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Pop-up Stores: The Attraction of Ephemeral Experiences

- A phenomenological study on consumers' experiences in pop-up stores

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ABSTRACT

Title	Pop-up stores: The Attraction of Ephemeral Experiences - A phenomenological study on consumers' experiences in pop-up stores
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Authors	Annie Holmgren & Sofia Olofsson
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Keywords	pop-up stores, consumer experiences, ephemeral; experiential marketing, consumption culture
Purpose	The purpose of this paper is to contribute with a new understanding of pop-up stores through a phenomenological perspective by examining how consumers experience pop-up stores. This can add a new dimension to what makes a pop-up store a unique attraction point for consumers. This study also aims to look at a micro and macro perspective to better understand how this phenomenon links to and is shaped by macro level trends of the contemporary consumer culture.
Methodology	Given the purpose and aim of the report, a qualitative method design with a multi-site study has been chosen. Semi-structured interviews with a phenomenological design have been conducted, in combination with participant observations. By using an abductive approach the empirical data was interpreted and analyzed together with existing theories to discover various patterns.
Theoretical perspective	Postmodernism & the ephemeral culture, Romanticism, Pseudo-events, Experiences; Consumers' consumption experiences, Experiential marketing, Experience of environment & interaction
Empirical foundation	Qualitative interviews have been conducted with consumers visiting pop-up stores in New York City, in combination with observations.
Conclusions	A finding of the study showed that the exclusiveness of pop-up stores could be instigated by its ephemeral nature, which attracts consumers of today in their search for new and exclusive experiences. It also emphasizes the importance for brands to provide consumers with a physical retail context for trust and relationship building, especially online retailers. Thus, making the artificial online brand more real and authentic. This is aligned with another conclusion of the study that short-term solutions, like pop-up stores, could result in long-term relationships for brands and consumers.

Acknowledgement

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Annie Holmgren and Sofia Olofsson

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1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter gives an introduction and background to the consumer culture of today and the emergence of pop-up stores. Further, a discussion of the problem area is conducted where a knowledge gap is identified. The next part goes through previous literature published in the field and ends with a short summary on what this literature is lacking and how this study will contribute to existing literature. After that, the purpose of the study is clarified together with the research questions. Finally, an account of the delimitations of the thesis is made.

1.1 Background

The increasing globalization has led to a complex environment where several marketing strategies and marketing channels are affected. Due to modernization of the retail sector and technological advances that allows for more efficient organizational structures, the innovation processes in marketing channels are rapidly developing (Musso, 2010). E-commerce retailing, for instance, has become a revolutionary distribution channel with major innovation potential. The advantages are many, such as lower prices, greater selection and availability and delivery of products to customers' doorstep. Despite this, many consumers avoid shopping products online due to reasons such as the inability to inspect and test products before purchase, shipping can be slow and expensive and the returning process can be problematic (Musso, 2010). Consequently, there appears to be limitations with e-commerce and the lack of delivering a 'touch and feel' opportunity that demands for complementary marketing channels (Gonzales, 2014). At the same time, consumers are not visiting normal brick and mortar retailers in the same extent any more as the retail format is not that attractive in itself (Hathaway, 2014). Several firms are now required to adopt multi-channel marketing strategies in order to tackle increased competitiveness, new consumer demands and other issues emerging from this (Musso, 2010).

The notable change in consumer behavior can be looked at in the context of the postmodern society that is becoming increasingly fragmented, and especially urban areas are rapidly changing (Hathaway, 2014; Beville, 2013; Niehm, Fiore Jeong & Kim, 2007). Consumers are not only keen about what types of products and services they buy but also what brand these carry. Focus is also rather moving towards the whole retail experience and the interaction with brands (Hathaway, 2014; Nihem et al., 2007). The economy of today has been described

as an *Experience Economy*, where the value lies in the shopping experience and to amaze consumers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p.12). This has led to a situation where retailers are required to redefine their businesses as a source of memories, instead of only providing goods and services (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

A similar trend can be seen in social media where consumers are increasingly engaging in two-way communication on different digital platforms (Hathaway, 2014). It is now clearer than ever that traditional media communications has reached a limited efficiency (Picot-Coupey, 2014). The demand for engaging and emotionally stimulating interaction and experiences are increasing and the desire for uniqueness and innovativeness is growing among modern consumers (Hathaway, 2014). In response to this, businesses are required to take on experiential marketing efforts and are assigning larger parts of their marketing resources towards more creative strategies in order to provide sensation-rich experiences. This means that retailers need to modify their business models to meet consumers' requirements since they evaluate both the quality of the tangible product and the holistic brand concept (Kim, Niehm, Fiore & Jeong, 2010). Hence, the whole retail environment needs to be more appealing and provide a memorable moment for consumers (Picot-Coupey, 2013). From this, it can also be seen that marketing communication strategies are moving from 'push' towards 'pull' approaches, where marketers provide consumers with valuable content that encourages the consumers to voluntarily engage with the brand (Balasubramanian, 1994).

The situation has resulted in the development of new innovative marketing channels, especially at the retail level (Musso, 2010). Pop-up stores, referred to as "*the latest expression of innovative solutions*" (p.35) in marketing channels, are used to strengthen the relation with the end-customer by providing extraordinary experiences (Musso, 2010). A pop-up store refers to a physical retail space, which is only open for a limited time ranging from one day up to a year. Hence, what characterizes this new retail format is its temporary nature; it pops up, and disappears rather rapidly. It can be described as an experiential marketing format, designed to engage consumers and offer an exclusive and unique interaction with the brand and its representatives (de Lassus & Anido Freire, 2013; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Ryi, 2011; Kim et al., 2010; Musso, 2010; Niehm et al., 2007;). A pop-up store usually offers selected products or brands to be promoted for a short time period, and is both used by globally known

brands and smaller, new brands (Niehm et al. 2007). Philip Tabbah¹ the global retail director of the fashion house Chloé in Paris, explains this in more detail:

“When Chloé opens up pop-up stores, it is often with the aim to deliver a clear and specific message about something. It can be to push a specific product, a launch, a new concept, an anniversary or a new collection. It is a really good way to put something in spotlight”. (Tabbah, 2015)

The phenomenon of pop-up stores has remained a growing trend since 2008, and is often gaining attention through guerilla marketing techniques such as word-of-mouth to create a buzz (Surchi, 2011; Tabbah, 2015). A key factor that has created opportunities for the pop-up store market is related to the recent economic recession, which led to a situation where several stores were forced to shut down. Pop-up store has been a solution to fill vacant retail spaces for a limited time (Nilsson, 2015; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Surchi, 2011). According to Mikaela Nilsson², the COO of Pop-Up Force:

“It is a win-win situation that benefits all actors involved; pop-up stores bring people to the shopping malls, it covers a place that the property owner cannot rent out, and retailers do not have to take any great risks with long-term contracts”. (Nilsson, 2015)

There are different reasons for why retailers are trying the new pop-up format. One motive can be to attract attention towards an area that may be of interest for future expansion (Surchi, 2011). Other reasons include international retailers that want to try new foreign markets or e-commerce based companies that want to expand to new sales and marketing channels by offering a physical store (Picot-Coupey, 2014; Tabbah, 2015). Nilsson (2015) also mentions “*it is also a good entry strategy for online-based companies to test a physical store and find new target groups of customers*”. She specifically refers to reaching those consumers that avoid to shop online and prefer to touch, feel and try the products before making a purchase (Nilsson, 2015). However, Nilsson (2015) points out that pop-up stores can be quite costly and time-consuming to open and close all the time. The flexibility with pop-up stores can also be problematic since it requires good planning and an ability to act fast as soon as an

¹ Philip Tabbah, Global Retail Director, Chloé, personal interview, Stockholm [2015-03-21]

² Mikaela Nilsson, Chief Operating Officer, Pop-up Force, personal interview, Malmö [2015-02-26]

agreement has been reached (Nilsson, 2015). According to Tabbah from Chloé (2015), “*the problem with this short-term strategy is that it can be extremely hard and costly to find good retail space that fit our strategy, and also to recruit and train new staff*”.

Pop-up stores fit our shifting society where trends are short-lived, thus referring to that a culture of the ephemeral is developing (Picot-Coupey, 2014). For example, this ephemeral trend is seen in the fastest growing smartphone app in America, ‘Snapchat’, which is based on an interest to capture, share and spread photos and videos that is shown for seconds and then disappears (Mahler, 2015). Temporary phenomena like pop-up stores have created a new and emerging trend in retailing, and could be one of many solutions to satisfy consumers’ demand for experiences today (Picot-Coupey, 2014). Nilsson (2015) has experienced that consumers’ response to pop-up stores limited time availability is positive:

“I think the temporary aspect, in particular, makes the experience more fun and exciting for consumers and works as an attracting force in itself. If consumers are aware that the shop and store concept only exist for a limited time, I believe they are eager to visit more often”. (Nilsson, 2015)

1.2 Problem Area

The current environment with fast developing technologies and increased usage of social media is evidently changing consumer habits with regard to consumption patterns and interaction with companies and brands (Hathaway, 2014; Musso, 2010). The growing trend of e-commerce retailing has made the relationships between brands and consumers more transactional (Gomez, 2014). At the same time, and as previously stated, consumers are demanding more interaction with brands and are looking for stimulating and engaging shopping experiences (Hathaway, 2014; Kim et al., 2010). Nilsson (2015) has identified a change in consumer behavior over the last years, where “*consumers are becoming pickier and require variation since they are getting tired of regular stores*”. Questions then involve in what ways businesses can build real and human connections with customers. The changing demands will require companies to search for new management strategies of channel relationships (Musso, 2010). Nilsson (2015) believes that pop-up stores can meet several new demands and work as a good complement to brick and mortar stores:

“Even though physical stores are not likely to disappear entirely, I believe that if they want to survive, they need to focus more on the retail experience. Something must change because consumers are getting harder to please and are now used to different types of services. This puts pressure on retailers to constantly perform better, be innovative and in the forefront of new technology in order to offer something extra”. (Nilsson, 2015)

New experiential retail formats like pop-up stores have developed recently and, according to Gonzales (2014), created a paradigm shift that is international for retail. The interest for pop-up retail is gaining more attention, and there is a notable change in the market where a higher number of companies are opening pop-up stores (Nilsson, 2015). According to Kim et al. (2010), “*pop-up retail may be an important strategy for marketers and retailers given the growing number of consumers looking for innovative and interactive experiences*” (p. 148). The limited time and exclusivity that characterize pop-up stores pushes the consumer to make fast decisions (Picot-Coupey, 2014). Hence, the ephemeral pop-up retail format seems to suit the consumer lifestyle in a fast-growing and rapidly changing society. This study aims to investigate how consumers are experiencing pop-up stores in the context of a contemporary consumption culture.

Even though pop-up stores are increasing in popularity worldwide, the concept has not received that much attention in the international retailing literature (Picot-Coupey, 2014). The research in this area has to a great extent focused on the management perspective, such as pop-up stores as a foreign operation mode (Picot-Coupey, 2014), the motives behind the choice of pop-up stores as a marketing tool (Surchi, 2011), and the value co-creation potential of pop-up stores (Russo Spina, Cardia, Culorcio, & Melia, 2012). Prior research on pop-up retail with a more consumer-based approach has often had a quantitative research design and studied opinions and views of pop-up stores (Ryu, 2011; Kim et al, 2010; Niehm et al., 2007). These studies were conducted when pop-up stores recently had been introduced on the market as a new retail format. Thus, the majority of the consumers participating in the study had never heard about nor experienced pop-up stores. However, as stated by Kim et al. (2010):

“As the number of venues continues to grow, national sampling of consumers with actual pop-up retail experience may become feasible. Future research may examine the characteristics and responses of experienced pop-up store shoppers to determine the most effective features of an experiential marketing strategy”. (Kim et al., 2010, p.148)

Now, a half decade later, the pop-up store concept has grown extensively, which would suggest a need to look deeper into the actual customer experiences associated with pop-up stores. Understanding consumers and their consumption experiences with brands, products and services, in various retail environments, is one of the key aspects of marketing (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). However, according to Schmitt & Zarantonella (2013), *“experience, as a concept and empirical phenomenon, is not as well-established as other constructs and phenomena in the areas of consumer behavior and marketing”* and *“judging by the number of articles published over the last two decades, marketing research on experience is still relatively underdeveloped”* (p. 26). At the same time, echoing de Lassus and Freire (2013), *“the ephemeral consumer experiences seem to be absent from the marketing literature”* (p.62).

The identified lack of literature on how consumers actually are experiencing pop-up stores makes this study relevant, thereby, taking on a phenomenological perspective in order to fully understand the consumer experiences that these pop-up stores generate. By analyzing this phenomenon with the ephemeral consumption culture of today, a new and previously neglected angle will be studied. This perspective enables us to look at it from a wider macro perspective to investigate the temporary attributes of pop-up stores.

1.3 Literature Review of Pop-up Stores

1.3.1 Definition of Pop-up Stores

The typical pop-up retail strategy is an experiential marketing format characterized by innovativeness, exclusivity and unrestricted locations. The purpose of pop-up stores is to create experiences, promote new products and enable a face-to-face dialogue between consumers and brand representatives (Kim et al., 2010). It also works as a tool for marketing communication with its interactive and engaging platform between customers and the brand (Picot-Coupey, 2014; Niehm et al., 2007). The retail concept tends to attract consumers for hedonic reasons associated to the originality and distinctiveness of the experience, rather than for utilitarian purposes (Kim et al., 2010).

Pop-up stores go beyond traditional retail stores and are used by various businesses from apparel retailers, restaurants, bars, nightclubs and hotels (Surchi, 2011). The flexibility associated with pop-up retail formats has made it possible for companies to show up in

different markets and create a deeper connection with customers on an aspirational level (Gonzales, 2014). Pop-up stores are primarily established to create awareness, where the major promotion typically is word-of-mouth communication, guerrilla marketing and social networking. Since experiential marketing formats, like pop-up retail, work as a marketing communication device, it is often used for press and VIP consumer events (Manlow & Nobbs, 2013). These in-store events often happen during the opening of the store, the launch of a new collection or other social events to increase traffic. Social media is particularly a widely used tool today to increase knowledge and create a buzz about pop-ups (Ryu, 2011).

1.3.2 Management Perspective

1.3.2.1 Motives & Objectives

As mentioned earlier, the majority of previous research on pop-up stores focuses on the management perspective, such as the motives for retailers to open them. The reasons can vary depending on objectives and type of product or brand (Gonzales, 2014). Various research has shown that a major benefit with the retail format is the opportunity to test the potential of entering new markets and try different locations without the high costs of a brick and mortar store (Gonzales, 2014; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Ryi, 2011; Surchi, 2011). Other benefits identified with the pop-up retail format include marketing, generating sales, and testing products, brands and concepts (Gonzales, 2014). Furthermore, it can generate customer loyalty and appreciation and be a good strategy for the brand to analyze consumers' response to a brand and its positioning (Gonzales, 2014; Ryu, 2011).

Russo Spena et al (2012) looked at the phenomena of temporary stores in relation to value co-creation, which refers to the interaction process between customers and sales representatives. The study investigates whether the retail format can enhance brand loyalty and equity due to the increased interaction that occurs in pop-up stores. The findings of the study show that the retail format provokes value co-creation between the firm and the customers due to the interactive and experiential relationship, which can result in higher brand loyalty and equity. The study suggests that future research could look further into the co-creation aspect from the consumer view (Russo Spena et al., 2012).

Due to the fact that the objectives can look very different depending on company, prior research has also showed that sales and promotion are not always the main purposes for

opening pop-up stores (Ryu, 2011; Surchi, 2011). Instead, the increase of brand awareness and the development of long-term relationships with customers may be considered more vital. Luxury or 'hedonistic' brands may often aim to stimulate creative engagement and deliver aspirational lifestyles, whereas brands offering more basic or 'utilitarian' products might wish to get customers to buy on impulse (Surchi, 2011).

