



JÖNKÖPING INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESS SCHOOL  
JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

# Global Consumer Culture -

A qualitative study on how consumers construct global selves through consumption

Master Thesis within Business Administration

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Jönköping May 2014

## **Acknowledgements**

*The authors of this thesis would like to acknowledge the following people who have inspired the authors throughout the process of this research.*

*To begin with, we would like to thank our tutor Ph.D. Benjamin Hartmann for his critical input, commitment, and for the precious time that he devoted to guiding us.*

*Moreover, we would like to thank all the respondents that participated in this research, that took their time for the interviews and who contributed with significant empirical findings. Without your contributions we would not have been able to accomplish this study.*

*Finally, a special thanks to our fellow students from the seminar sessions for their valuable feedback during the semester.*

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**2014-05-12**

# Master Thesis in Business Administration

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**Date:** May 2014

**Key Words:** Globalisation, Consumer Culture, Global Consumer, Global Self, Country-of-Origin.

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## Abstract

**Background:** Globalisation is changing the world and our daily lives are governed by products and images originating from other countries and other cultures. Globalisation influences consumer culture and different authors have argued for the emergence of global consumer culture. However, previous literature de-emphasizes what consumer beliefs about the global consumer culture are and how people who believe that they are global try to construct themselves as global in terms of consumption. What are their motives of being global and what kind of needs and wants do they cover by being global consumers?

**Purpose:** To explore and illustrate how consumers try to construct their global selves through consumption.

**Method:** An abductive, qualitative research approach with a combination of exploratory and descriptive research design was chosen. Primary data collection through semi-structured in-depth interviews was conducted among 15 respondents who tried to construct their global selves through consumption. These consumers were selected through a non-probability sampling and interviews took place in Jönköping, Sweden.

**Conclusion:** Consumers try to construct their global selves in a variety of ways, the most common ones are through travelling and engaging in cultural experiences, consuming products from specific countries for certain reasons, and by observing the market as one whole global market, thus not limiting themselves into the boundaries of specific countries, regions or continents. This consumption is then grounded on myths and beliefs that they have accumulated about global consumer culture while gaining experience in different parts of the world. These myths and beliefs are however based on their perceptions towards global consumer culture, not objective reality per se.

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# I Introduction

*“Globalisation means we have to re-examine some of our ideas, and look at ideas from other countries, from other cultures, and open ourselves to them. And that's not comfortable for the average person.”* - Herbie Hancock

This is a popular quote that partly inspired this thesis to investigate the influence of the globalisation towards consumption and how the global and local identities of consumers from different parts of the world appear in different situations. However, with the rapid advance of the technology and transport in the recent years, the focus will be mainly directed to the global parity.

Today, it can be observed that there are products manufactured in one part of the world, with material from somewhere else, and which then are sold by people from some other country. For instance, the Swiss food company Nestlé is the world's most foreign-oriented company: 87% of its assets, 98% of its sales, and 97% of its workers are outside of Switzerland (de Mooij, 2010). This trend within economics has begun to decrease the boundaries between countries, and the development of political and economic unions which aim has been to promote free trade, has inevitably distinguished the way of how people treat their consumptions habits (de Mooij, 2010).

Olivier et al. (2008) argues that developments in information and transport technology are changing the world. Our daily lives are governed by products and images originating from other countries and other cultures. Cleveland & Laroche (2007) claim that globalisation is a continuing and complex process. Since it is moving at different speeds in different parts of the world, and in different sections of the population of the marketplace, this process is shaping the cultural characteristics of consumers. They also discuss that globalisation is arguably the most critical issue facing international marketing managers today. They consider that powerful forces such as; capitalism, global transport, communication, marketing and advertising, and transnational cosmopolitanism are interacting to dissolve the boundaries across national cultures and economies. Maystre et al. (2014) even go further, they state that words such as culture or values have long been absent from the vocabulary of economists. A new and rapidly influential strand of literature has remedied this absence and demonstrated the importance of such variables to explain the cross-section of a wide array of economic outcomes.

In addition, Trentman (2009) argues that globalisation is more than financial flows and commodity trade. It involves human actors whose ideas, identities, anxieties and power can facilitate, manipulate or contain global exchanges. Consumption has been a decisive arena for global encounters, more precisely because so many things are central to life, identity and social order. Globalisation is therefore not all about integration. It has come with conflicting modes of imperialism, nationalism and internationalism as well (Trentman, 2009).

## I.1 Problem discussion

In the course of the development of globalisation, there has been an ongoing debate among researchers that there is an emergence of segments of consumers around the world who share similar tastes and needs (Levitt, 1983; Bird & Stevens, 2003; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Percy & Elliot, 2009; Carpenter et al., 2012). Cleveland & Laroche (2007) suggest that the focus of international marketers lie down into two main areas: (1) understanding consumer differences from the perspective of cultural, social, economic, and other marketing environment elements; and (2) the search for common groups of consumers

across countries, for international market segmentation purposes. The latter focus suggests the possibility of the existence, or imminent emergence, of global consumers (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

Globalisation of markets has presented an opportunity for the growth of global consumer segments. This growth matches the development of global consumer cultures – commonly established philosophies and consumer developments towards globally shared consumption-related symbols; such as brands, product categories, and consumption activities and events (Zhou, Teng & Poon, 2008). Global culture can be explained as the procedure of a global understanding where the world unites to the extent that it is viewed as one single place (Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 1999; de Mooij, 2010). According to Belk (1995), global culture leads to global consumption homogenisation. Although, global consumer culture does not only consist of globalised consumerism and global consumption homogenisation, it also takes into account the dispersion of world-wide firms and globalised capitalism (Belk, 1995).

There is also empirical evidence to support the existence of “global consumers” who show similarities in consumptive tendencies (Keillor, D’Amico & Horton, 2001). From a marketing perspective, the question about if there is a global consumer is important in terms of the raised question about the standardisation and/or adaptation approach that firms which operate globally should follow (Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997). The discussion about standardisation and adaptation has a long history and different research and theories defend both positions. One of the first publications that raised discussion was an article of Levitt (1983) who predicted that only global companies would achieve long-term success by concentrating on what everyone wants rather than worrying about the details of what everyone thinks they might like. Defenders of the standardisation approach, point out arguments as the globalisation of the markets, the globalisation of competition and the fact that many firms are no longer depending on the home market as sufficient scale (Meffert & Bolz, 1993). Other arguments include economy of scale and creating a global brand image, which reduce confusion among consumers (Jain, 1996). However, other scholars believe that there are undefeatable differences, such as cultural and economical, between countries and even between regions within the same country, which necessitates the adaptation or development of new/different marketing strategies (Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997).

Nevertheless, recent reports show that organisations benefit of the emergence of global consumer culture by modifying their brand assortments in favour of global brands or by positioning brands as part of the globally shared consumption symbols in their marketing communications (Zhou et al., 2008). Alden et al. (1999) labelled a strategy named “global consumer culture positioning” (GCCP). This strategy presumes that GCCP is proposed to effect brand value in a progressively globalised market. However, the probable influence of global consumer culture positioning to brand value would depend on consumers’ vulnerability to such an influence. Due to that consumers in general seem to have a bigger preference for brands that have a global image over local image, more corporations are now applying a global brand positioning strategy (Zhou et al., 2008). Discussion can be made whether consumers have a belief that world-wide known brands present better quality, status, and prestige, and thus, gives them a perception of being part of a global consumer culture. With this point of view, some consumer goods can be seen as more than a product, they could symbolise specific characteristics (Cleveland, 2006).

Even though the term ‘global consumer culture’ already has been briefly explained above, the academic literature still provides further definitions of the term. For example, global

consumer culture is a “*cultural entity not associated with a single country, but rather a larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures*” (Alden et al., 1999, p. 80). For the marketing purpose, global consumer segments are those segments that relate similar values to particular places, people and things (Alden et al., 1999). Likewise, it is about those “...*individuals around the world whose cultural, social, and other differences are becoming less important as influences on their consumer behaviour*” (Keillor et al., 2001, p. 2).

