low-quality segments replaced by two segments: basic and exclusive. This can be explained by new buying behavior on the part of new generations of well-educated and independent consumers, albeit with limited resources.

Customer’s satisfaction has a real impact on profitability. A recent study conducted among a large sample of Swedish consumers found that product quality affects customer’ satisfaction, and this results in increasing profitability among firms who provide quality products (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard. and Hogg, 2006).
Nordic consumers are highly required for better products and shopping processes. Thus, the physical environment of a store brings influences on the satisfaction of a consumer during purchasing process. When a consumer bought products in a better store environment, the shopping experience is more completed and memorable. To create a high quality store atmosphere to meet the expectation is obviously conducted by Swedish consumers.

1.2 Research Questions
The research questions in this study discuss toward consumer behavior and how a retailer build up the store environment according to its marketing strategy. It is essential to concentrate on the following aspects:
• How consumer’s behavior is influenced by the physical environment of a multi-brand fashion retail store?
• How consumers perceive different feelings in a multi-brand fashion retail store?
• Which consumer perception can become a positive attitude in terms of store design?
• Among fashion multi-brand stores, many of them market the same brands with similar price range. Based on the similar conditions, how does a consumer make the decision to buy a product in a specific multi-brand store?
• According to the retailer’s marketing strategy, should a multi-brand fashion retail store display products separately according to different brands, or to mix all brands with display?

1.3 The purpose of research
The store physical environment and consumer behaviour are two very interesting subjects that have real strong relationship and enormous mutual influence. The reason of concentrating on multi-brand fashion retail store is in order to terminate the question that how consumer conduct differently according to different store environment when she/he wants to purchase the exactly same product by similar price and available in all multi-brand stores.
The research of this paper is focusing on Swedish market by selecting three popular multi-brand stores that are normally located in the same area near by each other or in the same shopping center. The scale of the store, the number of brands and the quantities of products in these three stores are pretty similar, besides, same products as part of their products’ range are being sold by them together at same time. Here to prove that the store image can influence consumer behaviour without considering products themselves can be a very objective comparison and the advantage of the marketing strategy related to store appearance can be more prominent after receiving the results.

To study different multi-brand fashion store environments in Sweden and analyse the results after the marketing research will point out the current strategy in the selecting Swedish stores in relationship with store design, and discuss the consumer attitude which sorts by age, background, knowledge, etc that can help the local multi-brand retailer finding out the specific store image for its target group in the competitive fashion multi-brand retail market.

The purpose of this study is not only finding the solutions to increase the interests of consumer during shopping process in the store, it is also discussing the physical environment design of current fashion retail store by a critical point of view towards the world where over consumption is omnipresent.

With the purpose of bringing the true quality and well-being shopping environment to consumer under a sustainable approach, the multi-brand fashion retailers should understand that and communicate with consumer through the store physical environment as one of the most direct factor during the shopping experience, in order to find out the suggestions and solutions that ultimately create an environment that people can feel more enjoyable.

1.4 Research Limitations

According to (Hines and Brace, 2007), the benefits of store environment, good sales people service, convenience and quality merchandise of outlets are important factors that influence a consumer’s decision making. A well-designed physical environment
leads retailer to be successful financially, and also to examine if consumer receives the valuable shopping experiences in a store. (Eroglu and Machleit, 1993)

While comparing a multi-brand store to other retail channels such as a brand concept stores, the significant difference of a brand concept store is that it only sells a single brand as main products and the store design is easily following its own brand style. On the other hand, the tough job for a multi-brand fashion retail store is not only to combine several brands in a space, but also has to consider the whole style of its shop design. This makes a multi-brand fashion retail store different from other retailing channels.

In order to understand how consumer perceives store environment and how the consumer experiences store atmospherics, the scope of this study mainly focus on the element of physical environment in a multi-brand fashion retail store.

In this research, the multi-brand fashion retail store can be also a chain store. The scale of a multi-brand fashion retail store markets 10-20 hybrid brands, selling casual wear such as jeans and T-shirt with a similar price range in market place. Furthermore, this research is mainly focused on Swedish market. Based on those comparable conditions, the influence factors between a consumer and a store’s physical environment could be discussed.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of fashion store development

2.1.1 Craftsman’s workshop

Before the Industrial Revolution, a specific sense of “shop” or “store” did not exist, stores usually opened on the ground floor which was a part of domestic building. Many craftsmen such as metalworkers, cobblers and tailors produced and sold products at home, or they had a workshop that located near the street. Meanwhile, most products emphasized on custom-made. An earlier typical type of shop was developed when Industrial Revolution started. Craftsmen moved their workshops from rural area to city center. On the other hand, an idea of mass-production was formed instead of custom-made skills. Based on the influence of Industrial Revolution and mass-production trend, shops naturally become an outlet to distribute merchandises, which were the important factors for retailing to develop. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990)

In the late eighteenth century, a retail environment called “Bazaars” appeared in England. The Bazaars had a strong sense of store, because they connected both customer and retailer in a retail environment. In addition to this, the building of Bazaars was usually more than one floor, some commercial activities such as exhibitions and shopping stalls were hold at the same time. (Din, 2000)

Arcades were another type of retail development in the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that European lifestyle during the period influenced the development of arcades. Servants were the main customers in arcades because they took responsibility to shop commodities for masters. Due to this, most merchandise in arcades were cheap and affordable for servants. The arcades were well designed and covered by public space as well as linked to two to three active streets. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan is a typical example of the arcade. Today, an “atrium” design style in shopping center around the world is based on the influence of arcade. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990)
2.1.2 Department store

The social changes in nineteenth century of Europe and America, because of urbanization and industrialization developments, also brought a new mass market around small towns and big cities. Moreover, by the influence of mass-production concept, a great quantity of goods was produced. A huge and purpose-built retailing space was necessary to fulfill consumers’ needs. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990) In 1860, the first department store, Au Bon Marché opened, (Din, 2000) it sold a wide range of merchandise such as dresses, millinery, coats, underwear and shoes. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990) Au Bon Marché was popular and successful because it created a freedom access of place to meet people, rather than only supplying goods for customers.

In the 1950s, department stores developed in the UK and the USA. These stores were designed attractively with window dressing and interior displays. Furthermore, the department tried to attract the middle classes, created a high quality of shopping environment, customer service and home delivery as innovative ways. Because of the growth of the middle class consumers, there were over 200 department stores in the UK by 1900. (Kent and Omar, 2003) A new lifestyle and sexual revolution happened among younger generation in the 1960s. Followed by these social issues and changes, department stores launched new strategy for younger customers. A significant store example was Selfridges. It had bigger open spaces and incorporated many fashion brands, a vertical access of dress style from youth to maturity all could be found in the store. The environment of department store was friendly as well as offered social opportunities for people to communicate with each other and also have coffee for relaxation. (Din, 2000)

Nowadays, department stores fulfill retail and social opportunities as they built up in the eighteenth century. Walter K. Levy, of Kurt Salmon Associates, explained for a department store, “It used to be that department stores created a concept and then developed an assortment around that idea.” (Frings, 2005) According to the Census Bureau, “a department store is a retail store carrying a general line of appeal, home furnishing and house wares, and employing more than 50 people. ” The major trade magazine called “Store” defined “Specialized department stores with a fashion
orientation and full markup policy.” (Stone, 2004) Today most department stores around the world not only satisfied official definitions, but also pursue broader functions to attract consumers in such a competitive market. Take the Sefridges in London for example; it aims to connect store with a hotel at rear and allows 24-hour access, a leisure centre and restaurant are also included. (Din, 2000) In addition to this, many retailers fight back by adding entertainment values for customers such as interactive media inside of stores, fashion show, store visits by celebrities and festival events. For instance, some department stores arrange cocktail parties to launch new season collections, or introduce fashion designers to customers by the special events. In this way, department store could build up a close relationship with loyal consumer, and to find more potential consumers. (Stone, 2004)

2.1.3 Chain store

Chain Stores are groups of outlets engaged in the same general field of business that operate under the same ownership or management and spread national wide and worldwide. Chain stores have come to epitomize the vertically integrated big businesses of modern mass distribution, and their strategies have shaped mass consumption (www.answer.com).