Picot-Coupey (2014) offers management guidelines for using pop-up store as a foreign operation mode. Findings in the study show that a pop-up store can be a rapid, innovative, flexible and cost-effective strategy and a good first step to test new foreign markets and help address some of the challenges associated with the retail internationalization process. The author then suggests further research to look deeper into how and why pop-up stores will develop in the future, especially in a context where ephemeral appears as a structural norm and where temporary concepts are attracting more attention (Picot-Coupey, 2014).

1.3.2.2 Location Strategies & Challenges

Many researchers recognize that finding the right neighborhood and store location is a key factor and critical to ensure success and strengthen the brand reputation (Gonzales, 2014; Picot-Coupey, 2014; de Lassus & Freire, 2013). Locations can therefore range from high traffic shopping areas in fashionable and economically significant cities to innovative and unexpected locations (Picot-Coupey, 2014). An example can be applied to New York City (NYC) that offers a wide range of pop-up stores. According to Gonzalez (2014), if a company is looking for press awareness, cache areas like SoHo might be appropriate, and if the top-priority is sales then midtown might be a good choice. The geographical distance away from expected fashionable areas can help brands to gain availability and attract new customers (de Lassus & Freire, 2013). Further, it is not unusual with seasonal pop-up stores, which can stay open during summer and winter holidays on resorts and appear in different formats, such as a flexible food truck models (Gonzales, 2014).

Pop-up stores are also facing challenging issues such as finding a retail space to lease for a short period of time. However, pop-up stores have been analyzed as a solution to the complex economic climate facing landlords that want to fill vacant space and for retail managers that want to maintain sales and market a brand with a minor investment (Nilsson, 2015; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Surchi, 2011). Furthermore, Gonzales (2014) identifies a shift that is happening, for example in NYC that landlords no longer can ignore. Fewer retailers

want to sign a long-term lease, which has opened up a market for short-term real estates (Gonzales, 2014).

1.3.3 Consumer Perspective

1.3.3.1 Consumer Motivations & Attitudes

Niehm et al. (2007) studied the consumers' views of the retail format in a relatively early stage of the emergence of pop-up stores, when many consumers were unaware of the concept. The aim of the study was to understand how demographic characteristics of consumers were linked to their opinions about pop-up stores. It was found that consumers were more positive towards brands that sold hedonic products, compared to when purchasing utilitarian products. Further, the result indicated that consumers are gradually getting more interested in unique shopping experiences and want experiences beyond the traditional retail format (Niehm et al., 2007).

Through a qualitative netnographic research, de Lassus & Anido Freire (2013) discusses what motivates consumers to shop in high-end pop-up stores. The focus is mainly on the retail experience and investigates attitudes towards aspects such as location, store space, visit duration, atmosphere and the degree of an inviting environment. The study shows that pop-up stores can be an efficient way to add new brand features to a traditional luxury brand and that the retail format is perceived as more relaxed, informal, fun and pleasant than in parent stores. This is due to factors such as smaller store spaces that are perceived as more welcoming, less intimidating and more protective and that the sales representatives are experienced as being more friendly. It is also found that the products are displayed in a more accessible way, which makes it easier for consumers to touch, smell or try the products directly. However, all these results are found in a luxury context, which makes it hard to draw any generalizable conclusions about how the pop-up retail format is perceived by consumers in other settings and in a broader perspective (de Lassus & Anido Freire, 2013).

1.3.3.3 Consumer Characteristics & Purchase Intentions

Kim et al. (2010) looked at the consumer psychographic characteristics affecting behavioral intentions of pop-up retail. The study supports past research with findings that consumers who show high levels of shopping enjoyment and innovativeness were more likely to appreciate the positive hedonic aspects of pop-up stores, such as the new and unique products and the

exciting and exclusive experience (Kim et al., 2010). Thus, suggesting that the pop-up retail format may be effective for marketing purposes, especially to consumers showing these characteristics. The study also showed a positive relationship between a consumer's emotional experience and attitude, which indicates that a central aspect for retailers is to ensure that pop-up stores will emotionally engage consumers in a positive way. Once pop-up stores find methods to make consumers emotionally attached to a brand or a product, a long-term relationship will then begin to develop. In line with other research, the main goal of pop-up stores is not necessarily to facilitate purchase decisions. Kim et al. (2010) argue that is even more vital that pop-up stores offer consumers desired uniqueness of experience. Furthermore, this indicates the importance of relationship building as a part of the pop-up store experience.

The study also shows that the attitude toward pop-up retail was positively correlated with intentions to recommend, try and buy products from pop-up stores. Therefore, suggestions were made for future research to look deeper into understanding the feelings and beliefs that affect attitude toward pop-up retail (Kim et al., 2010). The limitations with the study primary concern the low number of respondents that had an actual experience with visiting a pop-up store, which makes the result less generalizable to actual pop-up store consumers. Consequently, this calls for further and more relevant research by interviewing respondents that have had a first-hand experience with pop-up retail.

1.3.4 Expected Knowledge Contribution

After a closer review on previous research we have found that a main limitation is that several studies on pop-up stores take on a management perspective, thus, focusing on marketers and retailers. A key aspect that these management-focused studies are lacking is examining the pop-up stores from a consumer view, thereby, neglecting the consumer experiences of the studied phenomenon. Furthermore, existing research on pop-up stores that take on a consumer-focused perspective have not yet looked at the actual consumer experiences of pop-up stores. Hence, the consumer experiences in pop-up stores remain largely unexplored so far. By bringing in a phenomenological perspective when studying consumer experiences, a new and relevant contribution can be made to the existing literature on pop-up stores. Adding this perspective allows for a better comprehension of how people experience a phenomenon, which could help us to form an understanding of various subjective views. Furthermore, none of the previous research investigated the impact that the ephemeral nature of pop-up stores has on consumers. It would

therefore be of interest to examine in what way the temporary aspect triggers consumers to engage in these unique and exclusive consumption activities. Our ambition is also to add a macro perspective to the study since prior research is missing a wider and holistic societal view of how the consumer culture has evolved.

Even though the consumer perspective is the focus of the study, this research is also meant to contribute to the existing management literature on pop-up stores. Businesses might benefit from understanding the underlying emotions of how consumers experience these temporary stores, and use this information when deciding whether to strategically utilize the pop-up retail format.

1.4 Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to contribute with a new and extended understanding of pop-up stores through a phenomenological perspective when examining how consumers experience pop-up stores. This adds a new dimension to what makes a pop-up store a unique attraction point for consumers and an appropriate retail and marketing channel for companies. Also, to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena, it is relevant to investigate how these experiences can be linked to the overall consumption culture. This perspective was appropriate for our study since it regards the social situation of pop-up stores as an expression of a wider society, and how this phenomenon links to and is shaped by macro level trends and cultural norms.

1.4.1 Research Questions

- Main question: How do consumers experience pop-up stores?
 - Sub question: How do consumers' experiences in pop-up stores relate to overarching, macro-level trends of the contemporary consumption culture?

1.5 Delimitations

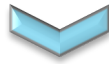
The study is limited to investigate how consumers perceive pop-up stores. However, interviews were initially held with experts in the field that have been used as a pre-understanding and background information to the study. In terms of pop-up stores we have chosen to narrow our investigation to those stores with a clear experiential marketing strategy in order to find typical pop-up stores that have an ambition to create unique consumer

experiences. For instance, this means that those stores that call themselves pop-up stores but only have a clearance sale strategy did not fit our definition of the typical characteristics of a pop-up store. Considering that different events are frequently taking place in a typical pop-up store and that often create even richer experiences, we have chosen to observe and interview people during these pop-up store events. By doing this, we also assured that there were a high number of potential consumers to interview in the store. Thus, these delimitations has been made so that we could collect relevant empirical data from a experiential pop-up retail formats that have an ambition to deliver some sort of experiences to consumers. However, we have not chosen to limit the research to specific industries, instead, the aim has been to find interesting pop-up stores regardless of what products they provide.

1.6 Thesis Outline

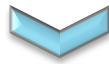
Chapter 1. Introduction

In the first chapter, presented above, the background to the research area is introduced and problem area of the study is defined. After that, a literature review examines previous research related to the topic that is being summarized in an expected knowledge contribution. Lastly, the purpose and research questions are presented, followed by the delimitations of the study.



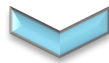
Chapter 2. Methodology

Methodological choices that have guided the study, and helped answer the research question and fulfill the purpose, are presented and argued for in chapter two. It includes the research approach, the study design and the research perspectives. After that, a description of the data collection is made, followed by the empirical analysis method and a critical evaluation of the methods used.



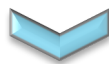
Chapter 3. Theories

The third chapter consists of the chosen theories that have been used to help interpreting the empirical data in the analysis. The last section includes a summary of the theories, together with a self-constructed model that summarizes all theories and provides a useful tool when understanding the empirical data.



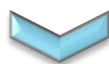
Chapter 4. Sites of Observation

The fourth chapter offers an overview of the observed pop-up stores located in New York City, together with pictures of the surrounding. Facts about the brands are given as well as own observations of the store and the respondents' thoughts about the surroundings and atmospherics.



Chapter 5. Analysis

The fifth chapter presents and analyzes the collected empirical data together with theories, in which two overarching themes are identified. The chapter ends with a short summary.



Chapter 6. Discussion & Conclusions

The last chapter concludes the study and recognizes and develops the major findings discovered in chapter five. The discussion ends up in the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

2. METHOD

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches that have been adopted to carry out the research. First, the chapter introduces the reasons for choosing a qualitative research method and an abductive research approach. Next, an account of the research perspectives is made including an ethnographic approach and phenomenological study design. After that, the empirical collection describes the interviews and observations conducted in New York City. The next part presents the empirical analysis, with a hermeneutic analysis method, together with the interpretive case method. The chapter ends with a discussion of the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, which refer to the possible limitations with the adopted methodology design. Important to note is that a critical tone will exist throughout the chapter.

2.1 Research Methodology

In order to study the experiences of pop-up stores we have chosen a *qualitative* method. The qualitative research design is characterized by an exploratory nature that is often complex and subjective (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The lack of existing research on the studied subject makes this an appropriate choice because the research area is still quite unexplored and difficult to measure. The other research method is the *quantitative* study design, which is usually more suitable for studies in areas where many contributions have already been made, and there is a need to test various parameters statistically (Bryman & Bell, 2013). A qualitative method is a more relevant choice since the aim with the thesis is to create an initial understanding of how consumers are experiencing pop-up stores, rather than to generalize the result to a population.

A qualitative study is typically based on small samples that provide insights and a deeper understanding of the problem and underlying motives, by examining the ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects of the subject (Malhotra, 2010). This research strategy has its analytical focus on the interpretation of contexts and words rather than quantification. A qualitative design is also more applicable in a study that examines human beings in social settings (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Altogether, the chosen research method can help to form an essential understanding of the context of pop-up stores, and how individuals in the setting interpret this.

A *multi-site study* has been conducted, which is described as an up-close, in-depth and detailed examination of a phenomenon (Audet & d’Amboise, 2001). In the early stages of

studying a new subject, a multi-site study research is an appropriate choice of method. Thus, it is suitable for an exploratory analysis that aims to provide new information and explain a particular phenomenon (Yin, 1994). The research form allows for a better understanding of individuals and events, by examining multiple representations. Also, investigating the experiences of the same type of phenomena in more than one setting will generate a broader picture (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). By examining different pop-up stores it was possible to compile the results from these sites and identify patterns and overarching themes.

2.2 Research Approach

The research structure is guided by whether the usage of theories is applicable in the initial phase or if theories are developed throughout the study process. Two main types can be identified; a *deductive* design where the theoretical point of departure already exists and consists of general theories, and an *inductive* design where theories are developed during the empirical collection process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This study takes on an *abductive* approach, which has features from both the deductive and inductive research design (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). This means that the abductive research approach is to a large extent based on empirical facts but also uses theoretical conceptions to discover patterns in the analysis of data. The research process alternates between previous theory and empirical findings, which is constantly being reinterpreted throughout the study (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). Such an approach was applicable for our qualitative multi-site study since it was possible to use theories as an inspiration when analyzing the empirical material and looking to identify various patterns.

2.3 Research Perspective

2.3.1 Ethnographic Methodology

The *ethnographic* approach is not a coherent or rigid methodology that specifies a certain research direction, instead, it can be portrayed in various ways (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). Therefore, this study combines an ethnographic method with a phenomenological perspective, which is described in the next section. The objective with an ethnographic approach is to interpret and form a deeper understanding of the social interactions of human beings (Aspers, 2011; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). Such a method was appropriate since a fundamental aspect of the study has been to interpret social interactions, more specifically, the

understanding of how consumers think and act when visiting pop-up stores. After the data had been gathered from participant observations and interviews, it was analyzed in order to generate explanations based on the understanding of human behaviors.

A critique towards an ethnographic method concerns the difficulty to make clear generalizations due to the diverse situations that constantly occur when investigating human behavior. Experiences in the context of ethnology are associated with how humans are interacting with others and are part of various cultures and groups (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Hence, we found it essential to interpret experiences immediately in its actual settings, and thus, conducted participant observations and interviews on the studied sites during consumers' experiences.

2.3.2 Phenomenological Research

The ethnographic method approach has been combined with a *phenomenological* research design, in which experiences are in focus (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). In phenomenological research, subjective opinions such as people's' ideas and fantasies are central, also defined as the *lifeworld* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). The lifeworld emphasizes the world as a social arena that includes individual, social, perceptual, and practical experiences. The preferred way to gain access to the lifeworld of individuals is through conversations (Burawoy, Burton, Ferguson, & Fox, 1991). Thus, such a method was useful in this study to enhance the understanding of subjective experiences when observing and interacting with pop-up store visitors. Furthermore, phenomenological research primarily examines real life experiences in settings that tend to have an impact and meaning for the individual and happens at specific moments in life (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This is also relevant for our study that looks at a phenomenon that aims to produce special experiences and memorable moments for consumers. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2008) argue that phenomenology is an alternative to the subjectivity and objectivity categorization, and instead, offers a new viewpoint that is referred to as 'the experienced'. In order to get access to how the respondents felt and thought while experiencing the pop-up stores, we chose to interview them during their visit. Critics directed towards the phenomenological research approach mainly concern its subjective nature that prevents this study from drawing broad conclusions (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

2.4 Empirical Collection

The empirical data collection, defined as the primary data, relates to the main sources that have been used to answer the purpose and research questions of our study (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This consists of material from observations, as well as conducted interviews with experts on the field and pop-up stores visitors.

2.4.1 Interviews

Qualitative interviews have its focus on subjective perceptions and viewpoints of the respondents, with the aim to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs and attitudes (Aspers, 2011; Malhotra, 2010). Interviews are the main data source of the study, which were made with experts in the field and consumers who was visiting pop-up stores. The latter took on a phenomenological perspective, and is the basis of our empirical material. Phenomenological interviews are appropriate for an exploratory research (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). These phenomenological interviews were conducted with a single respondent that described a lived experience of pop-up stores. This enabled us to gather valuable information when asking the respondents to give a full description of their experiences, including thoughts, emotions, images and sensations.

A *semi-structured* interview format based on an interview guide was chosen that gives the interviewer an opportunity to adapt questions throughout the interview process (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This way, the questions can be developed individually during the interviews, which creates a flexibility for the researcher to ask relevant follow-up questions and to re-formulate questions with regard to different responses (Bryman, 2006). The interview guides (Appendix 1 & 2) were developed to cover relevant topics of discussion and based on the purpose of the study, research questions and the theoretical framework. The semi-structured method was appropriate because we had questions around a clear theme, but wanted to avoid a fixed structure so that the respondent could freely express their experiences in detail. At the interview, we initially asked the same question and then gave the respondents the freedom to direct the interview and bring forth what they believed was central. This way we could obtain a more personal description of pop-up stores. This is aligned with the discussions made by Thompson, Locander & Pollio (1989), stating that the phenomenological interview structure is more likely to generate a richer empirical material.