## **1.2 Purpose**

Based on the definition from Alden et al. (1999), almost everybody could be seen as a global consumer. On the other hand, do the elderly people from a small village in Bulgaria feel global because they consume water and electricity like the people living in New York? Or do they feel global because the local food store, which is supplied every two weeks offers products from other parts of the world? Most likely not. Therefore, this thesis takes the perspective of investigating people that try to construct themselves as global through consumption.

Still, even though that there is extensive previous work on the topic of global consumer culture, there are still few qualitative researches done about consumer perceptions and beliefs on the topic. Specifically, previous literature de-emphasizes what consumer beliefs about the global consumer culture are and how people who believe that they are global try to construct themselves as global in terms of consumption. This also hints that these consumers are under-emphasised within research studies, making it possible to discover new knowledge, from and about them.

As a result, with the previous mentioning's, this paragraph ends in the overall purpose of this study:

**To explore and illustrate how consumers try to construct global selves through consumption.**

## **1.3 Research Questions**

**RQ 1:** What are the myths and beliefs about the global consumer culture?

We presume that consumers try to construct their global-selves based on their beliefs and perceptions towards global consumer culture which eventually influences their consumption, however it is not the global consumer culture per se, its only what they believe it is.

**RQ 2:** How does the country-of-origin matter when it comes to consumption?

Many products have a complex geography, with parts being made in different countries and then assembled somewhere else. Still, we believe that some products from some countries are globally accepted since they possess more of a symbolic meaning, which in turn might be related to the myths and beliefs consumers might have.

**RQ 3:** What is the function of global brands related to the Global Consumer Culture?

There are brands which are spread all over the world and which are seen as symbols of the globalisation.



## **1.4 Delimitations**

The research is focused on receiving in-depth, qualitative information from consumers that try, act and see themselves as 'global consumers'. The study is based in Jönköping where all the interviews were conducted. The respondents chosen for this study were selected through a judgmental sampling, although factors such as gender and age were not taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the term local is referred to a certain country. Thus, focus is not put on a particular region or city but a nation as a whole.

## **1.5 Outline of the Thesis**

**Chapter 1** - The first chapter presents background information about globalisation and the global consumer culture, these are then further discussed in a problem discussion that leads to a purpose and research questions.

**Chapter 2** - Presents a theoretical framework based on previous research and commonly used theories relevant to the purpose and research questions of the study.

**Chapter 3** - Presents and motivates the research approach of the study and the methodology used to collect data.

**Chapter 4** - The collected data is presented and analysed by comparing with the concepts presented in the literature review chapter.

**Chapter 5** - In this chapter, the findings will be discussed and critiqued with a more broad perspective.

**Chapter 6** - Here, the conclusions are presented by answering to the purpose and research questions.

**Chapter 7** - Lastly, suggestions are given for further research while also presenting theoretical and managerial implications.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

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*This chapter presents a review of past literature that this research will be based upon. As the topic about global consumers and how they construct a part of themselves is seen as complex and as there is no considerable information about it, we have tried to surround the key topic as good as possible by looking at constructs around it.*

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Investigating global consumer culture includes a lot of terms and processes. By taking globalisation, culture, and consumer culture as starting points, we then present the process of acculturation since this is the process in which individuals learn and adopt the norms and values of other cultures. Concerning that many products are both developed and sold to consumers from different parts of the world, but designed so that they suit the needs of local markets as well, a description on glocalisation is given. Thereafter, literature devoted to the symbolic meaning of goods is derived in order to explain the connection between achieving a specific goal, in our case being global, and consumption. However, since this symbolic meaning is firmly an individualised process, the process of perception and the self-concept is illustrated. Furthermore, with the assumption that this symbolic meaning is also accomplished by myths and beliefs, we submit the literature devoted to them. Regarding that globalisation involves so many countries and in relation to our second research question, we also resent the literature on country-of-origin.

### 2.1 Globalisation

The phenomenon of globalisation is complex, thus, there is not one particular universal accepted definition about it. In the scientific literature there are many different examples of researchers trying to explain it. Waters (1995, p. 3) defines globalisation as a “*social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding*”. In addition, Albrow (1997) depicts globalisation as dispersion of habits, values and technologies that have impact on people’s lives worldwide. Related to this, Robertson (1987a, p. 38) defines globalisation as a “*crystallisation of the world as a single place*” and also as a reason for “*the emergence of the global human condition*” (Robertson, 1987b, p. 23).

Lovelock (1999) summarizes globalisation into five different drivers: market drivers, competition drivers, technology drivers, cost drivers and government drivers. Rapid decline in transportation and communication costs are one of the main pillars of the globalisation. They are the result of the technological progress and innovations within different industries (Lovelock, 1999; Sobol, 2008). These factors have led to easiness in crossing national and cultural borders. This in turn, has paved the way to a boosting international trade and global marketing (Sobol, 2008). This is something that is also in line with the explanation of Spears, Parker and McDonald (2004), that refers globalisation as a process that eases the obstacles between countries to interact in economic, political, and personal matters.

Olivier et al. (2008) examine the globalisation as a two edged process. On one hand, a common wisdom among economists is that the benefits from international integration and globalisation are clear and significant. International trade should bring efficiency gains in production and access to an increased variety of goods and services. This approach is however at odds with the concerns of other social scientists over globalisation and the strong defensive attitudes of anti-globalisation movements. Indeed, one of the strongest critics to globalisation comes from the fear that such a process might erode national cultures and individual identities. The latter is not a new implication for the international marketing scholars. Yet, Ger (1999) claims that capitalism, global transport, communications, marketing

and advertising, and transnational cosmopolitanism are interacting to dissolve the boundaries across national cultures and economies, and in the eyes of many, accelerating the emergence of a homogeneous global consumer culture. However, he also claims that on the other hand, the “*differentiating impact of globalisation strengthens or reactivates national, ethnic, and communal identities; and the pattern of interrelationships fuels a hybridisation of social life*” (Ger, 1999, p. 65).

That an identifiable and homogeneous group is emerging is something that Bird and Stevens (2003) also agree on. The characteristics of these groups are that they primarily do not share common geographic location, socioeconomic class, religion, native language nor a national culture. Nevertheless, they do share the same set of values, attitudes, patterns, and behaviours. The growth of world trade, improvements in telecommunications and easiness in travelling are some aspects that have contributed to globalisation (Bird & Stevens, 2003; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Olivier et al., 2008). However, it is being argued that most of the emerging global culture is being influenced from the North American and Western Culture (Bird & Stevens, 2003; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). For example, as English is one of the most taught second languages, it has enabled a big part of the world to speak and communicate with one another in a common language (Bird & Stevens, 2003). Moreover, since English is the primary language in business, mass media and the internet, while also being widely used in packaging and advertising around the world, it has become a signal of modernism and internationalism to many consumers (Alden et al., 1999; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

## 2.2 Culture

Globalisation has an influence on the withering of national cultures and at the same time, making these national cultures converge into a more general global culture (Bird & Stevens, 2003). Some of the reasons for this convergence are for instance that evolving information technologies subject people to cultural norms, values and behaviours of other countries. Travelling is also an aspect that exposes consumers to new experiences and behaviours (Parker, 2005). Globalisation lie therefore at the heart of culture and cultural practices lie at the heart of globalisation (Tomlinson, 1999). With this relationship, there is a need of first defining culture as a construct and then proceed towards clarifying consumer culture and consumption.

