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MSc in Globalization, Brands and Consumption

The World of Second-hand Goods

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A Different Community

Master Thesis

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1. Introduction

This research study aims to develop themes that contribute to theory within the micro level domains: *Marketplace Cultures and Consumer Identity Projects* (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) in the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). Through exploration of the consumer centred second-hand market, this study is expected to contribute to existing research about market dynamics and interaction; and the consumption cycle.

The second-hand market in Denmark is defined as a market in development (Sæhl 2010). Especially Copenhagen seems to have become a central frame around this culture where the previous mentality of “Consume and throw away” is gradually replaced by the concept of “consume and resell” (Hoffman 2014). The consumers have become more aware of the worth of the used and old goods, defined as second-hand goods. This awareness has created a great interest for consuming and reselling these goods and used old goods is no longer thrown away to the same extent (ibid).

The second-hand market is characterized by a recirculating of used goods and no new produced goods are entering the market or considered attractive. Our research is limited to consider the consumption of domestic second-hand goods i.e. furniture and interior decorating goods. The circulation of second-hand goods within this consumption market is interesting as it creates a resource dependency among the consumers and professional dealers, where the marketers to some extent are excluded from the market of second-hand goods. “New” second-hand goods enter the market either when a consumer sells their goods or when someone die and relatives sell goods from the estate. The process of reselling goods can be related to Kopytoff (1986 in Corrigan 1997: 36)’s decommodification process. Furthermore, consumers are expected to constitute a central and dominant role, as they become primary suppliers of the second-hand goods.

This unique market setting consists of exchange of second-hand goods between consumers and consumers; professional dealers and professional dealers; consumers and professional dealers and vice versa. The several roles taken by the consumers are expected to foster a core of engaged consumers with distinct and specialized knowledge and skills about the complex second-hand goods. The goods are considered complex, due to the challenges of evaluating the worth and the acquisition of desired goods in a setting where goods recirculate and the consumers supply “new” goods.

1.1 A historical perspective of the second-hand market

To provide an understanding of the present market of second-hand goods and the acceptance of consuming second-hand goods, a socio-historical perspective is introduced briefly based on both a practical and a theoretical point of view.

There seems to be a shift in the perception of second-hand goods and the degree of acceptance of the consumption of second-hand goods during the last decades. Before the industrialization in the eighteenth century, it was common practice that furniture and interior decorating goods were passed on to the next generations, within families, as signs of social status (McCracken 1988 in Corrigan 1997: 5). According to McCracken (1988 in Corrigan 1997: 5) furniture among other goods were objects of material culture and signs of age, patina, which functioned as means of legitimizing social status as well as protection against pretenders to social status. The end of patina and the rise of fashion made signs of newness rather than signs of age the social markers (ibid). The industrialization and mass production lead to yet another shift in the use of goods (Corrigan 1997: 50). The industrialization gave rise to department stores in the middle of the nineteenth century, where everything could be purchased. The industrial rise and the now great focus on mass-production influenced consumers to consume new goods (ibid).

1.2 Second-hand is what we desire

Moving to the present, within the last few years, consumption of second-hand goods has become more common and acceptable (Hoffman, 2014; Sæhl 2010). Consumers have become interested in second-hand goods and interesting in how goods were produced in earlier stylistic periods and many find the story behind second-hand goods interesting (Hoffman, 2014). Additionally, there is an interest for inherited goods from relatives among consumers, due to the uniqueness and story that is connected to the goods (Baudrillard, 1990 in Corrigan, 1997: 47; Hoffman, 2014). As an effect of this development, the number of flea markets has exploded (Hoffman, 2014). Furthermore, the media focus on this culture is in line with the explosive development of the market of second-hand goods. There are several TV-programs about the concept of consuming second-hand, which is assumed to influence the growing interest in the second-hand market (DR1 2014; TV2 2014). According to Belk et al. (2003) consumers create a desire based on influence from different medias which becomes *“manifested differently in different cultures and times depending on socialization and cultural intermediaries”* (p.21). However, these TV programs are assumed to appeal mainly to mainstream consumers and it appears that there simultaneously has appeared more unique and engaged users of consuming second-hand goods within society (Lihn & Vesterlykke 2014). The complexity of second-hand goods, due to challenges of estimating the value and originality of old goods, are expected to be lowered for the mainstream consumers as they are provided the knowledge from the TV-programs. This may intensify the competition for valuable and original (popular) second-hand goods and thereby include the mainstream consumers more in a market that seem rather closed.

This raises the question of whether the interest for second-hand goods can become completely mainstream or if it remains a closed community around engaged consumers in relation to the challenges it might be to acquire desired goods. Even though the visibility of the second-hand culture has increased during the last few years, issues regarding the second-hand community in a theoretical context seems to be unexplored within the CCT perspective.

1.3 The second-hand community in a theoretical context

The second-hand community is expected to have unique market dynamics regarding access and engagement in the community and interaction between the different actors. The second-hand community is expected to be unique as a consumption interest in several brands and non-brands unites the members of the community. Furthermore, there is no direct influence from marketers as goods recirculate and the supply of goods is through consumers opposed to marketers i.e. professional dealers. The second-hand community is expected to differentiate from other communities in the field of access and engagement, due to the highly consumer centric community and the complexity of evaluating the origin and features of the goods (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001; Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Schau et al. 2009). Access to knowledge about goods is expected to be challenged by the competition to acquire the desired goods between the members in a community where no branded new goods are supplied. Furthermore, the interest of our research study lies in how the market is stabilized through a common consumption interests among the actors in a setting where consumers enact a dominate role and a resource dependency is present (Martin & Schouten 2014; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli 2007; Thomas et al. 2013). An active and several roles of the consumers is present, which is evident through their roles of suppliers, dealers and consumers.

The consumers' world is supplied with cultural meaning from collective and individual consumer actions (McCracken 1986). In our research, we expect consumers to be cultural producers within the context of consuming second-hand goods. We find the central role of consumers interesting in relation to the production of cultural meaning as the second-hand market is distanced from the marketers. Furthermore, our research study emphasises the use of domestic second-hand goods as means of self-expression through the process of acquiring goods and selection of goods as sort of a lifestyle task rather than an ordinary and mundane consumption of domestic goods (Money 2007). (Belk et al. 2003) have researched consumers' desire for goods and have developed "the cycle of desire", which can be related to the acquisition and selection of goods. The second-hand market are, as mentioned characterised by the recirculation of goods, which is assumed to challenge the acquisition of desired goods. Based on this assumed challenge our research study aims to uncover interesting aspects of the hope that keeps the desire alive in "the cycle of desire". Related to Belk et al. (2003)'s "cycle of desire" is the study of collectors (Belk et al. 1988). The

collectors desire specific goods within a given category of goods. The second-hand community is expected to foster some collectors, as second-hand goods are not goods that can be handpicked as branded new goods in regular stores. Our research aims to understand the consumers' engagement by relating it to the study of collectors (ibid). In our research study individual and collective grooming of goods is explored to provide understanding of how consumers engage in the consumption practice (Campbell 2005; Schau et al. 2009). The second-hand market is interesting as several brands and non-brands contribute to the "symbolic meanings" whereby there is no direct influence from a specific brand or marketers in creating "symbolic meaning" (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998).

1.4 Our research focus

Our research study aims to develop themes about engaged consumers within the consumption community of second-hand goods. Through an exploration of the social settings, events and individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 402) it is expected that the research will reveal themes about the several roles of the consumer regarding their interaction in the consumption community, where they act as consumers, dealers and suppliers simultaneously.

The circulation of second-hand goods in the consumption community of second-hand goods is interesting as it creates a resource dependency and the marketer is to some extent excluded from the community. The different roles enacted by the consumers in the community of second-hand goods and the resource dependency, makes it interesting to explore the interaction in this community. In our study the consumption of second-hand goods are expected to foster an interesting creation of the self as the goods needs to have an age, which means that no branded new goods enters the market and marketers have no direct influence. The second-hand goods are in many ways contrasting to the mass-produced goods, as they are less standardized goods and to a greater extent one of a kind. Through exploration of the consumption cycle it is expected that a better understanding of how the search for goods, the consumption of goods and the use of goods contribute to self-expression. To obtain a deeper understanding of the consumption community of second-hand goods and the engaged consumers, this study strives to provide themes about the following areas:

- a) How does the unique market dynamic of the second-hand market affect the interaction between central actors?
- b) How do engaged consumers acquire, consume and possess second-goods in a unique market setting where marketers have limited influence?

These themes will be provided from findings leveraged from interviews with consumers and professional dealers engaged in the community of second-hand goods. Furthermore, key concepts from related theoretical constructs within CCT literature are divided into two theory clusters; market dynamics and interaction; and consumption cycle. This literature is expected to contribute to the development of themes.

Our research is expected to contribute to the first mentioned literature clusters within the domain of *Marketplace Cultures* as it will create a deeper understanding of the market dynamics and consequences the interaction of the consumers have to an already stabilized market, due to their several roles as suppliers, dealer and consumers of goods to the second-hand market. Further, it will lead to an understanding of this consumer-driven market where issues as power struggles becomes evident, which will help to understand how this affect the mechanism of a market. In the second cluster of literature within the domain of *Consumer Identity Projects*, our research study aims to contribute to existing literature through a better understanding of the consumption cycle in the second-hand community. Focus is on the cultural production, acquisition and consumption of second-hand goods, grooming rituals and how the second-hand goods are used as a mean for self-expression.

To be able to answer our research questions six in-depth interviews with consumers engaged in the community of second-hand goods was conducted. They were all knowledgeable and experienced consumers in the second-hand community residing in Copenhagen. Due to their commitment, these consumers were all expected to contribute with rich data enabling us to create and explain how this consumption community differ from others communities. Furthermore, to be able to explain the dynamics and interaction from different perspectives of the community four in-depth interviews with professional dealers and one semi-professional dealer were conducted. To gain more knowledge about the second-hand community and the characteristics of the more engaged consumers an initial interview with a PhD student, was conducted as he is researching the relationship between use and values in the second-hand culture.

2. Literature review

In this section the departure in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) literature is presented and discussed to clarify where our research study adds to existing literature. The literature is first addressed in a broader context by first considering Marketplace Cultures and afterwards narrowed down to Consumer Identity Projects. The domain of Marketplace Cultures consists of the first cluster of existing literature addressing constructs related to market dynamics and interaction. The domain of Consumer Identity Projects consists of the second cluster of existing literature addressing constructs related to the consumption cycle.

2.1 Market dynamics and interaction

The domain of *Marketplace Cultures* “addresses the way in which consumers forge feelings of social solidarity and create distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected, and sometimes transient cultural words through the pursuit of common consumption interest” (Arnould & Thompson 2005: 873). Our study considers the common consumption interest in furniture and interior decorating goods within the market of second-hand goods. The second-hand market is characterised by consumers possessing several roles in the recirculation of second-hand goods meaning consumers are suppliers, dealers and consumers of goods. The unique characteristics and constructions of the second-hand market are expected to reveal yet unexplored themes and thereby contribute to the existing literature in the domain of *Marketplace Cultures*.

This first cluster of literature is divided into three subjects: Brand communities and the manufactures behind; Getting in and accepted in communities and The power and roles of actors in a community.

2.1.1 Brand communities and the manufactures behind the community

Brand communities have been a research area for several researchers within the field of *Marketplace Cultures*. Existing literature explores the characteristics and construction of brand communities i.e. the collective identification that exists within a consumption community. Furthermore, the influence from marketers is discussed in the literature.

In the postmodern consumption space, Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) introduces the idea of brand communities and provide the understanding of construction and re-construction of communities. Furthermore, they define brand communities as a “specialized, non-geographical bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (p. 412). Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) adds to theory about brand communities and find three core components as markers of brand communities: *Consciousness of kind, rituals & traditions and sense of moral responsibility*. The first marker, *Consciousness of kind*, creates a feeling of “we’ness” in the community and distinct its members from people outside the community. The

second marker, *Rituals & traditions*, creates a shared consumption practice of the brand and contributes to the construction of a shared culture within the community. The third marker, *Sense of moral responsibility*, considers the collective actions, which is characterised by two critical missions. The first mission is about integration and retention of members and the second mission is about assisting members in a proper use of the brand. Furthermore, the study explores how the mass-mediated ethos affects the character and structure of the community (ibid).

However, in the postmodern era members of a brand community have become more of an active participant in creating meaning of the brand. The brands are social entities, which are created by both consumers and marketers, which create a social setting where marketers are both threatened and strengthened by the community members (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001).

Related to Muniz & O'Guinn (2001)'s study, Schouten & McAlexander (1995) adds to the exploration of how marketers influence a community. They address the role of the marketer in their research of the Harley Davidson subculture (ibid). The investments in, and consumption of, material goods can become an opportunity for a symbiotic relationship for marketers. Herein, provide necessary goods; facilitate communications and sponsor events and activities for the subculture (ibid). Marketers need to understand the ethos of the subcultures in order to fulfil the needs of the members, which constitutes a consumption community influenced by the marketer through the supply of branded goods (ibid).

Schau, Muñiz Jr. & Arnold (2009), takes a different angle to how marketers can influence communities. They explore the value creating processes in brand communities and find four main themes across nine cases. Understanding of the value creating processes can help marketers take more control and collaborate with the consumers (ibid). The research supports the presence of influence from marketers in brand communities (ibid).

The studies mentioned above emphasize two central themes, which are very relevant and contrasting to the characteristics of the consumption community of second-hand goods we explore. First, in the second-hand community of furniture and decorating goods the social space is constructed by several brands and non-brands. The common consumption interest is focused on the concept of second-hand goods rather than a specific brand. Brands are present in the market, but it is not the common consumption interest that unites the consumers. In the existing literature, the consumers in brand communities share a common interest of consuming particular brand.

Second, the marketers seems to have a less direct influence on the existence and construction of the second-hand community. Marketers have no direct control over which goods are present in the community or the meaning of the goods. In the consumption of second-hand goods, marketers are distanced from the

market as no branded new goods are supplied directly by marketers. The process for a brand new good to enter the market seems to be far reaching and it is more or less impossible for the manufactures to predict which goods will be accepted by the market. The professional dealers in the second-hand market are the closest it gets to having marketers or manufactures. In existing literature, the brand communities are much more influenced and maybe even dominated by the marketers. The marketers constitutes a central role through the supply of goods and interferes with the perception of goods through branding.

The unique market dynamics, with no direct supply of goods through marketers and the mutual brands and non-brands that unite the members in the second-hand community, are expected to reveal interesting insights about the interaction, consumption practices and other factors uniting the community.