Modern chain stores have started in 1859, the year in which the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company opened its first grocery store (A&P).(www.answer.com) 20 years later, Frank Winfield Woolworth set up his first five-and-dime store under the attractive “five and dime” idea that all items were selling by the price at either five or ten cents in Utica, New York in 1879.( Din, 2000).By 1919 there were 1,081 Woolworth stores in existence, firmly establishing the chain-store concept both in the United Sates and in Europe. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990)

Between 1910 and 1931 in the USA there was a dramatic increase in the number of chain stores. The chain store principle originally based on a single commodity and price point—appealed to the working classes. The approach was simple, products were inexpensive and attainable, and the formula was widely reproduced (Din R.2000). Result shows that chain stores were instantly popular and far more accessible to most
people who don't have strong purchasing power in comparison with the exclusive department stores.

The purpose of chain store was to establish familiar formats with the same standard quality, outlook, service and delivery. Thus the whole package of environment should be the same and reflect only one concept to consumers.

The advantage of chain stores was inexpensively fitted out by offering the indirect luxury experience of the department stores. Regarding the name, chain store is using a centralized supply system and a single shop fitting formula by retailer. (Fitch and Knobel, 1990)

Today, the chain stores such as Intersport and MQ are highly developing in Swedish market. The central organization is responsible for profile, marketing, assortment and the shop's design of its chain stores. The homogeneity of chain stores is to provide consumers with safety in purchasing process, the same shop setting and price level. (Hedén and McAndrew, 2006)

### 2.2 Physical environment

Store environment is one of the biggest issues to judge the retailer; retailer certainly realizes that store environment could affect consumer purchasing decision and the total shopping experience. The management of the physical environment is considered as an important element in contributing to a retailer’s financial success and a valuable shopping experience for consumers (Hines T. and Bruce M. 1993).

“Atmospherics” as the concept was first introduced by Kotler P. (1973), where a store’s atmosphere is defined as the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance purchase probability. In-store environmental stimuli are positively related to the level of pleasure experience in the store. (Tai and Fung, 1997)
The ambient factors are related to the background character of the environment that tends to influence consumers at a subconscious level. The elements which are most considerable are including temperature, lighting, colour, music, smell etc. These ambient conditions are normally noticeable to consumers. Undesirable ambient conditions can cause dissatisfaction if the attention for the consumer is heightened.

Here the store environment is not including customer services and other intangible factors. But the interior, exterior, window display, indoor visual merchandise, and the tools that will help any would-be store design to be successful are all in the range of this research and it will be analysed by both aesthetic and functional critical point of view.

The scale of store environment of this study is focused on medium multi-brand retail store in Swedish market; department stores and shopping centers are not going to be studied in this paper.

Physical environment of fashion retail store is also containing social factors which are related to sustainability, such as energy using efficiency in the store that is especially becoming more concerned in Nordic countries. Hence, the sustainable approach in retailing store design should always be applied in design processing.

2.3 Fashion consumer behavior

With the advance of global economic development, today fashion brings significant influence to consumers more than before. It also becomes a billion-dollar industry employing millions of people around the world. Fashion is a symbolic innovation; it not only reflects the contemporary society and culture but also reflects people’s own style. (Solomon and Rabolt, )

2.3.1 Internal factors

In the fashion market, how is a consumer’s behaviour different from other markets? According to (Solomon and Rabolt, ), “the general field of consumer behaviour, which covers a lot of ground: It is the study of the processes involved when individuals or
groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. " It seems that most field of consumers have common and basic behaviour, but in terms of psychological factors of fashion, many consumers have a “need of uniqueness” for fashion desires. (Solomon and Rabolt, 2008) In additional to this, when consumers go shopping for fashion products, they not only look for one specific product. (Mattila,1999) The consumer’s behaviour in fashion is more pursuing latest trend, creating personal style and looking for a variety of products in the market. Today’s consumers purchase merchandise and service because they perceive to be relevant to their needs. (Drake, Spoone and Greenwald, 1992) Many consumers did not know some products they had until the retailer pointed them out, because the retailer understands the originals of motivation and to invent “needs” for consumers. (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi and Gill, 2008) From Abraham Maslow’s theory about hierarchy of needs in 1943, it still could explain modern consumer’s behaviour today. According to Maslow, there are five areas of needs for each individual; physical and security needs such as food, water, and stability are the bases of human needs. When an individual is satisfied by physical and security needs, he or she begins to seek for love and belongingness from the others. In terms of fashion market, consumers are easily touched by love needs; they desire fashion products that help them to fit into their social work and group. Esteem needs is at a higher level of Maslow’s hierarchy. People maturely desire to have admiration and respect from the others. Some luxury fashion products such as diamond, furs or limitation products are the merchandise to fulfil the esteem needs of consumers. The highest level of needs is self-actualization, which means one individual realizes his/ her own potential. As a fashion retailer, the way to attract a consumer’s need for self-expression is to offer various kinds of selections and services in the marketplace. (Drake, Spoone and Greenwald, 1992) By understanding consumers, fashion marketers can communicate customers with an appropriate marketing strategy and to fulfil what the customers’ needs.

Figure 1 shows that, self-actualization, esteem and love are the top three levels of needs and also the best opportunity for fashion retailers appealing to consumers in market place, because these are social needs that cover most age and income groups. (Drake, Spoone and Greenwald, 1992)
2.3.2 External factors

In addition to internal motivations, external factors influence fashion consumers’ purchasing decisions varying among people of different education backgrounds, ages, genders, cultures, careers, ethnicities and geographical regions. (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, Gill, 2008) In those complicate external factors, how can a retailer apply marketing strategy to communicate with consumer in the store environment? And how is the influence connecting consumer’s behaviour to store environment?

From the present conditions of most store environments we could know how external factors of consumers’ behaviour are involved. Fashion retail stores change window themes and displays by different festivals or events, because window is the most attractive among a store’s visual statements. For instance, the window display in Christmas is decorated with Christmas tree or Santa Claus. Window display sends
message to consumer and also reminds them it’s time to buy gifts for someone. Furthermore, it also reflects the gift-giving rituals as a form of social expression. According to, (Solomon and Rabolt, p55 ) on average people buy around six birthday gifts per year in America. 

Moreover, different target group of consumers lead fashion retail stores designing specific styles regarding consumers’ backgrounds such as genders and ages. For example, mature customers prefer to a store with warm and comfortable atmosphere. Based on the requirements of target customers, the store environment could be achieved with paintings decorations, seating areas, large space and soft lighting. By contrast, to attract teenagers of consumers, posters, graphics and music in the store are desirable elements for teens. (Frings, 2005) 

In addition, people receive stimulants through their five senses: vision, touch, smell, hearing and taste. “In fashion, vision is the most obvious stimulants.” (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, Gill, 2008) By applying the power of visual statements, it leads marketers create a better store environment for consumers, because they know as long as can catch the attention from consumers, which means catch more profit opportunities in their stores. Fashion retailers spend millions of dollars refurbishing and designing their shops, because they know in the competitive market today, a well design of store environment is what consumers’ needs. According to Schlossberg, 70-80 percent of customer makes purchase decisions when they are inspecting products in the store. This is a strong evidence that how consumer’s behaviour is influenced by the store environment. Thus, if the store environment could fulfil a consumer’s expectation, the consumer is satisfied during shopping. (Hines and Brace 2007)
CHAPTER 3: MARKET RESEARCH

3.1 Methodology

In the methodology part, literature review is the beginning research to find that how fashion stores developed and how consumer’s behavior are involved with store environment from past until today.

In order to understand how customers are influenced by the multi-brand fashion retail stores, interview and observation are important approaches in this investigation. The interview executes outside of the multi-brand fashion retail stores with customers face to face. Questionnaires are also sent by e-mail and linked to the online survey website called FreeOnlineSurveys.com.

Moreover, case study is adapted to the research. MQ, JC and CARLINGS are fashion multi-brand stores in Swedish market; the methodology of observation is based on these three chosen stores. Due to this, analysis and description between consumers and retailers are specific examples to execute this research.

In addition to this, figures and graph analysis are based on researchers’ own experience, which are not only according to the result of this research, but also combining our previous academic backgrounds.

3.2 The definition of a multi-brand fashion retail store

From the literature review part of fashion store development in this research we know, stores developed from traditional types of fashion retailers such as department stores to the other types of fashion retailers today. In fashion industry, retailing is the heart of business. As for the retailers, to catch latest trends as well as find customers’ needs and desires are more challenging than any other business. Fashion retailers should react quickly to consumer’s need, market changing and economic climate. (Stone, 2004) Following the fashion retailing market trend, a new type of marketing channel is multi-brand fashion retail store.
According to Maps of World Finance, a multi-brand fashion retail store means that a retailer markets several apparel brands deliberately as main products in the shop. In terms of consumer needs, the benefit of a multi-brand fashion retail store provides various kinds of choices; customers can easily compare similar merchandise by different brands during shopping. In addition to this, a multi-brand fashion retailer can also develop its own brand and sell many other brands under one roof.