A disadvantage of gathering data from interviews is that the result could be dependent on a conversation at a particular time and in a specific situation (Ahrne & Svensson, 2011). The issue with a semi-structured design might be that the interviewer unconsciously drives the interview in a certain direction through the use of words or tone of voice, and thus, influences the answers of the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Therefore, it is important to be aware of the risk that the information from the interviews can be somewhat biased. Other issues include how consumers may be restrictive to talk about personal feelings or that the experts on pop-up stores might want to avoid the risk of giving an inaccurate picture of their businesses.

2.4.2 Observations

Participant observation is a qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research and often used as a complement with other methods, in particular interviews (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). The benefits of participant observation are primarily to produce interesting insights and a deeper contextual understanding (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The main advantage of combining observations with interviews was that we had a better understanding of the situation and experiences that the respondent was telling us about. In line with the ethnographic method approach, we wrote field notes both during and after our observations of pop-up stores. Elliott & Jankel-Elliott (2003) recommend this method in studies where the aim is to fully contextualize what had been experienced and seen during the event (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Here, the nine dimensions by Spradley (1980 p.78) were useful to make sure all key aspects were covered while doing the observations, which is illustrated in figure 1.

SPRADLEY'S 9 DIMENSIONS	
SPACE	Layout of the physical place (rooms, outdoor spaces etc.)
ACTORS	Relevant details of the people involved
ACTIVITIES	The various activities of the actors
OBJECTS	The physical things that are present (furniture, products etc.)
ACTS	Single actions that people do
EVENTS	A set of related activities that people carry out
TIME	The sequencing that takes place over time
GOALS	The things people are trying to accomplish
FEELINGS	The emotions felt and expressed

Figure 1: Spradley's 9 dimensions (Spradley, 1980)

When conducting participant observation, the degree of involvement is relevant to decide, both with people and in the activities that are being observed (Spradley, 1980). Spradley (1980, p.58) points out five types of participation that represents a different range of involvement, as seen below (figure 2). In this study we chose to be *moderate participators* with some influences of *active participation* as seen in the figure. Spradley (1980) explains that the importance with this is to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider of the studied phenomenon. This meant that we took on the role as researchers, but still kept an ambition to experience the same pop-up store and to take part in the same activities as the consumers we interviewed. Furthermore, we presented us as researchers to some of the participants that we choose to interview during the event and asked permission to interview them about their experiences. This way, we were a bit more active in the role as participant observers compared to the typical moderate participator.

DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT	TYPE OF PARTICIPATION
High	Complete
	Active
	Moderate
Low	Passive
(No involvement)	Nonparticipation

Figure 2: Type of participant involvement (Spradley, 1980)

According to Elliott & Jankel-Elliott (2003), this strategy makes it possible for researchers to be directly involved in the interpretations and experiences of the consumers. We found this approach valuable for the study, even though, issues with this could be that we were part of the experience and might be co-creators of the participants' interpretations (Aspers, 2011). Hence, conducting semi-structured interviews in the actual setting provides relevant data to the research objectives, but decreases some aspects of the natural context (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). This situation creates a paradox, where the ambition to maximize the depth of information obtained, might compromise the aim to minimize the effect of the role as researchers (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Furthermore, it is obvious that the interpretations made by us will be conditioned by own visual impressions and knowledge in the field

(Aspers, 2011). Each situation at the different pop-up stores was unique and could have been affected by uncontrollable variables such as timing and luck. Hence, good planning and well-prepared questions does not guarantee sufficient outcome (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, our ambition was to keep an open mind during the observations, and only use the theoretical framework as guideline and direction. This is aligned with Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2008) argument that the collected empirical data is the essential part of the result that is being analyzed, and that theories and interpretations are secondary in relation to the data.. Another disadvantage with participant observations, as well as phenomenological interviews, is that the main level of analysis it provides is a micro perspective because of the face-to-face interaction (Burawoy et al., 1991). Thus, it was also necessary to choose theories and analytical tools that could bring in the macro perspective as well.

In addition to the interviews and observations, we took photos during the observations, which was used as visual material in our qualitative research. This can provide useful information when interpreting the setting and consumer behavior, and that might not have emerged during the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). The strategy has also been helpful in our ambition to capture the whole retail experience in a pop-up store as well as to enhance the understanding of the empirical material presented in the study.

2.4.3 Course of Action

In the initial phase of the study, research was made within the field of pop-up stores to gain a wider and deeper understanding of what had been written in the academic literature. We borrowed relevant literature from libraries and searched through databases such as ‘LUBsearch’ and ‘Google Scholar’ for academic articles about pop-up stores and temporary retail formats. We used keywords such as “pop-up stores”, “temporary stores” and “retail experience”. The objective was to extend our knowledge on the topic to identify limitations and lack of perspective with previous research. This eventually determined our focus to look at the consumer experiences of pop-up stores, since there was quite limited research on this. We also searched for links between pop-up stores and the ephemeral culture of today, and our understanding was that this combination had not yet been explored. From this, we could formulate the purpose and research questions of the study. Subsequently, we searched for relevant theories that could be used to support the analysis and help answer the purpose and research question.

At the same time, we had a personal interview in Malmö with the company Pop-up Force, which is an agency working with pop-up stores in Sweden. We also conducted a personal interview with the Global Retail Director at Chloé, who has been a part of opening pop-up stores for the company on a global level. The purpose with doing interviews with experts in the field was to get valuable input and a pre-understanding about pop-up stores from primary sources that were being used in the background discussion of this thesis.

Due to the absence of knowledge from previous studies regarding the actual consumer experiences in pop-up stores, the next step was to do fieldwork by conducting interviews and observations. Investigations regarding the supply of pop-up stores on the Swedish market showed that the pop-up retail format is currently growing and becoming increasingly popular. However, since the more experiential pop-up store concept is still a quite new and underdeveloped phenomenon in Sweden, we decided to travel to NYC, which is known to have a wide variety of pop-up stores. This gave us much better opportunities to collect a rich empirical data, and to conduct both observations and interviews with consumers visiting pop-up stores events.

Observations and interviews took place in six different pop-up stores in NYC, and lasted for around two to three hours at each place. 22 interviews (table 1) were conducted inside the pop-up stores and took around 10 to 20 minutes depending on how much the respondents were open to share and talk about their experiences, and whether they were familiar with pop-up stores. First, we had planned to sit down and interview consumers after their pop-up visit, but since we wanted to avoid reconstruction of the experiences after the event we found it more valuable to interview people during the actual experience. Also, it would have been difficult to find enough respondents that could meet up after the events. This might be a factor why the interviews were a bit shorter than what was first anticipated, however, we compensated this by interviewing more people than we had planned. Another change of plans was the number of pop-up stores, from three to six sites of observations. The reasons for this was that NYC had such a great variety of pop-up stores with many events, which gave us a richer empirical material and a more true and fair view of pop-up stores and how they can differ. By doing this, we also had a wider selection of respondents telling us about their feelings and experiences in pop-up stores.

DRESSBAR	AGE	BECKLEY'S	AGE	LUXURY GARAGE	AGE	LILLY PULITZER	AGE	ODE À LA ROSE	AGE	H&M CONSCIOUS	AGE
Respondent 1	28	Respondent 1	32	Respondent 1	25	Respondent 1	40	Respondent 1	26	Respondent 1	25
Respondent 2	25	Respondent 2	34	Respondent 2	28	Respondent 2	27	Respondent 2	35	Respondent 2	29
Respondent 3	38	Respondent 3	20	Respondent 3	24	Respondent 3	22				
Respondent 4	40	Respondent 4	30	Respondent 4	28	Respondent 4	32				
Respondent 5	24	Respondent 5	27								

Table 1: Respondents

All interviews were recorded with a dictaphone, with the purpose to transcribe the data and make the result as accurately written as possible. Based on this, the interview transcriptions was processed and coded (total of 38 transcription pages), and then summarized with the aim to identify themes and relevant quotes that could be used in the research findings. This gave us the opportunity to analyze the material based on our theories, where further analysis of the empirical data could lead to comparisons and where various different patterns could be distinguished, which is in line with the recommendations by Aspers (2001).

2.4.4 Sampling Size & Methods

This study has taken on the recommendations by Bryman & Bell (2013) that the sample size in qualitative studies can be determined when the data is sufficient and no longer generate new and useful knowledge. The aim has been to get theoretical saturation in the answers provided by the respondents, which means that the empirical material has been gathered until there was no variation in the answers (Bryman & Bell, 2013). After 22 interviews we had a rich empirical data and could no longer identify any new information that added value to the study. This suggested that no additional data seemed relevant, and that we had enough empirical material for this particular area of research and had covered the most important parts of what a consumer experience could be in a pop-up store.

To find pop-up stores that lived up to the requirements of our study, we started by doing research online to identify what pop-up stores that was currently opened in NYC. The retail and shopping website 'NY Racked' (NY Racked, 2015) provided lots of useful information about future events that was happening with pop-up retail formats in NYC. While visiting

pop-up stores, we talked to the brand representatives and the visitors, which forwarded and guided us further to find other relevant pop-up shops. Thus, several subjects of the study recommended us our future sites of the study that they had knowledge about. This sampling method could be described as *snowballing sampling*, which is a type of *convenience sampling* (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This is a common *non-probability sampling* method that aims to collect a sample of convenient elements and primarily relies on the personal judgment of the researcher, instead of chance, when selecting places to do observations (Malhotra, 2010). When using snowballing sampling as method, the sample subjects are not selected from a sampling frame, which could lead to issues that the result is biased (Bryman & Bell, 2013). For example, it might have resulted in that pop-up stores with well-known brands were recommended more frequently, thus were more likely to be chosen into the sample, than brands that were more unknown.

The respondents participating in the study were also selected based on a convenience sample. This way, the researcher can decide whom to interview. Since the convenience sample is a non-probability method, it could lead to that some people in the population have a higher probability of being selected than others (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, this sample technique often provides good estimations of the population characteristics (Malhotra, 2010). For example, the pop-up stores mainly had female visitors because the products in-store usually targeted women, which is the reason why all interviewees happened to be female. Thus, the respondents were selected randomly inside the store because they were in the right place at the right time. This selection method was less time-consuming to use since the respondents were both accessible and often willing to participate. Also, by striving to represent the population, we sought to resemble the reality as good as possible, even though the samples can never be said to be representative of any definable population. Another main limitation with this self-selection method is the risk that the chosen sample is seriously biased (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Malhotra, 2010). Therefore, such a method cannot be statistically proven to represent the population correctly, and thus, do not allow for objective evaluation (Malhotra, 2010). However, since the objectives of an exploratory study is to understand a phenomenon through the eyes of the consumers, and to provide insight on an unexplored area of research, it is not relevant to conduct a study that is generalizable to a population (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Instead, the ambition with this study is to generate new knowledge and form an initial understanding of various contexts with regard to consumer experiences of pop-up stores.

2.5 Empirical Analysis

The analysis of the empirical material aims to understand the descriptions of experiences by the respondents. As mentioned, we initially tried to identify themes of the most crucial aspects of the experiences in pop-up stores in order to find shared themes and similarities between the respondents. These could include aspects regarding the attributes of pop-up stores such as the physical surroundings and the other descriptive elements. This gave us a better understanding of what themes that were essential to these experiences.

2.5.1 Hermeneutic Analysis Method

The *Hermeneutic* analysis method can be used to interpret and explain written texts, spoken languages and human actions and behavior in social contexts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). This method, together with the phenomenology perspective, was appropriate since the data we collected on the experience of consumers in pop-up stores required a lot of interpretation. The hermeneutic method brings the analysis of experience and meaning together in situations where the meaning is flexible and exposed to new interpretations and comprehensions (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). Also, a hermeneutic orientation in combination with an ethnographic design helped us to analyze the social aspects of pop-up stores and understand the subjective thoughts and meaning expressed by individuals.

The hermeneutic method suggests that it is important to avoid being pre-shaped in the empirical gathering (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). During the study we tried to keep an open mind in relation to the materials and be aware that previous interactions and experiences constantly shape individual interpretations. This also relates to *the hermeneutic circle* (figure 3), which describes the interpretation process between pre-understanding and new experiences, and thus, leads to new understandings that can create the base for future interpretation (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). One of the main themes is that parts only can be understood if it is set in context with the whole, and that the whole only can be understood through parts (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Burawoy et al., 1991). Overall, we found the hermeneutic perspective a valuable helpful tool to control our own subjectivity and prior knowledge about pop-up stores while doing observations and interview, which is otherwise likely to bias the interpretation.

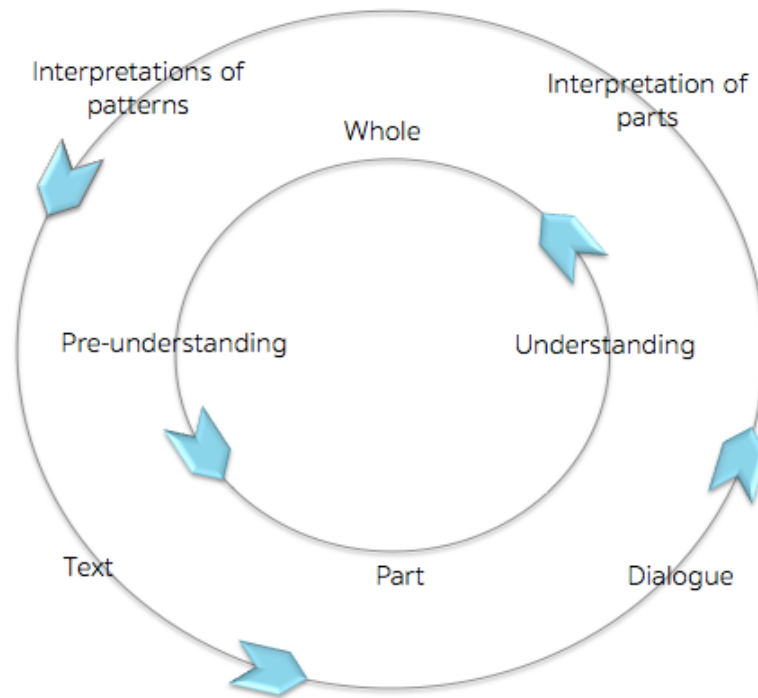


Figure 3: The hermeneutic circle (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008)

2.5.2 Interpretive Case Method

Beyond the hermeneutic analysis method, we also found the *interpretative case method* useful. Burawoy et al. (1991) describes this method as an analytical tool that clarifies the link between micro and macro perspectives, and examines how macro is present in the micro context. The interpretive case method aims to uncover the macro foundations of a microsociology when collecting ethnographic data during participant observation and interviews (Burawoy et al., 1991). Burawoy et al. (1991) argues that the method can be used to reconstruct theory out of the empirical data gathered through our observations. Hence, the interviews gave us a micro perspective that was then being linked to the overall macro discourses of consumer culture in our analysis. This perspective was especially relevant for our study since it regards the social situation of pop-up stores as an expression of the wider society, and how this phenomenon is shaped by macro level trends and cultural norms.

2.6 Trustworthiness & Authenticity

The information gathered through interviews represents data that has been processed and analyzed, and which results form the basis of the analysis and conclusion. There are certain requirements for an academic paper that must be satisfied when collecting the empirical data,

often referred to as *reliability* and *validity* of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2013). These measurements of quality are often used in quantitative studies. However, its relevance in qualitative studies has been questioned since the purpose is not to measure data, nor to only reach one absolute picture of the social reality (Bryman & Bell, 2013). According to Bryman & Bell (2013), a qualitative method design suggests that there is more than one possible description of a social reality and should instead strive for *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. The requirement of trustworthiness relates to that the collected material must generate a result that is as credible as possible, and the requirement of authenticity means that the collected material must seek to ensure a fair reflection of the opinions and perceptions of the studied individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Overall, we strived for the results to provide a comprehensive picture and reflect a trustworthy description of how the respondents perceived the pop-up store retail format. However, it is important to acknowledge and critically evaluate the impact that the methodological choices might have.

A main disadvantage of conducting a qualitative method, which has been discussed throughout the chapter, is the risk that the result is too subjective, and will not render a completely accurate picture (Bryman & Bell, 2013). For instance, this can involve our choice of theories, design of the paper and that we made our own judgments from the respondents' reflections and opinions around pop-up stores. Since our study has been conducted within a well-defined area of pop-up stores, the sample of respondents can also be questioned. The risk is still that we do not provide a full picture of how consumers experience pop-up stores and what effects this might have on the overall consumer culture. However, the primary aim was to get as many interviews as possible in an ambition to further strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility through a varied use of empirical data.