Culture is a complex and abstract construct that consists of various implicit and explicit elements (Groeschl & Doherty, 2000). It makes culture difficult for the scholars to agree on a universal accepted definition. Yet in 1952, more than 160 different explanations were given (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). However, among the many existing definitions of culture, several common threads are identifiable; culture is a learned, transmitted, and shared phenomenon (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Lindridge & Dibb (2003) claim that the most widely known and used classification is the one formulated by Taylor (1891, p. 1), who defined culture as “*that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals and law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*”. Moreover, Hofstede (1991, p.4) adds that culture is “*the collective programming of the mind*”. The transmission of culture does not occur genetically; therefore, any human being that is in the right place at the right time can technically acquire culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

Singh (2004) underlines that culture is the result of the interplay between the external and the internal worlds, where the ‘intra-personal’ mental structures helps us to understand, analyse and offer meaning to the ‘extra-personal’ world of objects. Furthermore, the ‘extra-personal’ world of objects keeps and transfers cultural senses throughout generations and

also helps as stimuli for cultural internalisation. It corresponds to the standpoint of McCracken (1988), who explicated culture as influencing our world in two ways: as a lens through which the individual views and interprets phenomena, and as a blueprint that provides rules and structure to human activity. Cultures are neither pure nor timeless; rather, cultures constantly evolve due to either internal dynamics or external forces (Venkatesh, 1995). Across different times and places, some cultures change more quickly than others, and some cultures are more open or resistant to change (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Once largely a consequence of wars and colonisation, culture changes today result from immigration, international trade and finance, global media and technological flows, and business travel and tourism (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

### **2.2.1 Consumer Culture and Consumption**

Because this study is aimed at looking at how consumers try to construct global selves through consumption there is a need of defining the aspect of consumer culture as it refers to the dominant mode of consumption.

As the title of Craig, Greene and Douglas (2005) indicate, ‘culture matters’. It has a profound influence on all aspects of consumer behaviour (Mazaheri et al., 2014). More than any other factor, culture is the prime determinant of consumers’ attitudes, behaviours and lifestyles, and therefore, the needs that consumers satisfy through the acquisition and use of goods and services (Mazaheri et al., 2014). As a subset of culture, Arnould & Thompson, (2005, p. 869) depicts the term consumer culture as something that *“frames consumers’ horizons of conceivable action, feeling, and thought, making certain patterns of behavior and sense-making interpretations more likely than others”*. Consumer culture is also about defining a solid merged system of global networks and enlargements from where local cultures are more and more interpenetrated by the powers of multinational capital and global media scape (Slater, 1997; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Hence, as consumer culture is reflected as consumption, it is a vital part of our daily lives since it affects and influences our social life and existence. Though, it is not entirely related to purchasing, but also to the usage, pleasure and experience of objects and purposes. This makes consumption a significant activity of human beings (Slater, 1997). There has also been a development towards a growing role for consumption patterns and style in people’s identity formation. Due to the increase in consumption possibilities; the overabundance of goods and the diversities in choice and styles has made many consumption choices statements about personality, values, and a way of handling social relations (Lury, 1996; Solomon et al., 2013).

Regarding to the increased consumption possibilities, Featherstone (2007) points out the importance of the larger amount of products and services that nowadays are being consumed or bought during our spare time. He further states that there is a need to see the difference between products we use in maintenance and leisure (like, cars and electronic equipment) and products that are used for daily or frequent consumption (food, beverages, and clothing). Moreover, Featherstone (2007) states that it is necessary to consider the ways in which some goods can move in and out of commodity status. While also looking at the different life span relished by commodities as they progress from production to consumption. Food and drinks typically have a short life. However, there are cases, for example, where a bottle of wine might never be consumed, instead, they are kept and consumed symbolically, as a way of exclusivity. This point can be referred to the doubly symbolic aspect of goods, goods that are used and renegotiated to highlight difference in lifestyle which establish social connections (Featherstone, 2007).

However, like culture in general, consumer culture is not equally shared by all members of the cultural group. Rather, consumer culture is characterized by *“the dynamics of fragmentation, plurality, fluidity, and the intermingling (or hybridization) of consumption traditions and ways of life”* (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 869). Briley and Aaker (2006) claim that buyer behaviour and consumer needs are largely driven by cultural norms and also that cultural backgrounds influence consumers’ information processing and buying motivations. Soares (2004) argues that culture influences consumption in various ways and to various degrees. He makes a categorisation of the three different standpoints of the influence of culture on consumer behaviour. The first perspective is defended by standardisation supporters (Levitt, 1983; Dawar & Parker, 1994; LeBlanc & Herndon, 2001) who claim that culture has minimal or no effect on consumer behaviour. These authors admit that social and environmental factors may have influence upon consumption; however they focus on processes which they believe are stable among different cultures. The second perspective of cultural influences on consumer behaviour emphasizes that culture is dynamic and its influences are present or absent depending on the context (Briley & Aaker, 2006). The third perspective proclaims that culture has an influence on all aspects of consumer behaviour and that consumption is a cultural phenomenon, by which individuals consume products that carry and communicate cultural meaning (Bjerke & Polegato, 2006; Harrmann & Heitmann, 2006). In agreement with the previous standpoint of Briley and Aaker (2006) we will further elaborate (with the findings) how exactly culture is presented in consumption and in which context it matters more or less.

McCracken (1990) argues that individuals use the meaning of consumer goods to express cultural categories and principles, to cultivate ideas and to create and sustain lifestyles. He explains that goods serve as an instrument of change in two related capacities. Firstly, goods provide opportunities for fashioning or innovating culture, via the selective use, novel combination, or otherwise experimentation with existing cultural meanings. Secondly, by promoting opportunities for reflection, goods serve as *“...an opportunity for discourse both within the innovative group and between the innovative group and the larger society”* (McCracken, 1990, p.36). Again, according to him, cultural meaning resides in three locations: the culture constituted world, the consumer good, and the individual consumer. Most contemporary researchers agree that ethnicity arises from the notion that certain individuals belong to or identify with certain cultural groups (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

## **2.2.2 Process of Acculturation**

Cleveland and Laroche (2007) argue that the process of consumer acculturation leads to global consumer culture. It is also a procedure in which members of one certain cultural group adopt beliefs and actions of another group, leading to openness and desire to emulate global consumer culture (Gentry, Jun & Tansuhaj, 1995; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). That is why it is important to examine the process of consumer acculturation. However, consumer acculturation is a subset of the broader term acculturation.

Gentry et al. (1995) uses the term acculturation as a generic procedure that outcomes when groups of individuals from different cultures get into contact with each other and successive changes in the original patterns of either or both groups happen. Cleveland & Laroche (2007) refer acculturation to the process in which individuals learn and adopt the norms and values of a culture different than the one in which they grew up. It is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005). At the group level, it involves changes in social structures, institutions, and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in a person’s behavioural collection. These cultural and psycho-

logical changes come about through a long-term process, sometimes taking years, sometimes generations, and sometimes centuries (Berry, 2005). As mentioned earlier, consumer acculturation is a subset of acculturation, focusing on how individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are appropriate to consumer culture (Peñaloza, 1989).

Contact and change occur for a number of reasons, including colonisation, migration, and sojourning (such as tourism, international study, and overseas posting); it continues long after initial contact in culturally plural societies, where ethno cultural communities maintain features of their heritage cultures (Berry, 2005). This often entails for example, learning each other's languages, sharing each other's food preferences, and adopting forms of dress and social interaction that are characteristics of each group. Sometimes these mutual adaptations take place rather easily, but they can also create culture conflict and acculturative stress during intercultural interactions (Berry, 2005). From a consumption perspective, in certain situations, this results in direct adaptation without modification of the alternative (foreign or global) behaviour (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). In other situations, this result involves mixing of alternative behaviour with local elements and still in other situations, this entails outright rejection of consumption behaviour (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Gentry et al. (1995) depict that consumers that are somewhat unsure of their identity and themselves might express a bigger confidence on material symbols that generate a feeling of belonging to a certain cultural group.

### **2.3 Glocalisation**

For the past decades, the production, distribution, and consumption of many product categories has been in transformation through industrialisation and globalisation. One of these products categories is food. This has led to that food is been looked at as not only about survival, but also a statement about lifestyle. The production of food is mainly a local process due to specific climates, soil and socio-cultural conditions. However, in the meanwhile, particular types of local products, especially food that is looked as high-value, have become progressively global in terms of their distribution and consumption (Dicken, 2011). By taking a closer look at the concept of glocalisation, a better perception can be given on consumers that not only reflect on global standards but local ones as well.