An example of a multi-brand fashion retailer is the Swedish fashion brand MQ Retail AB. MQ is an integrated retailer that runs and controls its retailing business from concept to sales channels. (Hedén and McAndrew, 2006) As customers purchase fashion merchandise in the store, MQ markets around 10-20 different brands of choices for customers.

3.3 Case study: Multi-brand fashion stores in Sweden

3.3.1 Introduction of MQ, JC and Carlings

3.3.1.1 MQ

MQ as one of Sweden’s leading multi-brand retails of Fashion Brands, has expanded quickly with over a hundred stores located all over Sweden. MQ has gained a strong position in the Swedish market, targeting consumers, both men and women with a sense for quality and modern design. The general concept of products is choosing for personalities who live a modern urban life and appreciate an exciting mix of brands in store. (www.mq.se)

Fig. 2 MQ

MQ believes that the store concept should be that the urban life is so much better than the big city; it is also an attitude, openness and hunger for new impressions and the respected daily life as well as weekend, home or office - in the big city or small town.
MQ are selling such brands as: 365Sunshine, Bjorn Borg, Blueprints, Ink, Bondelid, CalvinKlein, Diesel, Emilio, FredPerry, G-Star, InWear, Levi's, Lyle & Scott, Maison Scotch, Mangos, Matinique, New Balance, Peak Performance, Scotch & Soda, Stockhlm, Zoul.

Brands separately are appearing in both man’s ware and woman’s ware; brand mixing of products is only kindly being presented when it is sales period.

When a consumer enters MQ, the products are clearly presented in front of the cashier at the same time in a straight way, most stores of MQ has been chosen by a space of big scale and rectangular shape. The most obviously feature of products’ assortment is the strict distinguishing of male and female product.

3.3.1.2 JC

JC Jeans & Clothes as a store concept represents a young lifestyle based on jeans and clothing suitable to jeans. The range is based largely on proprietarily produced products and is supplemented with external brands of jeans. (www.rnb.se)

Fig. 3 JC

JC is not a young retailing store in Nordic countries, it has a long tradition, the first JC store established in 1962 and JC operates proprietary as well as franchise stores. In Sweden and Norway, stores are operated either by JC or on a franchise basis and in Finland all stores are operated centrally by JC.

As a specialize retailing shop for Jeans, JC’s has its own design and interim brands, in combined with world-leading jeans brands it creates a broad and complete range of
jeans aimed at increasing accessibility and product knowledge. Thus it offers a “one-stop shopping” for its customers (www.rnb.se).

The Target group of JC is girls and guys who base their fashion and style on jeans and related fashion wear.

JC is one of the biggest competitors of MQ in north Europe. They are acting as a multi-brand fashion retailer in Swedish market. Because of the same range of products and the same location they are sharing the market with MQ. Jeans or jean products are JC’s main merchandise in store that brings the big competitive advantage in the market. JC is owned and operate by RNB RETAIL AND BRANDS (www.rnb.se). As one of the biggest fashion company in Sweden, RNB conducts and develops multi-brand retails, department stores and outlet that are covering in 11 countries.

3.3.1.3 CARLINGS

In 1908 Swedish immigrant Fridolf Carling opened a men’s outfitters in Storgata – Oslo. This store was to become one of the most popular men’s clothing stores in Oslo for the better part of a century (www.carlings.no). “Frank Varner” was the first store of the Varner group Textile Company, since it got great success, after a few years several “Frank Varner” followed up. In 1980 Frank Varner the owner of Varner group acquired the CARLINGS menswear store in Storgata, and in 1982 carlings was transformed into a Jeans retailing store.

Fig. 4 CARLINGS

In 1986 CARLINGS had 4 stores around Norway, thus CARLINGS as the chain of multi-brand retailing was established. Since the first store in Stavanger, today there are around 150 stores spread all over Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Poland, there are more than 60 stores in Sweden. CARLINGS now is a part of the Varner Group.
textile company with centralized by the head office in Oslo and Swedish stores are being conducted by the regional office in Ørebro, Sweden. CARLING keeps bringing consumers the experience of rough and miscellaneous quality that reflects Carlings’ concept of radical and rebellious. It is selling personal, music-inspired and teenager’s tone fashion for its target group who is girls and boys 15-30 years old. Like other multi-brand fashion retailers in Sweden it has its own jeans label, besides CARLINGS also hold a wide range of assortment of world top-popular jeans brands, such as Levi’s, Diesel, Lee, Fornarina and Miss Sixty (www.varner.no). CARLINGS is trying to form the store’s image to be cool by mixing music and modern culture. The intensive arrangement and abundant graphics are the features of store environment in CARLINGS.

3.3.2 Store physical environment: MQ, JC and CARLING

3.3.2.1 Windows:

The Window is the front cover for every store. It is sending the message of what is available this season to consumer. It is acting as a very important tool for the retailer to bring the image of store concept in touch with the consumer. It can also stimulate the consumer to enter the shop and discover more of what the shop is selling.

3.3.2.1.1 MQ

Window display is changes quickly by different campaigns in MQ. As the chain store business model, it has a product-driven window designed by a same idea equally exhibit in every MQ stores all around in Sweden. Through observation, we may see that MQ’s windows are almost be using as close-back window which means it has a large pane of glass at the front, solid back walls but open sides. There are not so much props applying in the window and small price board often mounted

Fig. 5 MQ Window display
on the floor next to merchandise. All dressings are font-facing. Lighting is used simply by a track system with adjustable lamps in both daytime and night. Because of the lack of strong window scheme consideration, lighting is not a tool for conceptual usage here, but well functioned for visual perspective.

From the consumer’s point of view, MQ delivers the products image straight out by the blank back wall and clean Nordic style of design. But the ordinary display concept cannot stay time lasting in consumer’s mind.

### 3.3.2.1.2 JC

Different as MQ, window display JC is selected often as open-back window meaning that there is no back wall but may include side walls. Many retailers prefer them because they make the interior of the shop more visible from the outside. This also has a higher requirement for the interior look to look attractive at all times. Nevertheless this might make it more difficult to dress because the background is too complex viewed from both outside and inside. JC doesn’t give the possibility to customers to be able to touch the display. Some JC stores are emphasizing on Jeans that is more highlight by presenting only Jeans without any accessories in windows display. Like regular window display, JC is showing the price on the floor of windows that is easy for consumer to view Few advertisement text and graphics appear in the window for the purpose of perceiving interior fluently.

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Fig. 6 JC Window display
3.3.2.1.3 CARLINGS

Carlings window is also a open-window with no back walls and sides. Unlike JC, advertises and graphics are sticking on the window on purpose. Merchandise display is simple and ordinary. Information for the interior is not easy for consumers to receive unless on steps in.

Fig. 7 CARLINGS Window display

3.3.2.2 In-store Visual Merchandising:

“It is extremely important that we have an established theme that begins with our windows and translates to all areas in-store nationally. The in-store areas are just as important as our windows and provide our customer with information and entertainment” Said by Johe Gerhardt the Creative Services Director of Holt Renfrew (Morgan T.2008).

In-store visual merchandising is the method of leading customers through a shop in a logical way, encouraging them to stop at designated points and hopefully, to make a purchase. (Morgan T.2008)

The competitive advantage of each store can be chosen by good feedback of in-store visual merchandising from customers. The space is easy to shop in, the product is simple to find and the signage is clear and informative are all the evaluating points for a retail, thus good quality and appropriated in-store visual merchandising can increase consumer’s satisfaction of shopping.

As the continuation of widow display, in-store visual merchandising is accomplishing the whole exercise and completing the expectation from visually perception to tactile perception.
3.3.2.2.1 Product adjacencies and display

In order to maximize the space and use of the selling floor, the customer should be well-guided through the fixtures and aisles from one product to the next. Products should be placed relevant with each other, thus customers will not get confused and possibly pick up other items for which they may not have specifically been shopping. Cleaver use of product adjacencies will reinforce the appearance of the area and give it authority. (Morgan T.2008)

• MQ

When customers enter MQ, first they can easily understand the clear orientation that products display by gender. Second, the logical and well-orientated product adjacency is designed to feel spacious and wide. The division of accessories with fashion products is very visible and memorable in MQ. Accessories usually are placed next to the cashier at the end of the store; occasionally the mix of fashion and accessories under one promotion brand has its own stand in the middle between two main paths.