Another concern may also relate to the criticism of qualitative methods with unstructured interviews and observations, which lead to the issue of significance (Burawoy et al., 1991). Even though exploratory studies can provide interesting results, it is also lacking a measure of generalizability since its result has not been tested on a sample that is randomized selected from a population. Instead, it is based on the observer's judgments, subjective experience and possible distraction during the event (Aspers, 2011; Burawoy et al., 1991). Thus, it is important to be critical towards our interpretations of the result, especially because the analysis can be built on subjective knowledge and experiences of the studied phenomenon. Another potential issue that could affect the credibility and trustworthiness is that the paper is

not written in our native language, which could result in linguistic misinterpretations while conducting the study and gathering the empirical data. This might also relate to cultural differences when interviewing people from another culture in an unfamiliar context.

According to Malhotra (2010) and Thompson, Locander & Pollio (1989) it is important to inform all participants of the purpose of the study and ask for permission to interview them and to record the interview, in order to avoid any ethical concerns. Thus, all respondents were assured anonymity, and with their approval, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to meet the desired analytical needs. The main reason for this was to protect the confidentiality of respondents and aim for a high level of credibility, for example, to avoid quoting the respondents incorrectly. Also, in order to provide as high credibility and trustworthy content as possible, the majority of the additional resources are peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals.

Another issue with adopting a qualitative research method could be the lack of *transferability*. Qualitative results tend to have focus on the unique context and social reality that has been examined (Bryman & Bell, 2013). It can then be discussed whether the information gathered about consumers experience in pop-up stores can be transferred into other contexts or industries than what has been studied here. However, as Bryman (2006) puts it, the qualitative research method tends to be exemplifying rather than generalizing, thereby, making the trustworthiness and authenticity of our study mainly limited to this particular area of research.

3. THEORIES

This chapter introduces the theories of the study that have been used to interpret the result of the empirical data, which together form the basis for the analysis. The first part takes on a macro perspective when discussing postmodernism and the ephemeral culture of today, and the development of various consumer tribes and new consumption activities. After that, romanticism and pseudo-events are presented. Next, theories of experiences are presented; consumers' consumption experiences, experiential marketing and experience of environment and interaction. Finally, a summary is made of all theories, together with a self-constructed theoretical model.

3.1 Introduction to Theories

The overall objective with the chosen theories has been to find useful theories that can help identifying themes and elements of a vague and intangible nature of the empirical data. With an ambition to enhance the interpretation of the consumer experiences in pop-up stores, theories have been used to support the analysis of the empirical material. A wider macro perspective on the consumer culture was chosen that looks at the postmodernism of today, and discusses how this has led to a fragmented ephemeral society. These theories have contributed to a better understanding of the development of contemporary consumer culture and the engagement in various and temporary collective groups, or tribes. This mainly refers to the relationship and shared emotions between individuals within these temporary communities or tribes, which is useful to gain a better and holistic understanding of the current consumption activities. A theory about romanticism has been chosen that also takes on a macro perspective and look deeper into the hedonistic aspects of consumption activities. Pseudo-events are also chosen as a suitable theory about how the result of what happens when the expectations of people are increasing might escalate and create a hype around something that do not even exist. The next section includes the definition of experiences including several relevant theories to use when analyzing the micro tendencies with regard to the empirical data. The theories found here involve a discussion of consumer experiences today, a definition of experiential marketing, and the importance with the experience of environment and interaction. This chapter concludes with a model constructed to combine all theories and provide a clear overview of how they relate to the studied phenomenon.

3.2 Postmodernism & the Ephemeral Culture

Postmodernism directs the focus to the transformation of the contemporary culture (Featherstone, 2007). Many factors have affected this contemporary consumer culture, for instance, the global growth and changes in consumption, developments in intellectual and academic fields, and the emergence of new communication channels under conditions of increased competition. This has then impacted the changes in day-to-day experiences and cultural practices of groups in society. The concept of postmodernism is trying to make sense of and clarify how these factors have contributed to the globalization and developments of new structures, which points to the complex changes within the broader cultural sphere (Featherstone, 2007). The new interest to investigate this with regard to the relationship between culture, economy and society have been derived from the current situation with over-supply of goods in contemporary western societies and the movements towards cultural fragmentation and disorder. According to Featherstone (2007) this “*had led to an increasing interest in conceptualizing questions of desire and pleasure, the emotional aesthetic satisfactions derived from consumer experiences*”(p.13), and that there is a need to further investigate how consumer experiences may be related to the postmodern society.

The postmodern era of today can be characterized by an extreme individualism with a desire for something new, which is seen as a consequence of a fragmented society. This has changed radically from the traditional society, in which people were born into a social status and structure that they identified themselves with their whole lives and that were difficult to have an impact on (Canniford, 2011). The cultural fragmentation of the postmodern society has resulted in an complex and vast context where it gets more difficult for individuals to find like-minded others with shared passion, values and beliefs. At the same time, people are increasingly liberating themselves from social constraints by reaching out to alternative social gatherings and new communities in the search for social belongings (Goulding, Shankar & Elliott, 2002). This has also led to a situation where individuals are joining together in various temporary, or *ephemeral*, groups (Cova & Cova, 2002). Temporary engagement with different groups and settings becomes even more essential in order to seek out those individuals and collective events that are appealing and creates feelings of belonging (Robards and Bennett, 2011).

The French sociologist Maffesoli discusses the emergence of *tribalism* and the search for maintaining or creating social links in which the social dynamics are stated to be constructed by a variety of shared experiences and emotions (Maffesoli, 1996). The postmodern tribes can be understood as a community of shared emotions and passions that are not fixed by the principles of modern society (Cova & Cova, 2002; Maffesoli, 1996). Here, the temporary features are said to give rise to a power of attraction towards these tribal communities and lead to strong social ties with shared experiences, beliefs and lifestyles (Cova, 1997). These collective expressions of the contemporary cultures seem to be associated with what Maffesoli calls *neo-tribes* (Robards & Bennett, 2011). Maffesoli argues that neo-tribes are built on the idea of ephemerality; thus, do not have the fixity and longevity of tribes (Maffesoli, 1996). This new type of consumer tribes is primarily expressed through lifestyles and can be characterized by fluidity and occasional gatherings (O'Reilly, 2012; Robards & Bennett, 2011).

Similar to the idea of neo-tribes and consumption communities, Arvidsson (2013) discusses the emergence of *consumer publics*. The concept refers to an association of people who has something in common, for instance, a brand, a news story or a famous person. Consumer publics are based on short-term relations with other strangers who have a common interest and devotion towards the same thing. What distinguishes consumer publics from consumption communities is its momentarily nature and transitory 'membership', which results in a weaker form of association than communities. This consumer behavior has specifically emerged with the digital rise, and where an interaction can occur by clicking on the same 'like button' on a company's Facebook page. Hence, the participation does not have to result in sustained relations. The author also puts forward that instead of creating traditional values that communities does, publics create values in terms of 'buzz', brand reputation and opinions (Arvidsson, 2013).

Considering that many consumer gatherings today are unpredictable and ephemeral, the tribal network is constantly changing (Canniford, 2011). The existence of a setting that is "*fluid rather than fixed*", might be derived from social situations in which different people, objects and places have divergent goals that constantly affects the dynamics of the groups (Bennett, 1999). There are several current examples of consumers' desires for change. For instance, popular online platforms such as Facebook, ebay and news blogs offers a constant stream of new information and impressions that consumers want and can be a part of. As a result,

consumer tribes demand new and engaging methods to the building of consumption communities that include emotional appeals and new innovative opportunities for how to launch products and services (Canniford, 2011). Previous studies suggest that consumption communities do not only show engagement to individual brands. Instead, it is common to have weaker relationships with several brands, products, activities and services (Canniford, 2011). The consumption of today could further be described as an exploration for social connections with individuals, which is formed around a passion for certain cult-objects, physical surrounding or activities that links individuals to each other (Cova, 1997). This would suggest that in order to be part of communities, consumers primarily seek products and services for their social linking value of being part of a group of enthusiasts or devotees, and less for the actual use. Thus, various marketing methods can be seen as an approach to facilitate social interaction and communal gatherings (Cova, 1997).

3.3 Romanticism

Consumer behavior in a modern consumption context is claimed to stem from a commitment to *romanticism* (Boden & Williams, 2002). Campbell, in his *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit Modern Consumerism* (1987), discusses how the modern society is characterized by a romanticized consumption ethic in which there is a hedonistic conception of pleasure. According to Campbell, romanticism has a preference for the dynamic and disorder and typically values feeling over cognition or imagination over intellect (Campbell, 1983). Inspired by the ethic, values and beliefs of the Romantic era, Campbell (1987) developed a consumerist ideology in which romanticism is said to be a facilitator of modern hedonism consumption (Boden & Williams, 2002).

At first, Campbell (1987) argues that there are two differentiated types of hedonism; *traditional* and *modern*. Traditional hedonism refers to how need and satisfaction is achieved through direct and physical experiences in social and cultural interactions such as eating, drinking and dancing. Campbell (1987) then discusses how this traditional type of hedonism has been somewhat replaced by a parallel modern hedonistic appreciation of anticipated emotions. This is a complex process, where pleasure is sought through a process of mental images that provide an intrinsic pleasure in itself. Hence, modern consumption is described as a creative, hedonistic activity with a focus on imagination and emotions. According to Campbell (1987), experiences in modern commercial society occur in expectations of and as

self-illusory alternative for a fulfillment (Chase, 1993). Citing Boden & Williams (2002) that refer to the work by Campbell (1987), *“paradoxically, the more proficient one becomes at creatively imagining emotions and sensations, the more likely it is that ‘real’ consumption fails to deliver a comparable intensity of pleasure”* (p. 496). This issue oftentimes creates consumer frustration because the actual consumption does not live up to the imagination, thus being a disappointing and dissatisfying experience. This has created a cyclical pattern of desire and disappointment in the consumption culture, with an endless quest and demand for awesome experiences and to live the day to its fullest (Boden & Williams, 2002; Campbell, 1987).

Critique towards Campbell’s work concerns the issue of studying emotions that are complex and display a hidden role and function in social life. Other concerns Campbell’s own partial and subjective interpretations of romanticism and his connections to the western consumption culture of today (Boden & Williams, 2002).

3.4 Pseudo-events

Daniel J Boorstin’s (1962) study about pseudo-events refers to happenings that are primarily created with the purpose of being reported in media. The author explains *“the power to make a reportable event is thus the power to make experience”* (p.10). Here, the true and real aspects of an event are less important than its newsworthiness, *“the news behind the news”*, are rather considered to be the most interesting news of today (Boorstin, 1962, p.5). Pseudo-events implies that people gradually are having higher expectations of what the world can offer; people expects anything and everything. Individuals have illusions that they want to make real, and every effort to satisfy these makes them more attractive. A pseudo-event is referred to a self-fulfilling prophecy; if an event is prepared in a certain manner, it will be perceived that way too. A larger part of people's experiences and consciousness, of what we see, hear and read, consists of these events. Boorstin (1962) suggests that possible reasons to this are the increased consumption, personal relations, education and public affairs.

The limitations with Boorstin’s study concerns that the attempt to discover the reality behind what is being portrayed in medias is sometimes weak; often, it has neither been hidden by ‘illusions’, nor ‘unreality’ (Merrin, 2011). Also, important to keep in mind is that Boorstin

wrote this in 1962, and that the cultural values and beliefs at that time probably looked quite different from the situation in the society today.

3.5 Experiences

Experiences can be defined as ongoing perceptions, feelings and direct observations (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013 p. 28; Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). The term refers to the participation in events that people undergo and encounter in life. It is also related to experimentation, which is defined as being based on objective facts, whereas experiences are associated with subjectivity (Schmitt & Zarantonello). Schmitt & Zarantonello (2013) argue that there has been a rise in experiential value lately, where the phenomenon has gained more attention. Today, several researchers mean that the global developments have created an *experience economy*, where the most valuable offerings are related to experiences and actions (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

3.5.1 Consumers' Consumption Experiences

One of the main tasks in marketing is to understand consumers' consumption experiences with brands, services and products (Schmitt & Zarantonello 2013). Research on consumer experiences has its focus on the categorization and the process of experiences, rather than emphasizing marketing elements and marketing activities. According to Holbrook & Hirschman (1982), consumption is increasingly associated with "*a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun encompassed by what we call the experiential view*" (p.132). This also means that less focus is put on the information process that is linked to shopping behavior.

The way consumers shop has changed during the later years by the technological development and traditional brick and mortar retailers are starting to complement their operations with alternative solutions such as e-commerce and other online presences (Hathaway, 2014; Mathwicka, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). These multi-channel systems provide a variety of shopping experiences and deliver different kind of values. So far, e-commerce is among the new channels that have had the most penetration-power and changed consumer patterns drastically (Musso, 2010). Today, consumers constantly move between different channels, both on- and offline, and do not longer understand or want only traditional retail formats (Mathwicka, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). It can be said that modern consumers are almost equally comfortable with buying products online as in in-store environment. This

is important reasons for traditional retailers to provide customers with unique and new-thinking concepts and to persuade consumers that the physical store still can be relevant and engaging for them (Hathaway, 2014). However, issues have emerged as a result of the increase of the number of channels carrying a brand and its products, which can lead to consumers being overwhelmed by choices (Spenner & Freeman, 2012; Musso, 2010). Hence, the rising number of marketing efforts aiming at increase engagement may instead push consumers away (Spenner & Freeman).

As stated above, consumer experiences can be divided into online and offline channels, where offline retailing refers to brick and mortar stores and online retailing is associated with e-commerce (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Typically research on offline channel consumer experiences examines environmental elements that affect the in-store atmosphere such as scents, lightning and music. These elements tend to have impact on consumer attitudes and behavior inside the store, thus, influences the shopping experience. The increase in digital shopping has emerged into new, different consumer experiences, which is called online experiences. Research has shown that the online retail experience is highly comprised by a digital interaction in which the consumer has control over the online shopping process. However, it is also associated as being challenging for many consumers who are not yet comfortable with navigating online. Positive online experiences are correlated to consumer's perceived control over the online shopping process, and how easily they can deal with the encountered challenges online (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

3.5.2 Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing refers to a type of marketing that aims at providing consumers with memorable experiences in order to affect emotions and cognitive feelings (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Schmitt, 2000). Compared to traditional marketing, which focuses on communicating a product or brand verbally or visually, experiential marketing strives to stimulate consumers' senses in an extended way (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). Instead of finding value in a product's or service functional and utilitarian benefit, experiential marketing often focuses on the shopping experiences and the hedonic aspects (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

According to Dolbec & Chebat (2013) the combined effects of in-store environment such as merchandize assortment, salespeople and retail atmosphere impacts the in-store brand and

retail experience. According to Kotler (1973), the place and atmosphere where a product is bought or consumed is among the most meaningful aspects of the whole experience and might have greater impact than the product itself. The author claims that “*in some cases, the primarily product is the atmosphere*” (Kotler, 1973. p. 48). It is also critical to understand the value of customer retail experiences and which sources that engages consumers (Russo Spena et al., 2012). In the case of experiential marketing, the emotional role of the point of sale is highly important since it is considered to be the place where relationship building occurs, and therefore, environmental efforts are directed towards design attributes and customer sensory involvement (Russo Spena et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2010). The experiential shopping environments facilitate consumers to interact with the brand and products directly, which gives the opportunity for greater evaluation and hands-on exploration (Kim et al., 2010). The marketing form also allows customers and representatives to get in one-on-one contact with a specific brand in order to create memories of the retail experience (Gordon, 2004).