Glocalisation, which combines the word globalisation with localisation is a term that is mostly associated to Robertson (1994), it emphasizes that the globalisation of a product/service is more likely to succeed when a product/service is adapted specifically to each locality or culture it is marketed in (Matusitz & Leanza, 2009; Lin & Ke, 2010). This interaction occurs when, for example, a global company replicates its corporate philosophy and symbols world-wide at the same time as taking local tastes and preferences into account (Matusitz & Leanza, 2009; Sinclair & Wilken, 2009).

Nonetheless, with the growth of globalisation, local and global products are set to compete with each other. Hence, making it important for managers to understand if consumers are feeling more global or local, which is an essential aspect when positioning the brand. A local identity refers to consumers that identify themselves more with the local community and the local ways of life, while a global identity is more identifiable with a global or cosmopolitan lifestyle (Tu, Khare & Zhang, 2012). Therefore, even though that this thesis is mainly aimed at describing how consumers construct their global identities, there is still a need to understand the local–global identity concepts.

Some scholars predict that local cultures will be inevitably colonised by international corporate brands (Parameswaran, 2002; Daniels, 2003). However, many studies support that some aspects of the local culture will survive the erosive effects of globalisation (e.g. Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Lal, 2000). Sinclair & Wilken (2009) argue that in the age of globalisation, cultural adaptation has become a fundamental principle for marketers. Since cultures are often classified in a divided way, it results in cultural pluralism and hybridisation in appearance when global culture enters the local and usually collectivistic cultures (Lin & Ke, 2010). Glocalisation both highlights how local cultures may critically adapt or resist global phenomena, and reveals the way in which the very creation of localities is a standard component of globalisation (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007). Moreover, glocalisation argues that it allows national companies to have started to globalize their products in order to attract both domestic and global markets (Rantanen, 2005). Matusitz (2010) argue that interaction between the global and the local, when it comes to cultural values, is about flexibility.

## 2.4 Perception and Symbolic Meaning of Goods

As part of the main objective, this thesis is likewise aiming to find out consumers' perception towards global consumer culture. However, if we take for example that people believe that by purchasing specific products, they present their global selves because the product is perceived as global, it does not necessarily mean that the product is actually perceived as global objectively. It can mean that this product is perceived as global by a specific interpretation process of a specific consumer through their perception. The same product could be perceived by someone else as local. That is why it is important to examine the theory about perception and the cultural meaning of the consumer goods.

Lewin (1936) states that people respond on the basis of their perceptions of reality, not reality per se. Nevertheless, consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality (Mostert, 1996; Puth et al. 1999). Walters & Bergiel (1989, p. 333) define perception as “*the entire process by which an individual becomes aware of the environment and interprets it so that it will fit into his or her frame of reference.*” They expand on the definition by stating that every perception involves a person who interprets something through the senses, like from an event, or relation which may be designated as the percept (Walters & Bergiel, 1989). Van der Walt (1991) adds that perception occurs when sensory receptors receive stimuli via the brain, that code, categorizes them and assign certain meanings to them, depending on the person's frame of reference. However, Solomon et al. (2013) point out that the meaning interpreted by the individuals is influenced by their unique biases, needs and experiences. Further, it is noticed that two individuals may be subject to the same stimuli under the same conditions, but their recognition and interpretation is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, and expectations (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 1991). Solomon et al. (2013) claim that people do not passively process whatever information happens to be present, only a small number of the stimuli in the environment are ever noticed. This selective choice is explained by the amount of risk that consumers take when making a purchasing decision (Mostert, 1996).

There is a conventional economic theory by assuming that individuals are endowed with different clusters of cultural values and that these cultural values can be tied to consumption (Maystre et al., 2014). These ideas build on a well-established tradition in anthropology, psychology and marketing, emphasizing the fact that products have a significance that goes beyond their functional utility, which can be altered through well-designed marketing or advertising campaigns. Which in turn explain why marketing expenditure is an important

driver of consumer demand, along with the more familiar variables of price and income (Maystre et al., 2014).

Saying it in a more simple way, the idea is overlapped by Levy (1959), who suggests that people buy products not only for what they do but also for what they symbolize. People prefer to consume products that have a symbolic meaning consistent with their own identity and values (Sirgy, 1982). These products include not only standard cultural goods (books, movies, music...) but also various differentiated consumption goods (food and beverages, fashion clothes, cars, cosmetics, jewelry and other conspicuous goods...) (Maystre et al., 2014). The functional and symbolical meaning is also examined by Berger and Heath (2007) who claim that nowadays, differentiating products on their technical functions or quality is difficult. Since the wave of the quality controls in the 1980s, products can be expected to fulfill their functions reasonably well. Symbolic meaning provides another way to differentiate products (Berger & Heath, 2007). Individuals use their consumption patterns to define their own identity by signaling information to their self and to other individuals (Berger & Heath, 2007). With technological improvements and systematic quality controls across industries, the symbolic meaning of goods becomes increasingly important (Maystre et al., 2014).

## **2.5 The Self**

In order to fully understand consumers' perception about their global selves, we have to examine the current theoretical framework related to the self-concept and self-construct. This is also related to consumers that purchase products for what they do and symbolize, since consumers prefer to consume products that have a representative meaning consistent with their own identity and the values they try to construct themselves with (Levy, 1959; Sirgy, 1982). Necessarily, it does not indicate that a product's functionality is unimportant, but relatively that the roles they play and the significance that they have in consumers' lives go past the tasks they perform. If a product has a deeper meaning, it may help to make the product more differentiated towards other similar goods and services. As a result, consumers will choose brands that have an image coherent with their basic ideas. Thus, when purchasing a certain product, it can be a reflection or statement of one's lifestyle. It might show the type of person you are, or want to be (Levy, 1959; Fournier, 1998).

One of the main parts in forming the self is through relationships with other people. People occur in a symbolic environment, where meanings involved to situations and/or objects is decided by the understanding of these symbols. By being members of a society, we start agreeing on common meanings. Hence, consumers interpret their own identities, and this is something that is under constant development as they come across new situations and people (Mead, 1934; Solomon et al., 2013). Thus, consumers design their own behaviour on the perceived expectations of others in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. When looking at a broader perspective, it is possible to see how consumption of products and services influences to the description of the self (Mead, 1934; Solomon et al., 2013).

The term self-concept can be described as a theory an individual has developed about itself as an operating and sophisticated human being (Epstein, 1973). Hence, the self-concept is related to the perceptions an individual holds about its own features and to the extent to which it perceives these characteristics as positive or not. Engler (1999) defines self-concept as a function of how one perceives himself in addition to the feedback one has from others in society. Choi & Rifon (2012) claim that self-concept is viewed as the sum of an individual's thoughts and feelings about themselves with respect to others. Given that what others see consist of a person's clothing, car and other materialistic things, it might be



expressed that these products also help to determine the perceived self. The products that a consumer has, puts him or her in a social role, which eventually aids to answer the question 'Who am I now?' Therefore, people make use of individual's consumption activities to assist them in making judgements about that individual's social identity (Solomon et al., 2013). However, Engler (1999) indicates that this understanding of self may not be a true reflection of the environment, as it is more an interpretation of others' values within that environment.

What is judged good versus bad will be a product of the person's environment and then adjusted to one's value of those judgments and their actions. The complexity of the self-concept is highlighted also by Sirgy (1982) who suggest that the self is composed of many attributes, some of which are given greater emphasis when the overall self is being evaluated. The self-concept involves various self-relevant attributes (mental representations of the self): dispositional characteristics and traits; perceptions of the ongoing or past experiences, social roles, and behaviors; self-related attitudes and affect (Kaltcheva et al., 2011). Typically, people have numerous self-relevant attributes, but only a subset of those attributes is salient in working memory at any time (Kaltcheva et al., 2011). It corresponds with the perception Solomon et al. (2013) use about the multiple selves. They underline that people have many selves as they do many social roles. This is further connected to products and services. Some situations necessitate a different set of goods in order to play a different role of the self (Solomon, 1983). Furthermore, Kraus et al. (2011) examined people's self-concept consistency suggesting that it refers to the consistency with which people view aspects of themselves (e.g., traits, motives, goals) across varying contexts. One example suited here is that a person could be shy at home, but not shy among their friends and that will reflect in a low level of self-concept consistency regarding to the different social roles. That is why this thesis is interested in understanding in what situations consumers try to present their global self. Self-concept consistency is influenced by a number of social factors including the immediate social environment, cultural background and the types of relationship partners with whom one interacts (English & Chen, 2007).