2.1.2 Getting in and accepted in communities

The following review of literature explores how consumers enter and engage in a consumption community within the field of *Marketplace Cultures*. Consumer research studies have considered different behaviours and collective consumption practices which guide the belongingness to a group. Furthermore, the structure of a community is studied by several authors within the field of CCT and these structures often lead to status hierarchies portraying different status positions within a community.

Consumption of goods affects the consumers' perception of the world they are living in e.g. communities. According to Douglas & Isherwood (1979 in Belk et. al. 2003) the desire for goods defines our belonging in groups. Wilk (1997 in Belk et. al. 2003) supports this argument by arguing that we also define our belonging to a group based on what we dislike. Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) find that a brand community develops common actions of integrating and retaining members.

Schouten & McAlexander (1995) study the ethos and structure of consumer subcultures, the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, from a consumer perspective. They explore the reconstruction of identity. The study illuminates the nuances of a biker's identity and lifestyle within a motorcycling subculture by becoming an integrated part of it through daily consumption patterns. According to Schouten & McAlexander (1995) there are common consumption values and behaviours, which unite people into a group. The common consumption values are able to make the subculture strong enough to encompass any group of people. The unique ethos or common set of values governs a consumption pattern, which the members of the subculture unify. The social interactions within the subculture are governed by the structure of it, which is a reflection of the commitment of the members to the unique ethos within the subculture (Ibid). Meanings are attributed to a brand or product and its usage is reflected by a set of core values, which builds the ideology of a subculture. Schouten & McAlexander (1995) argues that a religious

intensity holds the commitment to the key brand or product usage behaviour and it often elevate them to the status of icons for the members. The world of the subculture is becoming a sacred domain for the members in their daily life (ibid). The structure of the subculture reflects a difference in status among members and creates a social hierarchy based on commitment and authenticity. The members with the highest status are given the function as opinion leaders, but there are different perceptions of a member's status depending on whether one has an outlaw or an enthusiast perspective within the community (ibid). Becoming a member is a process of socialization and material possession. The understanding of the ethos of the subculture by the marketers can help the mainstream consumer enter the culture through the "right" possessions. All newcomers will generally be placed at the bottom of the status hierarchy (Ibid). According to Schouten & McAlexander (1995) this process implies "*an evolution of motives for involvement and a deepening of commitment to the subculture and its ethos.*" (p. 56). The process is part of a transformation of the individual member. Based on personal interpretations and experience within the subculture, newcomers will gravitate towards the needs that fit them best, and they begin to distinguish themselves in smaller groups within the subculture. The establishment of material and social investments helps to increase status and commitment of the member within the group and eventually they become a hard-core member (ibid).

Related to Schouten & McAlexander (1995)'s study of the status hierarchy through understanding of ethos and possession of specific goods is Schau, Muñiz Jr. & Arnold (2009)'s study. They consider social structures in relation to value creating processes. The empirical data have revealed that there are many unspoken rules and an evident hierarchy in many cultures. In order to display their various skills members of brand communities are constantly competing on their knowledge and history with the brand i.e. to be able to distinguish themselves from other members and to create a social hierarchy (ibid).

The studies mentioned above emphasize how consumers enter and engage in a community. The consumption of goods determines belongingness to a group. The studies also find that certain material possession of goods can be required to enter a community. Furthermore, the acceptance and status in a community can be determined by understanding of the community's ethos, and knowledge and history with the goods. In our study of second-hand goods, we expect that the common consumption interest in second-hand goods unite the members, but there might be nuances in the specific goods which they desire to acquire. Furthermore, we do not expect material possessions to determine the access to the second-hand community, but the several roles taken by the consumers may be limited as some consumers might not supply goods or take the role as dealer. Lastly, we find it interesting to understand the structure of the community of second-hand goods, in terms of status hierarchies, and thereby which factors that determine

acceptance and higher engagement. In the community of second-hand goods, consumers seems to have central roles and it is assumed that it is more complex to evaluate the goods origin and features compared to new goods. These conditions in the second-hand market provide the basis for expecting to find interesting and maybe new themes about the status hierarchy in a community.

2.1.3 The power and roles of actors in a community

The emergence and stabilization of a market and the market dynamics has been a research area for several researchers within the field of Marketplace Cultures. Existing literature uses *Actor-Network Theory* to explore the roles of the different actors in a consumer-driven community.

Martin & Schouten (2014) explores consumers' roles in driving market emergence, which is in contrast to the widely explored firm-driven emergence of markets. Through the use of Actor Network Theory (ANT) the study uncovers the process of market formation and stability. ANT is a theoretical framework applied to explore the roles of materiality in the social construction. The actor-network is central in ANT, which is a "*heterogeneous assemblage of human, non-human and hybrid actors*" (Martin & Schouten, 2014: 857). The study adds to theory about consumers' roles in a formation and stabilization of an emerging market and explores the socio-material relations and translations, which have led to the stabilized market of minimoto (ibid). Translations are defined as multiple processes "*wherein consumers mobilize human and nonhuman actors to co-constitute products, practices, and infrastructures*" (Martin & Schouten, 2014: 855).

Three stages of translation are identified. The first stage of translation was evident through the emergence of the adult minimoto rider, which involves innovative consumption actions by different actors. In the second stage of translation, the fun of riding minimoto's and the low entry barriers attracts other potential riders. The shared meaning becomes a catalyst for the formation of a community of practice. Furthermore, a material translation is evident through construction of local racetracks. In the third stage of translation the market matures through translations of races, mass media etc. The formation of a new market was driven by consumer actions and their modification of goods, which led to the translation of commitment. The consumers co-constitute products, practices and infrastructures based on desire, skills and creativity (Ibid). The new niche market within the motorcycle area was through this consumption driven market emergence translated into a fully functioning market (ibid). A social, political and cultural process influenced by a symbolic capital of the actors contributed to the creation of the new market and its identity. However, the co-creation of the material infrastructure of the new niche market was also driven by knowledge, skills and material resources from the actors (ibid). According to Thomas, Price & Schau (2013 in Martin & Schouten 2014) the consumers in consumption communities develop similar practices that enables a stabilization and reproduction of the resources, which they are depended on.

Compared to the firm-driven actor-network these communities of practice is stronger and “*the entire network of communities develops with a higher level of resiliency.*” (Martin & Schouten 2014: 867).

In contrast to Martin & Schouten (2014)’s study of consumer-driven market emergence in a homogenised community is Thomas, Price & Schau (2013)’s study. They investigate a mainstream, heterogeneous, stabilized consumption community in an effort to explore the interplay between multiple heterogeneous actors in a community. Opposed to Martin & Schouten (2014) the authors use ANT to analyse a stabilized market consisting of a heterogeneous network of actors. The communities are complex, where multiple and divergent views from the members on the elements of communities is present e.g. authenticity, membership and consumption pattern (ibid). Thomas, Price & Schau (2013) are exploring the interplay between the multiple members of the communities, how they are shaping the experiences of other members in the community and how the members are informed by dynamics of the marketplace. Herein to create a definition of what this market dynamic means for the members and the community combined with an exploration of what the implications of heterogeneity may cause the community as a whole (ibid).

Closely related to Thomas, Price & Schau (2013)’s study is Thompson & Coskuner-Balli (2007)’s study, which explores the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). This study also explores a heterogenic market where actors have competing agendas, but different from Thomas, Price & Schau (2013)’s study is that the CSA community could be perceived as an alternative to the mainstream market. The unconventional marketplace practices and relationships implicitly address a market where the actors have competing agendas, which could be seen as heterogeneity.

The studies mentioned above explores the market dynamics in consumer-driven communities. The studies also address emergence and stabilization of the communities using ANT. In our research of the mature second-hand market the consumers’ actions and central roles in stabilizing the market through supply and consumption of goods points toward a consumer-driven market. The interplay between the actors, consumers and professional dealers, is different in relation to resource dependency from the mutual resource dependency found in some of the existing literature. The market seems to be solely dependent on consumer’s resource supply in the form of goods. This research focus on a stabilized mature market and therefore emphasis is on what keeps the market going through exploration of consumer actions and interaction between members.

Our research of the second-hand market is expected to uncover interesting themes in the literature about consumer’s ongoing, active and central roles in the market dynamics. Furthermore, constructs of power may be an interesting area in the second-hand market, due to the central role of the consumers.

2.2 The consumption cycle and self-expression

Within the domain of *Consumer Identity Projects* (CIP) “the marketplace has become a preeminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people conduct narratives of identity.” (Arnould & Thompson 2005: 871). Furthermore, consumers are considered seekers and makers of identity (ibid). In our study the consumption of second-hand goods are expected to foster an interesting creation of the self as the goods needs to have an age, which means that no branded new goods enters the market. The second-hand goods are in many ways contrasting to the mass-produced goods, as they are less standardized goods and to a greater extent one of a kind. Our research emphasise the cycle of consumption (ibid): acquisition, consumption and possession. Through exploration of the consumption cycle it is expected that a better understanding of how the search for goods, the consumption of goods and the use of goods contribute to self-expression. The unique characteristics of the goods in the second-hand market are also expected to reveal interesting findings related to “symbolic meaning” of goods.

This second cluster of literature is divided into five subjects: Consumers as cultural producers, Display and meaning of domestic goods; Desire for goods and collecting of goods; Individual and collective grooming of goods; and Symbolic meaning of branded goods.

2.2.1 Consumers as cultural producers

Consumers are considered cultural producers in a culture of consumption where a collective identification exist through beliefs, meanings, rituals, social practice and status systems within the field of CIP (Arnould & Thompson 2005: 874).

McCracken (1986) explores how material goods reflect and contribute to a cultural constitution in a consumer society. Herein an explanation of the current consumption behaviour and its complexity in a more detailed way. According to McCracken (1986), the world is filled with goods aided cultural meaning, which moves through several locations in a social world. Through its flow the world is supplied by cultural meaning from collective and individual efforts e.g. designers, producers, advertisers and consumers. In other words, “*Culture constitutes the world by supplying it with meaning*” (McCracken 1986: 72). Based on categorical distinctions, which individuals’ plays out continually, a world is created. This world has to be trustworthy with the members’ imaginary world. The created world is in constant construction and the members are engaged in the created world. Furthermore, it create an opportunity for the members to express the culture as material and as a categorical scheme (McCracken, 1986). The members within the culture use rituals as social actions. The cultural meaning is manipulated to pursue the creation of collective and individual communication and categorization. This manipulation makes it possible to affirm, assign or revise the meanings within the community (ibid).

This literature review illuminates how consumers are cultural producers and create a world where they can express the culture as material and as a categorical scheme. Furthermore, the world is supplied with cultural meaning from collective and individual consumer actions (McCracken, 1986). In our research, we expect consumers to be cultural producers within the context of consuming second-hand goods. We find the consumers' central role interesting in relation to the production of cultural meaning as the second-hand market is distanced from the marketers. This may lead to consumers taking a more dominating and sole role in producing cultural meaning. The professional dealers are the closed it gets to having marketers and these may also influence the cultural production.

2.2.2 Display and meaning of domestic goods

The display of domestic goods and the meanings of these goods are to a limited extent considered in recent literature within the field of CIP, from the literature we have been able to find.

Recent research has explored the material culture of consumption of objects displayed in the home within the ordinary, mundane and routine consumption practices (Money 2007). Consumers are considered active as they produce meaning through the consumption of goods. According to De Certeau (1998 in Money, 2007) goods are used to maintain social relationships through the meaning attached to goods. Money (2007) explores how consumers have an active role in "making sense" of goods displayed in their home in three key ways: 1) *As familial obligation*, which is goods the consumers receive from family members that does not fit with their own taste of goods displayed in the home. However, the goods are displayed anyway. 2) *As markers of memory*, which are goods that reminds the consumer of something positive from the past. 3) *As commemorative objects*, when goods are assigned identities based on special occasions in the consumers' life. The use value of the goods is through the transformation of the meaning of goods "replaced by the value of social connection that is actualized in the receiving, display and possession of such goods" (Money, 2007: 373).

The study mentioned above emphasize how consumers receive, display and possess domestic goods. Furthermore, the study explores the active role of the consumer in "making sense" of goods. Our research of the second-hand market aims to explore the acquisition, consumption and possession of domestic second-hand goods. Furthermore, the second-hand goods are not new and the age of these domestic goods are expected to reveal a different "making sense" of the goods.

2.2.3 Desire for goods and collecting goods

Consumption processes, consumption behaviour and feelings attach to consumption practices are explored in existing literature within the field of CIP. The studies add to theory about the desire for goods and collection of goods.

Existing literature has examined different aspects of desire in relation to consumption of goods (Belk et al. 2003). In the CCT literature, emphasis is on desire rather than needs or wants for consuming particular goods (Ibid). Belk et al. (2003) define consumer desire as a passion between social situational context and the consumer's fantasies of consumption. Desire is described as intense and powerful motivating emotion focused on particular goods. Desires are often unplanned and illogical and thereby accompanied by irrationality and mistakes, which create a process of change of the consumer's emotions of the consumer. Belk et al. (2003) reveal several aspects of the cultural context of desire: *bodily feelings, the desire for otherness and the desire for sociality*. The *bodily feelings* are described as cravings for a particular good. The consumers' *desire for otherness* is described as the consumer's desires after the "displacement of meanings" and imagination is central to this aspect of desire. Furthermore, the *desire for otherness* is an attempt to recreate an image or a recollection of something from the past. Last is the *desire for sociality*, where a hope to facilitate social relations or obtain responses from others is present (ibid).

Desire is considered as wild and a pre-cultural force of the consumer based on elements of human animality (ibid). According to Belk et al. (2003) desire is an "*impossible search for control over the uncontrollable*" (p. 338). The consumer is constantly battling between a struggle for self-control and a struggle to obtain the good. Belk et al. (2003) describes *a cycle of desire* where the social context fosters an imagination where feelings are intensified and excitement of obtaining the desired object are build which leads to a hope and finally realization or frustration.

Related to Belk et al. (2003)'s research of desire for goods is his and other authors research of collecting. (Belk et al. 1988) consider the extreme aspect of consumption by exploring collectors of particular goods and develops a deeper understanding of collectors and collections. According to Belk et al. (1988) there are several reasons to collect particular goods and the collector creates a pattern of collecting. Collectors of particular goods often begin their desire to collect as an incidence e.g., gifts can trigger the materialistic activity of collecting particular goods (ibid). Collecting is an activity that continues to develop as the interest grows and the desire to collect can become an addiction and thereby, in its most extreme form, an obsession. Feelings are getting stronger and the collector is thrilled by the experience of searching for new goods (ibid). Some collectors might experience a transformation of the ordinary and profane goods, which become sacred icons for them. When a good is added to the collection, it reaches a status of something

extraordinary and according to Kopytoff (1986 in Belk et al. 1988) it becomes singularized. There is a tendency for collectors to specialize in the goods collected, which creates a manageable collecting task and increases the possibility to be unique (ibid). Many collectors “has literally put a part of self into the collection” (ibid: 550). The collection is an expression of the collector’s experiences and portrays fantasies about the self. The passion that is driving collectors in their search for goods is the sense of purpose and worth (ibid).