Flagships stores are an example of an experiential marketing format with the purpose to provide a total brand experience to consumers (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Manlow & Nobbs, 2013). An increasing number of brands are focusing on delivering experiential retail spaces in order to offer extraordinary brand experiences (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Manlow & Nobbs, 2013). In a comparison study between flagship stores and ordinary stores by Dolbec & Chebat (2013), findings were that flagships have a stronger influence on brand attitude and brand equity than ordinary stores. Due to its more ‘fun’ and ‘playful’ characteristics, consumers tend to remember these stores differently from original stores, thus, put them in separate physiological categories. Results also showed that flagships offers a greater variety of ‘anchoring points’ than normal stores, which refers to well-designed shopping experience, opportunities for co-creation and well-educated sales personnel, which leads to higher stimulation of consumers emotionally, intellectually and physically. Overall, flagships are used as a strategy to distinguish retailers from others, since it offers different brand-stimuli elements related to design, communications, environment and atmosphere (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). Flagship stores share many similarities with pop-up retailing, for example, none of them have sales as the main purpose (Surchi, 2011; Ryu, 2011). Instead, both are considered experience stores, and are rather defined as marketing communication devices that aims at building the image of a brand (Manlow & Nobbs, 2013; Moore, Doherty & Doyle, 2010).

3.5.3 Experience of Environment & Interaction

Servicescapes is a concept that refers to the impact that the physical surrounding has on consumers during a service process (Bitner, 1992). The theory discusses the effect of atmospherics such as the physical design and decoration elements in consumption situations. Since the service provided is normally consumed and produced at the same time the consumer is in the 'factory' and taking part in the experience while being in the physical environment. The surrounding in these 'factories' often influence the consumers' opinions of the whole experience because they tend to seek out elements in the surrounding that can be connected to the quality and capabilities of a product or a brand. Thus, a physical surrounding can have large impact when communicating the image of a brand to consumers, and may also play an important role in the creation of the ultimate service satisfaction (Bitner, 1992).

Bennett & Bennett (1970) cited in Bitner (1992) stated that "*all social interaction is affected by the physical container in which it occurs*", (p. 61) and proposed that the environment can influence the interaction in terms of duration. The physical environment can also symbolize certain social rules, conventions and expectations, which can be determined by how a brand builds up the environmental design (Bitner, 1992). When studying environmental psychology, it is found that individuals normally react on the surrounding in two different forms of behavior, either with *approach* or *avoidance* (Bitner, 1992). The first form refers to positive behavior that can be linked to factors such as desire to explore and stay longer in an environment. The latter form describes the opposite, thus, the desire *not* to explore and *not* to stay longer in an environment. In the context of retail environment it is found that the approach behavior towards shopping enjoyment, friendliness towards others, time spent browsing and exploration of the store, were highly dependent on the consumer's opinion of the environment. Furthermore, the environment where the service takes place can influence the degree of satisfaction a consumer experience in terms of fulfilling the purpose and goal with the visit. Thus, companies' goals are to increase the consumer's feeling of executing their intended plans, as well as encouraging approach behavior and prevent avoidance behavior, through environments that build the brands image (Bitner, 1992).

3.6 Summary of Theories

A conceptual framework has been constructed in an attempt to summarize all theories into a model. The model (Figure 4) provides a theoretical background that supports this study and

offer the reader a better understanding of the relevant components and perspectives used in the analysis. This self-constructed formation also aims at explaining how the macro perspective influences the micro level, demonstrated by the thick blue arrows, which has been helpful when analyzing the empirical material in a broader meaning.

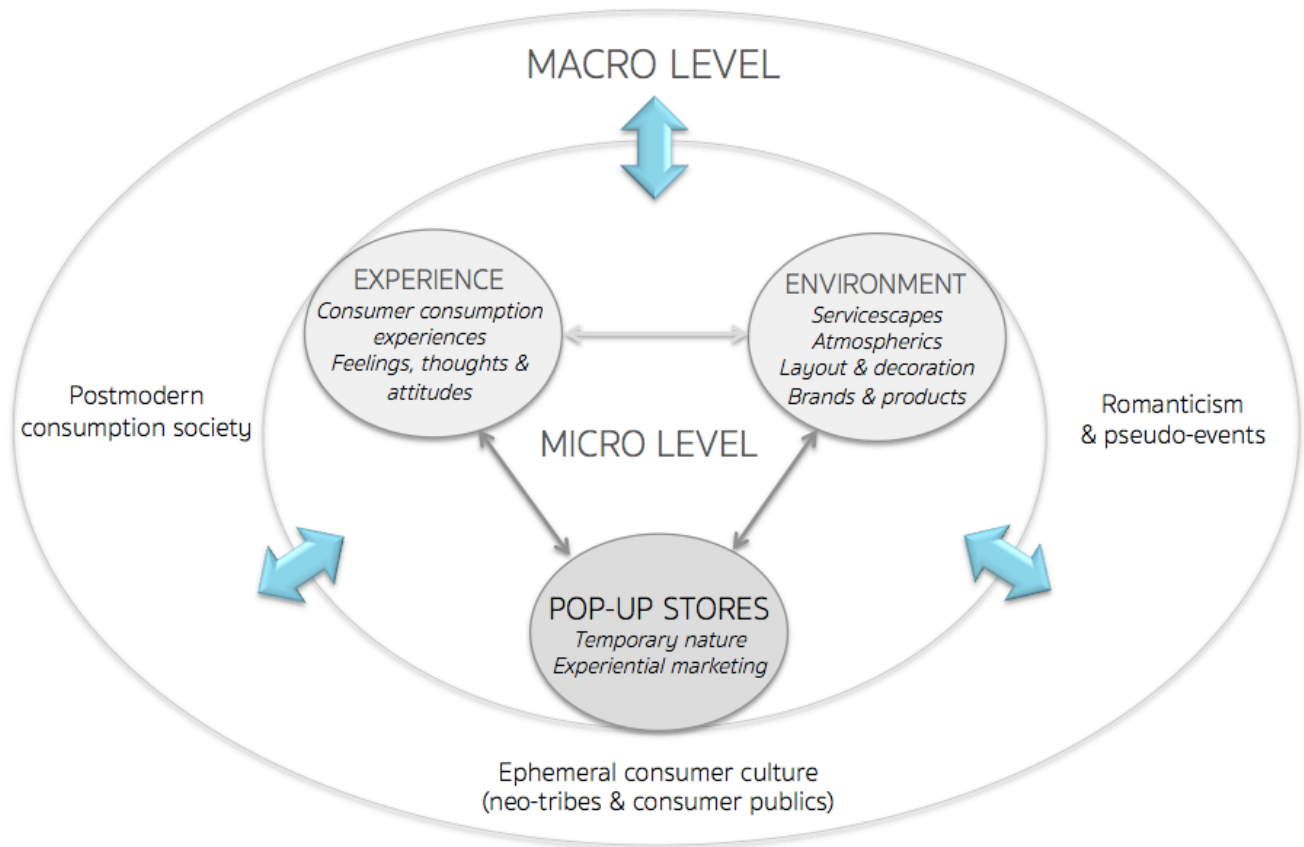


Figure 4: Conceptual framework of theories (Holmgren & Olofsson, 2015)

As seen in the figure, the outer circle represents the *macro level perspective* of how the current consumption society is influenced by *postmodernism* and the *consumer culture of the ephemeral*. Postmodernism refers to how various factors have affected the changes of the modern consumption society, for instance, resulted in a fragmented individualistic consumer culture. This perspective is relevant since these changes have led to a new and increased interest for investigating contemporary consumer experiences. The ephemeral culture relates to how individuals are increasingly engaging in various temporary groups and activities as a way to seek out like-minded others and find a social belonging. This goes in line with the theories about *neo-tribes* and *consumer publics* that describe how consumers take part in various group formations that are rapidly changing in the way that they emerge, transform and disappear. These temporary groups experience passion and generate social linking value by

sharing experiences, beliefs and lifestyles. The model also clarifies that the theories of *romanticism* and *pseudo-events* should also be analyzed on a macro level. Romanticism symbolizes the desire for something new and unique and the constant search for awesome experiences. In addition, pseudo-events add the theory about the need to look for new happenings and events to report about in order to create a buzz.

The inner circle is described as the *micro level perspective* and emphasizes that the study aims to make closer observations on the chosen pop-up stores and respondents participating in the research. The gray circle represents the focus of the study, *pop-up stores*, and its key attributes; the temporary and experiential nature. The two white circles, *experiences* and *environment*, are the main aspects examined in the study used to understand the pop-up phenomenon. The experiences refers to what the study aims to investigate; to understand pop-up stores by conducting phenomenological interviews with consumers about their subjective experiences with regard to feelings, thoughts and attitudes. These theories include experiential marketing and consumers' consumption experiences, relevant in the interpretation of how consumers describe and understand their experiences of pop-up stores as a new and experiential retail format. The third circle, described as environment, concerns the physical surrounding of pop-up stores, such as the atmospheric elements and in-store layout. Here, the theory about servicescapes can be used to form an understanding of how the physical surrounding impacts the experience and social interactions in-store.

4. SITES OF OBSERVATIONS

Chapter four intends to present the pop-up stores, all located in NYC, which has been the main subjects of this multi-site study. This is also where all empirical data has been collected.

4.1 Pop-up Stores Retail Settings

4.1.1 Luxury Garage Sale

Luxury Garage Sale is a premier upscale consignment service and boutique, selling a selection of vintage designer merchandises through several retail channels. These include an e-commerce, a high-end boutique in Chicago, and recently, a three-day pop-up store in NYC. The pop-up store was made in collaboration with the hairdresser brand DreamDry, and was located at their saloon in Chelsea. During these days, different events were being held. The observations and interviews took place at the opening event. Visitors were offered free hairstyling, drinks and champagne and exclusive luxury vintage shopping. We observed the pop-up store to be glamorously decorated with a bar at the entrance in which bartenders were shaking drinks to all visitors and expensive handbags were placed throughout the place. The surrounding was white and bright and the environment felt luxurious. People that came were well dressed and ‘fashionable’, and were mingling with each other.

The respondents appreciated the atmosphere and described it as “*intimate*”. One respondent said, “*the atmosphere is just wow, it’s nice! Drinks, hair – what more can a girl ask for? And clothes and great handbags*”. Another respondent said, “*It looks really exclusive with jewelry and bags placed on tables everywhere and I love how they have turned a hairdresser saloon into a store and a bar, so you feel like this is some exclusive party that you are attending*”.



4.1.2 Ode á la Rose

Ode á la Rose is an online flower delivery service that is bringing their e-commerce experience offline with a three-month pop-up shop at the Roger Smith Hotel in Midtown Manhattan. The company was founded by a French rose specialist and has gained popularity through its website that offers high quality and exclusive flower gifting and deliveries. In the pop-up, guests have the opportunity to learn about the roses with florists offering a flower education. This pop-up shop also introduced the newly launched Ode á la Rose app, which is unique for the industry and allows customers to send a video, photo or audio recording, together with the delivery of a bouquet. During these three months they planned to have several in-store events such as a Mother's Day gifting event. The observations took place during the opening event and featured a rose champagne bar, finger food and goodie bags. The boutique was observed as small but cozy and decorated with carefully chosen details. The table in the center was filled with a massive amount of colorful roses. Visitors were invited to smell the roses and mingle in an intimate and friendly environment. The crowd was quite mixed with various age groups and nationalities, but mainly middle-aged women.

All respondents pointed out the layout and design of the pop-up store as *“beautiful”* and something that they particularly liked. They also reacted on the efforts that had been made into styling the store and making it aesthetically pleasing. For example, *“I just love the whole set up; the balloons and I personally like the rosé champagne. And all the roses, I mean everything feels really intentional, so it is nice”*, and, *“For me the centerpiece is really lovely and the flower decorations that they have set up, which make this pop-up store unique”*. The location was described as very good and centrally located close to Times Square.



4.1.3 Beckley

Beckley is a contemporary Los Angeles based fashion and lifestyle brand directed towards women. The brand collaborates with other brands, which they also featured in their New York pop-up store. Currently, Beckley is only found online, since they recently closed their LA store to focus on utilizing pop-up retail formats instead. The pop-up store was open during twelve days in mid April and had different events every other day. The store was located in the heart of the fashionable area SoHo. It was decorated in a minimalistic way and there was an open space in the middle with a couch where people could hang out, which created a very social atmosphere. The observations took place during two of these events, the opening event and the Sunday brunch. The opening event had bartenders mixing freshly made mojitos, chefs upstairs continually serving finger-food at a buffet and a DJ playing music in a corner. During the Sunday brunch, a generous bagel buffet was served in the middle of the store and mixed drinks and freshly squeezed juices were provided. It was possible for the guests to get their hair styled for free by professional stylists.

The atmosphere at the opening event was described as *“a pre-party feeling”* where people were mingling and socializing. The respondents described the decoration as *“simplistic”* and one said, *“it is like aligned with the brands aesthetics. It is clean but chic and cool”*. A common reply was that the pop-up store was fitting the brands origin very well, *“it’s like California vibe meets New York”*. All of the respondents pointed out how *“friendly”* everyone were and that it was easy to talk to people. The respondent described the guests as *“cool”*, *“fashionable”* and *“hipsters”*. Regarding the location, the respondents thought that SoHo was the perfect fit for the brand since it is a *“super diverse and artsy area”* and *“a lot of edgy downtown hipster shoppers”*.



4.1.4 Dressbar

Dressbarn is a women's clothing company that produces wear-to-work dresses for women. The company has opened a three-month pop-up store in New York midtown called the Dressbar by Dressbarn. The pop-up store houses various brand collaborations with designers. The purpose with the pop-up store is to offer a more exclusive experience than its original brick-and-mortar stores, for instance, by throwing free evening events every week. This specific event, in which the observations took place, was the launch party of Lovely by Adrianna Papell's dress collection. All visitors were welcomed to put things in the cloakroom and then served drinks, champagne, and finger food by dressed up male waiters. There was also a healthy juice-stand and candy bags being offered. Extra activities included free hair styling, iPad-screens, a video booth area and a TV-show celebrity attendance from the 'bachelorette' Andi Dorfman. The pop-up store was decorated in white and provided a great variety of extra services, in a bright and upbeat environment with a DJ playing on the second floor creating a festive atmosphere.

The respondents described the surrounding as *"beautiful"*, *"airy"*, *"relaxed"* and *"bright"*. One respondent commented on the atmosphere; *"It feels like a lounge with New York vibes, high ceilings, white and fancy"*. Many respondents reacted on the DJ and the bar that was in the middle of the room and thought that it added a *"party feeling"*. When asking about the crowd, a majority described that the guests were *"well dressed"*, *"chic"* or *"fashionable"*. The food and drinks served at the store were also highly appreciated by the respondents. Regarding the location, common answers were that the store was *"great located"*, *"in the middle of everything"* and *"easy to get here"*.



4.1.5 H&M Conscious Collection

The H&M Conscious collection pop-up shop was located in their flagship store at Times Square and opened for a week. The pop up shop celebrated the launch of H&M's latest Conscious Exclusive collection, which is a collaboration with many different designers working with responsible commerce to offer various sustainable and ethical fashion brands. The main brand is Conscious Commerce, founded by Olivia Wilde and Barbara Burchfield with the purpose to offer shopping with a conscience. Observations and interviews were conducted on the opening day of the pop-up shop where the designers had been invited to show their products. We observed that the pop-up shop had been built using wooden materials that were stretching over the ceiling down to the ground, which created an organic atmosphere. In the middle area there was a table with small samples of products from different designers. In one corner they had iPad's that visitors could find more information about the collection and the designers, as well as to sign up, get discounts and become a member of H&M.

The respondents reacted on the tree bar that made up the store and thought that the set-up was in line with the conscious collection. A common reply was also that the pop-up store design was very different from H&M's original stores. One said, *"I love this structure, I am very visual, so I think that is kind of organic as opposed to everything else that you see in the typical H&M retail space that is really modern and white and black and really chic, clean lines"*. Commented were also that there was a DJ playing and one respondent thought that it *"adds extra too the whole thing"*.