In addition to our multiple selves, Choi & Rifon (2012) suggest that there are two core domains of the self, actual self and ideal self. Actual self refers to how a person perceives her or himself, whereas ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive themselves. Freud (1965), however, believe that the ideal self is a person's conception of how they would like to be and is somewhat formed by elements of consumer culture. For instance, by people portrayed in advertising who serve as models of success or appearance. Products can therefore be bought for the reason that they are believed to be helpful in achieving personal goals. Moreover, goods and services are selected since consumers perceive them to be in line with the consumer's actual self, whereas for others they help to reach the standard set by the ideal self (Freud, 1965). Additionally, the ideal self seems to be more pertinent when searching for highly expressive social products such as luxury accessories and perfumes. While, the actual self is more appropriate for everyday, functional products. There is also a possibility that these standards differ depending on the situation of usage. For instance, when being at home a consumer may perhaps wear more functional and comfortable clothes, but more classy or flashy clothes when going out in the public (Solomon et al., 2013).

## **2.6 Country-of-Origin**

When purchasing and evaluating products, consumers encounter many judgements related to the product itself. Some of these aspects that affect the purchase, perception and con-

sumption of a product are its country of origin and beliefs (Piron, 2000). Hence, as the manufacturing of products and the quest for consumers has become increasingly global (Roth & Romeo, 1992), it is important to consider the role of country-of-origin and its effects on consumers. We believe that products or brands from certain countries or regions, for example within the food category, have a particular quality, story, and culture attached to it. Thus, by consuming products/brands from a certain country, a person can construct a part of their global self.

Country-of-origin refers to information relating to where a product is made (Zhang, 1997; Wang & Yang, 2008). According to Roth and Romeo (1992), the study of country-of-origin strives to understand how consumers observe products coming from a particular country. More specifically, it can be explained as the “*overall perception consumers form of products from a particular country, based on their prior perceptions of the country’s production and marketing strengths and weaknesses*” (Roth & Romeo, 1992, p. 480). Today, it is well-known that country of origin has an effect on product assessments (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Schaefer, 1995; Zhang, 1997), but also that consumers in general show preferences toward products from certain countries (Han & Terpstra, 1988; Schaefer, 1995). When consumers are involved in product choices, they are affected by numerous descriptive, inferential and information cues related to that product. Cues that influences consumers perceptions, evaluations and buying intentions (Zhang, 1997; Nebenzahl, Lampert & Jaffe, 1997). These cues are called intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic cues are for example related to colour, design, and taste. Whereas, the extrinsic cues are related to factors such as price and brand name and are often used by consumers when they are missing intrinsic cues (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Zhang, 1997; Hoffmann, 2000; Sharma, 2011).

Country-of-origin is considered to be an extrinsic factor in the creation of an attitude towards a product (Han & Terpstra, 1988, Zhang, 1997; Hoffmann, 2000), and sometimes to a larger degree as consumers tend to be less familiar with products of foreign origin (Han & Terpstra, 1988). Nonetheless, there are several ways in which country-of-origin is recognised to be an influence on consumers’ assessment of products (Roth & Romeo, 1992; Piron, 2000; Wang & Yang, 2008). Consumers’ cognitive processes might for instance contain self-perception, uttered as a wish to correspond self and product images (Sirgy et al., 1991; Piron, 2000). It can also take the shape of a product scheme where there is a possibility that it comprehends knowledge in the form of implicit representations of brands, product attributes, usability and other information (Schaefer, 1995). Furthermore, consumers could shape their assessment of a product based on their opinion of the country-of-origin, thus, allowing stereotyping to take place (Zhang, 1997). Specifically, the central processes, that form the ‘cognitive approach’ of the country-of-origin cue, simply affect a consumer’s beliefs about product attributes (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Bloemer, Brijs & Kasper, 2009). In addition, when consumers are not acquainted with a product, they tend to count on ‘halo effects’ which can indirectly influence consumers’ product perceptions when assuming the product attributes (Wang & Yang, 2008). For instance, a country’s name could trigger feelings that may be transferred on the product (Schaefer, 1995; Zhang, 1997). When consumers on the other hand are acquainted with a product, they summarize their beliefs regarding product attributes (Wang & Yang, 2008).

It can be understood that the influence of country-of-origin is an important factor for marketing managers. By connecting country images to product category characteristics, decision makers can better understand preference foundations for their products. But other factors may influence to what degree consumers consider it to be of importance. Depend-

ing on the consumers' age, gender, and beliefs the view on foreign products are different (Roth and Romeo, 1992; Zhang, 1997; Nebenzahl et al., 1997).

## 2.7 Myths and Beliefs

To relate to the previous topics of country-of-origin, the self, consumption, and globalisation, a focus needs to be put on the beliefs that consumers might have on certain concepts and products. Consumers can for example base their perceptions and decisions of a product on myths and beliefs. For example, that Italian food might be tasty, or that Western products that are advertised around the world are a signal of modernism and internationalism (Solomon et al., 2013). Usually, when consumers are interviewed regarding consumption of products, respondents are often asked to; define the product features, convey about recent examples of using a product, and clarify how and why certain products are used. Somewhat, the belief is that products are used due to symbolic meaning (Levy, 1981). A part of the way in which a consumer tells a story of how a certain product is consumed can be explained in what kind of beliefs that are there and what the product says about people, their characters and persona. Therefore, it can be expressed that the story in which a product expresses has a vital meaning for consumption patterns (Levy, 1981). Hence, by trying to comprehend what consumers might think is 'cool' and 'hip', a better understanding can be given on how they build a part of their self-identity through consumption.

Mythology or myths can be explained as "*stories we are told, tell to others and ourselves; tales that explain, adapt and evolve as their context changes*" (Ferguson, 1992, p. 74). Whereas, Barthes (1972, p. 109) states that "*myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message*". Consumer culture is filled with mythologies, and to help members to better understand or make sense of the world, every culture has developed their own stories and practices. Hence, each society holds a set of mythologies that describe that culture. Thus, it is important for marketers to have an understanding of cultural myths since it enables them to pattern their strategy along a mythic structure (Solomon et al., 2013). Advertising and mass media for example are all influenced from mythic models and plotlines to create convincing stories, characters, and promotional appeals (Thompson, 2004). McDonalds with its golden arches is an example which plays into the symbol of American culture that gives consumers the possibility of consuming a bite of America and modernity (Solomon et al., 2013). Furthermore, in both the Western and Eastern world, it is common that marketers within the categories of health foods, cosmetics, fitness programmes, and casinos, suggest that their products/services have 'magical' assets that will help against sickness, ageing, poverty or just plain bad luck. This makes people do things like betting on their lucky numbers, carry lucky accessories or have lucky 'clothing' as they believe these things will help them bring good fortune. In the marketplace, it is also common that consumers tend to regularly create myths to serve numerous and at times competing ideological agendas, especially when consumers deal with matters of health and well-being (Thompson, 2004; Solomon et al., 2013). However, mythologies are not compelled and used for advertising only. There are also theorists stating that cultural myths utilise an important effect on the stories consumers tell and, hence, the meanings they ascribe to their experiences (Levy, 1981; Thompson, 2004).