The research study suggests that collections may be classified on three-dimensions: *conscious/unconscious*, *vertical/horizontal* and *structured/unstructured*. The *conscious/unconscious* refer to the theme of the collection. The *vertical/horizontal* dimension reflects to what extend the collection is centrally located/ spread in a space. The *structured/unstructured* dimension reflects the degree of order in the collection. The three dimensions result in a typology of the conceptual possible classification schemes of collecting which explains how the extreme consumption practices of collectors are used as markers of identity (Belk et al. 1988).

The above mentioned studies develop theories about desire and collecting in relation to consumption of goods and self-expression. Our study of the second-hand community is expected to relate closely to the two developed theories as these theories are expected to be useful in the understanding of the acquiring, consumption and possession of second-hand goods. Furthermore, the acquisition and consumption of second-hand goods is expected to be more long-term, because second-hand goods are not to be handpicked from an assortment as new mass-produced goods are. This assumption of a more long-term consumption practice is expected to relate to hope, which Belk et al. (2003) describes as an engine for keeping *the cycle of desire* going. The rather long-term acquisition of second-hand goods are expected to challenge the acquisition of the goods, which could mean that consumers hope for acquisition of goods is more present in this consumption community. In our study the theories about desire and collecting, are also expected to provide a ground for a more nuance evaluation the consumption practice of consuming second-hand goods i.e. whether the consumers of second-hand goods can be classified as having a desire for specific goods or as collectors of goods.

2.2.4 Individual and collective grooming of goods

Existing literature explores the individual and collective grooming of goods i.e. rituals and modification of goods. Campbell (2005) explores the subject from an individual perspective and (Schau et al. 2009) explores the subject from a collective perspective. Both paths of literature examine how goods are used as a mean of self-expression within the field of CIP.

Campbell (2005) adds to existing literature with a fourth image to guide understanding of consumption practice in the contemporary society, which he defines as "*the craft consumer*". The research explores the different stages of consumption and suggests three different stages of engagement: *personalization, customization and craft consumption*. According to Campbell (2005) collecting with passionate involvement is a form of craft consumption. Similar to (Belk 1988)'s arguments about how consumers begin to collect particular goods, Campbell (2005) argues that the path from customization to craft consumption can spring from the "normal" grooming and possession rituals. Through the development of specialized knowledge and skills, goods and activities can possess significance, which can lead to a perception of the goods as unique, singular or even sacred. Within the marketplace, this is regarded as a path towards personal self-expression and authenticity. Furthermore, it is proposed to be a more "*realistic strategy to 'embrace' the world of commodities*" rather than resisting the marketplace (Campbell, 2005: 37). Campbell (2005) describes how the craft consumer use knowledge and skills to transform goods and as a way of self-expression i.e. a consumption activity where the consumer make and design a "product" themselves. These rituals are according to Campbell (2005) a "*help in the process of overcoming the inherently alien nature of mass-produced products*" (p.29), herein, an alternative to the industrialization through a world of consumer's own meaning.

Related to Campbell (2005)'s study of individual grooming rituals is the study of collective grooming rituals by Schau et al. (2009). The study explores the value creating processes in brand communities and finds four main themes across nine cases. One of the main themes, brand use, is highly relevant in relation to Campbell (2005)'s considerations about the individual personalization, customization and crafting of goods. The value creating process within brand use involves the consumers' grooming of the brand, which create value through the performance and appearance of the brand. Further, the consumer attempts to customize the brand into personal unique needs, and thereby create value through reproducible solutions for the user of it (Schau et al. 2009). This is followed by a commoditization of the grooming or a customized technique in order to make it available for collective use in the community (ibid).

The two mentioned studies explore the individual and collective grooming rituals. In our study, it is expected that consumers modify the goods, as these are second-hand goods, which means that they are passed on between consumers. The goods may show signs of age or just need a fix up to become fully functional. Campbell (2005)'s theory about *craft consumers* is expected to provide a ground for evaluating to which degree the consumers in our study modify the goods. Furthermore, it is interesting to investigate if there are any common and collective grooming rituals in the community of second-hand goods.

2.2.5 Symbolic meaning of branded goods

We have found one study in the existing literature that highly deepens and nuances the “symbolic meaning” of branded goods in the context of a brand community, within the field of CIP.

(Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998) are investigating how consumers provide a “symbolic meaning” to particular goods. They explore the meaning of goods in a postmodern era and focus on the use of brands for creating self-identity. According to Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) the consumer does not make consumption choices solely from goods, but they are also using the “symbolic meaning” of them. This is a way to express who they are, or who they want to be. The goods may carry a variety of meanings, whereby there exists different meanings associated with the different goods depending on the individual (ibid). Consumers are living in a brandscape with the brands they trust. This brandscape consists of exchanging, possessing and grooming of goods. Furthermore, there is a divestment of rituals, where each ritual gives the consumer an opportunity to affirm, assign or revise the meaning from a mediated experience of advertisements (ibid). This mediated experience is a consumption of media i.e. mass consumption (ibid). Furthermore, advertisements transfer and create meaning into culture, but it varies depending on the interpreter. This makes brands an effective source for consumers to create symbolic construction of the self as many brands are connected with memories or feelings e.g. memories from the childhood of the consumer (ibid).

This study by Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) explores the “symbolic meaning” of branded goods, which illuminates how consumers use brands as a way of self-expression for who they are and want to be. In our research of the second-hand market goods are expected to supply “symbolic meaning” as well, but we find it interesting to explore the “symbolic meaning” in a setting where several brands and non-brands are present. Furthermore, the marketer is distanced from the second-hand market, which could mean that consumers play a more significant role in the creation of the “symbolic meaning” in goods.

2.3 Sum up of the literature review

To wrap it up, the above argued positioning in the literature within the two theory clusters, *Market dynamics and interaction*; and *the consumption cycle and self-expression*, are the foundation for our contribution to existing literature. The first cluster helps us to explore the unique market dynamics of the second-hand market and the interaction between central actors in a community where consumers enact a central role. Furthermore, this cluster provides basis for our exploration of how consumers become engaged and absorbed in the second-hand community, when the complexity of evaluating goods are present. The second cluster of literature supplies the ground for exploration of different aspect of the acquisition, consumption and possession of second-hand goods, which also relates to how consumers use second-hand goods as a mean for self-expression.

3. Methodology

In the following section, an argumentation for the methodological approach and reasoning in the study will be provided. Herein, argumentations for our research philosophy and the choice of research strategy and research method, data collection method, sampling method and the research analysis approach will be provided. The study aims to develop knowledge within the field of consumer culture theory (CCT), which has affected the choices mentioned above.

3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of our research study is to explore the market dynamics and interaction within the community of second-hand goods and how the second-hand market is kept stabilized through common interests among the actors despite the dominant role of consumers and the resource dependency among the actors. Furthermore, the purpose of our study is to uncover interesting aspects of the consumption cycle. In sum, our study aims to develop themes about engaged consumers within the consumption community of second-hand goods.

An inductive approach will be taken as the exploration of the second-hand community strive to create new knowledge through identification of patterns and central themes from the data, resulting in development of a theory or concepts in line with our research purpose (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 13 and 386). Furthermore, the research study is based on a grounded theory approach, which means that an iterative approach is taken through continual interplay between data and theory (ibid). This also means that the research purpose has been gradually refined in line with what was explored (ibid: 580).

3.2 Research philosophy

Issues of epistemology concerns what knowledge is considered acceptable in the research (Bryman & Bell 2011: 15). Taking an interpretative stance the emphasis is on understanding of behaviour rather than explanation of behaviour (ibid: 16). The understanding is derived from the perspective of the people involved in the second-hand culture and their interpretation of the world around them (ibid: 19). Thus, subjective meanings of social actions will be created from the knowledge and surprising findings may occur (ibid). The interpretations will, as an aim within the study, be placed into a larger social context. Thus, to be able to interpret the interpretations from others (ibid).

People create meanings through their social reality (Bryman & Bell 2011: 18). The actions of the people are thereby meaningful for them as they *“act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and*

the acts of others" (ibid: 18). The hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition is a subarea under the interpretivist view, which will be considered to enable interpretation of the actors' actions and to understand the actors' interpretations of their social world (ibid). Hence, to be able to understand how the actors "*make sense to world around them*" (ibid: 18).

The ontological issue in the research raise concerns regarding the way the research questions are formulated and the way research is conducted (Bryman & Bell 2011: 23). Herein, as a use to "*reflect on the indeterminacy of the knowledge of the social*" (ibid: 23). Our study aims to illuminate various truths and carries a constructionist perspective where there is no absolute truth (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012: 48). Our research focus on different perspectives through examination of the actors' social world, which is expected to uncover valuable insights and illuminate various truths. Hence, to be able to explain how "*meanings are constructed in and through interactions of the actors*" (ibid: 22). The emphasis on exploring several truths is assumed to create a more nuanced reality where the culture of consuming second-hand goods are continuously constructed and reconstructed by the actors involved (Bryman & Bell 2011: 21). To provide a more convincing research within the constructionist perspective emphasis is on authenticity through display of the ours understanding of the actions in the social world that is researched (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012: 53).

3.3 Research strategy

3.3.1 A qualitative research strategy

A qualitative research strategy is chosen, as the research question is more concerned with how than why things are the way they are (Bryman & Bell 2011: 163), herein an investigation of the social context with a CCT perspective. Building primarily on qualitative research our paper aims to go in-depth by exploring the culture from the viewpoint of the respondents imbedded in the culture. Our research study attempts to create acceptable knowledge by understanding and interpreting the social world through the eyes of the respondents (ibid: 402). With our interpretive approach the aim is to become more of an insider than an outsider, which is expected to create insights that are not revealed to an outsider (ibid: 403). However, there might be a risk of "going native" and thereby losing sight of what was studied. Furthermore, it can be a challenge to understand the social world through the eyes of all people (ibid). To overcome this, we have focused on achieving deep and argumentative answers from our respondents.

The emphasis in our study is on social processes within the community of second-hand goods i.e. collective events, actions and activities in which a qualitative method is preferable for that purpose (Bryman & Bell 2011:404). Furthermore, a qualitative method creates a flexibility which enables us to easily change the

direction in the investigation and areas within the study are thereby not necessarily delimited (ibid: 406). It will enable us to obtain an explanation and rich descriptive details about the setting. Herein, the present reality and past events within the community, which is, through a broader perspective, expected to foster a better understanding of behaviour and meanings in the community of second-hand goods (ibid: 404).

3.3.2 Research methods

To identify engaged respondents within the culture of second-hand goods and to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between professional dealers and consumers within the community the initial aim was to use observations as a method. An ethnographic approach was assumed to provide the ability to simply join the group of engaged consumers and professionals within the community, but that seems more challenging than first assumed (Bryman & Bell, 2011:424). Furthermore, the role as a “participant as observer” could have provided an opportunity for semi-involvement in the social settings, which initially was considered an optimal method (ibid: 437). Observation of the respondents’ behaviour and the ability to ask the respondents questions about their behaviour afterwards would provide a ground for a deeper understanding of the interaction within the culture (ibid). To obtain this, observations were planned to be conducted on several sites, where the culture of consuming used goods is present i.e. Flea markets and physical stores that trades second-hand goods. These sites might have created initial knowledge about the community and additionally provided an opportunity to identify relevant respondents. Furthermore, the observations could have revealed the implicit meaning of respondent’s interaction. Unfortunately the selection of respondents and thereby the observations did not work out as expected. The culture around second-hand goods appears rather closed and it is nearly impossible to get in touch with engaged consumers at the flea markets. The few consumers that were possible to spot and seemed committed were not interested in further collaboration after inquiry. It appears that it is a matter of relationships with the engaged consumers within the community to create acceptance for collaboration and participation in the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 428). A method to reveal engaged and potential respondents have been through direct and indirect social ties of us, which was a method that successfully enabled access to relevant and engaged consumer of second-hand goods (ibid). Additionally, another opportunity was to be “participant as observer” in the professional setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 437). Herein, to be an observer when the professional dealers were bargaining with consumers and searching for “new” goods. However, we did not succeed in finding professionals that were willing to allow these observations in their stores or observation of their search for goods. The professional dealers appeared afraid that following them around during their business might expose them too much (ibid: 435).

A useful alternative to these expected observations was to focus only on in-depth interviews. Interviewing enables us to choose direction that is considered relevant and important for answering the research question (Bryman & Bell 2011: 467). Using in-depth interviews with a semi-structure provided data for thick descriptions and it helped create an understanding of the social world of the respondents along with a better understanding of rules, choices, passion, meanings, emotions and symbolic power (ibid). Nevertheless, to reveal these understandings the focus in the interviews had to be on the respondents' interaction and thereby bargaining behaviour within the community. The interviews were conversational in nature to allow creation of insights (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 467). A topic guide was used to ensure that central themes were covered and we were also able to control the direction of the interview to some extent. Furthermore, this method was more flexible in that the topic guide provided a better ground for consistency in the content of the interviews i.e. more detailed answers and alignment in style with two interviewers (ibid: 467 and 473). In semi-structured in-depth interviews, we show interest in the respondents and their commitment to a given topic. This seemed to provide a greater interest among the respondents in sharing their viewpoints and knowledge of the subject (ibid: 466). It was important for the study that the respondents had the opportunity to talk openly about their views and feelings about the community followed by an opportunity for reflecting and amplify their answers (ibid: 478). The questions in the topic guide was therefore open to a great extent to be able to uncover the meanings and interpretations the respondents attached the culture and also to avoid bias through our viewpoints and interpretations of the social world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012: 130). In order to understand the respondents in their own terms, the interviews were conducted within the home of the respondents. If the respondents were professional dealers, they were conducted in their stores (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 476). Interviewing in a safe environment might help making the respondents more open-minded (ibid). Furthermore, the interviews were conducted face-to-face which helped us provide a deeper meaning of the respondents' answers of the questions, as it enabled us to discover their body language (ibid: 402).