4.1.6 Lilly Pulitzer for Target

Lilly Pulitzer is a brand started by the American socialite and fashion designer Lilly Pulitzer, also called “the Queen of Prep”. The brand produces high-end colorful resort wear and chic beach clothing with her famous floral prints. The exclusive brand have made a design collaboration with the discount retailer Target, which allowed for lower prices that attracted a wider public to buy the collection and visit the one-day pop-up. The pop-up was located in midtown in the beautiful Bryant’s Park close, and held four days in advance to the actual release of the collection in store and online. According to our observations, the pop-up shop attracted loyal Lilly Pulitzer fans that wanted to shop the collection earlier to ensure that the merchandise was available. The pop-up had two areas, one outside in the park, and another inside where customers had to queue to get in and buy items from the collection. During the day, free manicures and freshly squeezed juices were provided to all shoppers and you could see painters making Lilly Pulitzer prints live.

Regarding the surrounding and decoration, everyone was positive and one respondent said, *“it is incredible! More than I expected. So yeah awesome!”* Further, one respondent was also impressed by the store, *“they got the fountain and they have dyed the water all pink”*, and a third said *“it’s really fab with the trees, with the plants; it’s kind of a beach resort feeling”*. One respondent shared that she felt that *“the atmosphere is super girly like super shopping, fun, manicures, juice bar, pink, I mean, they even dyed the fountain, what can you expect?”* All respondents described the location in Bryant Park as really good and centrally located, *“Bryant Park is awesome; I mean it’s a perfect location, so much space”*.



5. ANALYSIS

The Ephemeral Experiences of Pop-up Stores

This chapter presents the analysis of the empirical material, and discusses the findings of the conducted research together with theories. Two major themes are identified; the first with regard to the temporary and exclusive aspects of pop-up stores and the next describes the importance of a retail context for developing trust and loyalty towards a brand.

Several aspects have been put forward in this study regarding what function pop-up stores have in the society today. A similar understanding on how to explain and define pop-up stores has been seen in the literature review and collected from interviews with experts on the field and consumers. Previous literature states that the pop-up retail format is an innovative marketing tool used to try new products and concepts, as well as new markets and different locations without the high costs of a brick and mortar store (Gonzales, 2014; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Ryi, 2011; Surchi, 2011). The expert interviews with Nilsson (2015) and Tabbah (2015), also discusses how pop-up stores is a good entry strategy for online-based companies to test a physical store and find new target groups, avoid the risks with long-term contracts and work as a tool to deliver a marketing message about a new concept. What has also been identified is that pop-up stores can be a solution to the economic recession, in which many retail spaces are left empty (Nilsson, 2015; Pollock, 2015; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Surchi, 2011). The previous findings and the interview with experts could be summarized as being quite concrete and tangible when discussing the benefits and opportunities with pop-up stores. The interviews conducted with consumers also generated many similar insights and descriptive examples of the pop-up retail format. One respondent stated this clearly:

“Pop-ups are normally utilized as temporary retail space for e-commerce brands so that they can have proof of concept in the market place in a retail setting. And pop-ups are also a way to sort of balance out the rent costs to do your own store. So a lot of times it is about to take e-commerce brand offline, and that they want to be able to showcase it without having crazy overhead”. (Respondent, H&M Conscious Collection)

Hence, one could argue that the most obvious answers provided from various sources concerns a concrete ‘benefit and risk’ reasoning associated with the pop-up retail format.

However, another perspective of a more abstract nature was also found in the empirical material concerning the same phenomenon, which could indicate to be equally significant to put forward. This refer to how it might exist a need to move focus away from the already acknowledge tangible factors of the pop-up retail format and look at what overarching functions pop-up stores have in a wider consumer culture of today.

5.1 Exclusive Experiences

5.1.1 The Quest for New & Unique Experiences

A notable feature of pop-up stores is, of course, that its spirit is short-lived, but pop-up stores also seems to generate one intense experience, as well as representing a new collection or a certain trend that will soon be outdated and replaced. Even though pop-up stores may incorporate the ephemeral in many ways, the attraction behind the temporary concept may be quite difficult to disentangle. The interview with the pop-up store expert Mikaela Nilsson (2015) shows an example of this:

“I think the temporary aspect, in particular, makes the experience more fun and exciting for consumers and works as an attracting force in itself. If consumers are aware that the shop and store concept only exist for a limited time, I believe they are eager to visit more often”. (Nilsson, interview, 2015)

Somehow, the temporary nature of pop-up stores is attracting consumers today. This attraction for the ephemeral in the contemporary consumer culture could also be interpreted as being illustrated on a micro level from the comments made by the respondents. One respondent pointed out that since pop-up stores are temporary, *“it is much more exclusive, and then you get more attracted by the whole idea”*. Discussions often involved how the temporary nature of pop-up stores have created feelings of urgency and a need and curiosity to go and *“check it out”* and take the opportunity to experience it before it disappears. There were also many respondents who gave examples of how the temporary aspect of pop-up stores enhanced the attraction and generated excitements because it made it more unique and exclusive to go there. Examples of how the temporary feature adds an exciting touch involved comments like, *“it brings some kind of excitement and that is the fun part of it”* and *“the good thing about a pop-up store is that it’s not here forever. If it was, it wouldn’t be unique and*

people wouldn't be as motivated to come because it is here all the time". And as one respondent put it:

"I like the idea of a pop-up because it means that you have to get it instantly before it disappears. So it is something with the limited engagement, and that you have to act quickly since it is not always going to be there. And I think that is why a lot of companies still continue to do pop-ups because people like the idea of exclusive, limited, and it's exciting to people". (Respondent, Beckley)

Thus, several respondents experienced that the limited engagement with pop-up stores gave rise to feelings of exclusivity and excitement, and a need to act quickly and prioritize a visit there. However, all these descriptive words are somewhat abstract and refer to subjective understandings of what 'unique' and 'exclusive' means to a specific person. What this actually indicates in a wider context may only leave room for certain reflections. However, what can be found is that most respondents chose to use these types of words when describing their experiences in a temporary experiential retail setting. The findings could indicate that these aspects seem to be fundamental for consumers today.

It has been widely acknowledged that consumers want to be amazed by new experiences and are demanding more overwhelming brand- and shopping involvements (Hathaway, 2014; Kim et al., 2010). In this context, pop-up stores are considered to be an important new retail format that allows firms to demonstrate unique brand values and design an exclusive atmosphere that engage customers and creates feelings of relevance and interactivity (Picot-Coupey, 2014; Musso, 2010; Niehm et al., 2007). The previous discussion indicates that the exclusiveness of pop-up stores might be instigated by its ephemeral nature, especially since it generates new and unique experiences. Comments from the respondents often gave vague explanations of what experiences pop-up stores could produce, such as, "*I go to pop-ups to try something new, experience something new and see new things*". A respondent explained why she visits pop-up stores:

"It is like a fun thing! If it is something exclusive, you want to check it out. And you feel that it is more exclusive because it is only there temporarily, rather than if it was there for a longer time. So because of that you want to go there, it makes it more interesting". (Respondent, H&M Conscious Collection)

In order to form a wider understanding in what ways pop-up stores are attracting consumers with regard to the temporality and exclusivity it brings, a new perspective need to be identified. The romanticized consumption ethic of today indicates a search for new experiences that may satisfy an illusion of living life to its fullest (Campbell 1987). Postmodern consumers are said to strive to be amazed and to maximize their experiences so that they can feel more unique as an individual. Pop-up stores might create an exclusive setting in which people can experience something extraordinary, thus, making them feel important. Most respondents expressed that they felt special and taken care of in a setting described as “*exclusive*” and “*unique*”. The respondents often showed an appreciation for the specific products or context they were in, and specifically valued the extra services and activities offered in the pop-up shops that were out of the ordinary. One respondent from the luxury garage sale stated, “*It is nice to go and get my hair done and at the same time get a drink and to watch vintage pieces. It is a exclusive feeling in the store, which I really like*”. Another example was described from a respondent at the Dressbar; “*I feel very glamorous because everyone is drinking champagne while trying on dresses, and it’s a more comfortable and relaxed way to buy things since it feels almost like a party*”. A pop-up store could then be analyzed as providing a temporary reality, which could be said to temporarily satisfy the ambition to be part of and experiencing something that no one else does in a special and cool setting.

5.1.2 Capture Moments to Spread & Gain Recognition

Moreover, all respondents showed a need to spread the word and tell others about their visit. For instance, one respondent said “*I do not do this very often so for me it is a unique experience and I would definitely tell people about this event*”. This could indicate that these experiences are reaching a higher level of satisfaction when being recognized to others. The majority of the respondents specifically expressed that they had taken pictures of the pop-up stores and were either going to, or had already, put them up on social media. A comment was, “*I will absolutely tell others about this, and I have already told a bunch of people! The set up is so cool and great so I want to share it on Facebook to friends who do not live here*”. One respondent described, “*I feel excited because it is temporary and it is not going to be here forever so you feel like you need to experience it while it is here and create like a buzz around it a little bit*”. Another respondent clearly demonstrated a need to ‘show off’ to people in her

network that she had participated in an exclusive pop-up event that was only taking place temporarily in NYC:

“Spontaneously, I felt like this is a good Instagram picture. I’m going to be like “Oh, they had this in New York and not anywhere else”. This is like a fun thing that might not happen elsewhere, so I am definitely going to tell other people about this”. (Respondent, H&M, Conscious Collection)

Hence, one could argue that a symptom of unique and ephemeral experiences, that will not happen again, is a need to capture the moment immediately and spread the word about what has been experienced. This can be analyzed in the context of pseudo-events developed by Boorstin (1962). Pseudo-events are happenings that are created with the purpose of being further reported and reproduced in other channels (Boorstin, 1962). Important to note is that many respondents were also eager to share and recommend cool and existing pop-ups they had experiences earlier or knew was going to happen. One respondent believed that *“generating buzz is what it is all about”*. Telling the world about a certain happening might lead to a feeling that the temporary illusion is more real and, thus, might last longer in the minds of the consumers. One can argue that the reason why pseudo-events exist and are created is that people tend to have unreasonably high expectations of life and the experiences it can offer. This mentality has led to a constant strive for exceptional experiences that are impossible to achieve, but that we keep craving more of. Settings like pop-up stores may be a way to offer this to consumers. An aspect worth reflecting around is whether this could indicate that some pop-up store visitors partly go to these sorts of events with the purpose to share their experiences in communication channels such as social medias. As Boorstin (1962), suggests, the true and actual events that are taking place are not always as important as its newsworthiness. Instead, the messages that will be spread afterwards are often considered more vital, referring to *“the news behind the news”*. It is difficult to evaluate whether the respondents were more eager to share the experiences with others than actually participating in and experiencing the pop-up event. However, it could give an indication that pop-up stores meet the requirements of being defined as something out of the ordinary that is worth telling others about.

A consequence of the identified romanticized spirit of the consumer culture to constantly look for amazing experiences involve the issue that people are getting higher expectations that is

harder to please in the retail context. The creation of pseudo-events might be a result of this, which extends the need to not only find unique and awesome experiences, but also to capture, share and spread these experiences and moments to others. An assumption could be made that together with an ambition to spread the word about the amazing experience, also goes together with making it appear in a better light than what the actual reality has created. In this world, it seems as if a new trend has emerged that stresses the importance to constantly look for unique moments to capture and put on social media. These trends somehow represents a fear of missing out, especially since these moments never comes back. From this, an analysis can be drawn that in a postmodern society with a craving for new things it gets more difficult to live and enjoy the present. New experiences are constantly sought, and as one respondent expressed:

“It is nice to walk in, I feel like this is a cool experience, “what is this? I want to see more!”. I walk around to see what it all is. There are so many different touch points. So I try some things but after a while it is not much more to see. I wouldn’t say that I could stay here for too long. They give you one cool experience, you experience it and then you are done”. (Respondent, Dressbar)

The comment above could then indicate that pop-up stores generate one cool and exciting experience. Once that experience is consumed, a new experience is sought. The current consumption culture has created an endless search and demand for awesome experiences (Boden & Williams, 2002.). This could lead to a cynical argument suggesting that the ephemeral culture might give rise to a difficulty to find long-term ways of enjoying life in an everlasting pursuit of happiness.

Aligned with this reasoning, the modern type of hedonism by Campbell (1987) can be used to explain the issue of enjoying the present here and now. All respondents at the Lilly Pulitzer for Target particularly described how they had been excited to attend the event. Many of these had already checked out the new collection online and other information about the pop-up event. For instance one said, *“This is incredible! More than I expected for sure because I had seen some of the pictures last night from when they had the premiere of the pop-up. So yeah, awesome!”*. At the Dressbar pop-up, one respondent had been excited to come so that she could meet the celebrity attending the event. At the H&M conscious collection, a respondent was enthusiastic to see the new collection that was being launched in the pop-up store. From

this, it seems as if these consumers had a tendency to build up their expectations before, and gained some sort of pleasure from imagining how the experiences was going to be. Campbell (1987) points out that the modern hedonism might come between the ‘in-the-moment’ experience due to the expectations and self-illusory excitement that have already processed the emotions before the actual event. An interesting question is whether experienced pleasure with traditional hedonism of experiencing something direct and concrete, might be somewhat replaced by the modern hedonism today. If that is the case, the respondents who felt excited before, might have already generated an even stronger hedonistic appreciation of anticipated emotions and image of what the pop-up store would be like. Overall, this relates to a modern consumer culture in which satisfaction could be achieved through the imagination and excitement before an experience, rather when the actual happening is taking place. However, the issues of analyzing this theory further and to study emotions and mental processes of how people are experiencing things are extremely difficult to understand and analyze since they are representing a hidden role of individuals.

Another issue aligned with the feelings of pre-excitement before going to events, in combination with the increased consumer expectations that becomes harder to satisfy can be identified as well. An example of this was a respondent who was a big Lilly Pulitzer fan explained how she came to the event filled with excitement. However, the respondent was not overly convinced about the pop-up and explained her feelings of disappointment and frustrations:

“I am undecided. It is a little disappointing. I’ve waited in line for an hour and a half and then I have been in here and the stuff is not utterly available so now I am waiting for them to see what they have. So it is not very efficient, and the clothes looked better online”.

(Respondent, Lilly Pulitzer for Target)

This experience made her a bit confused about how she actually felt about the event she had looked forward to. Another respondent at the same event was also disappointed by the long queues, crowdedness and limited stock availability. Romanticizing the events could then also easily lead to feelings of disappointment and create consumer frustration. This is also aligned with the reasoning by Boden & Williams (2002) concerning how the actual consumption activity might not live up to the expectations of the consumers and, thus, result in a cynical pattern of desire and dissatisfying experiences. Here, one could reflect further if this issue

creates some type of paradox. The high expectations from modern consumers have put increased pressure on retailers to provide something extraordinary. However, creating too much buzz around something might result in an inability to live up to several anticipated expectations. At the same time, without an effective promotion, no consumers are likely to show up.

5.2 Making the Artificial Real

5.2.1 Need of a Retail Context

The pop-up store retail format can be utilized by any retailer in various industries and designed by own choice, resulting in a setting without any boundaries and limited creativity. Thus, making the pop-up stores look quite different from brand to brand. At the same time this also creates a concept that is slightly diffuse and difficult to define and completely understand. When respondents was asked to compare pop-up stores to regular stores, a main theme was to described pop-up stores as “*more unique*”, “*offer something extra*”, “*more fun*”, and “*have cool events and activities*” compared to regular stores that are “*more generic*” and “*mass-produced*”. This would suggest that the main difference regarding these experiences is that regular stores usually offer the same type of experience over a long period of time, which is not true for pop-up stores. Instead, the typical definition of pop-up stores is that it is a significant and innovative retail format today that can be used for experiential marketing purposes to create something that makes consumers feel unique to be a part of (Picot-Coupey, 2014; Musso, 2010; Niehm et al., 2007). Well-established brands use pop-up stores, and as Tabbah (2015), puts it, it is often to focus attention to a specific product or new concept. However, it gets increasingly common for online retailers to use pop-ups as a way to exist in a real retail setting, which calls for a further exploration on what triggers this situation.