Regarding the perspective of globalisation, myth is used as an approach of classifying certain assumptions about the modern world found in the sets of ideas about world history, economics, culture, communication and ecology (Ferguson, 1992). The mythology about globalisation shows how old myths adjust and new ones appear. Some are familiar, others not, and some serve particular interests or groups. However, together they clarify and ra-

tionalise much about the scenery of a shifting global political and cultural economy. At this point in the mythology of globalisation, some myths are identified: 'big is better', 'more is better' and 'global cultural homogeneity' (Ferguson, 1992). Usually, myth has a complicated connection to social reality, as it is built on what is already there. By merging the real with the idyllic, it creates something of an ideal type that goes beyond what the evidence will show. Being both 'real and sacred', the myth becomes somewhat a pattern, and therefore repeatable, for it serves as a model, and by the same symbol as a justification, for all human actions'. In some sense, myths help to construct our sense of fitting to a specific culture, to the 'our' world that is also the 'whole world' (Ferguson, 1992).

## 3 Methodology

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*This chapter presents the whole process of how the research has been conducted. Every headline discusses the different options available when conducting a research and ends up with reasoning to why a particular methodological decision was made. The chapter begins with the basic research approaches and leads down to the data analysis methods and quality indicators.*

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### 3.1 Research Approach

There are several decisions to consider and to take into account when choosing an appropriate research approach for a study (Bryman & Bell 2011). In this sub chapter, firstly the decision and reasoning between inductive and deductive research approach is presented. Secondly, the choice whether to apply a qualitative or a quantitative research is argued and portrayed.

#### 3.1.1 Inductive vs. Deductive Research

Generally, there are two different approaches in order to reach conclusions in a research, inductive and deductive. How they are separated depends on how the researcher considers the relationship between theory and empirical findings (Aaker et al., 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011). A deductive approach means that the conclusions are reached by testing commonly known theories, stating hypotheses or research questions and then collecting data. An inductive approach however is made in the opposite way. It first starts off with the collection of empirical data in order to reach conclusions and possibly establish new theories. This information is usually collected by observations and is quite time consuming since the researchers do not have any prior knowledge to base their assumptions on (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In combination of these two approaches, there is the abductive approach, which gets the most out of the advantages and reduces the disadvantages of both inductive and deductive (Saunders, Levis & Thornhill, 2009). For these reasons, the abductive approach was chosen as there was already a basis of theoretical framework to collect further information on, and consecutively as there was a need to potentially create a new construct due to the lack of complete knowledge of how consumers construct themselves. Likewise, this approach made it possible to extend the frame of reference with additional theories after the collection of empirical data in order to better explain the findings.

#### 3.1.2 Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

When collecting empirical data it can be done either through quantitative or qualitative methods. The methods differ in the way they are conducted, but also in what kind of empirical data it brings to the study (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Aaker et al. 2010). A quantitative research approach starts from a broad perspective and aims towards making generalisations about a larger population. It is a structured, controlled and formalised method with few variables on a large amount of respondents. The data collected ought to be in forms of number as it should be measured and presented in statistical statements (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Aaker et al. 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011). A qualitative research approach is an unstructured method with many variables based on small samples, aimed to offer insight and understanding. Hence, it is not generalizable. The data presented is in forms of words, instead of numerical data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The reason behind presenting the data in form of words lies in the interest of studying complicated situations such as how humans perceive and understand things, this in order to get a deeper understanding about a more complex problem under investigation (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Due to the stated purpose and research questions and given that the current study aims to get a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon through consumers that construct a part of their selves as global; this study has a qualitative research approach. This method was also chosen as several quantitative researches already had been done on the subject area, thus by choosing a qualitative this thesis aimed at minimising the current gap in research.

## **3.2 Research Design**

There are mainly three categories of research designs to choose between when conducting a research. These are exploratory, descriptive and casual research designs. The design of the research depends on the objectives of the study, whether you want to understand or measure something and the current knowledge about the subject (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Aaker et al., 2010).

An exploratory research is characterised by its objective of offering insights into and an understanding of a certain marketing phenomena. In general, it is used when the focus of the investigation cannot be measured in a quantitative manner, or for instance, where the progression of measurement cannot convincingly signify specific qualities (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Therefore, if the problem of the study is not clearly defined, an exploratory research can be performed in the beginning of a study to make the problem clearer and more defined (Aaker et al., 2010). When choosing an exploratory design some common methods are interviews, unstructured observations, pilot studies and focus groups (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A descriptive research design is an approach chosen to describe something. For example, market characteristics, functions and attributes. Moreover, it makes it possible to describe who, what, when, where and why about a situation, but also questions regarding the term how (Aaker et al., 2010). Additionally, a descriptive design can be separated into two separate research designs, called cross-sectional research design and longitudinal research design (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). A cross-sectional research design is when collection of information is gathered at one time only, whereas a longitudinal research design is used when the data collection is done at two or more occasions on the same sample. This makes it possible to illustrate the situation and the changes that are taking place over time (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A causal research design is used to examine cause-and-effect relationships, in other words, how a variable depends on one another. For example, if loyal customers lead to increased profitability for a company. Apart from that the approach requires a planned and an organised design, it often also requires an experimental study, and therefore it is vital to have a clear view of the phenomena that is to be investigated (Aaker et al., 2010).

In this study, a causal design was rejected since we did not aim to investigate if one variable causes the value of another variable. Thus, as this investigation aims to explore and at the same time illustrate specific facts concerning how people construct a part of their self as global; the study has both a descriptive and an exploratory research design. Moreover, the decision was made to do a cross-sectional study, as a longitudinal study did not fit the time frame.

## **3.3 Data Sources**

When deciding about different methods for data collection it is important to have in mind the different sources of the data collection. There are mainly two different sources of data,

primary and secondary data (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009). Primary data is data that is initiated by a researcher for the explicit study at hand. As the data is originated with the specific purpose in mind it makes it well suited for the investigation. Additionally, the data is up to date, meaning that the result of the study will not be outdated (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to the exclusivity though, some of the disadvantages with primary data is the cost of time in collecting and analysing it (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009). Secondary data can be summed up as information that is already collected by somebody else. It can be information made within a corporation, data composed by business and government sources, research organisations, and computerised databases. Hence, it is not collected with the purpose of the study at hand (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This explanation is the main reason primary data sources were chosen for this study. The primary data was better assisted to tackle the relative complexity and depth of the information required by the current study regarding the topic of the global consumer culture.

### **3.4 Research Strategy**

When collecting data, there are several different strategies to choose from. According to Yin (2009) these are: experiment, survey, archival analysis, history and case study. Which method to use depends mostly on what type of research questions that has been stated, if it needs control of behavioural events and if it focuses on contemporary events (Yin, 2009).

Although, since archival analyses are observational methods, and as experimental research strategies often are used to find answers in causal problems, like manipulating behaviour, either in a direct, accurate or systematic way, these choices were rejected as the thesis focused on gathering tailor-made and up-to-date primary data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). History was also neglected due to reasons that we were interested in current events and not how it was in the past (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, as surveys are done in a quantitative manner and aim to make statistical inferences of a population (Malhotra & Birks, 2007), this led to the decision of selecting case studies as research strategy. Case studies are detailed studies that ascend out of the desire to understand complex phenomena. It is used in various situations to contribute to our knowledge of individuals, groups, organisational, social, political, and other related occurrences. Concisely, it lets researchers preserve the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Yin, 2009). Case studies provide a closer and a more intensive analysis of a certain unit and are best suitable when investigating how and why questions (Yin, 2009). To further clarify the motivation behind this choice, it needs to be explained that we see consumers that try to construct a part of their self-identity as specific cases, as non-average persons. By analysing these individuals it became less difficult to understand this complex phenomenon. Moreover, a multiple-case design was chosen as we wanted to investigate more than one individual, thus also enabling the possibility of comparing the results and getting different views from different individuals.

### **3.5 Data Collection Method**

The method of data collection is grounded on the bases of the chosen research strategy and approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As the thesis focused on doing case studies on specific individuals that purposely try to construct themselves as global consumers, there were certain sources of data collection methods that were applicable. These were documents, archival records, direct observations, participant observations, physical artefacts and interviews (Yin, 2009).