Fig. 8 Product display in MQ

All products are presented by the noticeable brand’s nameplate in the area of the individual brand. Catalogues and broachers are presented on the table of the cashier, and some graphics of the current campaign or specific brand are kindly placing next to products and brand fixture.

Not only fashion products, but accessorizes are also separated clearly by brands and function.

• JC

JC has set up its stores by a broad space where all products are presented in the position convenience for consumers and staff to reach. Unlike MQ, JC is presenting the
brands by a mixed method and different assortments. Jeans is JC’s main merchandising selling in the store as original business concept created, it has its own wall fixture where all brands of jeans are placing together covering all most the whole wall. By using the common display style for jeans that one overlay the other are separated by brands and styles, so called horizontal merchandising. Brand’s label or Jeans are showing by small wooden blocks on the top of the shelf where the Jeans are. The order has no regulation; consumer can only notice that how many Jeans brands are selling in the store.

• CARLINGS

Products of Carlings are displayed in a more "intense" way; the utilization rate of the space is higher, every space is fully occupied. The distance between products’ fixtures is small and compacted. This kind of strategy is designed to show many options of garments and carry a large amount of stock for a high product turnover. Thus there are several adjustable metal arms that hold the hangers in position. It is worth to think about the height at which the arms are set, the hangers seem too high on the wall in Carlings, and thus sometimes consumer may feel harder to reach garments. Most of products have no brands separation. Catalogues are placing randomly next to merchandise without corresponding to its brand labels.

3.3.2.2 Floor layouts

Visual merchandisers often divide the floor into four areas and define these areas by colours: platinum, gold, silver and bronze. The entrance where the start point of the shopping experience it is the position of the platinum area. The most attractive garments, such as discount product or promotion and high fashion items should be
placed here. The second consumer walk through is the gold area, the third towards the back of the store is silver, and at the end lies the bronze area. The bronze area at the rear of the store will draw fewer customers due to the longer distance from the main entrance, thus it is best to place some basic products or desirable brands in order to encourage customer flow through the entire store (Morgen T.2008).

• **MQ**

Floor layout follows the above theoretical idea the promotion items and sales products usually are placed in the middle of the store by the entrance and the full range of the merchandises category hanging on the walls. There are two wider paths that go directly to the cashier in the end of the store. Dressing rooms are placed behind cashier making it easier for salesmen/women to help consumers and manage the merchandise in the dressing room.

• **JC**

![Fig. 10 Floor layout in JC](image)

JC uses more space of the sidewalls in the store than the middle space, thus the circulation is in the middle. The floor has been separated by floor pavement, the entrance of JC is designed by covering black marble tiles, and wooden boards pave the following floor. Thus the division of space is embodied here so clearly. The same as MQ All catalogues are placed on the cashier’s table. And the brand label stands are printed with color and texts all in the same format. Graphics of precuts image is also showing together with label and price especially for promoting.

• **CARLINGS**

There is no specific stand for floor layout in CARLINGS, cashier usually close to entrance and circulation is in the middle and merchandise mainly separate by gender. From visual communication perspective Carlings has different expression according to their business concept. All price posters or product’s name is written by the sale’s persons themselves in the store, and they have freedom to decide where they should place it and which color and format they will using.
3.3.2.2.3 Color, Light and lighting

Without light there is no space, without light there is no color. Light makes everything to be visible, all colors depend on light. The light source selection in a retailing store is incredibly important and can help the merchandiser to appear the correct color. In addition the correct lighting can render the whole indoor atmosphere accordingly to the store design and concept and bring visual comfort and a healthy fashion retail environment for consumers.

Consumers can easily recognized that the store has a better lighting condition is more relaxing to be in and seems more welcoming.

Unfortunately, many retailers do not realize the significant usage of lighting in a store, and still pay more attention into dressing the display, yet fail to make it stand out with the use of good lighting.

The track system with adjustable luminaires offers the most flexible solution for in-store displays and brings the opportunity to use several different luminaire fixtures, each luminaire can be used for different functions depending on the display idea. Spot lights will light up and highlight the chosen merchandise, while the wide beam of flood light lighting fixtures can light up the whole area in-order to create the ambient light. Different light sources generate different rendering results, to choose the correct light source not strictly for the lighting plan budget is the experience of the successful fashion retailing stores.

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Fig. 11 Lighting in MQ, JC and CARLINGS

- MQ

Use track systems for both windows and indoor display and is well applied in MQ. Spotlight and floodlight is the main lighting design concept in the environment.
The light sources are mainly metal-halide, which result to a strong bright light that is good for big scale store spaces. MQ is also uses led for decoration purpose which the right way for saving energy. The lighting design consent has also planned to illuminate the main path in the middle of the store where consumer can see the cashier from entrance straightly.

- **JC**

The Lighting plan in JC store looks less considered than in MQ. The big scale of the space in a normal JC retailer and the high level between floor and ceiling requires that the light source should have enough power to light up the whole space, JC has chose fluorescent tubes for the ambient light source that is mainly to illuminate the floor, and metal-halide fixtures for both wall wash and spot light. Consumer may perceive the color of merchandises easily in the shop but the color of the merchandise has been rendered under the light with cold color temperature. Thus the whole environment has been illuminated by functional lighting but not high quality light.

- **CARLINGS**

In CARLINGS the consumer can feel the space is more heavy and tough. All light sources are metal-halide lamps, which illuminate the merchandise by a strong bright light. Without any ambient light, shadows are created on the wall and floor according to the angle of the luminaires. The new, unique, special or discount products has been pointed out by the spot light. Considering the black color of the walls and the metal hangers, the whole interior is like a storage room.

### 3.4 Interview

#### 3.4.1 The designing of questionnaire

Prior to questionnaire designing, store interview and store observation are important processes for us to investigate and formulate questions. Three multi-brand fashion retail stores MQ, JC and CARLINGS are selected as case studies in the research. Store observations include physical environment, products ranges and price as well as customer behavior. In order to focus on the physical environment differences among these retail stores, the stores are chosen with comparable conditions. And for this, the observational stores all located in Knalleland shopping mall of Borås are chosen which
have similar store scale and location. Based on the observation, it enhances the questionnaire to be clarified with practical examples.

Moreover, the questionnaire is divided into two main categories: consumer behavior (background, attitude, knowledge) and physical environment (interior design, lighting, window display). The first section of questionnaire is related to consumer behavior, which accounts for 10 questions. In the second section, 11 questions of store environment are according to the common store environments in Swedish market. With some questions related to the images of design and store displays, graphs and store pictures are also listed for explaining on the questionnaire.

3.4.2 Customer Interview

By interviewing consumers, it is valuable to understand how consumers assess the physical environment of multi-brand fashion retail stores. Customer interview is through online survey system and face-to-face interview. The total number of customers interviewed in this study is 71; on average, 90 percent of the results are from online survey, and 10 percent is from face-to-face interview. The survey period lasted for almost three weeks.

Because of the target customers’ ages of three retail stores are from 18 years to 40 years, the customer interview is also focusing on the same range of this group. Furthermore, this study is mainly researching in Swedish market; the interviewees are selected by living in Sweden or at least knowing and have shopping experience with fashion multi-brand retail stores.

Face-to-face interview carries out outside of three stores, to avoid disturbing interviewees’ judgments. Those face-to-face interviewees include both male and female; the age is from 16 to 40.

On the other hand, questionnaire is uploaded on the online survey website. We send the website link to consumers through email and the Internet social network called Facebook to invite those who are interested in shopping and are familiar with fashion multi-brand retail stores.
3.4.3 Store interview

To interview case studies of MQ, JC and CARLINGS in Knalleland shopping mall of Borås is helpful for us to know how the companies apply strategy in the market. The positions of interviewees from MQ and CARLINGS are of salespersons, and the interviewee from JC is the store manager. The interview mainly concerns about the store and window display strategies of the company. Based on the interviewees’ positions and work experiences, the information related to marketing strategy that could not be found from the Internet before, are well available from their replies. Shooting pictures of the environment and detail from the store is allowed during interviewing, which provides the practical images to compare and analyze in the study.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Evaluation of Interview

4.1.1 Method

The outline of thesis structure as following could explain how the research process is. Multi-brand fashion retail store is the research object. A fashion retail store is formed by visible factors: interior and exterior elements; invisible components are psychological and social factors, which composed of the store physical environment. A customer experiences and involved with the physical environment as own perception. Consumer perception is the combination of his or her personal attitude and knowledge, which drives to a consumer’s behavior.