To ensure the interviews would proceed as planned and end up with providing insights that can supply sufficient data to answer the research question, questions within the topic guide were formulated in a way that help answering the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 475). To ensure a reasonable flow of the questions a certain order in the topic areas was present, which also provided a quick overview for the us during the interview. Additionally was the language in the questions comprehensive and relevant to the respondents in the interview and the questions were asked in a casual way (ibid). Follow-up questions were used to deepen the answers given in the interviews and provided the opportunity to explore further interesting topics (ibid: 467). Furthermore, the respondents were encouraged to tell stories and examples

about their interaction and bargaining cases or other events from the community. The stories will provide richer data about events compared to the data we could have gained from observations as this covers a larger timespan.

All interviews were tape-recorded, except one, which helped in aiding the listening process. When respondents did not want to be audiotaped notes were taken during and immediately after the interview to minimize the loss of nuances in the data. Furthermore, the interview recordings were transcribed to help correct possible limitations of memories (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 481; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012: 139). Additionally, to avoid bias the interviews were recorded in a quiet setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 476).

3.3.3 Sampling method and participant criteria

In our research study, the emphasis is on a smaller, purposive sample, in order to obtain richer data about the culture of consuming second-hand goods from the perspective of the engaged consumers and the professional dealers. The sample group of respondents are conducted in the area of Copenhagen in which appears to be a central area of the culture of second-hand goods (MarkedsKalenderen 2014).

From a constructionist perspective focus is not on probability sampling, but more on identifying a few relevant subjects to the research in the “right” setting (Esterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2012: 24). Our study aims to illuminate the social world of the engaged consumers and the professional dealers to explore the interaction, the consumption practice and the meaning of second-hand goods.

The aim of generating an in-depth analysis in qualitative studies, makes issues of representativeness and generalizability less important and the measures for quantitative studies are less applicable to qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell 2011: 394 and 489). According to Guba & Lincoln (1994 in Bryman and Bell 2011: 395) there is no single absolute account of social reality and they propose two alternative criteria, trustworthiness and authenticity, for evaluating reliability and validity in qualitative studies.

Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability*.

Credibility is obtained through detailed considerations about execution of the research method (see “*research method*”), which ensures that our research is aligned with what is considered good practice for semi-structured interviews (ibid). The preoccupation with unique context and depth in qualitative research makes it hard to generalize to other contexts or even the same context. To enhance *transferability* our research study provides thick descriptions of the culture and consumption practices of second-hand goods, which becomes the ground for others to judge the possible transferability across social settings (ibid).

Furthermore, we were also encouraged to keep records of all phases of the research process to enhance the *dependability* in our study (ibid). This is a more weak area for the research study, but extensive considerations about the process, which have characterized our research process, are to a great extent

described and evaluated in the method section. Furthermore, interview guides and transcripts are made available. In the conduct of our research and in the findings derived from the research we have aimed to limit the subjectivity, by minimizing influence of personal values and avoid over interpreting theory, to enhance *confirmability*. Authenticity in our research is obtained through identification of respondents representing diverse viewpoints (ibid).

A snowball sampling method, a non-probability sampling method, was used to identify more engaged consumers and professional dealers, even though this sampling method is unlikely to be representative of the population (Byman & Bell 2011: 193). This sampling method was applied because there is no accessible sample frame and a limited transparency regarding the engaged core of the community (Bryman & Bell 2011: 489 & 491). In the snowball sampling method initial contact to a smaller group of relevant respondents are used to generate contact with other relevant respondents (Bryman & Bell 2011: 192). To gain initial access to relevant respondents our and professional dealers' network were used (direct and indirect social ties). The professional dealers helped by identifying some of their regular and engaged customers, but it was also the other way around as consumers helped identify relevant professional dealers. Furthermore, the identified respondents helped identifying other respondents in their network. This approach was time saving as it enabled us to address the "right" respondents i.e. the engaged consumers.

A focus on more engaged consumers created the challenge of identifying who were more engaged than others and what characterized those engaged consumers. To gain more knowledge about the second-hand community and the characteristics of the more engaged consumers an initial interview with a PhD student, Fredrik Larsen PhD student at Copenhagen Business School, was conducted as he is researching the relationship between use and values in the second-hand culture. This knowledge became the foundation for evaluating the degree of relevance and engagement among potential respondents and thereby expected learnings was the driving force for choice of respondents (Bryman & Bell 2011: 60).

There are no rules in deciding on sample size in non-probability sampling and generalizations are made to theory rather than a population (Saunders et al. 2009). It is commonly recommended that the data collection continue until data saturation is reached (ibid). In our research study, a pragmatic approach was taken as the sample size was balanced between deriving new learnings, time and resource constraints. This has resulted in interviews with six consumers, one semi-professional and four professional dealers.

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' profiles:

Name	Sex	Age	Role	Occupation	Residence/ Shop location
Ane	Female	36	Consumer	Kindergarten teacher	Lyngby, Denmark
Kathrine	Female	20	Consumer	Tailor	Copenhagen, Denmark
Caroline	Female	21	Consumer	Student	Copenhagen, Denmark
Sanne	Female	54	Consumer	Educator	Farum, Denmark
Thomas	Male	28	Consumer	Marketing	Copenhagen, Denmark
Christina	Female	30	Consumer	Researcher	Charlottenlund, Denmark
Rikke	Female	-	Semi- professional	Shop owner	Copenhagen, Denmark
Pjot	Male	-	Professional	Shop owner	Rødovre, Denmark
Jesper-Bo	Male	-	Professional	Shop owner	Frederiksberg, Denmark
Kim	Male	-	Professional	Shop owner	Copenhagen, Denmark
Charlie	Male	-	Professional	Shop employee	Copenhagen, Denmark

The interviews lasted between 30 min. and 60 min. Most of the interviews were audiotaped, which has resulted in 100 pages of transcribed data material.

3.4 Data analysis

“There are few well-established and widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data” (Bryman & Bell 2011: 571), but a search for themes is common across most approaches of analysing qualitative data (ibid: 752). The inductive nature of the research strives to generate theory or themes from the collected data, which makes the grounded theory approach suitable for the analysis (ibid: 13). The search for themes in the data is characterised by an iterative approach, which consist of an ongoing interplay between the collection of data and analysis of data (ibid: 574). Structure is derived from the data, which means that the data is analysed to explore themes (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2012: 166).

The analysis has used the processes and outcome framework for grounded theory proposed by Bryman and Bell (2011; 580, figure 22.3), which is based on Glaser and Strauss (1967).

A key process in grounded theory is coding (Bryman & Bell 2011: 577). Coding was continual as data were derived from interviews in the form of transcripts. The ongoing coding of data ensured a better understanding of the data and a more clear estimate of the needed data in the process of data collection i.e. theoretical sampling (ibid: 585). The process of elaborating themes builds on the three levels of coding suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1990 in Bryman & Bell 2011: 578), which consist of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The process of coding gradually narrowed down toward considerations about *“more general theoretical ideas in relation to codes and data”* (Bryman & Bell 2011: 586). To overcome a common problem with coding: losing the social setting, focus has been on not losing the context of what is said (ibid: 588).

These processes and outcomes in grounded theory resulted in development of themes and subthemes relating to the specific empirical case i.e. substantive theory related to the consumption community of second-hand goods. It might be too extensive to claim that an actual theory was derived whereas the result rather has been grounded themes (Bryman & Bell 2011: 580).

4. Analysis

The analysis part of the paper aims to explore the interaction between the actors in the community, the market dynamics, the processes for consuming second-hand goods and the use of second-hand goods as markers of identity. Following the grounded theory approach, the analysis will be presented and divided by sub themes classified under the following main themes: Knowledge is key in the community of second-hand goods; The several roles enacted by consumers; Hunting for treasures; Dedication to second-hand goods and I make it my own.

Our research study of the second-hand community consists of interviews with six consumers, one semi-professional dealer and four professional dealers. In the analysis, the respondents will be referred to as “consumers of second-hand goods”, “Semi-professional dealer” and “Professional dealers”. “Members” is the term used for all the actors in the community.

4.1 Knowledge is key in the community of second-hand goods

This section aims to explain how gaining and possessing knowledge in the community of second-hand goods is a dominating part. Furthermore, depending on how much knowledge the consumers possess it explains in which position it may place them in and in relation to other members, and how it may affect the professional dealers within the community.

4.1.1 I inherit more than the good

The interest for second-hand goods is not something that suddenly occurs in your life or something you suddenly become aware of exists. The interest is often inherit in an early age and many consumers inherit their interest from their family or relatives. It is an interest and engagement, which continue for generations. Additionally, many of the consumers inherit a few pieces of furniture or interior decoration goods later on in their life. Thus, their collecting of goods can begin with “*inherited “seed” goods or an intact “starter” collection that primed the adoption of a collector role*” (p. 548) which help to increase their interest for second-hand goods (Belk et al. 1988). Many see a potential of consuming these kinds of goods and a new world opens up for them. Furthermore, the consumers get their knowledge and skills through listening to relatives who have talked about the goods through the childhood of the consumer. Every consumer becomes dedicated in different areas of second-hand goods within the community i.e. different types of furniture, chinas/ceramics and lamps or a whole style of interior and decoration. Some consumers inherit furniture, in which they become thrilled to investigate more about it and additionally gain more knowledge about them. In other words besides the inherited goods, the consumer also inherit the interest and knowledge linked to these. The consumers continue to develop their interest and the knowledge that

revolves around their interest areas, why many end up being incredibly engaged in the practice (Belk 1995). This is evident in the following comment:

*“I had some old furniture, some old chairs and tables, some so-called antiques as my mother called them. In that case, I got interested in investigating a little... uh, where they came from and who had made them... I think we have to go back in 70’s it started... However, I think it really started with some silverware I had inherited and I thought it would be fun to see where it came from and who had made it. I found it interesting and I was looking forward to see if it was from “Georg Jensen”.” –
Sanne*

Many consumers have visited flea markets or second-hand stores with a parent or grandparent from an early stage of their childhood. (Belk et al. 2003) have found social relations to be the underlying motivation behind even the most object-focused desires. Our research revealed that the social part is not the primary reason for participation in the second-hand community; however, an uncontrollable interest and commitment between the relatives who were engaged in this area and the consumer was present. The consumer was dragged into this second-hand community by experiencing the atmosphere and through their awareness, their interest grew. Additionally the consumer gained knowledge and skills about the goods by listening to their relatives bargaining at the markets or by experiencing, them renovate their home interior. The access to the community is thereby defined by a heritage, which create *“an evolution of motives for involvement”* (p. 56) and enables the consumer to understand the ethos of the community around second-hand goods (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). This is revealed in the following quote:

“Through my father. He has always collected. He is originally educated as an architect and has always collected antique furniture. Therefore, I grew up with classical furniture in my home... That’s where it comes from. He has always been a part of private markets and he had an antique shop in his old age. Then... well, then he died three years ago and I have sort of driven it a bit further and it’s how I got a great interest for it. So from childhood, I have been at flea markets along with him and he has been a collector, you could say.” – Ane

*“My mother is very interested in it. My whole childhood, I have visited a lot of flea markets and such. She’s very interested in renovating furniture, in so I did... In addition, because my grandparents are very devoted to antiques and such things, I always have found it very interesting.” –
Kathrine*

The fact that the interest and knowledge for second-hand is inherited means that consumers who has been introduced to the field from childhood has an advantage compared to other consumers. According to Bourdieu (1984, in Corrigan 1997:26) a difference in knowledge and skills will always appear based on the cultural capital of the individual. Hence, consumers who are not engaged in this culture through their heritage will be challenged in imitating other members of the culture regarding their skills and knowledge (ibid). As Caroline's frustration in the following quote:

"The worst thing is people who lie about things and it's a bit annoying. I have often experienced that people have tried to convince me, that it is a cup from "Royal Copenhagen", but now I know their watermark and there is not much to gamble about. This is the worst thing, when people choose to lie about it by act something they are not... and then try to take over price for something that is not worth anything. So it's probably the worst." – Caroline

4.1.2 Knowledge is power

The shared meaning and ideology of the second-hand goods is the commitment between the members of the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). A commitment between the consumers and the professional dealers. However, the second-hand community is built on knowledge about the goods, whereby a hierarchy based on the knowledge and skills within the community are present (see *The several roles enacted by consumers*). More knowledge makes the member able to distinguish from one another and makes consumers independent of the professional dealers. Development and achievement of knowledge enables consumers to evaluate which goods are originals or not.

Several product categories and brands from several style periods are floating within the community of second-hand goods. Areas about the product categories or style periods have to be explored continually to gain more knowledge in order to distinguishing yourselves (Schau et al. 2009). Especially the Internet is the preferred place to investigate information about the goods and according to Laaksonen (2011) the highly involved consumers within the this community spends more time on expanding their knowledge and skills. Opposed to Schouten & McAlexander (1995)'s study there is an ongoing development of the members' skills and knowledge and a process that constantly have to be worked on if the members in the community of second-hand goods want to move up in the hierarchy. It is a matter of achieving prestige within the community and avoid the risk of being manipulated by another member. Thus, not appear ignorant to other members. This may be both humiliating and embarrassing if others can gloat about your lack of

knowledge. Furthermore, the large degree of seeking information about the second-hand goods expand the consumers knowledge in such a degree that they might compete with the professional dealers.

It is important to stand out from the other members through the construction of knowledge and skills. Knowledge creates a competition among the members, however, it is implicit and unspoken (Schau et al. 2009). In relation to Veblen (1979 in Corrigan 1997:21-26) members are showing off their knowledge and thereby their status within the community. Hence, a social hierarchy within the community are created through the competition in where they are enabled to distinguish themselves from one another (Schau et al. 2009). Additionally, consumers' cultural capital impose more resources through their knowledge and skills. This enable them to differentiate themselves in terms of status (Holt 1995 in Schau et al. 2009). In contradiction to Schouten & McAlexander (1995)' study, where commitment and status of the members are determined by personal interpretations and experience, status in the community of second-hand goods is expressed through the degree of knowledge possessed by the members which also determines how they are allowed to act within the community.