However, due to the fact that documents look at personal information, like diaries, and as they can be difficult to find (Yin, 2009), this option was disregarded. Archival records were also rejected as they are mainly dealt in a quantitative manner. Physical artefacts were excluded as it deals with physical objects (Yin, 2009), and observations were left out as they are very time consuming and are based on monitoring environmental conditions (Saunders et al., 2009). As a result, since qualitative research is used to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the research subject (Malhotra & Birks, 2007), and as this thesis is conducting a qualitative research on case studies, the method accepted for gathering relevant data was in form of in-depth interviews. Therefore, a more comprehensive and detailed explanation of in-depth interviews will be given.

An in-depth interview takes place face-to-face between an interviewer and a participant (Aaker et al., 2010). It is based upon a conversation where the main purpose is to discover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a subject. Thus, the importance should be to understand the meaning of the respondent's experiences and life worlds (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In-depth interviews foremost uncover a greater depth of insight compared to for example focus groups. By focusing on engaging and evolving an issue with the individual, a researcher can be able to uncover hidden agendas. In other words, try and establish a personal rapport that encourages participants to talk easily and without shyness (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Aaker et al., 2010). Moreover, in-depth interviews are used as they provide more information for a lower cost. Interviews one-on-one lower the possibility of participants being influenced by others, for example, as in a focus group where one respondent might influence the other. Interviews also increase the quality of information as participants are asked directly to find out personal thoughts on a certain matter (Aaker et al., 2010).

Nonetheless, some of the challenges that a researcher faces when conducting in-depth interviews are that the information collected can be problematic to analyse and understand. Hidden messages and interpretations in how respondents express themselves are some of the issues. Therefore, it is vital that a researcher before conducting the interview has a solid theoretical awareness in order to make sense of the information collected (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

In a qualitative approach there are two basic forms of in-depth interviews. They are unstructured and semi-structured, and differ in how the interview-guide is designed (Aaker et al., 2010). Unstructured interviews are informal and the researcher does not use an interview-guide with a predetermined list of questions. Instead they only have a clear idea about the aspect of exploration (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). This gives the participant the chance to talk spontaneously about opinions, events, behaviour and beliefs in relation to the topic area (Saunders et al., 2009; Aaker et al., 2010). In semi-structured interviews there is a specific list of topics and questions that a researcher wants to deal with, and these interviews approximately last between 30 minutes to one hour (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One of the reasons of conducting such an interview is to verify evident facts that one already think have been generated. This suggests that wording, timing and time allocated to each question must be wisely directed. Since, asking leading questions will not serve the purpose of verifying evident facts (Aaker et al., 2010). By having a semi-structured interview it further means that the order of questions might be different varying on the course of the conversation. Besides, additional questions can be necessary to explore the research questions and objectives given the nature of events (Saunders et al., 2009).

Since interviews are conducted to acquiring significant responses and uncovering hidden issues, the usage of probing is essential (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Probing questions means



to further explore responses that are important to the research topic (Saunders et al., 2009). This can be done by asking questions like; “why do you say that?” or “that’s interesting, can you tell me more?” By probing, a researcher can make participants feel more relaxed, personal and motivated to respond in manners that suit them better (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Even though that we already had an understanding on what topics and questions that we wanted to focus on and ask, an unstructured design was excluded. The main reasons behind the decision of conducting semi-structured interviews were based on the easiness of having some kind of structure and at the same time giving participants flexibility when answering.

### **3.6 Construction of Empirical Material**

This sub-chapter gives a justification and presentation of the different instruments that were used in order to gather data for this study.

#### **3.6.1 Interview Guide**

Considering that an in-depth interview process is flexible, questions may not follow on precisely in the way outlined on the schedule. Therefore, questions that are not stated in the guide may be asked by the interviewer depending on the answers given. Nonetheless, in general, most of the questions will be asked and a similar wording will be applied in every interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Still, it is important for a researcher to know what to ask and what information to seek for. This makes it also a vital part of interviewing the right persons that can provide the most relevant and valid information. The interview questions depicted in the guide should have a relationship with the research questions of the study, since, there needs to be a consistency between the two in order to receive the data wanted (Ghuri & Grønhaug, 2010).

The interview guide for the semi-structured interviews (see appendix 1) was designed with the general research topics with sub-questions related to concepts in focus. These questions were formed with the help of the theoretical framework as well as suggested qualitative questions from Cleveland and Laroche (2007). This aided us to construct relevant interview questions in order to collect rigorous, relevant empirical data and fulfil the objective of the in-depth interviews, which was to understand how people construct a part of themselves as global through consumption.

#### **3.6.2 Pre-testing**

Before doing an interview, it is recommended to do a pre-test where the questions are looked at in a critical way, in order to identify and eliminate potential problems. This can be done by having a colleague, adviser, or friend doing the interview and afterwards giving feedback (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). By doing pre-tests, researchers ensure that the interview questions operate well and that the research methods as a whole functions in a good way. Pre-tests also enable researchers to find questions that might not seem to be understandable enough, or questions that can make respondents feel uncomfortable and unwilling to answer (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In this investigation, we pre-tested the interview guide on three potential respondents as well as asking for feedback from our thesis supervisor who is an expert within the field of study. By asking for feedback and doing a pre-test on these people it gave us valuable insight and information on certain questions and structure. It also helped us to further con-

firm a logical and proper order of topics. Complex and vague questions were either reformulated or deleted from the guide.

### 3.7 Sampling

In most marketing researches, the objective is to acquire information about the characteristics of a population. Malhotra and Birks (2007, p. 405) state that a population is “*the aggregate of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics and that comprise the universe for the purpose of the marketing research problem*”. By taking a census or a sample, it becomes possible to obtain information about this population. A census is the enumeration of the whole population. It relates to all units in a population. A sample, however, is a segment of the population that is selected for research and can be based on probability or non-probability sampling (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). A probability sampling is a sample where each element of the population has a known probability chance of being selected for the sample. A non-probability sampling technique means that a sample has not been selected using a random sampling method. In other words, choices are made on the personal judgement of the researcher (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Since, it is impossible to investigate the entire population, mainly due to time and monetary means, this research made use of a sample. Furthermore, a non-probability sampling was used because we were convinced that appropriate information would be obtained from the participants. In addition, when deciding on a non-probability sampling approach, it also has to be concluded whether it should be a convenience sampling, judgemental sampling, quota sampling or snowball sampling (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). We decided to make use of a judgmental sampling, which is a form in where the population elements are purposely selected based on the judgement of the researcher (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Thus, the participants that were included in the sample were chosen because we believed that they were appropriate of the population of interest.

### 3.8 Sample Selection and Procedure of Empirical Material

To be certain that respondents would be appropriate for the study, some guidelines for the sample selection were followed. The respondents selected for the study were mainly based on the purpose, research questions and the theories of the study. Furthermore, it considered people possessing additional understanding of the issue. Therefore, through already established relationships with friends and acquaints, and due to the stated purpose some certain characteristics for respondents had to be stated. The choice of who to interview were based on several criteria that were created by us, for example, personality and experience. To summarise what kind of respondents that were chosen for interviews, the following features were taken into account:

**Gender & Age:** No restrictions.

**Personality:** People who believe that they are global consumers, and that it is important for them to be considered as global consumers.

**International experience and awareness:** Participants that had lived in a country other than their home country, had done a lot of travelling, had international friends and been part of an international environment. Additionally, people that were aware of global news and happenings. By including these features, it was stated that the sample chosen had experienced some of the drivers of globalisation.

**Academic Background:** We made assumptions that people with an academic background had more intense knowledge when purchasing and consuming, thus, having more information about the market place itself.

**Jönköping:** Delimitation was made to the city of Jönköping as it was both convenient and easy for us as researchers to find and interview respondents in a fast and inexpensive manner. Jönköping with its university is also known for its overriding international profile, and was therefore a suitable data collection point.