As already established, consumers are currently moving between online and offline channels, and are not longer satisfied with traditional retail formats (Mathwicka, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). This is aligned with the discussions of how consumers are constantly looking for and demand new things and experiences. The development of e-commerce retailing has changed the consumer behavior considerably (Musso, 2010). The online experience involves a digital interaction in which consumers have control over the online shopping process (Schmitt &

Zarantonello 2013). Even though, the online presence grows stronger with benefits such as lower prices, wider selection and delivering services, many limitations with e-commerce are also identified (Musso, 2010). First, a high number of consumers are still not used to navigate themselves online and find it difficult to understand the digital interaction (Schmitt & Zarantonello 2013). The other issue relate to the lack of delivering a ‘touch and feel’ opportunity, with the inability to inspect and test products before making a purchase decision (Gonzales, 2014). This insecurity might result in avoidance to shop online, especially due to an inherent fear of experiencing problems and extra costs with a potential returning process (Musso, 2010).

The expert interview with Nilsson (2015) brought up the issue with shopping online for those consumers who prefer to touch, feel and try the clothes. And according to her, pop-up stores *“is a good entry strategy for online-based companies to test a physical store and find new target groups of customers”*. A common theme from the interviews was to emphasize that pop-up stores offer a unique opportunity to touch and feel the products, which was appreciated by the respondents. For instance, *“they are often for online brands, so I guess it is a way to actually see it as a whole in a physical store”* and *“it’s easier to shop when you get to actually try the items on and see them in person”*. One respondent developed her insights concerning taking an e-commerce brand offline and create a proof of concept in a temporary retail setting in which *“consumers come in and are able to touch and feel everything that they might have seen online”*. Another person also expressed the benefits of what a pop-up store can offer:

“It’s better than to just see how it works on a model and on a website. Like how you are going to wear it, and with what you are going to wear it. I can try everything on, it makes it a lot easier to see how it works on me, instead of just buy anything on the Internet”.

(Respondent, Dressbar)

The empirical evidence clearly demonstrates the value of offering a physical retail setting. Pop-up stores give consumer access to brands that they could normally only find online. Thus, the obvious advantages with providing a physical retail context would be the chance to interact with the products and people that were previously only found online. Looking deeper into the importance of offering such a context, other underlying factors may also be identified.

5.2.2 Materializing Trust & Relationship

As previously discussed, the building of trust is a central barrier for online brands to overcome when looking to extend their customer base. Pop-up stores could then be a way for online brands to offer a retail context since there seems to exist a need to experience something that is real and authentic. An online website only represent an artificial perception of the brand in the minds of the consumers. Such a diffuse concept seems to be hard for consumers to fully understand and create a deeper connection with. One comment from a respondent, discussed the importance of getting a real and tactile experience with the online brand before fully trusting it:

“Since pop-ups typically are related to brands within e-commerce you can always find it. So I think it is about being able to build a relationship with the brand in a retail setting. For me it is an experience, so I kind of prefer just seeing it and then if it goes back online then it is okay because now I trust them”. (Respondent, H&M Conscious Collection)

It was clearly demonstrated by many respondents that consumers need something more concrete to form a relationship with a brand. One explained, *“The reason why I visit pop-up stores is to get something more than just the brand, like the experience from this event, and where I can really get to know the brand”*. Another comment suggested a central aspect of experiencing the in-store environment of a brand, *“you can get a feeling of how the brand is and the interior design and everything makes it a lot more easier to get to know it”*. A respondent particularly captured the key of this discussion:

“Pop-ups are an interesting idea just to get knowledge about the brand that I haven’t before. By just reading it in the paper or online you get kind of curious, and you want to know what’s out there. And when you actually come and you’re like “okay I totally get it”. And what I feel, I do not know and I am happy that I came and I learned more about the brand than I did before”. (Respondent, Beckley)

The comments above all give a further indication to the importance of materiality, and that it has to do with trust and brand relationship. It seems as if people are not satisfied with only having experiences online, but also demands a material interaction, in which the retail context might add something vital and authentic. In this sense, pop-up stores can be a tool to help online retailers make consumers loyal customers that are emotionally attached to their brand

or products. This goes in line with the importance of relationship building as a part of the pop-up store experience (Kim et al., 2010). The findings made by Kim et al. (2010), showed a positive correlation between emotionally engaging consumers in pop-up stores and their attitude towards a brand. Once pop-up stores find methods to make consumers emotionally attached to a brand or a product, a long-term relationship is more likely to develop (Kim et al., 2010). Once again, this indicates that a context would be needed to stimulate a positive brand experiences for consumers. However, several respondent also expressed that the limited time of a pop-up was not a big issue because once they had been to the store and experienced the brand, they could always find the brand online. Comments involved, *“this generation use internet so we can always shop online”*, *“it is not gone forever”* and *“I will probably continue to visit their website”*.

A central aspect aligned with this previous reasoning of providing a context concern the significance to offer an atmosphere that represents the brand image in a correct and welcoming way. Several respondents expressed a willingness to stay longer because of the positive experiences with an interactive and exclusive environment that provided extra-added services. A comment was, *“the store really embraces you and people welcomed us the first minute, and they were so kind”*. As both Bitner (1992) and Bennett & Bennett (1970) argue, the surroundings in retail settings can influence consumers' duration and social interaction in the environment and desire to explore the store. The 'servicescape' concept by Bitner (1992), also indicates that the whole surrounding can affect the consumer's opinions of the brand. Thus, a pleasant and social atmosphere in a pop-up store retail format could be an important platform used to satisfy the consumers and set the ground for a positive attitude that enhances the possibility of engaging with the brand for a longer time. Altogether, these discussions suggest that pop-up stores can provide a setting in which the artificial is materialized into something that consumers can relate to and create a relationship with.

5.2.3 Experience of Temporal Social Belonging

The relationships that consumers can form with an online brand in a pop-up context may also indicate a potential to find other social links and opportunities in that temporary environment. One could argue that pop-up stores might function as a good meeting place that provide a social setting for consumers with a mutual interest for certain brands. Today, many marketing methods can be seen as an approach to enable social interaction and communal gatherings in

which people show passion for certain cult-objects or activities that links individuals (Cova, 1997). The consumers being observed in this study seemed to be engaging in group activities and shared emotions and experiences within the pop-up store. Many examples showed that people came together in a passion for certain brands, which was especially seen at the Lilly Pulitzer for Target, Beckley and H&M conscious collection since the respondents often expressed their devotion to the brand. Interestingly enough, this did not necessarily indicate that the purpose of the visit was to purchase products, but instead it seems as if there also involved a social aspect that might be worth looking into.

Several respondents stated that they visited the pop-up as a social activity with friends, and that they had either heard it from friends or knew people that worked with the pop-up store. A few respondents expressed that they enjoyed staying there longer to socialize because they were having fun with their friends. Other examples of respondents that enjoyed the social environment of pop-up stores because it was easy to start conversations with new people were, *“it creates a nice spot for you to meet people”* and *“I feel relaxed and cool. It is easy to meet new people”*. One citation clearly sums up the discussions of how pop-up stores facilitates a social atmosphere that might be of great importance to people; *“They invite you here and are welcoming and make you become a part of the community or this group of people, but I am not sure anyone is buying anything though”*. Comment like this indicates that the social and welcoming context pop-up events make consumers be a part of, might be more important than the actual products. This would suggest that the purpose of visiting pop-up stores not only has to do with creating a setting in which consumers can interact with brand representatives, but also a place to mingle with each other. Such a trend was identified by Cova (1997), who argued that consumers seek brands less for its actual use, and more for the social linking value of being part of a group.

The empirical results shows that pop-up stores seem to bring like-minded people to a social environment that offers extra added services and makes people want to stay longer than in normal retail settings. Considering that five of the six pop-up stores operated within fashion, many respondents had positive comments on the crowd of people. They often used descriptive words such as *“fashionable”, “chic”, “hip”, “preppy”, “well-dressed”* and *“cool”*. Many respondents indicated that they had a feeling that it was a careful selection of people there, as well as *“I feel like it is people who are fans of the brand”*. At the Beckley’s one respondent commented on the crowd by saying *“they all look like downtown hipsters, which fit the*

dynamic or the demographic of what the clothing line is supposed to cater to". It also seemed, as it was common that the people at the pop-up events had a great interest for fashion and oftentimes worked in the fashion industry, or with PR. Many of these people were also linked to each other in different ways, and several respondents specifically commented on the sociable environment and lifestyle-vibe with the brand that they experienced in the pop-up stores. A respondent at Beckley said, *"I like how they have other brands, not just their brands, that are kind of aligned with their aesthetic so like adds something new and creates kind of like a lifestyle atmosphere"*. A similar comment about that pop-up stores can create a lifestyle-feeling that goes beyond the products was made from another respondent at the same event:

"I like the idea that it incorporates with a lot of others brands and making it a lifestyle instead of just the apparel. It goes with the vibe, like you understand this girl by looking at all of the other elements instead of just the apparel and the products". (Respondent, Beckley)

Analyzing these micro tendencies of what pop-up stores can offer in a wider macro perspective may give a further indication on how an experiential retail format adds something new, exciting and social, that fit into the ephemeral consumption culture of today. As noted, the fragmented and fluctuating postmodern society of today have resulted in an increased individualism (Picot-Coupey, 2014; Cova & Cova, 2002). This has changed how consumers think and behave, and new consumer lifestyles, beliefs and attitudes are constantly emerging (Picot-Coupey, 2014). These cultural shifts have also resulted in a multi-layered environment where it gets increasingly difficult for individuals to find like-minded others that share the same passion, values and beliefs (Goulding, Shankar & Elliott, 2002). Pop-up stores seem to fill an important social function with regard to this. Furthermore, Robards & Bennett (2011), identify how this situation has given rise to temporary engagement with groups and establishments, as a way for individuals to seek out the most interesting and appealing collective events. The interviews with consumers showed clear indications that a pop-up retail setting makes it easier for people to meet and seek out others that share the same interests and devotion to the same things. This is also aligned with the current definition of how contemporary consumer tribes are often being expressed through lifestyles in occasional gatherings that lead to strong social ties with shared experiences and beliefs (O'Reilly, 2012; Robards & Bennett, 2011). Here, one could argue that pop-up stores could generate social

linking value and bring a group of enthusiasts together as a type of consumer tribe. However, it would be more appropriate to indicate that pop-up stores create temporary collective groups, which Maffesoli (1996) referred to as neo-tribes. These new relationships could either be short-lived and exist only in that context or develop further and become long-term.

As one of the respondents pointed out, pop-up stores may create a feeling of being part of a community. Here, the term ‘consumer publics’ by Arvidsson (2013) can be used to explain how pop-up stores create a momentarily brand ‘membership’ in which people may feel like they belong and have something in common even if they have never met before. Even if consumer publics are a weaker form of association than a typical consumption community, these creations might be a better fit in the contemporary culture of the ephemeral in which pop-up stores exist. This adds a further perspective to the discussions around what makes consumers attracted to an opportunity of being part of an experience when online brands temporary appear in an offline setting. However, there are no clear indications that these consumers demand that pop-up stores should be constant. Instead, and as shown before, the attraction in itself is that the experience is unique for that specific moment, which also make it exclusive and special.

5.3 Summary of Analysis

Two main themes of the study have been identified in the analysis of the ephemeral experiences of pop-up stores. The first theme analyzes the exclusive and temporary features of pop up stores and discusses the attraction of the ephemeral on a micro and macro level. It was suggested that the temporary aspect of pop-up stores generates excitement and exclusiveness. The empirical findings showed that this lead to a need and urgency to go and ‘check it out’. An analysis was made with regard to romanticism of how consumers are looking to be amazed and where pop-up stores might create an exclusive setting in which people can experience something extraordinary, thus, making them feel important. Furthermore, taking part in exclusive and ephemeral pop-up store experiences seem to result in a need to let other people know by creating a ‘buzz’ around visiting the event, which was discussed in the context of pseudo-events. The other theme discusses how trust and relationships can be built through a retail context and via social linking in pop-up stores. The empirical evidence clearly suggests the need for a brand to provide a retail context so that

consumers can trust and ‘get to know the brand’. This analysis discusses whether pop-up stores could be an alternative for online brands to materialize the artificial online to something tangible offline, in which consumers can personally interact with the brand and ‘touch and feel’ the products. Moreover, the experiences of pop-up stores are analyzed in a social context of how the retail format has created a social setting for consumers to temporarily engage with like-minded others by bringing in theories of ‘consumer publics’ and neo-tribes’. This search for social belonging is also discussed on a macro level with regard to the ephemeral and fragmented consumption culture of today.

6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The final chapter highlights the most important aspects of the study and what conclusions that can be drawn. This section also acknowledges the theoretical contributions of the study and the managerial implications of how the results can be used by marketers and retailers. Finally, a critical evaluation is made about the limitations of the study that follows by suggestions for future research.

The purpose of our study has been to examine the consumer experiences in pop-up stores and look at what connection this might have to the overall macro-level trends of the contemporary consumer culture. Here, we intend to present and discuss various aspects and conclusions of the result that we have identified as most significant and interesting.

A main aspect that has been put forward is that previous research in particular focuses on the concrete managerial incentives for utilizing the pop-up retail format. For example, pop-up stores creates an opportunity to test a new market, promote a brand in an experiential and interactive environment, and avoid the high costs and risks of opening a regular store. These more obvious ‘benefit and risk’ reasoning do not necessarily explain why pop-up stores have become such a popular trend among consumers today. Instead, we argue that more abstract means and a macro-level analysis are needed to form such an understanding, which have not yet been emphasized in this context.

6.1 The Attraction of the Ephemeral Phenomenon

A finding of the study showed that the exclusiveness of pop-up stores could be instigated by its ephemeral nature. The majority of the respondents pointed out that the ephemeral and exclusive aspects of pop-up stores had the most appealing and valuable influence on their experiences. When combining these two components something happened in the minds of the consumers, some sort of desire and a ‘check it out’ syndrome. The concept of pop-up stores attract and fascinate consumers due to its temporary nature that creates a feeling of experiencing another reality built by exclusivity. The desire for this ‘temporary reality’ seems to come from a need to seize a limited opportunity of being part of something unique and exciting that will not happen again. Thus, we identified a wish to live a ‘parallel life’ in a cool atmosphere. However, consumers only requested a short-term experience and did not

necessarily wish to experience it longer than for a moment. This would give certain indications that it fits the postmodern consumer culture characterized by a constant search for something new in order to live the day to its fullest. The ephemeral culture could then be said to be a product of postmodernism. The temporary feature and flexibility of a pop-up store might be derived from a shifting society with increased demands of consumer needs. Hence, pop-up stores generate new and unique consumer experiences that seem to fit into the increasingly ephemeral and fragmented consumption context of today. We could reflect further around identifying why modern consumers both prefer and seek short and intensive experiences, rather than something being constant. This is also aligned with the core of the modern romanticism spirit, to extract the most out of life and further look for extraordinary and awesome experiences. A symptom of unique and ephemeral experiences was also found to create a need to capture, share and spread the moment immediately, which could be derived from a fear of missing out on ‘cool’ happenings. Thus, making the experiences of something momentarily more real, longer lasting and accepted in the eyes of others. From this, another finding on a speculate level indicates that in a postmodern society with a craving for new things and an everlasting pursuit of happiness, it gets more difficult to live and enjoy the present.

6.1.1 In-between Alternative to Online & Offline Retail

An important finding from our results concerns the interesting tension created between the artificial online and the tangible and material offline in a retail setting. We identified that people are not satisfied with only experiencing a brand online in a digital interaction. An important argument from this is that consumers’ perception of an online brand is solely created by an artificial image and association from the website and other channels online. Instead, we found that consumers need and want a material interaction with a brand, in which the retail context might add something vital and a sense of reality to the artificial world online. Thus, the abstract brand is not real and authentic in the minds of the consumers until they are actually giving the opportunity to interact with the brand representatives and ‘touch and feel’ the products or its ‘material’. In such an environment, made up by all the components of a brand, a deeper understanding of what the brand stands for is more likely to form. The issue with this is of particular relevance for brands that are only operating online, and need a physical proof of concept. Pop-up stores can offer a temporary setting and solution for these brands in which the artificial is materialized into something that people can relate to

and create a relationship with. This also suggests that by making the artificial real in a context, trust can be built and a loyal brand relationship can take form.