Unspoken rules are created within the community of second-hand goods and these are being followed by the members (Schau et al. 2009). The consumers within the community pretend to be ignorant and express a low degree of enthusiasm to the goods they desire in a bargaining. In other words, *"the wise fools the less clever"* which enables the consumer to make a better deal with the seller. This is evident in these comments:

"The best thing is to find those who do not know a damn thing about it and sell it for 5 DKK, because it's flea market. It is in fact extremely cruel, but when you find something that someone sells to an unduly low price, it's all about getting it purchased and get away - get away before they change their mind... it is really important not to show how excited you are when you find something you want" – Caroline

"Well I can pretend I have no idea what it is. I bought some candlesticks not so long ago in Forum and he said he did not know if it was silver. Then I said: "I do not either. It's probably not. I do not know." Therefore, we negotiated the price and I knew that it was silver, but then I pretended I did not know that much about it. I'm trying to act reasonable cool when I ask and not too enthusiastic." – Ane

Competition exists among the members; especially consumers have a need of sharing their experience and findings with their relatives or other close social ties within the community. Appreciation and empathy from close social ties within the community can be explained as social benefits (Thomas et al. 2013). Sharing insider knowledge with other consumers derive a sense of authenticity and distinctiveness. In order to distinguish themselves and be considered as unique through the goods, collected by the consumer, social comparison is important to them (Ekström, 2011). Achieving a desired deal emphasizes that the consumer has mastered the procedures in the community and reinforces their possessed knowledge. Herein drawing on their resources of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984, in Holt 1998). Additionally, as the consumer has a desire to be accepted or approved by others it is assumed that they also appreciate that other members envy their qualities. Obtaining desired responses from other members and close social ties are an underlying part of the enthusiasm behind their desire of collecting and possessing second-hand goods (Belk et al. 2003). Additionally, it is a way to facilitate social relations with the other members within the community which reinforces the feeling of belonging to a group (Belk et al. 2003; Thomas et al. 2013). In order to compete for status the consumer therefore have to draw on resources of “symbolic capital” i.e. economic, social and cultural capital which contributes to establishing a distinction to the other members within the second-hand community (Bourdieu 1984, in Holt 1998). This is evident in the following comments:

“It’s... I hope they think, “wow it’s cool” and therefore it’s also fun when they say “I also want to buy one of these”, then go out and search for it!” - Kathrine

“It means a lot to show others, especially if you have done a very good bargain. People then say, “God, was it sooo cheap” then you think it’s great and it make you think that you have done a great deal.” – Christina

4.1.3 Members need to possess knowledge about the details

A constant development in knowledge is evident in the community of second-hand goods. There are shared opinions about what a member needs to know about the second-hand goods to be able to commit to the community and be able to upgrade within the hierarchy and become a member of higher status (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). Several rules about the type of knowledge regarding the goods are created and the knowledge needs to be highly detailed e.g. the history about the goods, design, brands, producers etc. This knowledge is used to distinguish between original good or plagiarised goods. Every member are continuously searching for new knowledge and evolving their interest areas. Most consumers perceive the professional dealers as the true experts and thereby the members with highest level of knowledge. Although there exist a competition among the members, humbleness are present when consumers are

ranking themselves within the knowledge-based hierarchy. This is evident in Sanne's and Ane's comments in the following quotes:

"...It's about how much you engage in the interest. The description of a real expert would be someone who would never be satisfied with just getting a simple answer. However, a true expert would investigate and proceed with the quest to get more information about a particular product... they are very hard to stop talking about their interest; it is rooted always in a deep interest. However, I would certainly not think of myself as an expert." - Sanne

"They're just passionate, really passionate. They are talking about nothing else. They are special types actually. It is impossible to know everything, but usually they know something about some specific areas of the goods; the models and colours and who designed them. You can hear this when you are talking to them... I do not think I am an expert, but I know perhaps more than most ordinary people about some areas. I would not say I am an expert. I do not think I am, but I might just have more knowledge in some areas compared to others."- Ane

A "real" collector is according to Belk (1995) a person with high degree of knowledge who is able to judge quality or have specialized skills within a certain area of goods and would never deny that they have these skills. Under the assumption that it is taboo for second-hand consumers to be associated with a "real" collector, many will not admit their great desire for collecting. Adding goods to a collecting may be associated with addictiveness of possessing particular goods (Belk et al. 1988) rather than a hobby which the consumers are considering their interest. Additionally, the consumers are not considering their consuming and possessing of goods as constitution for a "fix" (ibid). Further, many are considering obsession of collecting as a negative condition to be in (Peele 1985 in Belk et al. 1988). Therefore, the consumers are very humble when they explain their interest areas and their own knowledge. Many may know a lot more than they want to express.

4.1.4 Being a "true" member of the community of second-hand goods

Shared ideologies, meanings and ethos based on knowledge, skills, creativity and a desire to achieve and possess second-hand goods within the community unites the members of the community. Members of the community of second-hand goods consists of both consumers and professional dealers. Within the community, a hierarchy based on age, knowledge and commitment is dominating, which raises interesting aspects related to access and engagement in the community. Our research has showed that a member with a low level of knowledge and skills will be placed in the bottom of the hierarchy (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). However, different from Schouten & McAlexander (1995) where material investments are crucial for

the members to move within the hierarchy of the community, members within the second-hand community increases their commitment and status in the hierarchy through a progress in knowledge.

In the periphery of the community, mainstream consumers interact. The mainstream consumers are considered as ignorant with low involvement in the community. Slightly similar to the study by Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) where mass-mediated ethos may affect the character and structure of the community are the mainstream consumers' search for goods influenced and advanced by the media's informative TV-programs. The education of mainstream consumers through TV-programs threaten the engaged consumers, as the media provide the necessary knowledge to rule the complex second-hand market and create awareness of which goods are valuable.

However, some knowledge is difficult to acquire without been highly engaged. Similar to Schouten & McAlexander (1995) where the marketers help outsiders (consumers) to enter the community through the "right" goods required in the community, the media helps consumers enter the second-hand market through supply of knowledge. However, although media's have an influence, the mainstream consumers still have a lack of knowledge and skills compared to the engaged consumers. It is still common that they are challenged in evaluating the value of the goods they are trading; therefore every member of the community wish to trade with these consumers and due to their ignorance, the engaged members are ensured a great deal by trading with them.

The mainstream consumer could be considered in relation to Tönnies (1964)'s *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1964, in (Corrigan 1997): 136). The community around second-hand goods are considered as a closed and small society with a floating friendliness around it. A mutual respect fills the community through an overall dependence on each other through supply of goods. The second-hand community is considered as an alternative to the mainstream market which is slightly similar to the study by Thompson & Coskuner-Balli (2007) as the consumers who are engaged in the second-hand community perceive the mainstream market as unattractive. The mainstream consumer are considered a part of the inauthentic and alienated mass-consumption society, in which the members of the community perceive unattractive. This links closely to the concept of *gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1964, in (Corrigan 1997): 136). The inauthentic aspect of *gesellschaft*, herein the mainstream consumer may have an aim of imitating the authentic look of members of the community (Veblen 1975 in Corrigan 1997: 22-23). This community is arranged around second-hand goods in which the mainstream consumer are trying to become a part of through buying and trading the same kinds of goods as the "true" members. Furthermore, a development in the mass-media's focus on the second-market, helps the mainstream consumer obtain the hard to get knowledge through TV-programs. However, due to their lack of knowledge it might be difficult for them.

Although they may have the possibility to interact and consume second-hand goods they may not be completely imbedded in the community and thereby considered as “true” members.

4.2 The several roles enacted by consumers

Consumers take different roles in the second-hand community. They enact the role as supplier, dealer and consumer. Primary emphasis in the following two sections is on the consumers’ roles as dealer and supplier. The consumers’ role as consumer will be considered in-depth in the following sections: Bargaining is a part of the game and Hunting for treasures.

4.2.1 Power of consumers

Many consumers within the community of second-hand goods choose to engage more in the role as dealer, as it is common in the community that consumers use their spare time on flea markets, once or even more times over a month, dealing goods with both other consumers and professional dealers. Some consumers wish to be or become semi-professional dealers themselves. However, it is common that consumers enact the role as dealer whereby they enact several roles. Opposite to Martin & Schouten (2014) the actors in the second-hand community enact more than one role and has a highly central influence on the stabilization of the consumption market. On the other hand, it is similar to Martin & Schouten (2014)’s study as the consumption community of second-hand goods is consumer-driven. The respondents’ statements show how they take several roles in the community.

“I sometimes act as dealer on some of those big flea markets in Forum and Bella Center. There I gradually know the buyers, then we buy a little of each other and some of the stands are also selling from what they have.” – Ane

“I also love to sell things on the private online exchange market as “Den Blå Avis” (DBA). I have done it a lot. Also at flea markets... However, it is mostly clothes I sell, actually. The reason I do not sell more is that I have just gathered what I need. Therefore, I do not have enough in my home to resell furniture and stuff.” – Kathrine

Engaged consumers prefer to consume and deal with other private consumers opposed to the professional dealers. It appears that the consumers avoid acquiring goods in professional stores. Preferable places to consume and deal among the consumers are flea markets and online sites e.g. an online exchange site, “Den Blå Avis”, which is a place for consumers who wish to sell second-hand goods.

Consumers create an independency of the professional dealers, which means that the interaction between consumers and professional dealers are less present among those that are engaged in the community. The consumer trades directly with another consumer i.e. the interaction are intensified at the consumer-consumer level. In the below quotes consumers of second-hand goods describe the preference for dealing with other consumers.

“I would rather try to find the goods myself when I know what I’m looking for, then there is no reason to go through the professional dealers. He gets the product from the same place like the estates.” – Thomas

“I am not really that much in professional stores. I’m going to Ravensborggade¹ when they have flea market there. However, you are usually not able to do the good finds there, because the professional dealers have the sense of it... I would visit mostly other markets.” – Ane

To achieve a great deal, the consumers are critical of whom to bargain. Professional stores are known as a place where the prices are too high because of professional dealers knowledge about the goods. Meaning that engaged consumers prefer not to buy from the professional dealers. This is of course without refusal that mainstream consumers presumably are the primary users of professional dealers.

Using the Internet as a space to consume and deal is a growing area within the community for both consumers and professional dealers. The internet supplies a convenient marketplace for the consumers to buy and sell goods from their computer at home or at work. Additionally, consumers are able to search information and achieve more knowledge about the goods before they consume or deal. The following quotes illuminate how consumers use the internet to enact the role as dealer.

“I would rather make an active search if I know a mother is dead and her children resell her stuff. It is commonly that many resell the goods on DBA... I also sell all my stuff - all the old stuff. I sell my books or other things I am not using anymore... Ordinary things for the household thereby. Instead of it just are standing in the attic, I earn a little money from it. When you have been searching at DBA, then you find out that you can sell anything there...” – Thomas

“I have sold a bit at DBA because I just got an extra cabinet. It is a little easier to sell big furniture on DBA because if I want to sell stuff on flea markets then I have to have a car to tow it. Therefore I

¹ Ravensborggade is a street placed in a part of Copenhagen where many professionals have their stores. When it is spring and summer many flea markets driven by the store owners are arranged during the weekends.

would rather be able to lug the stuff in a suitcase when I sell stuff on flea markets, which is a little difficult with cabinets and chairs.” – Kathrine

The professional dealers also see economic benefits from using the internet and considers it an effective way to reach the consumers.

“I would say that the Internet is still the key for the industry. That is how it will work in the future, because the small shop where you clear an estate once in a while or people come down and sell some stuff over the counter, they are dying.” – Pjot

4.2.2 A consumer centric resource dependency

The second-hand community is a market driven by consumer supply of second-hand goods, which means that no new produced goods are entering the market. Hence, there is no marketers directly behind the consumption community of second-hand goods. It is the common consumption practices of consuming several branded and non-branded second-hand goods, which unite the members of the second-hand community. The closest we get to a marketer influence within this community are the professional dealers.

“New” goods enter the market either when a consumer sells their goods or when someone dies and relatives sell goods from the estate. This creates a great amount of recirculation of goods within this community, and the respondents estimate that 80 % of the second-hand goods are recirculated goods. This number can of course not be used as an exact measure, but it indicates the domination of recirculated goods. This circulation of goods constructs a mutual dependency of resources among the members of the community in which the consumers constitute a central and dominant role. Consumers thereby “*maintain a continuous supply of resources*” (p. 1021), which the rest of the community depend on (Thomas et al. 2013). This construction of resources dependency may develop though competition among the professional dealers because they are forced to buy from the consumer or other professional dealers. The market is controlled and stabilized by the inflow of goods, which is limited and depending on the consumers. This gives consumers a powerful role in stabilization of the second-hand market through the supply of resources. Resource dependency is also considered in Thomas et al. (2013)’s study of the community of runners.

The supply of goods depends on what the consumers choose to sell from their possessed goods. It may take many years before an opportunity for replacing things from their home occurs and it is a highly selective activity to acquire the desired goods (see *Hunting for treasures*). According to our research the greatest inflow of second-hand goods are from estates, but these goods are primarily supplied through the professional dealers. Either professional dealers run their business large scale by acquiring goods form an

entire estate or professional dealers specialize within a given area of second-hand goods by acquiring goods from diverse consumer channels i.e. flea markets, online sites and estates. The following quote describes the different types of professional dealers.

“There are two options. Either one can run a shop by large scale, like we do... or one can specialize by knowing everything about Georg Jensen or Art Nouveau, a specific period or the like.” – Pjot

The primary supply of “new” goods from estates, through professional dealers, which makes them a bit more powerful as they become a channel for “new” goods to enter the market. This could make consumers slightly dependent on the professional dealers; however, consumers still enact the role as sole providers of second-hand goods. “New” goods also enters the market without being channelled through professional dealers. On the other hand, consumers seem to be interested in different second-hand goods, which are assumed to keep the market stabilized through the recirculated goods.

In sum, consumers’ several roles makes them powerful in keeping the second-hand market stabilized through supply of goods, dealing and consuming second-hand goods. We argue that the stabilized second-hand market is highly consumer-driven as consumers are powering the goods that unite the consumption community, which can be considered slightly similar in the study from Martin & Schouten (2014).

4.2.3 Bargaining is a part of the game

The buying process between members of the community are constructed of different rituals. These rituals are according to McCracken (1986) used as social actions to which the consumers use as communicators. Consumers prepare for the bargaining by setting a maximum offer for what he or she is willing to pay for the goods. This value is usually dependent on the amount of time the consumers has searched for the product and of course the considered value of the goods. A great part of the rituals associated with the process of acquiring goods is the bargaining. These rituals are used in the process of achieving desired second-hand goods.