![Diagram](image-url)
4.1.2 Result and analysis
In the following sections, empirical researches of case study and the interviews of 71 consumers will be described. And a summarized analysis of how consumer behavior be generated in store physical environment will be made corresponding to the results in the four selected sections below. By choosing the most remarkable questions into the different sections the study is processing in a gradual way.

4.1.2.1 Demographic and social factors:

4.1.2.1.1 Demographic factors
A Retailer should first consider the demographics of its customers before he chooses the way of designing a store. Traditional shoppers will possibly not be impressed if their local store turned futuristic and contemporary (Morgen, 2008).

Most of interviewees who participated in the interviews were from 18 to 35; only few customers were over the age 40. Their education level was different ranging from high school, to bachelor and master; almost 80 percent of interviewees were students.

Teenage:
The results for this group indicated that all younger age customers have visited the three selected multi-brand retail stores; especially teenage customers describe the experience in CARLINGS as "cool". On the other hand teenage customers purchasing power is low thus are consider thrifty and beget when they shop, they expect abundant choices surrounded by an atmosphere of inexpensiveness in the store. Music and entertainment is also an influential measure for teenage consumers.

18 to 35 adults:
The results of our research showed that the target group from ages 18 to 35 is concerned about the whole shopping experience including comfort, relaxation and health.

A sense of uncertainty about security has led this market segment to “seek lasting value in both relationships and products” as well as an increased demand for luxury
products. “Technology and luxury are two things this generation clearly desires” (Rence, 2006). Though observation we have noted that technologic aid is currently being applied in MQ, i.e. the LCD screen showing the contemporary styles, garments as well as any other useful information can be seen hanged in the entrance of the store. People who choose MQ are all in this group. They also feel it is easy to shop in a special shopping environment.

This group is not only concerned with the product value but also the extent to which it is environmentally safe, they seem to be connected to a cause that gives back to the community. Most of people from this group also thought that having the lights on during the whole night in the retail shop is a waste of energy.

Thus this generation requires a preferably luxurious shopping experience with good design, good value, but with a feeling of some social responsibility.

**Age 35 to 50 adults:**

“They want to spend more, they need to indulge themselves a little bit, like they are thinking, ‘If not now, when?’”- Maddy Dychtwald (www.uwex.edu).

This group of individuals does not follow any fashion style but what shop according to what looks good on them.

Another aspect of concern for this age group is fitness and well-being. “They want to be defined in terms of their attitudes and education, health and wellness, adventure and excitement” they are not the target group of the case-study retailers, however they are concerned as potential consumers who will substitute the others who will become web shopping consumers.

**4.1.2.1.2 Social factors**

The social factor involves people who are present in the store environment. Russell and Snodgrass (1987) note that the number, type and behavior of both consumers and sales people are included as elements of the social factor (Hines and Bruce, 2008). Sales people will affect consumers in a store environment by their behavior. The performance of a sales person in turn might be influenced by the store environment
that eventually generates an impact on the consumers. Thus a crowded environment
and messy arrangement of merchandise can and will affect the shopping experience.
Mackintosh et al. (1975) found that respondents performing an experiment in
overcrowded conditions described themselves as ‘tense’ or ‘confused’, whereas
positive feelings such as ‘pleased’ or ‘relaxed’ were found in less crowded conditions.
Store environment is the overall aesthetic and emotional effect created by the store’s
physical environment, it is the total sensory experience created by the store (Hines and
Bruce, 2008). Unlike MQ and JC, CARLINGS’ sales persons can decide everything about
the stores interior display. From color gradient design to product assortment and
display, all of the appearances are decided by store personal. Therefore due to this
creative advantage the CARLINGS sales person will feel satisfied working under a very
"free" environment. On the other hand the negative effect may be the
different individual aesthetic standard that may influence the result and overall the
store environment general leading to different layouts in different CARLINGS stores.

4.1.2.2 Consumer perception
The inspiration to make consumer enter the shop from the street mostly comes from
window display when consumers don’t have any other specific reasons. As one of the
most important factors of motivation, the architectural and window display attract
passersby to get in. How customers react and think from the experiences they had of
MQ, JC and CARLINGS will be present below in Exterior section.

The continuous influence from the interior store environment on consumer behavior
will be evaluated and studied in interior part.

4.1.2.2.1 Interior
The design of a store can help support the brand image as well as underpin a
successful retail strategy. Retailers rely on the design of the store to attract customers
inside. While some retailer prefers a delicate store design, others like to shock and
inspire, creating sores that generate hype and discussion (Morgan, 2008).
Consumer’s discernments

Factors are showing that customers strongly recognized the differences of display between each multi-brand store. Some of them mentioned that the different characteristics of the brand decided the store environment. Thus consumer has a very clear division about the store concept by experiencing the product’s display.

Product presenting and Floor layout

In a multi-brand store where the space is big and the range of fashion merchandise is full, consumer should have a clear brands’ notification by well-designed orientation. According to the answers from consumer, most of them like to have brand’s area individually.

Stores like JC and Carlings mixed all brands together when they are presenting the garments. The reason is not only because of the consideration of brands matching for selling together, it is also because of the strong driving force of other famous brands.
that can increase sale of retailer’s own brands. For example, JC has big amount of products under its own brand that usually is mixed with other products from the world-leading jeans brands present in the store. However one customer also mentioned that she prefers to have jeans here and t-shirt there means same assortment of products by different brands. To place the products by varied brands in the same category individually seems the secondary request from consumers. Hence before plan the floor layout, retailer should always check how to merchandise categories and brands together in an easily manageable and customer friendly way. Finally, when store merchandiser decides the brands’ position, it is best to understand where customers see the brands on a floor plan. Large brands have very strong views and can be placed more inside. Egos can strive when dealing with prestigious brands by the prime locations. Many small brands, on the other side, can be placed close to other brands where retailer expects their customer be inspired.

Successful merchandiser always recommend to start by placing the largest categories and key brands first, undoubtedly take up the most space and, hopefully, generate the most sales (Mogen, 2008).

Before customers enter the store, retailer should always stand on the point where customers are making the decision to step into the store, whether go left, right or forward or leave. The key factor is to remember creating gaps between products or to introduce a different type of fixture. Customer doesn’t like every rack of clothing looks the same.

Interviews proved that customers also don’t like over whelmed space where it is too much cramped. However it is depends on the age and lifestyles of consumers, older customers prefer more spacious space. One middle age interviewee said he doesn’t like the experience with pressure in CARLINGS where he feels tired. But for younger group they don’t care so much and they want to have more choices at the same time with vast supply. Hence, the style of the store’s layout and space arrangement will depend on the products the retailers are selling and the target group of the store. Consumers usually have experienced that more expensive garments may justify a spacious contemporary
feel with minimal dressed fixtures. Nevertheless, customers will not interact with the products if they feel they should not touch them. Attaining the right mix of fixtures in correct floor layout to display products is essential in creating customer comfort.

Fig. 15 Interview result about space of display

**Position of signage, poster and catalogues**

Signage, tickets and brand catalogues are very important in store to guide customers as a useful navigation tool. A large store with different brands needs to have detailed brand guides and product information. Usually the big poster or graphics should be posted in different brand area. But multi-brand retailer kinds have specific area to display all of the brand information where customer can study store’s layout and brand introduction before purchasing. Normally small multi-brand retailers place catalogues on the table of cashier where when customers processing payment can notice more brands and styles in store. Are catalogues’ or brochures’ position contributing efforts in the process of decision making of consumer? What is the best place and customer’s oriented position for catalogues? This question has been asked in the interview and analyzed below.

Fig. 16 Interview result about catalogue display
demonstrated that all consumers notice about the position of the catalogues and care about it. The one who chose other is prefer to have catalogues in the entrance, and almost half interviewees like to see catalogues in its own brand area. It is reasonable, the motivation of buying not only depends on product itself it is also depending on the whole brand image. To know more information and product range before making decision will help consumer finalize the decision confidently. Whether the store is small or big, customers need to have explanations about brand and information made clear to them.

Posters and advertisement are also playing a significant role as direction sign and at the same time sending messages of new fashion style knowledge and campaign concept. A strong brand sight or attractive graphic can act as an anchor to reinforce the store’s product category and highlight the main style of merchandising in store.