To clarify the importance with a physical context for consumers to build a deeper relationship with a brand, we have developed a model (figure 5). As seen in the figure, an e-commerce strategy provides a digital interaction in an artificial context. These main issues identified concerns the lack of a ‘touch and feel’ opportunity and no real interaction with the brand, which creates uncertainties for consumers. The model also demonstrates that traditional brick and mortar formats offer a physical interaction in a material context. As emphasized throughout the study, consumers get higher expectations and demand new experiences, which these stores often fail to offer. Other problems is that they are too costly or do not fit the strategy of online-based retailers. The model suggests that pop-up stores could work as an additional in-between alternative to an online and offline retail format. For e-commerce retailers, the pop-up store context provides a translation and integration process from online to offline. Pop-up stores usually offer an engagement with both offline and online channels in store. Looking at it that way, pop-up stores could work as a new and effective way for both brands and consumers to find a good match, which will lead to new and loyal relationships. This alternative could bridge the gap between online and offline channels and reduce the distance between the artificial and material of a brand.



Figure 5. Making the artificial real (Holmgren & Olofsson, 2015)

6.1.2 Building Long-term Trust in Temporary Settings

As we have previously stated, pop-up stores can provide a temporary setting in which the artificial is materialized into something that consumers could relate to and create a relationship with. Hence, another interesting conclusion that could be made is that short-term

solutions, like pop-up stores, might result in long-term relationships, especially for online brands. The experience of seeing a brand being materialized in a temporary environment somehow makes people trust the brand. In a broader sense, this might once again relate to our fragmented postmodern consumption culture. What we can see is that even though we live in a society characterized by fluidity and fragmentation, we still look for and require some sort of solidity and security to stick with. Paradoxically, short-term meeting points, such as pop-up stores, could solve this issue. Even though this reflection might be somewhat contradictory it still discusses an interesting point that pop-up stores create some sort of ephemeral structure and a fixed point that attracts people today. Such a tool might help the brand to create a cool image and hype for consumers that they are part of something limited exclusive, which develops positive emotions that stick in the minds of the consumers for a longer time.

We have also acknowledged another macro-level aspects of how the contemporary consumer culture seeks temporary social links and meeting places. Traditionally, the social framework was clearly structured; people were born into certain social groups in which they belonged for the rest of their lives. Now, in an extremely individualized culture, people are getting the liberty of choosing their own relations and communities to be involved with. Even though this opens up for a greater variation and more to choose from, there might also exist fear and uncertainties of not finding a place to belong. What can be seen is that people still seek social interactions and links, but that the nature of these are perhaps more ephemeral today. We have found that pop-up stores provide a temporary social setting, almost like a social network, that attracts specific groups of like-minded individuals that can share a lifestyle. In this sense, we could speculate that the ephemeral postmodern consumer culture is drawn to temporary places for a short-lived experience of being part of something that creates feelings of belonging.

6.2 Theoretical Contribution

The findings of our research may contribute to different existing theories or concepts in branding and marketing literature. It provides an in-depth analysis and a new dimension of the temporary shops phenomenon by adding a phenomenological perspective to the to the academic literature on how consumers experience pop-up stores. Despite the increased growth and presence of pop-up stores on the market, little was previously known empirically about this area of research. Hence, this study has generated further knowledge to the research on pop-up stores that previously looked at the management perspective (Picot-Coupey, 2014;

Gonzales, 2014; Russo Spena et al., 2012; Surchi, 2011). Furthermore, this study supports the research by Niehm et al., (2007) and Kim et al. (2010) that found a positive attitude towards unique shopping experiences in experiential retail formats, as well as the study by de Lassus & Anido Freire (2013) of how pop-up stores provide a more relaxed, informal, fun and pleasant environment compared to traditional stores. The idea of pop-up stores as something exclusive because it is temporary adds a new focus to the previous research on pop-up stores as well. This perspective had only been suggested for future research by Picot-Coupey (2014), and this thesis started to explore the ephemeral aspects of pop-up stores in relation to the modern consumption society, which can be relevant for research on contemporary consumer culture. The micro tendencies of consumers' experiences in pop-up stores were analyzed from a macro level regarding the contemporary fragmented society characterized by fluidity and a desire for new and unique experiences.

The study offers two main contributions for a variety of academic literature. First, it identifies the importance with a material proof of concept in the process of brand building relationships. This is demonstrated in a model (see figure 5), suggesting that brands need a retail context that can produce a reality of the artificial of an online brand. By materializing the abstract symbolic features of an online brand, consumers will be convinced of its existence and trust the brand. For instance, this study adds a consumer experience perspective to the managerial findings by Russo Spena et al. (2012) that showed that pop-up stores enhance brand loyalty due to the increased experiential interaction provided in pop-up stores. Here, the value of providing a physical and interactive retail context in order to develop a loyal brand relationship, especially for online brands, is emphasized. This finding is still only found on a speculative level, but the implication of this theoretical contribution could be especially useful in the academic field of classical marketing, retail management and e-commerce.

Second, the creation of long-term relationships of trust through temporary retail experiences can contribute to the research of brand relationship and trust, experiential marketing and consumer experience. The study's findings supports and adds a new perspective to the findings by Kim et al. (2010), which showed that engaging consumers emotionally in pop-up stores could positively affect the attitude towards the brand. This study emphasize the interesting tension of how a temporary retail format then can be utilized to make consumers emotionally attached to a brand or a product, and create long-term relationships. Thereby,

explored the ephemeral aspects of pop-up stores by applying theories that had not been used in this context before.

6.3 Managerial Implications

Our study has found a number of implications that could be relevant for both marketers in practice and academics. Even though the main focus of the research has been to investigate pop-up stores from the consumer point of view, the result can provide equally meaningful input to the management perspective. A main implication is that temporary solutions like a pop-up store could fill an important role for many retailers and fit into the ephemeral society of today.

An important implication, especially for online-based retailers, is that pop-up stores may be a good and affordable short-term alternative to offer experiential and interactive experiences that could enhance the brand loyalty and trust. More specifically, pop-up stores can work as a platform that transforms the artificial feature of an online brand into something graspable and real. As shown in the self-constructed model (see figure 5), pop-up stores could be defined as an additional in-between alternative to offline and online strategies and translate and integrate the artificial online into something tangible and material offline. This indicates that it is vital for online retailers to provide a physical retail setting that allows for a personal interaction that can create a deeper connection to the brand and establish long lasting brand relationships. Without such a setting, consumers will only have an artificial image of the brand, which might lead to uncertainties and prevent a loyal brand relationship to develop.

Furthermore, most retailers will probably gain something by offering a retail format based on surprise and exclusivity. Traditional retailers may utilize the pop-up store as an experiential marketing format, by separating it from regular stores and offer something new and exciting. The pop-up retail format could be a solution for traditional brick and mortar retailers to expand into a multi-channel strategy and give consumers a memorable experience in a unique and exclusive shopping environment that encourages engagement with the brand. For instance, these retailers could provide temporary flagship stores in pop-up store formats in order to respond to the current consumer demand and expectations new and original experiences. This could also be relevant for brands with smaller budgets that want to provide a temporary and experiential setting to engage with consumers in an extended way. Important

to consider is also that consumers enjoyed attending special events held in pop-up stores and that our study indicates that the social crowd can impact whether consumers feel exclusively selected and that they belong. This would then demand for good marketing strategies for how to attract the right people to these events.

Another significant implication concerns how the ephemerality of pop-up stores could be a temporary method to enable longer brand relationships. Marketers need to pay attention to other similar new trends based on ephemerality, such as Snapchat, which clearly indicates that temporary phenomenon somehow attracts people. Pop-up retailers also need to encourage more digital interactions in-store that and utilizes the identified trend of how modern consumers are eager to share something that is short-lived, because it makes it more unique and exclusive. This is aligned with the fact that pop-up stores make consumers feel like they are given an opportunity to interact with the brand. In an increasingly saturated and fragmented environment, it is vital to stay unique as a brand, which puts new requirements on marketers. The trend that many communication strategies have changed direction from ‘push’ to ‘pull’ methods, suggest a need to get consumers to voluntarily take part in communication and advertising (Balasubramanian, 1994). Pop-up stores may be a form of ‘pull’ method, with a marketing potential to provide something that consumers willingly want to be exposed to, rather than being ‘pushed’ to choose whether they want to participate or not. This may also contribute to a great viral spreading, in for example social media, because consumers may feel more willing to share the message when they feel like they are in control.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations that might have had an impact on the outcome can be identified in this study. First, the choice of theories could influence the result because they were not necessarily directly suitable for the research purpose but considered helpful tools to better understand the phenomenon. However, there might also exist other or additional theories that could have been appropriate to use when analyzing how consumers experience pop-up stores. Another factor that could have impacted the result is the interview questions, in which a slightly different choice of questions could have generated a richer empirical data and other interesting aspects worth looking into. The time limit of the study might have impacted the outcome and prevented us from conducting more and deeper interviews and observations. Considering that the sample group was consciously chosen and quite homogeneous in terms

of age, gender and situation, could have had a large impact on the data. Furthermore, this might question the transferability of how well our study on experiences in retail pop-up stores, in particular fashion, can be transferred into other types of brands and industries with other types of consumers. However, our research did not aim to examine consumers' experiences in a specific industry, thus, the same type of questions could have been asked regardless what industry had been examined. What also need to be emphasized is that this discussion focuses on the attributes of the western culture, both regarding individuals and brands, and might not be applicable to other cultures. Altogether, these limitations points out those aspects that could have an impact on the quality of the study and suggest that there is room for improvements and developments. Therefore, the result should not be considered a fact. Instead, this study has contributed with a new perspective and laid a foundation for developing further knowledge within this area of research.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study has identified many interesting aspects that could be examined further to extend the knowledge in various areas of research. As previously noted, studies on pop-up stores, in particular the consumer experience of pop-up stores is still underdeveloped. This would indicate a need for more research, theories and models the field. Below are suggestions on different areas that we believe could be interesting for future research.

A primarily recommendation would be to test the findings and what has been implied in this study by using a quantitative research method. It would be interesting to test various hypotheses on a larger sample of pop-up visitors based on a probability sampling technique, to identify what factors and dimensions of the experiences that are proven significant. For example, an aspect that could be tested further is the correlation between the importance of trust and relationship building with a brand and a physical context. Another hypothesis to test in a quantitative manner is whether the temporary aspect of a pop-up store result in higher urgency to visit the store. This would give a more statistically proven result, compared to the explorative nature of this study.

Secondly, the aspect of whether physical platforms like pop-up stores may contribute to longer relationships for online-based retailers could be explored more practically. By investigating online brands in their process of opening a retail format, such as pop-up stores, a

deeper understanding will form with regard to the importance of offering a physical place where consumers can interact with the brand. This could be studied from either a management perspective, for instance through the usage of 'CRM' activities, or a consumer perspective. Also, examining how temporary methods can create loyal relationships could also be relevant to look further into from a marketing perspective. One example would be to examine the ephemeral aspects of marketing tools such as Snapchat, since the app is considered to be a new successful marketing tool, much because of its temporary feature. This further indicates a need to look at the macro level factors of these ephemeral expressions and why these trends are effective in the consumer culture today.

Additionally, the managerial implications that have been discussed of how pop-up stores can be used to create a 'pull' effect for consumers could also be of value to explore for future research. This would primarily concern how to use effective methods to attract modern consumers and make them feel like they are voluntarily engaging and interacting with a brand. This is in line with the new marketing focus on content marketing, in particular storytelling, which has become an increasingly important strategy used by marketers. We think it would be interesting to examine whether pop-up stores provide some sort of storytelling experience to consumers in a real retail setting.

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APPENDICES

Interview Questions: Expert Interviews

- Can you tell us about your company?
- Can you describe your role?
- What is your perception of how the concept has developed during the recent years?
- What types of businesses use the pop-up retail format? *Why?*
- Can you describe the process of opening a pop-up store?
- What kind of experiences do you want to produce?
- What is the thought behind the pop-up store experience?
- What kind of consumers are interested in pop-up stores?
- How do consumers' experiences differ between pop-up stores and original stores?
- What is your perception of consumers' knowledge about pop-up stores?
- What kind of marketing channels do you use to promote pop-up stores?

Interview Questions: Consumer Interviews

- Why are you here?
- What do you know about pop-up stores?
- Have you visited other pop-up stores? *Why?*
- What do you think about this pop-up store?
- Is there anything in particular that you have noticed in here?
- Are you going to buy anything here? *Why/why not?*
- How do you feel when you are here?
- What do you think about the atmosphere?
- Can you describe the surroundings and the decoration in detail?
- How would you describe the people here?
- What do you think about the location?
- Can you tell us about the staff and the service?
- What do you think about the music?
- What would you say is different with this store compared to a regular store? *What do you prefer? How does it come?*
- How do you feel about that this store is a temporary store and will soon disappear?
- How likely is it that you will tell anyone that you have visited this store? How and what will you tell them? Have you taken any photos?
- Can you recommend any pop-up store you have heard about or visited?

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Pop-up store visitors drinking champagne and mingling while shopping.

How Pop-up Stores Make the ‘Artificial’ Online Brand Real

By Annie Holmgren & Sofia Olofsson

New York. *They pop-up and disappear rather quickly, creating excitement and exclusive events that generate immersive experiences. With its temporary nature, pop-up stores are a great offline solution for online brands looking to test the market, allowing consumers to ‘touch-and-feel’ the products and get to know the brand in a unique and interactive environment.*

Pop-up stores, referred to as “the latest expression of innovative retail solutions” in marketing channels, could work as a way to strengthen the relation with the end-customer. What characterizes this new retail format is that it pops up, produces exclusive and interactive experiences, and disappears rather rapidly. The temporary feature of pop-up stores creates feelings of urgency and a need to go and ‘check it out’ and seize the opportunity to experience it instantly. The functions of pop-up shops are the opportunity for brands to test a new market, in particular for online-based retailers, as well as using experiential marketing methods when promoting a brand. Mikaela Nilsson, an expert on pop-up stores, explains:

“It is a win-win situation that benefits all actors involved; pop-up stores covers a place that the property owner cannot rent out, and retailers do not have to take any great risks with long-term contracts.”

It has been questioned whether the traditional retail store is a dying format since modern consumers neither are visiting nor are attracted by normal brick and mortar formats in the same extent any more. The fast-growing economy has led to a modernization of the retail sector, characterized by a rapidly developing multi-channel environment. This demands for new and creative strategies. Alternatives like the pop up retail format satisfy the increased desire for engaging and emotionally stimulating interaction. At the same time, it also fits the trends of the contemporary consumer culture, with a constant quest and demand for new and awesome experiences.

The growing trend with e-commerce retailing brings issues such as insecurity, due to the inability to test products before making a purchase. Consumers are demanding a material and atmospheric interaction, in which the retail context might add something vital and a sense of reality to the artificial world found online. The experiences of a pop-up retail format can contribute to transform the artificial of an online brand into something more graspable and real. This is clearly demonstrated by Georgina, visiting a pop-up shop by the online-based retailer Beckley:

“I think there is more of an urgency to get there, to check it out, like it's not going to be there forever. For me it is an experience, so I kind of prefer just seeing it, touch it, feel it and then if it goes back online then it is okay because now I trust them.”

The abstract brand is not real and authentic in the minds of the consumers until they are given the opportunity to physically interact with the brand and brand representatives and ‘touch and feel’ the products. By making the artificial real in a pop-up retail format, trust is more likely to be built and a loyal brand relationship can take form. Furthermore, the retail format usually offers an engagement with both offline and online channels in store, encouraging consumers to share their experiences online. Pop-up stores could then work as an additional in-between alternative to an online and offline retail format. Somewhat contradictory, one could say, it seems as if a temporary phenomena like pop-up stores could facilitate trust and long lasting brand relationships.



A pop-up store providing visitors with a photo-booth camera that creates a digital interaction in-store and encourages consumers to share their experience on social media.