An economic consideration influences many consumers; why they usually prepare themselves by only withdraw a finite amount of money before they search for specific goods at flea markets and other sites as Caroline does:

“It is best to have equal money. It's horrible if you have faced and negotiated down 50-30 DKK and when you are going to pay you give the dealer a 50-note.”- Caroline

An important part of the bargaining ritual is to appear ignorant about the value of the goods (see *Knowledge is key in the community of second-hand goods*). When the desired goods are found, the bargaining part begins. This last until the imagined price or a better price is achieved. The following comments reveal this:

"I am always ready to negotiate, yes, reasonable ready to negotiate the price down, you should never let it go for the first price you hear." – Caroline

"I ask for the price and if I think it is too expensive I will put it down again. Unless I really want it, then I will try to haggle it down a bit. However, I will always haggle over the price. It is what you do. Usually it is a 100-50 DKK. I am haggle down, unless it is very expensive goods. There is always negotiation. You always negotiate the price down." – Ane

"Well, uh, I'm just asking what it costs, and then I bid lower, and then I smile, then it works a little better. At the DBA I just write "you agree to sell it for ... what do I know?", and I will pick it up quickly." – Kathrine

These rituals can be explained by Rook (1985) as behavioural habits. The rituals are performed more or less habitually but they are all an experience build around an *"episodic string of events"* (p. 252). The rituals are affected by the shared consumption practice among the consumers within the second-hand community (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). Rituals should be understood as a symbolic language in which the consumer are taught that their recent work will be complemented through a ritualization of specific aspects of their marketplace behaviour (Rook 1985). When the consumers learn to decode the *"symbolic meaning"* of the goods the complement will be revealed (ibid). According to Rook (1985) rituals portray how the consumer are striving for social status. Striving for social status through the use of goods is according to Veblen (1975 in Corrigan 1997: 22) an indication of social distinction. Achievement of desired goods through a successful bargaining is for the consumer *"the most efficient way of demonstrating their wealth and thereby claiming status"* (p. 22) in the community (ibid). However, unfamiliar rituals can create anxiety or embarrassment for the consumer (Rook 1985). This is evident in the following comment:

"The worst thing is... if it's the sellers who have the knowledge. When you are at a flea market and people who have some Royal Copenhagen and demands at least 200 DKK for a cup and plate, then I become hugely aggressive, because I had hoped that it was someone who should just sell their grandmother's frame and did not know what it was worth." – Caroline

The consumers within the community have preferences for the different kinds of second-hand goods to which they fulfil their desired ideal of a lifestyle or home decorations. These preferences can force the consumer to compete for specific goods. However, among the consumers there exists a shared perception that they shall never let their emotions take over the rational arguments when trying to achieve a preferred or desired good. Meaning that, the consumers will never let their desire for specific goods take complete control. Nevertheless, the consumers “visualize an exciting world of wonder” (p. 333) through their desire which they strive for (Belk et al. 2003). When the consumer have an intense desire for specific goods, they will experience their consciousness become “rivets” by the desired goods through “a palpable feeling that permeates their existence” (p. 333) (ibid). The consumers is thereby very challenged by their consciousness when they face a desired second-hand goods. Following statements from the respondents illuminate the challenges they are up against:

“If I like it, then I would like to compete a little about it. If anyone else also would like to have it then I would bid higher. However, I do not think I would lose control. I'm very aware of what I spend my money on and would thereby not suddenly lose control. I do not collect, so I would therefore not lose control and due to a desire to have it.” - Kathrine

“If there is someone else who wants it I might lose control. However, I have a girlfriend who is very strict with our economy. She keeps me in handles and I am not allowed to spend several thousand Danish kroner on something that may not cost that much. However, I might be tempted to over bid prices sometimes.” – Thomas

4.3 Hunting for treasures

In the following, section the analysis aim to explore the process of “hunting for treasures” within the market of second-hand goods. It appears that the “hunt” for second-hand goods plays a significant role in the consumers’ consumption behaviour within the community of second-hand goods.

4.3.1 A specific task

The process of acquiring second-hand goods is often long-term due to the rather specific task the consumers pursue and the limited “new” goods supplied in the consumption community of second-hand goods. It appears that the consumers within the second-hand community create their preferences and thereby the task of consuming second-hand goods from four main aims: 1) Home decoration i.e. a well-considered style for the entire home. 2) Second-hand goods are determined by category or brand i.e. a specific type of domestic goods or designs or brands. 3) Valuable goods i.e. being able to spot the attractive goods, provides an opportunity to resell with a profit and some of these goods never lose their material

value. 4) Popular second-hand goods i.e. the task for second-hand goods change according to external stimulus and inspiration, and a part of the task is to be first mover to enhance the chances of acquiring the desired goods. Furthermore, the consumers have a perception that the goods become more popular minimum 30 years after their production.

Consumers within the community of second-hand goods have a desire for possessing different kinds of goods, which is referred to as the task. They create a consumption pattern or strategy that enables them to “hunt” and possess desired goods. This consumption strategy is transformed into a specific task for possessing different goods, which contributes to the completion of the task.

The “hunt” for second-hand goods becomes a sort of passionate consumption practice to which Belk et al. (2003) argues: “*consumer desire is a passion born between consumption fantasies and social situational contexts*” (p. 327). Furthermore, desire is often focused on a specific good shaped by social and historical circumstances (ibid). The notion of desire points towards the characteristics of the task of “hunting” for second-hand goods. In the search for goods, consumers desire specific goods based on the created task.

To nuance the task consumers pursue, it is related to literature about collecting. Belk et al. (1988) present two non-collector types, *the accumulator* and *the hoarder*, which do not apply completely to the task consumers of second-hand goods pursue. *The accumulator “is acquisitive, but lacks selectivity”* and *the hoarder “is possessive, but views the items possessed... primarily as utilitarian commodities rather than extra utilitarian sacred items”* (Belk et al. 1988: 548). One could say that the community of second-hand goods foster different types. The consumers of second-hand goods are different from the accumulator due to their selective approach. As mentioned earlier, consumers have specific goods they desire within the four main aims framing the task e.g. “hunting” for Danish design lamps. *The Hoarder* is closer to some of the consumers as some goods are considered utilitarian commodities. A significant finding, which separate second-hand consumers from *the hoarder* is that they often prioritise the “hunt” for goods higher than the possessing of goods (ibid). The consumers of second-hand goods cannot be classified as pure collectors. Belk et al. (1988: 548) states, “*items collected may have utilitarian or aesthetic appeals, they must have additional significance to the collector due to their importance in contributing to the “set” of items that comprise the collection*”. Consumers of second-hand goods collect or desire a set of goods in a selective manner within the boundaries of a specific task; however, unlike collectors goods are still viewed as utilitarian goods (Belk et al. 1988: 1 and Belk 1995: 3).

4.3.2 I hope, therefore I hunt

A long term hunt

The acquisition of second-hand goods is to a great extent characterised by the “hunt” for goods. The “hunt” for second-hand goods are challenged and prolonged by the recirculation of second-hand goods. Recirculation of goods is dominant for the market, which is evident in the empirical data. Consumers estimate the circulation of goods to account for up till 80 % and “new” goods are primarily added from estates of a deceased person. These are not actually “new” goods, but they have been off the market for a longer period or enters the market of second-hand goods for the first time. The main challenge when “hunting” for second-hand goods are to locate a dealer with frequent replacement of goods and to be the first to spot it, which makes the place more interesting to investigate for the consumers as they might find a “hidden treasure”. Furthermore, the consumers of second-hand goods perceive certain goods as more rare and unique than others, which makes them attractive and at the same time hard to get. This creates a stronger desire to possess these goods and the consumer may intensify the “hunt” to achieve the desired good(s) (Belk et. al 2003). The following quotes implies that goods, which are difficult to acquire may intensify the desire.

“I think I am in a 1960s period right now where everything has to be teak, and especially from Farstrup Capentry. They do not exist anymore, so it is a bit difficult to find also because they have not produced that much. They only made products in teak and they produced from the 30s I think until they closed in the 1960s; 1968 I think I was. I have spent a lot of time looking for those goods and the supply is limited. You really have to be hasty!” - Thomas

“I had a specific thing I wanted and I think I looked for it for about a year and a half. When I found it I gave the price, because I would not risk losing it.” - Kathrine

An explorative hunt for specific goods

The “hunt” for second-hand goods is rather open within the limits of the task, which is fairly specific, and the consumers are never sure of what they may find. The task is the consumers aim for consumption of desired goods within a given area e.g. wooden furniture in teak made by a specific producer. Obviously consumers know that second-hand goods are not available everywhere to be handpicked and therefore the “hunt” for goods is more explorative and long-term. Our research of second-hand consumers shows that consumers do not want to restrict their “hunt” to one specific good, as this is perceived as a way to overlook or miss the “hidden treasures”. The following quote illuminates these finding.

“Sometimes if you are too determined to find something specific, then you are too blind to see other good things. I try not to be so specific, when I look for things.” - Ane

The experience and the fun of hunting for goods

Consumers see the “hunt” of goods as an experience and do not want to be disappointed by having to high expectations to the “hunt”. It is commonly expressed, among the consumers, that the fun and experience of “hunting” for goods is what keeps them going.

“I just think it is enjoyable and unique and different. To see possibilities in things makes it fun.” – Kathrine

In sum, the long-term task of searching for second-hand goods, the explorative “hunt” and the experience of “hunting” for goods shows how hope is an engine for the consumption practice. Hope seems to keep the desire for goods alive even though they are challenging to acquire. According to Belk et. al. (2003) the positive state of hope leads to a desire and without hope of acquiring the goods the desire fates into impossible fantasies. Hope is not the same as expectations of acquiring a desired good, but consumers struggle to obtain desired goods by exploring ways to make the desired good more reachable and these actions foster hope (ibid). Hope is a consumers’ perceived possibility of achieving a desired good and it is also hope that keeps the cycle of desire moving (ibid). Consumers of second-hand goods limit their expectations, in the “hunt” for desired goods, which might help foster hope and keeping the cycle of desire moving. Furthermore, the ongoing “hunt”, on a regular basis, are ways in which consumers aim to make the desired goods more reachable i.e. the more effort the consumers puts into acquiring the desired goods the closer they get to possessing the goods.

Beside hope as an engine for the consumption practice, the fun of “hunting” for goods seems to play a significant role in the consumption process. The experience described by the consumers emphasises the thrill and fun of “hunting” for goods. These descriptions support the finding of Bjarne Rogan (1998 in Campbell 2005) who finds that collecting is also about fun and play. Belk et al. (1988) finds that some collectors enjoy the “hunt” rather than the possession of the object. Further, an on-going “hunt” makes a consumers feel skilled. The fun of collecting or “hunting” might also be a way for a consumer to appear skilled concerning knowledge about second-hand goods and thereby completing their task. Spotting and “hunting” specific second-hand goods contributes to a feeling of fun and mastery for the consumers of second-hand goods (ibid).

4.3.3 An irreplaceable hunt

The task of finding second-hand “treasures” is irreplaceable to the engaged consumers. Consumers are not willing to replace the “hunt” for second-hand goods with other interest arenas. Rather than replacing the interest the consumers express desire to expand their interest, which is clearly expressed by one respondent. Ane wishes that she had kept her father’s professional shop in Copenhagen, and the dream of opening her own shop someday is still alive. The statement shows that it is common that the task within second-hand goods expand over time:

“In the beginning I was very interested in jewelry and watches. But lately I am also becoming interested in ceramics, porcelain and furniture; especially teak furniture. So my interest has broadened.” - Ane

Among the respondents, the “hunt” for second-hand goods shift to a new range of domestic goods and a higher engagement through the wish of becoming a professional dealer, which makes the task of finding second-hand goods an endless interest.

Similar findings are present in literature addressing the complexity of collecting behaviour (Belk et al. 1988). Collectors express fear of completing the collection (ibid), where the consumers of second-hand goods see a continuous exchange of their goods. This could also be explained by the consumer’s emphasis on the process of acquiring goods rather than displaying them (Money 2007). Furthermore, high involvement in consuming goods are assumed to increase the time and effort consumers are willing to allocate to acquiring the goods (Laaksonen 2011).

The endless task of consuming second-hand goods and interest in second-hand goods can be supported by McCracken (1988 in Corrigan 1997: 46), who describes goods as bridges to displaced ideals e.g. the perfectly decorated home. The bridges to displaced meanings are imagined and a concrete step is to consume goods that fit with the ideal. Furthermore, there are always higher levels of consumption for consumers to aspire (ibid). Unique and rare collectibles are mentioned, as these goods are rare and make the completion of an ideal nearly impossible (ibid). Several consumers refer to the task as something they just know; a tacit knowledge which is difficult to describe in details. Rikke, a semi-professional, is an example of how the task is difficult to describe in details and it changes continually. She has an ideal of the perfectly decorated home or a personal style in mind when “hunting” for second-hand goods and therefore goods become bridges to displaced meaning (ibid).

“It is simply a gut feeling. I do not consider whether I will be able to resell it, I do not care about that. Someday I might have to consider that but for now I just pursue what feels right. It is like I

have an x-ray vision like Super Man, where I can see things shine through a bunch of things. I never get overwhelmed by a lot of thing I just think it is cool.” – Rikke

4.3.4 A successful hunt

The acquisition of goods that fits with the task of consuming second-hand goods evokes joy, satisfaction, relief, surprise and a feeling of a successful "hunt" among the consumers in our research. A successful "hunt" becomes even more of a victory when the consumer has searched for the goods for a long time (Belk et. al. 2003).

“You get really happy, when you have wanted something for a long time, which is difficult to find and then find it. That is very satisfying.” - Kathrine

“It is so great when you have been looking for something for a long time and find the perfect thing and to a reasonable price. I remember when I wanted some specific china; I was intoxicated when I found it.” - Caroline

4.3.5 Where to hunt

Despite the importance of identifying sites with frequent replacement of goods, consumers still have preferred locations in their "hunt" for goods. The respondents' most preferred places are online sites and flea markets. Expectations about where one can find the "right" goods determine where consumers search for second-hand goods.

“I research a bit to figure out what are the odds of finding a specific thing and where do I need to go to find it.” - Thomas

The importance of identifying an attractive site relates to consumers anticipation of acquiring a desired good, which is a source of pleasure (Belk et. al. 2003). On the other hand, the actual "hunt" for goods is still what the respondents find most pleasurable. Besides the identification of the attractive sites a part of the "hunt" is also to buy the things before someone else.

“You really have to be quick; I think we look after it (on the internet) every day or every other day.” – Thomas

“On the flea markets you have to be on the spot as soon as they unpack their things sometimes even before they have even opened the boxes.” - Ane

The desire to buy a good before everyone else has created what consumers describe as “Early birds”. “Early birds” are consumers that pay extra to “hunt” for goods before everyone else at, for example, flea markets.

“For example in Forum and in Bella center, they have something they call “the early birds” where you can pay a little extra to get in before the real faire is open and the mop arrives , I sometimes do that.” – Ane

4.4 Dedication to second-hand goods

Consumers’ interest for consuming and possessing second-hand goods is a great part of their daily life and is a shared perception that this interest cannot be replaced by another one (See Hunting for treasures). As previously discovered in the other sections many consumers within the second-hand community have adopted the interest in a young age and for many it has become a lifestyle. Through their life, the interest for different categories of goods have expanded. Simultaneously they have improved their knowledge and gained more insight about which goods are attractive to possess. The following section aims to explore how the consumers within the community of second-hand goods create meaning of the goods and how these goods are means for self-expression.