Like MQ, they always have the “URBAN LOOK” on their posters as the identification of the garments which are available in the shop. And the image of graduation girl with party dress for celebrating the ceremony occasion for their new campaign also announces that MQ is right here available for people who will graduate.
Lighting

Fig. 18 Interview result about colour difference of products between indoor and outdoor

Lighting should never be an aftermath in the process of indoor display. People have noticed the color difference between indoors and outdoors lighting by the different conditions that artificial lighting and daylight offer. Daylight adds another dimension to the overall lighting design and can have an impact on the customers’ perception of space. Successful retailing with good lighting design should never make the consumer realized the difference in color when the lighting has changed. Finding the best lighting solution in terms of color rendering means finding the appropriate light source that may faithfully reproduce the daylight spectrum thus create a "natural" lighting situation as close as possible to daylight. This will enhance the visual environment and create a sense of comfort.

In addition, the store environment should not be considered only from the part of the consumer, the salesman/woman should also be part of the planning process since he/she is the one that spends most time in the store environment. Thus aspects such as visual comfort, heat and glare seem essential for the employees’ well being which will utterly also reflect on the overall communication between customer and sales person. One of the solutions is to choose the correct high quality light source and lit up the store in a way that it simulates daylight in order to create a relaxed shopping environment. Halogen is a high quality light source that has been well (over) used in the store environment, nevertheless the heat from halogen lamps almost always requires a ventilation system without which the temperature within the retail store would rises in quantities which would make the consuming experience at least frustration! LED today is developing as fast as the market asks, proper use of LED is
also in line with energy saving. LED simulating daylight seems the ideal solution both in quality and quantity.

Another interesting method is to have daylight directly from skylight or daylight channels, this is preferable when a shop is totally blocked from daylight as well as it is easy to maintain

4.1.2.2.2 Exterior

With regard to the exterior selection, the survey focuses on a comparison of window displays among store studies, and how consumers think about retailers’ marketing strategies in lighting system.

Figure 19 below indicates that the window display from MQ is more attractive to over half of the interviewees, because they feel the window display of MQ is stylish, funky, clean, more professional and looks not so luxurious. On the other hand, younger interviewees prefer to the window display of JC and CARLINGS, a 15-year-old interviewee described the window display of CARLINGS: “It is cool!”

![Figure 19 Rate about window display in MQ, JC and CARLINGS from consumers](image)

Figure 20 shows that nearly 60 percent of interviewees feel about lighting on for a whole night after the store closed is a waste of energy. Fewer than 20 percent of customers regard the lighting on of a whole night that can increase their shopping desire. On the other hand, a few people feel this may cost electricity, but absolutely stimulates shopping desires.
Aspects related to exterior selection, it reflects how a retailer builds up exterior physical environment to attract more consumers visiting and entering the store. Especially for window display, it is the eye of a store, it presents a brand image and it sends an attractive message to consumers.

From previous analysis of case study in this research, the window display of MQ is clean, urban with Nordic style. From MQ’s brand concept, it expects to attract more mature age of customers than JC and CARLINGS. In this survey, most interviewees are around 24-year-old to 28-year-old, no doubt, they prefer the window display style of MQ. As a contrast, JC and CARLINGS design their window display to attract younger customers compared to MQ. Although the number of younger interviewees is fewer than mature interviewees in this survey, the result still reflects that they like JC and CARLINGS more than MQ. According to the result, it is clear that three case studies of stores have specific target customers, by applying different strategy to design the window display; they successfully attract the probable target consumers.

In addition to this, retailers try their best in many ways to stimulate consumers’ shopping desire. One of a common strategy is to show windows with merchandise even after the stores closed. They used to have lighting on in window displays or some specific areas for a whole night; consumers could shop with eyes whenever they pass through the stores. However, this strategy is a kind of wasting energy rather than increasing shopping desires in terms of most interviewees. From the result, it reflects
the store environment, which the retailer creates, brings both negative and positive influences on consumers. When consumers perceive beautiful products from a window’s display, they not only consider their “shopping needs and desires”, but also concern for more factors such as environment problems. In terms of consumers, when they see the exterior design of a store, they use their previous experience and knowledge to judge the store with a positive and also negative attitude.

4.1.2.3 Consumer knowledge

An interesting result from the interview is that almost half of the consumers do not look for some special fashion brands from a fashion multi-brand retail store, which means they buy general brands in the store rather than to find unique one. A smaller group of 40 percent of consumers intends to search for special brands in a multi-brand retail store.

![Fig. 21 Interview result about consumer's knowledge](image)

Figure 21 illustrates how consumers concern for the knowledge in interior design field and how they notice information. It indicates that nearly 80 percent of interviewees are interested in interior design and decorative trend; they may read or skim through magazines to get trend and information.
The process of acquiring knowledge involves cognitive processes: perception, learning, communication, association and reasoning. (www.thefreedictionary.com) People acquire knowledge through learning, education, observation or experience. Marketers use consumers’ knowledge as a marketing strategy. For instance, an eco-friendly fashion brand called Kuyichi, displays “PET bottles” inside the store to show customers how their products are made by recycling PET bottles, and furthermore provides a small booklet which lists products related information such as Fair Trade and Track&Trace for consumers. In this way, consumers perceive eco-friendly information and transfer the information as their knowledge. When consumers go shopping, they not only purchase merchandise, but also have new channels to acquire knowledge. It is a win-win situation for both consumers and retailers.

Concerning the result of consumer knowledge section, a higher percentage (80%) of interviewees are willing to receive interior design information, which means they are opening mind to learn about what they are interested. Through learning process, consumers can build up knowledge and apply it during shopping.

On the other hand, MQ, JC and CARLINGS sell a variety of fashion brands and all of them have own-design brand, providing many brand choices for customers. However, over half of interviewees do not expect searching for special brands from MQ, JC and CARLINGS. In other words, they go shopping to a fashion multi-brand store aiming to find more choices rather than searching for unique brands.
4.1.2.4 Consumer attitude

According to interviewees, the most important factor for them to buy fashion products is “look good on me”, and the reasons following are price and fashion style. They consider that, service from a store is the last important factor.

Figure 23 shows that about 37 percent of customers spend 11-30 minutes shopping in a fashion multi-brand store, whereas over 30 percent of customers stay in the store depending on different conditions.

Among three stores, over 40 percent of interviewees usually visit MQ more than JC and CARLING. Also, more than 40 percent of interviewees go shopping to other multi-brand stores such as Solo and Åhléns. (Figure 23)

The question (figure 24) is designed expecting to find customers if they have specific preferences to any multi-brand stores. The question develops in an equal condition, which is, if the product consumers want is available among MQ, JC and CARLINGS, will
they care about the store to buy from? Based on this condition, it shows that around 60 percent of interviewees do not care about it. On the other hand, 32 percent of customers consider a specific store to buy like MQ.

Fig. 25 Interview result about consumer attitude (3)

consumers’ decisions are influenced by the store design and decoration in a fashion multi-brand store. Over four-fifths of consumers regard the interior design and decoration as an influential factor when purchasing; By contrast, only 3 percent of consumers think it is not important to influence their decisions.

Fig. 26 Interview result about consumer attitude (4)

“An attitude is our settled opinion—either positive or negative—about people, place, ideas, or objects. By “settled opinion,” we mean that attitudes are formed after some thought, they are learned, and they occur within given circumstances.” (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, Gill, 2008, p104) When consumers enter the store, they may experience visible and invisible objects, for instance, the store atmosphere and merchandise display. The perception of the environment forms a part of the processes for them to build up their attitude.
With respect to the attitude, consumer has to make decisions as well as judgments related to purchasing or re-visit to the store. They decide how much time they would like to spend in a store, or what kind of products fit to her or his style. In this survey, most consumers spend 11-30 minutes in the store, but many other consumers’ stay depend on different conditions such as store design, display or products ranges. For the retailer, try to keep customers staying in the store longer could bring more business opportunities. Apart from this, the interior design of a fashion multi-brand retail store influences over 80 percent of interviewees’ purchasing decisions. This result explains a well-design store can bring positive influences to consumers, and furthermore to establish their attitudes.

In the previous result analyzed, those interviewees have their preferences for a specific store, or they choose a better design of store to go shopping; however, if the product is available among three case studies of stores, nearly 60 percent of interviewees do not care which store they will purchase. This result clarifies that many other factors lead them to make different decisions, for instance, store location, service or convenience. Although consumers may try to maintain the same attitudes or opinions all the time, this is possible to be changed by friends, individual personalities, past experiences and marketing efforts. (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, Gill, 2008, p104) It is clear that in the consumers’ attitude selection, marketers have many spaces to influence consumers’ opinion, or to enhance marketing strategy finding more loyal customers.