4.4.1 Quality goods for everyone

Consumers within the second-hand community perceive that second-hand goods have a better quality than new produced goods. They believe it is possible to return to those goods from earlier stylistic periods, which actually were produced well and with better raw materials. Furthermore, the second-hand goods must generally be original from the original producers or from the “original” time e.g. 50s, 60s or 70s and not necessarily a specific brand, to make it interesting for the consumers to possess. This of course varies depending on the individual consumer. The age of the goods makes it authentic and unique to which it often have a story. Patina is therefore fundamentally for those second-hand goods that consumers have a desire to possess. Goods with patina have been on a journey for generations between families. In sixteen century patina, signs of age, functioned as marker of social status (McCracken 1988 in Corrigan, 1997:5-7). Today, patina in goods are passed on between consumers and an indicator for the quality of the goods is present due its long-term existence. The contrast to patina is fashion (ibid), which in this community is characterized as new mass-produced goods, which the consumers find less attractive (Campbell 2005). This is evident in the following comments:

“It is mostly the design and that the product is unique which is interesting. Not everything needs to be new; you can easily combine something completely new with something old. The most important thing is that it is unique and actually also the quality of the goods. Because the quality is a little

different when you buy something old. Therefore, the important thing is to have something that no one else has... I do not want something which is fake or a copy; then I would rather like to have something that is not a specific brand but has a specific expression.” - Christina

“A good quality is important. That can also be a beautiful bowl of teak wood. It does not have to be a brand as long as it is beautiful and unbroken. I never buy broken things. I guess I am more discerning. Especially in my home; I can combine my things with something cheap, but it has to be classic, it has to be durable.” - Ane

Stories behind the second-hand goods are considered attractive and the story provides additional value to the goods. According to Kopytoff (1986 in Corrigan, 1997) *“objects have their own biographies and are often far more than mere commodities”* (p.36). Consumers of second-hand goods value the biographies of things and assign additional value to goods that carry a story. Furthermore, there are *“various views on the proper status of the goods”* (Kopytoff, 1986 in Corrigan, 1997:40) among the consumers. These views could be reflected in the different preferences the consumer has e.g. some assign higher status to antique goods and some to Danish design goods. The story gives the second-hand goods an identity and a *“symbolic meaning”* becomes attached to the goods, which makes it unique and attractive to possess (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). For Thomas a cabinet suddenly gained another meaning to him:

“I have actually got a cabinet made by a carpenter. Some friends of my family moved to a new house and some of their furniture did not fit in. They did not really know what to do with it, so I came and looked at it. It turned out that it was her grandfather who had made the cabinet as a piece for his apprenticeship, so that was very cool.” - Thomas

History of the second-hand goods are important to most consumers, due to the memories attached to them. These memories create *“an emotion that is usually instigated by feelings of frustration in the present, compared with an idealized image of a perfect past”* (Goulding, 2002: 544). This emotion is based on personal experiences with the goods (ibid), which have created a special relationship with the goods for the consumers (Baudrillard 1988 in Corrigan, 1997:47). These emotions, aroused by nostalgia, create preferences among the consumers of what is attractive to achieve and intensify the *“hunt”* for the desired goods for the consumer. This is evident in the memory of Sanne:

“Nostalgia means a lot to me. I remember a sugar thong we had in my childhood home, which I do not know where is now. It was made of silver and I loved to play with it. However, it was only when

we had guests that I was allowed to play with it. It could pick up pieces of sugar and look like a thing from a construction site but it was very funny. I would like to find one of those again.” – Sanne

The history of the second-hand goods makes it difficult to estimate its economic value due to personal sentimental values. The time will signify the goods, which according to Baudrillard (1988 in Corrigan, 1997:47) are called the “*Bygone object*”. The consumer will “*transform it into personal and social significant goods*” (p. 550) which makes the goods extraordinary to the consumer and it will become “*singularized*”. Maybe even sacred icons to them to which the goods will reach a high status in their collections or among other possessions (Kopytoff 1986 in (Belk et al. 1988; Belk et al. 2003). History in the second-hand goods affect the willingness of the consumer to trade the good and to whom the dealer wish to sell; it has to be the “right” buyer. The buyer has to understand the meaning and value of the good, which in many cases can be difficult. Nevertheless, the second-hand goods may not have the same meaning for every consumer. When the consumer are reselling a good it is commodified again as it no longer have an identity (Kopytoff 1986 in Corrigan, 1997:35-38). When a new owner buys the good, it will become decommodified in which the former identity will be replaced by the new owner’s perception of the good and a new identity will be created. The relationship the former owner had to the good is also replaced. If the good are resold, it will become commodified again etc. (ibid). Following comment reveals the process of decommodification:

“There is a great difference in what people choose to sell their things for, so you can easily feel if people have at special relationship to the furniture they sell, even if other people cannot see anything special in them. Where you think to yourselves “wow” they are expensive... It also important if you have seen the products before. I think everybody can relate to that. This is the case with our chairs. My boyfriend and I were disagreeing about what kind of chairs to get. However, the ones we got was the same kind as some chairs his grandmother had, so he agreed on them. If he had not seen them in his grandmother’s home, then he would probably not have liked them. So I really think you are powered by if you have seen a thing before and also that it is old.” – Christina

Several elements makes the second-hand goods unique e.g., quality, design and originality. Consumers believe that the older the goods are, the more special. The second-hand goods may therefore not lose their material value compared to branded new goods. This means that if the consumer prefers to resell a good, the material value would either be the same or higher. However, the second-hand goods do have various values regarding the sentimental value of the consumers. In terms of usefulness, the perception of the benefits of owning the goods will therefore be different among the consumers (Marx 1974 in Corrigan, 1997:34). This is why the same goods may be resold for very deviating prices. This is evident in the following comments:

"I do not think that goods can be compared and exchanged equally, because it from person to person has so different personal value... It is probably a good I have searched after for a long time to which it has a high value for me to be able to possess. However, the goods I have brought to the flea market instead is possible not similarly attractive to others at the flea market." - Caroline

"If I wanted to sell my dresser, which has been my grandparents for many years, then maybe potential buyers would offer me 100 DKK, but to me, because of the sentimental value, it is much more worth." – Christina

4.4.2 Beauty in the home

Consumers within the community of second-hand goods have a perception that consuming second-hand goods is a part of creating a beautiful and personal home. The aim of possessing the goods is not with the purpose of displaying them in the home opposed to what (Money 2007) found as important, but they are contributions to a beautiful home. Second-hand goods are selected because of the beauty and aesthetics it represents in the domestic sphere (Corrigan, 1997:103-104). This is evident in the following quote:

"I think it has a soul and I think that people like having something unique in their home, instead of some plain vase from IKEA. I think it has more personality and reveal more about you, if you have something special in your home. I think that is the main thing and the also the aesthetic and beautiful." - Ane

According to Forty (1968 in Corrigan, 1997: 96) domestic goods have a central role in transforming the home. The home is transformed *"from a source of moral welfare and place of beauty to a source of physical welfare and place of efficiency"* (Ibid: 96). The beauty of the second-hand goods are thereby related to the social function of beauty there once characterised society. In a way, second-hand goods are bridges to values that were once present in society. Goods are attached different meanings depending on the life phase of the consumer. Young people associate furniture with comfort, whereas adults may perceive it differently and mostly based on memories, social networks and accomplishment of creating a home (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981, in Corrigan, 1997:112). Consumers individually creates *"symbolic meanings"* to the different types of second-hand goods (Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998). Thus, the individual consumer has his own *"symbolic meaning"* connected with the goods, which are slightly different from other consumers (ibid).

According to Douglas and Isherwood (1979 in Corrigan 1997: 18) all material goods carry social meanings and are used as communicators in a cultural context. The consumption of second-hand goods carries the meanings of uniqueness and the home communicates these meanings. The consumer have constructed an

intelligible universe in their home, through their second-hand goods that makes sense for them (ibid). According to McCracken (1986) is this an “imaginary” world the consumers have created to be able to express themselves. Thus, they become cultural constructors of their own created world, based on those meanings, social groups and goods to which they are surrounded (ibid).

“I think you have imagined how your interior should be. It should match the way I feel about myself, and then I think I have become very settled with the glow from teak wood.” – Thomas

4.4.3 I say no to IKEA

The consumers perceive second-hand goods as unique and expressive goods. This perception of goods stand in contrast to the mass-produced goods sold in, for example, IKEA. There appears to be a shared consensus of these two opposite possibilities for consuming furniture and nearly all respondents mention IKEA as the unattractive alternative to second-hand goods. This consensus is revealed in these comments:

“You could have bought everything in IKEA... I am so sick of getting in to a home where it is all the same and lacks expression. You do not know whether you are in an IKEA catalogue or in somebody’s home...I prefer to have thing of high quality instead of thing that are in fashion right now or another IKEA piece.” - Thomas

“I think it is a matter of personality. Furniture from IKEA is not personal. Of course some people prefer something which is the same and just works, but I also think that there is something in your home you just want to shine through differently; like an old armchair. So I think people try to put some soul into their homes by finding a chair that your granddad had when you were a child and then do something new to it, but keep the memories. There are no memories in new products.” - Caroline

In our research we found that the consumers use second-hand goods as a mean to express themselves and the carefully selected goods are expressing their personal style (Belk et al. 1988). Maybe even an ideal lifestyle. According to McCracken (1988 in Corrigan 1997: 46) goods are bridges to the ideal lifestyle, because of the displacement of meanings in goods. Meanings are put into the second-hand goods, as they are perceived as unique and become bridges to a desired expression of the self and authenticity. According to Belk et al. (1988) the collection of the goods “accounts for many of the self-enhancing motives, as seeking power, knowledge, reminders of one’s childhood, prestige, mastery and control” (p.550). Goods are used to express personality in the home and are a way of the consumers to represent and distinguish themselves (ibid). This is also express by the respondents’ statement.

"I think my home is an extension of me or being in my home would be like being with me. I don't want people to get surprised when they see my home; it should reflect who I am as a person and what I stand for." - Thomas

According to Corrigan (1997: 100) There exist a tension between how the consumer express themselves individually and the ideas from the society. Several ideologies and values are built into the designs of goods. The taste appears therefore not to be individual within a society (Corrigan, 1997: 101). However, other authors argue that the ideology of the goods varies depending on the interpreter although the medias and the society have a major impact on it (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Within the community of second-hand goods, the individual taste of the members is reflecting their personality. According to Stewart (1984 in Belk et al., 1988) the possessions of the consumer are *"implicated in the extended self because it is often visible and undeniably represents the collector's judgement and taste"* (p.550). The consumers seems to have created their own universe of goods based on their "judgement of taste" which classify themselves (Bourdieu 1984 in Skov, 2011). They have thereby succeeded in creating a home, which reflects their personality, which is evident in the following statements.

"I think that good taste can be reflected in a furnishing where there has been done a little extra, and not only from IKEA. Good taste can also be thins from IKEA, but I think it should be combined with something else, something personal. Something that you have spent some time looking for." - Ane

"To combine colours is important to me. Not different styles but colours. But you cannot define good or bad taste; then you would not feel commutable in other peoples home. Some people think they have a beautiful home and think that I live ugly." - Sanne

4.4.4 Less money to offer

Consuming second-hand goods is cheaper than consuming branded new goods, which is a shared perception among the consumers within the second-hand community. The economic aspect is therefore essential among the consumers within the community of second-hand goods. It is common for the consumers to feel that they have saved a great amount of money while also met a personal desire of consuming and possessing the goods. Besides the attached "symbolic meaning", which affect how valuable the goods are to the consumer (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998), the value of the goods increases even more if the consumer have an experience of having achieved a desired good to a considerably lower price than what they were willing to pay. This is evident in these quotes:

“You get very thrilled; especially when you get something cheap, because it is never great to pay too much for something. If you get something cheap, then you become very happy. It is a sense of happiness, if you bring home something really nice to a low price.” - Ane

“When I started to buy second-hand it was because of the price. I got an offer on a lot of Royal Copenhagen and then I decided to buy it because of the price. I think it can be very nice to have just a few old things (from Royal Copenhagen) and then mix it with new things because the colour and the pattern is still the same.” - Kathrine

However, the perception of the value of goods increase if goods are considered unique and difficult to achieve i.e. if the consumers have searched for a desired good for a long time the price they are willing to offer changes. Thus, their desire overrule their economic considerations (Belk et al. 2003). The two comments from Sanne and Kathrine reveals this:

“I had a feeling about to small glasses from Holmegård; there were something special about them but I could not could my finger on it. They wanted 300 DKK for them and I gave that, because I really wanted them. I did not refuse to pay what they asked, because if I left without them to turn back later after them, and then they were gone, then I would be very disappointed. I would rather pay what they asked to be sure to get them even if people were laughing at me. When I see something special, I just know it right away and then I must have it no matter the price.” – Sanne

“Royal Copenhagen is the only thing I collect. And yes I could end up paying too much for it if I saw a special bowl or something, then I would be willing to pay a little extra.” – Kathrine

According to Belk et al. (2003) reaching a desire for goods is available for everybody, however it is not necessarily accessible to all; in the community of second-hand goods knowledge is important for consuming desired goods which is considered something that is not accessible to everybody (see *Knowledge is key in the community of second-hand goods*). The consumers thereby have the ability to consume and possess goods, which once were expensive and only people with wealthy could afford. Thus, the consumer creates an emulation of a consumption pattern people from higher layer in the society once held (Veblen 1975 in Corrigan, 1997:22-23). Their mastery in acquiring desired and attractive goods reflects an understanding of the shared ideology within the community which is slightly similar in the study from Schouten & McAlexander (1995).

4.5 I make it my own

In the following section of the analysis the emphasis is on understanding extended individual grooming rituals and the use of goods as means for self-expression. The degree of engagement is implicitly explored and put into perspective through the use of existing literature about consumption practices that enable consumers to be self-expressive.

The practice of consuming second-hand goods is a highly selective and ongoing consumption action. The continuous interest in consuming second-hand goods requires skills and knowledge from the consumers, which have been elaborated in the analysis part about (see *Knowledge is key in the community of second-hand goods* and *Hunting for treasures*). Consumers within the community of second-hand goods use goods to obtain individuality and personal style as well as unique and symbolic resources to express the self. Opposed to the study of (Schau et al. 2009) that explores grooming as collective activity, our research of the consumers of second-hand goods has only revealed individually grooming actions. The consumers of second-hand goods apply alterations to their acquired goods to transform them into personalized goods. The following quotes illuminate how the consumers imagine the possibilities in the goods:

“... once I wanted to have things that were ready to use, but now I am much better to see the possibilities and if you paint it a little here and there or repulsture something. Once is had to see it before I could imagine the possibilities. I do not need to any more. Often I do these modifications myself or my family helps me, but I have never had it done by professionals.” - Kathrine

“It is cheaper to get something cool when it is used and you can but something very cheap and then renovate it exactly as you want.” - Christina

This is a consumption action that requires skills and knowledge combined with creativity and the ability to imagine the possibilities in the goods. Campbell (2005) describes the craft consumer as someone who takes different mass-produced goods as the “raw materials” for the creation of new goods. Craft consumers transform goods into personalized goods, which are typically intended for self-consumption (ibid).

The consumption actions of the consumers in the second-hand market could be characterised as craft consumption, but it is interesting to look more into the nuances i.e. whether these consumption practices actually are evidence of craft consumption or whether it is merely customization of goods. Customization is about changing the good in some way to meet an individual’s needs, taste or desire (Campbell 2005). Customization can be the rise for craft consumption. When customization of goods lead to the acquisition of specialized knowledge and skills, and the act has tuned into a more long lasting interest, in for example interior decoration, it becomes craft consumption (ibid). Craft consumption differentiate from

customization of goods as *“the consumer must be directly involved in both the design and the production of that which is to be consumed.”* (Campbell 2005: 31). It seems like it is not just customization that is present in the second-hand market, due to those consumers that apply significant modification of the goods and the long lasting interest (ibid).

Craft consumption is also seen in the creative act of “putting together” of mass-produced goods and not solely by direct modification of the goods (Campbell 2005: 34). The “putting together” of goods is evident in consumers’ emphasis on personal style in the home through carefully selected second-hand goods. Furthermore, “putting together” of goods is also seen through mixing of new goods and second-hand goods. The following statements from second-hand consumers illuminate how “putting together” is present in the second-hand community.

“... But also a style that is well considered, that you have not just mixed everything. I think it is nice to mix a few things, but if it is completely without a sense of style and in every existing colour then it looks messy.” – Kathrine

“... The design and the unique features of the goods and the fact that everything does not need to be new, but one can combine something completely new with something really old.” - Christina

The creative act of “putting together” leads to considerations of collecting goods as a sort of craft consumption (Campbell 2005: 34). Belk (1995 in Campbell 2005) define the activity of collecting as *“the processes of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing, things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects of experiences”* (p.34). Emphasis is on an active direction and passionate engagement, which is present in the community of second-hand goods and thereby supports the argument of consumers of second-hand goods as craft consumers. The search for specific goods, collectables, requires knowledge and skills and can be seen as a creative act. The process of collecting involves possession and grooming rituals as well as investment in the self through the creation of a collection (ibid).

Furthermore, craft consumption and collecting could be related to Kopytoff’s concept of commodification and de-commodification. Some goods, for example collectables, successfully resist commodification as they are held sacred (Kopytoff 1986 in Corrigan 1997: 39). Campbell (2005) add to the topic and states that the rise of craft consumption might be a “decommodifying reaction” to the progressive commodification. Our research of second-hand consumers have not showed straight forward evidence for a “decommodifying reaction”, but the consumption of second-hand goods are perceived as an attractive alternative to mass-produced goods. Consumers of second-hand goods do not consume goods as a direct reaction to mass-

production. Second-hand goods possess attractive characteristics that engage the consumer in the consumption practice, which is explored further in the analysis of *Dedicated to second-hand goods*.

The desire for self-expression is the engine behind consumer's skills, knowledge, judgment and passion of the consumption activity termed "craft consumer" by Campbell (2005: 23). Consumers consume based on a desire to engage in creative acts of self-expression (ibid). The rise to their distinctive mode of consuming is the fact that they already have a clear and stable sense of identity (ibid). It appears that the more engaged consumers of second-hand goods are to a greater extent represented by people with a creative background e.g. designers and architects. Furthermore, consumers' perception of other consumers that are extremely engaged in the practice are described as unique and distinctive individuals. The creative background and the unique characters in the second-hand community supports Campbell (2005)'s notion of the craft consumer as someone who has a clear and stable identity, but pursues self-expression through the creative acts of craft consumption.

5. Conclusion

In sum, our study revealed that the consumers of second-hand goods are united through a shared consumption interest in varied second-hand goods. Furthermore, there appears to be a distinction between “true” members and mainstream members. Knowledge about second-hand goods provides the opportunity to aspire within the status hierarchy in the community. When consumers inherit the interest, knowledge and goods, consumers are provided explicit and tacit knowledge, which engage and absorb the consumers in the community of second-hand goods. This knowledge is hard to acquire for the mainstream members. However, mass-medias educate the less knowledgeable members, which enable them to gain a better position within the status hierarchy.

The consumers within the community of second-hand goods enact several roles as they act as dealer, supplier and consumer. Our research study shows that the consumers prefer to deal with other consumers when they are engaged in the community. The Internet is a convenient marketplace to enact their role as dealer. The consumers constitute a dominating role, as they are sole suppliers of “new” goods. However, professional dealers can enhance their own power through large-scale business or through specialized knowledge about the goods, but they are still depended of the resource supply from the consumers. Within the community of second-hand goods, a shared bargaining ritual to achieve desired goods exist among the consumers. Knowledge provide power to the consumer, but in the bargaining process, consumers “hide” their knowledge to obtain desired goods. Furthermore, our research revealed that mastery of the bargaining reinforce the consumers’ perception of their status position.

The unique market dynamic of the second-hand market creates power struggles among the actors within the community. The consumers become powerful through their sole supply of “new” goods and use of knowledge. Thus, the power of professional dealers is challenged by their low degree of influence on the market. The dominant role of the consumers and their actions are central for the stabilization of the second-hand market.

Our research study reveals that acquiring, consuming and possessing desired goods is a lifestyle task for the consumer. The acquisition and consumption of second-hand goods is characterized by a specific task and an ongoing and challenging “hunt” for goods. These consumer actions are continued and kept alive by feelings of hope, mastery and fun. Among the members, there exist a shared perception of which goods are “acceptable” in the community. This is grounded in what they consider attractive goods. The attractiveness of the goods is determined by the consumer continual aim to aspire to their ideal lifestyle, which have created a desire for specific goods. In contrast to new mass-produced goods, the consumer desires unique and authentic goods to fulfil their aim. Their desired goods are used as symbolic resources for expression

and construction of their self. The desired goods are used as raw materials for self-expression. The consumer modify and “put together” goods to obtain a unique self-expression.

6. Discussion

Within the field of CCT, our study add to theory in the domain of *Marketplace Cultures*. More specifically a deeper understanding of the market dynamics and consequences the interaction of the consumers have to an already stabilized market, due to their several roles as suppliers, dealer and consumers of goods to the second-hand market. Furthermore, our study has revealed an understanding of the community of second-hand goods as a consumer-driven market where issues as power struggles has become evident. An understanding of these issues regarding power struggles has helped to understand how it has affected the mechanisms of a market. Furthermore, our study add theory to the domain of *Consumer Identity Projects* through a better understanding of the *consumption cycle* in the second-hand community. Focus is on the cultural production, acquisition and consumption of second-hand goods, grooming rituals and how the second-hand goods are used as a mean for self-expression.

6.1 Power Struggles between the actors

The market of second-hand goods consists of several non-brands and brands to which the consumer selectively chooses goods dependent on their individual desire, why the second-hand community is versatile. Consumers’ choice of goods appears therefore to be undefinable, why a specific brand not necessarily is the choice. Additionally, there is no direct control of the amount and types of goods, which enter the market and a great amount of the goods, recirculate within the market to which the consumers constitute a dominant role. The key criteria for goods entrance is that it has to be used, old and not a part of new-produced mass-production. The marketers behind branded new goods, reproductions or a specific brand do therefore not have anything to offer the consumers in the second-hand community. This makes it difficult for the marketers to become an actor in the community of second-hand goods, because they have no contribution and control of the circulation of the goods. This means that marketers are put out of action in the market. Nevertheless, some brands are circulating within the second-hand community. Although, these brands are accepted, they might become threaten if the consumers consider the goods as too popular. The consumers want to have a unique collection of goods. If the goods become popular among the mainstream consumers, the second-hand community consider these goods as unattractive and they might become abandoned from the community. The consumers’ consumption interest are not directly influenced by the marketers as explored in other communities (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001; Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Schau et al. 2009). The marketers and brands are therefore not able to influence the construction of

the community. The consumers in the community of second-hand prefer to produce their own culture based on their own choices which relates to a symbolic freedom (Murray & Ozanne, 1991 in Holt, 2002). Through the selected goods, the consumers create their own world where they can express their own created culture (McCracken 1986). These actions can be considered a political consumption behaviour to which the consumers emancipate from the capitalism (Holt 1998). However, the consumers within the second-hand community are still largely influenced by close social ties or selective choice of media based on their lifestyle interest, why the consumers not entirely become resistant to the marketers and brands.

6.2 We want authenticity and no marketers

Our research revealed that consumers of second-hand goods obtain authenticity through other consumers within the community. The goods often carry a story about origin and past users experience with the good, which is considered attractive by the consumers. The story is also evident through signs of age, patina. Consumers' story behind the goods makes consumers the provider of storytelling, which addresses issues within the domains of *marketplace cultures* and *mass-mediated marketplace ideologies*. In Schouten & McAlexander (1995)'s study of the Harley Davidson subculture the marketers influence the community. The marketer or brand of Harley Davidson pursues to create authenticity through the subculture and thereby hide the aggressive commercial intentions (Holt 2002). Generally, in the postmodern paradigm, the marketers attempt to create authenticity to obtain effectiveness in their branding techniques (ibid). Consumers have seen through these actions and realized that marketers invent stories that may not be connected to the real history or consumption of brands (ibid). In our research marketers have no direct influence on the second-hand community and therefore no influence on the provided authenticity. Set in a broader perspective the consumers of second-hand goods may attempt to avoid the marketers "fake" authenticity by consuming goods where consumers' roles are more powerful through the supply of goods and "real" stories about the goods. These considerations about the market interaction, structure and authenticity in the second-hand market rise interesting aspects of the market dynamic and consumers potential attempt to liberate from marketer influence through commitment to the second-hand community. There seems to be highly limited or no space for the marketers in the second-hand community.

6.3 Mastery and fun makes hunting an ongoing activity

In our research we found that consumers' consumption actions are characterised by an ongoing "hunt" for desired goods. The long-term and explorative "hunt" for second-hand goods as well as the experience of "hunting" for second-hand goods shows how hope is an engine for the consumption practice. Despite the challenge of acquiring the desired goods, the desire is kept alive through reduced expectations to the "hunt" for goods. Furthermore, our research revealed that the consumers emphasises the thrill and fun of

“hunting” for goods and the mastery of “hunting” the desired goods through ownership of the required knowledge about the goods. Being able to spot and “hunt” desired second-hand goods contributes to feelings of fun and mastery for the consumers of second-hand goods. Taking Belk et. al. (2003)’s cycle of desire a bit further, it could be argued that the fun and mastery of acquiring second-hand goods contributes to the cycle of desire at the same level as hope. Our research shows that the fun and mastery of acquiring goods makes the respondents committed to an ongoing desire for goods.

6.4 Self-expression without no marketers influence

As considered in the postmodern branding paradigm the brands would become more valuable for the consumers if they acted as cultural resources rather than cultural blueprints in the process of producing the self (Holt 2002). The consumers within the community of second-hand goods have through the knowledge they possess been able to select among valuable resources from the goods, without directly influence from the marketers or brands which they have used as cultural resources in order to express their self. The marketers are therefore cultural engineers but they do not install preferences, as the marketers not directly influence the consumers (ibid). The consumers in our study have thereby been able to create their own “symbolic meaning” of the goods in contradiction to previously studies (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Furthermore, the consumers have obtained skills grounded in their knowledge, which enables them to customize and craft the goods as they like (Campbell 2005). This cultural production has as Holt (2002) discuss outmaneuvered marketers as the consumers in the community of second-hand goods use the resources from the marketers, herein brands or non-brands, they need to express their self. Our research study have also revealed, in line with the postmodern branding paradigm, that the consumers within the community of second-hand goods no longer express status through their consumption (Holt 2002). Our research shows that the consumers construct their identity through a nuance of their consumption to which their knowledge about the goods has a major impact. Furthermore, this knowledge has made the consumers within the community of second-hand goods able to create a distinction in terms of status to other actors within the community of second-hand goods.

6.5 Knowledge is crucial

The community of second-hand goods differ slightly from previous studies as the consumers in our study primarily gain access to the community through their inherited knowledge and skills rather than social and material implications (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). A shared interest in consuming and possessing second-hand goods unite and commit the consumers in our study. They all have the same agenda which makes the community of second-hand goods homogeneous; however, they are not influenced by a specific brand or one type of product as in previous studies (Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Martin & Schouten

2014; Schau et al. 2009; Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). The degree of knowledge, which the consumers possess decide their position within the community as it creates a possibility to distinguish themselves from the other members. The possessed knowledge create an independency to the professional dealers, as the consumers do not need their specialized knowledge to the same extent as in other contexts. Furthermore, the knowledge enables the consumers to compete for valuable goods with other members in the community of second-hand goods. Knowledge about second-hand goods enables the consumers to achieve a great deal without making others aware of it. Additionally, the consumers are capable to find and possess desired and valuable goods before others to which their creation of their identity is assumed to become a slightly easier process.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research

Our research has provided rich and interesting themes about the market dynamics and interaction; and the consumption cycle within the second-hand community. However, there are several areas that could be explored further as our research is rather limited to consider specific constructs within the second-hand community.

Our research revealed some tendencies for a changed mentality among consumers within the political consumption context. We discovered that consumes are less occupied with the sustainable issues related to consuming second-hand goods and more engaged in how goods can bring joy and be useful, when passed on to other consumers. It seems like consumers have got a more purposeful ownership of goods and do not want to “throw away” goods. This relates to a mentality where consumers wish to consume and resell rather than consume and to “throw away” goods. Based on this notion the larger societal mentality is an area that could be explored further.

In our study, consumers wish to consume second-hand goods rather than new goods and the marketers have no direct earnings from this consumption community. This rise issues of whether or not retailers/marketers are threatened by the second-hand market and could provide a ground for further research.

Our study revealed that the community of second-hand goods is consumer-driven as the dominant role of the consumers and their actions are central for the stabilization of the second-hand market. To reveal more insight and to explore further aspects of the interaction and the roles of materiality in the social construction of the community, herein the human, non-human and hybrid actors in the market, Actor Network Theory could be considered as an alternative to the grounded theory approach.

7. Referencelist

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