4.2 Discussion

In the competitive overcrowded fashion market today, the marketers make great effort creating well-designed store environments in order to attract more consumers. In the initial marketing research and interview section of this study, we acquire information both from the retailers’ and consumers’ viewpoints. Based on the results from case study and interview, the perspectives between the retailers and consumers are going to be discussed in this section.
4.2.1 Perspective from the retailer

Nowadays, marketers create the physical environment of stores according to their marketing strategies and company directions; this is how an environment builds up by marketing orientation. There is no doubt that marketers apply strategies to stimulate consumers toward their needs and desires. According to Solomon and Rabolt (2008), consumer response is the ultimate examination if the marketing strategy is successful or not.

As mentioned in market research chapter, the difference of a multi-brand fashion retail store from other retail channels is that they handle a variety of fashion brands in parallel and sell the products under one roof. While retailers hold more brands, they face more challenges not only to arrange all merchandise together but also to display all products in an attractive way.

Among case study of stores, consumers recognize MQ has a higher performance in store design and environment. It may generate the question, what is their strategy behind obtaining consumer’s admiration? Take the MQ’s display manipulation for example, the headquarters sets up a supervisory team that composes 5 professional staffs, they are mainly responsible for examining every MQ’s store display around Sweden regularly as well as to make sure that the decorations and displays of all the stores are maintained in the same style. Moreover, the head office sends a guideline booklet in which is printed all the details of displays with graphs and pictures in a practical way for its every branch. In addition to this, MQ’s window display changed every two weeks following the fashion trend. According to the interview, most consumers visit multi-brand stores weekly to monthly, this indicates that when consumers pass through their stores, they are easily attracted and influenced by new window display.

By applying the marketing strategy toward consumers’ needs, it naturally brings positive influence to consumers, reminds consumers about fashion trends and it stimulates consumers shopping desires.
On the other hand, a retailer’s marketing strategy may bring negative influence to consumers by lack of considerations. According to the 60 percent of interviewees in this research, the drawback of lighting on after a store’s business hours is a waste of energy rather than to increase shopping desires. In addition to this, most consumers experience a product’s color difference inside and outside of a store because of the store’s lighting design system focus on “store atmosphere” rather than a practical way.

4.2.2 Perspective from the consumer

According to Hines and Bruce (2008), a positive emotion-inducing store appeals to consumer’s pleasurable shopping experience. Because of this, the interaction between store characteristics, consumer’s mood as well as satisfaction is associated with consumer’s decision. By minimizing the gap between consumer’s perception and expectation, the consumer is satisfied with the store.

Based on the consumer interview, from the stores’ display section, consumers prefer to display of merchandise in a neutral space than in an intensive or spacious way. An overcrowded store is associated with low level of pleasure. (Hines and Bruce 2008) In addition to this, displaying products by different brands is more helpful than to mix all brands together. A neutral space and separation of brands for displaying are beneficial for consumers making purchase decisions. According to Swinyard (1993), “A good mood-inducing store will lead to a good shopping experience, which will contribute to positive effects on shopping intentions”. Since consumers are satisfied with shopping experience and environment, they have more positive feelings from the store.

On the other hand, the differences of demography in age, gender or education of consumers are also significant factors to influence their perceptions and expectations. Again, take the store display for example; most interviewees are fond of neutral way, whereas middle aged interviewees are preferred to a spacious display. Moreover, a younger customer is attractive by CARLINGS’s store design more than a middle aged consumer. These examples indicate that the physical environment of a fashion store targets a certain group of consumers. While a fashion company designs appropriately
according to their target consumers, the influences on the target consumers are positive.
Nevertheless, an intangible element of consumer’s learning process is also a significant influence. Nearly 80 percent of interviewees are interested in interior design and decoration magazines. This result explains consumers are willing to learn and educate through other channels by themselves to enhance knowledge in interior design and decoration field, which is an intangible affect to the development of attitude. By acquiring knowledge, consumer builds up attitude upon the physical environment of a fashion store. In this way, consumers’ perceptions are not only influenced by the retailers, but also through acquired perceptions based on their own knowledge.
CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Recommendation

The purpose of this study is to find questions, answer and improve the retail shopping experience, thus recommendations have been made to assist the current multi-brand shopping experience continually and in a progressive way.

Feedback from store interviews and customers indicated and explained what consumers want and prefer and retailers may not realize but must embrace and comprehend in order to be more visible and forceful in the fashion market. Here we are sharing the suggestions and recommendations generated from the upper study.

5.1.1 Improve visual communication in store

Visual communication in multi-brand fashion retail store does not only mean promoting, better interacting between consumer and merchandising also required highly demands from the way of presenting signs, posters and catalogues.

Retailers should place useful catalogues in more visible are and customer can easily reach them. Big posters with innovative eye-catching graphics can increase customers’ interests and inspire.

Innovative approach can be more interacting, thus high-tech and customer involved poster design can be one of the solutions.

5.1.2 Increase sending positive knowledge for consumers

Retailers should consider that customers enter the store not only for purchasing. It is one of the main casual activities in people’s life thus people are always perceiving, thinking and studying during this activity.

Some consumers go for shopping mainly for updating their knowledge on current fashion style, trends and products etc.
Clever retails will provide merchandising information in such a way in order to produce an effective and efficient result. For instance, when ecologic products are available in the store, customers need to understand the deeper meaning of ecology and the idea behind the particular products. Simple and attractive introduction can be applied and well presented in the store. Thus the consumer will receive the knowledge which will influence his/her attitude and finally affect his/her decision-making. Nevertheless further future research may be done by loyal customers.

Transparent store image and educating consumers can be embodied in this method. The awareness of decrease use of energy can also be positive knowledge provided in store. Interviews revealed that middle age consumers are energy – saving conscious. Thus is this way consumers can take or feel they are taking socially responsibility as well as receive knowledge without having to commit any significant amount of time to the causes.

5.1.3 be aware of the visual merchandising in a professional approach

Visual merchandising is a vital part of any retail operation (Morgan, 2008). Visual merchandising is a way for stores to say,” This is who we are and what we stand for”.

A professional visual merchandiser will reinforce store imagery and bring benefits to the store. Multi-brand chain retails want to express the same marketing concept and store display to its consumers, by employing well-trained visual merchandise designers will enhance and concrete the main concept in a coherent and similar manner across the chain.

The department of visual merchandise in MQ is a good example which works with a very organized head office, after they have determined the new campaign the merchandising display concept will spread out to every store in order to see to it that this campaign is enforced, soon they will come again to check and improve.

High satisfaction of consumers proved that MQ is using the easy and efficient way for visual merchandising.
5.1.4 Improve lighting design

People feel unconformable when they stay under artificial lighting environment for long time. Lighting could affect visual acuity of objects in display and arousal experienced by shoppers (Areni and Kim 1993).

The way of choosing a light source should be carefully considered, some retail operations are illuminated by rows of fluorescent fixtures, which span the length of width of the store. Usually fluorescent fixtures are the cheapest and most efficient light sources. However it is not always the best choice for delicate merchandise. The color temperature from florescent tubes is usually around 2000 to 4000 Kevin; therefore the overall is more cool and bright. It is not suggested to use florescent lighting in dressing rooms because human skin needs more warm and soft color rendering. On the other hand placing halogen lamps will enhance the customer’s skin tones, and she/he will looks at her/himself bejeweled.

To avoid glare is one of the primary considerations, in an area where only artificial light is present people will feel awfully uncomfortable by glare. It can break down the desire and feeling of joyless.

Energy efficient lighting can help retailers reducing the budget of day to day consumption, but the lighting quality should not be reduced reduces at the same time. Consumers are also aware that display lighting in the night is a waste of energy but at the same time it can also increase consumer desire, thus it is wise to set up a time device that will automatically turn off all lights when there is are visitors after mid-night.

There are so many lighting products that come out in the market on a monthly basis, updating the knowledge of lighting design technology in order to mix new ideas with existing planning will enable to keep the store growing and meet the fast growing consumer requirements.
Consulting with a professional lighting designer is like asking helps form a professional health care provider if you had an ailment (PEGLER 2006). Good lighting designers will help retailer in planning the best solution in terms of energy as well as merchandise display under the most efficient lighting.

5.2 Summary and conclusions

The overall purpose of this research was to understand how consumers perceive physical environments from multi-brand fashion retail stores. According to Solomon and Rabolt (2008), a well-design of store environment can fulfill consumer’s shopping process with a pleasant, efficient and enjoyable experience. Since many researchers have proved that the store environment directs consumer’s shopping experience, by investigating consumer’s behavior with psychological and physical perceptions in a store is the approach for retailers to create more business opportunities in a competitive fashion industry today.

Through literature review we know, the development of retail stores from eighteenth century until today, it changes by social, culture, economic factors as well as consumer behavior. From the history, it also illustrates how a multi-brand fashion retail store grows in today’s Swedish market.

Customers’ interview is the important approach to know how consumers experience shopping and perceive the environment in the multi-brand fashion retail stores. Because of consumers’ demographic differences, the perceptions from the same store environment lead to either positive or negative feelings. By interviewing the store staffs, the companies’ management and store display strategies are provided and it is helpful to analyze and compare in parallel. The retailer applies appropriately store designing strategy to focus on a certain group of consumers is useful to find its target consumers as well as appealing to target consumer’s satisfaction with shopping experience. Based on the interview result, the perceptions both from consumers and retailers are discussed.

According to the analysis of the results, recommendations are given for tangible and intangible improvements. In terms of visible improvements, the retailers may improve
visual communication and lighting design in the store environment which enhances consumer’s attitude toward positive perception and exceptions. Sending positive knowledge is an invisible channel to influence consumer behavior, and it is sure that consumers are willing to learn what they are interested. Furthermore, improving visual merchandise management is an approach to compete increasing number of outlets in the market which could be achieved by professional employees and training processes. To design or create a better physical environment of multi-brand fashion retail store, it not only follows the retailer’s marketing strategy and company orientation, but also concerns for consumers’ needs toward positive influences. A consumer’s perception from a store environment decides his or her attitude and behavior. If consumers are satisfied with the store, they will tell an average of 5 other people, whereas disappointed consumers may talk to more people and never return to the store. (Hines and Bruce 2008) To develop a better physical environment of a multi-brand fashion retail store, it relies on interacting of influences between consumers and retailers.

5.3 Future Researches

5.3.1 How to reduce energy and approach the best environment friendly multi-brand retail

Concept stores usually have their own ideas and approach to sustainability according to their marketing strategy.

Economy is the main driving force in the fashion retailing market, but energy saving awareness has already captures the consumer’s mentality especially when it comes to Nordic countries.

How can we reduce energy costs in the usual multi-brand fashion retail store? Renovating the current interior concept and keep improving marketing strategy is the difficult but important task for retailers. Thus further research when it comes to sustainability in lighting as well as store furniture should be promoted.
5.3.2 The difference of consumer behavior between traditional multi-brand retail and multi-brand E-retailer

During the time that traditional retailers are struggling to improve physical environment in store, thousands of e-retailer come into existence. The question that lies is can e-retailers eventually substitute transitional one? How is the consumer reacting in a world where almost all commercial activities have Internet based activity. The traditional physical store is different than online stores; the obvious differences are the way the products are displayed to customers and the way in which they enter the store to browse around. Is convenience always good? Abundant choices sometimes can make consumer feel dizzy and confused.

To exam consumer behavior between these two purchasing channels and compare strengths and weaknesses will help traditional stores clarify the differences and ultimately upgrade the physical store environment to be more competitive.
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Figures

Fig. 1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Source:www.omafra.gov.on.ca/) .......................... 18  
Fig. 2 MQ ...................................................................................................................... 21  
Fig. 3 JC ....................................................................................................................... 22  
Fig. 4 CARLINGS ........................................................................................................ 23  
Fig. 5 MQ Window display .......................................................................................... 24  
Fig. 6 JC Window display ........................................................................................... 25  
Fig. 7 CARLINGS Window display ............................................................................ 26  
Fig. 8 Product display in MQ ..................................................................................... 27  
Fig. 9 Brand Label in MQ ............................................................................................ 27  
Fig. 10 Floor layout in JC ............................................................................................ 29  
Fig. 11 Lighting in MQ, JC and CARLINGS ............................................................... 30  
Fig. 12 Method of Analysis ......................................................................................... 34  
Fig. 13 Interview result about store display ............................................................... 38  
Fig. 14 Interview result about the way of display ...................................................... 38  
Fig. 15 Interview result about space of display .......................................................... 40  
Fig. 16 Interview result about catalogue display ....................................................... 40  
Fig. 17 Interview results about visual communication in store ................................... 41  
Fig. 18 Interview result about colour difference of products between indoor and outdoor .................................................................................................................. 42  
Fig. 19 Rate about window display in MQ, JC and CARLINGS from consumers ...... 43  
Fig. 20 Interview result about to have light on during the whole night ..................... 44  
Fig. 21 Interview result about consumer’s knowledge ............................................... 45  
Fig. 22 Interview result about the interior design knowledge of consumers ............ 46  
Fig. 23 Interview result about consumer attitude (1) ................................................. 47  
Fig. 24 Interview result about consumer attitude (2) ................................................ 47  
Fig. 25 Interview result about consumer attitude (3) ................................................ 48  
Fig. 26 Interview result about consumer attitude (4) ................................................ 48

Note: The right of all figures and photos are owned by authors except figure 6.
Appendix

The influences of physical environment of a multi-brand fashion retail store on consumer's behavior

On behalf of Fashion management program at Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås, we would like to collect your answers for our thesis research.

Notification: This interview only has educational value and it will not be used for any other purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Education:</th>
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Gender:  

Note: A multi-brand fashion retailing store that means a retailer markets several apparel brands deliberately as main products in the shop. In terms of consumer needs, multi-brands store provides varied choices; consumer can easily compare similar merchandise by different brands during shopping process.

1. How often do you visit multi-brand fashion retail stores?
   - [ ] Weekly  [ ] Monthly  [ ] Yearly  [ ] Other:

2. When you buy fashion products, what is the most important for buying product? (Multiple Choice)
   - [ ] Style and fashion  [ ] Type of fabric, level of comfort  [ ] Look good on me
   - [ ] Appropriateness to my lifestyle  [ ] Price  [ ] Level of service

3. How long do you spend in a multi-brand retail store for shopping?
   - [ ] 1-10 minutes  [ ] 11-30 minutes  [ ] More than 30 minutes  [ ] It depends...  [ ] Other:

4. When you go shopping, who will go with you? (Multiple Choice)
   - [ ] Alone  [ ] Friends or colleagues  [ ] Family members  [ ] Other:

5. Which multi-brand fashion retail store do you usually visit in Sweden when you go shopping?
   - [ ] MQ  [ ] JC  [ ] Carlings  [ ] Other:

6. Which style of clothing do you buy from the multi-brand stores below? (Multiple Choice)
   - MQ:  [ ] Leisure wear  [ ] Work wear  [ ] Party wear  [ ] All  [ ] No  [ ] Other:
   - JC:  [ ] Leisure wear  [ ] Work wear  [ ] Party wear  [ ] All  [ ] No  [ ] Other:
   - Carlings:  [ ] Leisure wear  [ ] Work wear  [ ] Party wear  [ ] All  [ ] No  [ ] Other:

7. When you want to buy a product that is all available in these three stores, do you care which store you will buy from?  [ ] Yes  [ ] No  ,  If yes, I prefer:  [ ] MQ  [ ] JC  [ ] Carlings

8. Which window display is more attractive to you?
   - [ ] MQ, why:  [ ] JC, why:  [ ] Carlings, why:

9. Do you look for special brands as it is a multi-brand fashion retail store?
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Other

10. Which area to display catalogues is visible and useful for you?
    - [ ] Close to its own brand  [ ] All catalogues mixed in a certain area  [ ] Cashier  [ ] Other:
11. Do you think MQ, JC, Carlings have different displays for their products?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other:

12. Following question 11, which store display do you think is better? ☐ MQ ☐ JC ☐ Carlings

13. In general, which way for displaying fashion products is more attractive for you?

☐ Separate areas by different brands ☐ Brands all mixed together ☐ I don’t care ☐ Other:

14. How do you feel about visual advertisement and posters in a multi-brand fashion retail store?

☐ Useful information ☐ Better communication ☐ Disturbing ☐ Other:

15. Which elements are important for you in a dressing room?

☐ Lighting ☐ Mirror ☐ Bench or desk ☐ Hooks ☐ Scale of the dressing room ☐ Other:

16. Which kind of store display for product you prefer?

☐ Intensive ☐ Neutral ☐ Spacious

17. Have you experienced that the color of the merchandise is different under the lighting condition inside and outside of the store?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other:

18. How do you think about lights on for a whole night after a store closed?

☐ Increasing shopping desire ☐ Waste of energy ☐ I don’t care ☐ Other:

19. Do you think the interior design and decoration in multi brand retail store are important when you purchase?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other:

20. Are you interested in interior design magazine or some information related to decoration?

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. Are there any improvements for multi brand retail store? ____________________________