Moreover, the majority of them were students at the Jönköping University. There were a total number of 15 respondents participating in the study and each interview lasted mainly between 25-40 minutes, with one exception of 52 minutes. The explanation behind having 15 interviews and not more was related to that the results began to be very similar and new insights into the topic remained somewhat infrequent. The complete list of respondents can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – List of Respondents

Age	Gender	Nationality	Status	Duration of Interviews	Label
29	Male	Sweden	Employed	25 min	M1
21	Male	Mexico	Student	37 min	M2
25	Male	Germany	Student	28 min	M3
27	Male	Germany	Student	52 min	M4
27	Male	Bulgaria	Student	36 min	M5
20	Male	Japan	Student	28 min	M6
24	Male	Mexico	Student	25 min	M7
26	Male	Germany	Student	27 min	M8
24	Male	Sweden	Employed	25 min	M9
22	Female	Canada	Student	29 min	F1
23	Female	Bulgaria	Student	28 min	F2
25	Female	France	Student	31 min	F3
21	Female	Moldova	Student	24 min	F4
24	Female	Germany	Student	35 min	F5
32	Female	Sweden	Student	26 min	F6

To make sure for us as interviewers that no answers were missed or misunderstood all the interviews were audio-recorded with the help of a smartphone. This was also in agreement with the respondents chosen. Supplementary notes were also taken during the interviews. Additionally, due to the recorded conversations, it gave us more freedom, leading to that more focus could be put on trying to understand and comprehend the participants' answers, while also making us more able to probe questions if necessary. By probing, we could go deeper into some subjects and make sure that we received the desired responses. Most of the interviews took place at the university itself, but also at some of the respondents' student accommodation due to convenience matters.

### 3.9 Data analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis contains of four stages, these are; data assembly, data reduction, data display and data verification (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Data assembly refers to collecting information from several sources. Some of these forms that can be included are that during an interview or an observation, a researcher can take

notes of what they see and hear. Further sources consist of audiotape/videotape recordings and transcripts of those recordings, and reflections of researchers or observers involved in the data collection process (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). To make it easier for a researcher to indulge and collect all the information that he/she is transmitted to, a suggestion is to maintain field notes, as this can enhance ones learning process and help a researcher to produce a deeper and more general sense of what is going on later on in the process of data analysis (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Data reduction is about managing the collected data by organising and structuring it. As a result, a researcher might have to delete some data since collecting information from a big amount of interviews gives a researcher a lot of data. For example, the recollections and notes of the moderators who took part and transcripts of what was said. For many studies the primary data source in qualitative data analysis are the transcripts, and much emphasis should be put on typing them up. Together with the transcripts, notes and other valuable material collected, researchers then have to choose which data that is relevant and what is irrelevant. This process of reducing information includes the procedure of coding. Coding refers to decomposing the information collected into separate pieces and assigning labels to those pieces of data, based upon what the researcher sees as a significant classification (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Data display is the process of where the data is an organised and compressed assembly of information that allows conclusion drawing and action. This can be done with the use of matrices, graphs, charts or simply plain text. In the different sections, columns, and cells, decision regarding what information to be displayed needs to be taken into account, as well as a need of clear logic of connections (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Data verification consists of searching for alternative descriptions trough theories and other data sources. In other words, determine the meaning of observations, and perceiving regularities, patterns, explanations, and propositions. With the use of theories, literature and similar research findings from other studies, it can help to verify the data (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Data assembly was the collection of information, in other words, the interviews. These interviews were as mentioned earlier recorded via a smartphone and more data was assembled through the notes that we took during the conversations. For the data reduction, the interviews were first transcribed manually into word-documents to have an overview of what was collected and in order to break down the data. This was made possible to due to the recordings. In this part, we then chose to categorise the information collected into two main sections based on the purpose and research questions stated for the thesis. These two sections were named; 'the belief of what a global consumer is' and 'how consumers try to construct global selves'. The second part was thereafter further divided into three different themes which all related to different 'hows', these were; 'travelling and engaging in cultural experiences', 'consuming products from specific countries for certain reasons', and, 'consuming local and global brands'. Moreover, there was also information deleted in order to be able to organise and structure everything in a more comprehensive way. Data that was seen as irrelevant was material that was not thoroughly related to the theoretical framework and purpose, for example, information about what nationalities they connected best with. In the data display, the facts representing the relevant empirical information in the best way were showed in text format, together with quotes and in connection to the theoretical framework. This allowed a more comprehensive view of how we made connections among the different categories created in the coding phase. The last step, data verification consisted of relating the finding with the theoretical framework. Since the study had an abductive

approach, it also resulted in looking at new literature, for instance information relating to perception and cultural meaning of goods.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

During a research it is important to consider the ethical aspects since it refers to the correctness of ones behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the focus of the work, or are touched by it. Hence, research ethics connects to the enquiries about how the research topic is formulated and clarified, how the research is designed and how access is gained, collection of data, processing and storing data, analysing data and to write up research findings in a moral and responsible way (Saunders et al., 2009; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Therefore, it is important to be sure that the research design and methodology is both thorough and morally defensible to those who are involved. Some issues that might arise during the different stages of the research are: the confidentiality of potential and actual respondents; the will of participating and the option to withdraw partially or completely from the process; consent and potential dishonesty of participants; preservation of the privacy of data provided by respondents or identifiable participants and their anonymity; and, reactions of participants during data collection, counting embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain and harm (Saunders et al., 2009; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

To solve the ethical issues in this study, no names were provided, instead the respondents were labelled in order to keep them anonymous and securing their confidentiality. Furthermore, in agreement with the respondents and as explained earlier, all interviews were recorded simultaneously as notes were taken to have the visual information in mind when transcribing the data with the purpose of not missing out on information.

### **3.11 Quality Indicators**

In order for a study to be of high quality, accurate and solid as possible, the concepts of validity and reliability are important factors and should be used in every research. Validity shows if the research truly measures what it is intended to measure or how truthful the research results are (Golafshani, 2003), while the term reliability refers to the degree to which a measure of a concept is stable (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, in this thesis, where a qualitative approach was chosen, the terms within this topic are differently transformed. Therefore, we looked at the terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability as these four criteria should be considered when wanting a trustworthy study (Shenton, 2004),

#### **3.11.1 Credibility**

Credibility is an important factor in establishing trustworthiness, and deals with the question of how consistent the findings and the research are with reality (Shenton, 2004). To receive accurate data, we described the themes that would be discussed and further explained what the focus of our thesis was about to the different respondents. This ensured that the participants to a higher extent were more informed. Additionally, by allowing an expert within the field of study; PhD Benjamin Hartmann to review the in-depth interview guide and also by doing pre-tests with a small amount of participants, it could be determined whether the questions or the structure of the guide was representing the intended focus.

### **3.11.2 Conformability**

Conformability refers to the qualitative investigator's equivalent concern to objectivity. In this case, it needs to be made certain that the findings in the study are the result of the experiences and ideas of the respondents, instead of the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. To address this issue, a detailed methodological description was used to help the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted (Shenton, 2004).

### **3.11.3 Transferability**

Transferability or generalisability as it is called in some cases is a concept that assesses whether the results obtained in a study can be generalised or not, for example to other populations, surroundings or periods (Shenton, 2004; Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). As the goal of a qualitative research is not to generalise but to get a deeper understanding, and as this study is qualitative with in-depth interviews, the results collected are not possible to generalise for the whole population. Nevertheless, multiple case studies on individuals were conducted in order to at least strengthen the transferability. Moreover, the same interview guide was used for all the interviews, thus, strengthening the findings for this specific sample and theoretical framework.

### **3.11.4 Dependability/Reliability**

From a qualitative perspective, the aspect of dependability or reliability refers to the quality of the research done and how good it was to generate understanding (Golafshani, 2003). A way of achieving this is by addressing the processes within the research in detail, thus enabling a future researcher to repeat the study. Thereby, the design of the research can be viewed as a stated example for others. This kind of in-depth coverage also gives the reader the possibility to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004). In this thesis, we have attempted to give a thorough view of the research methods as extensively as possible. Every subchapter has argued over the different options available and with reasoning to why a particular methodological decision was made.

Additionally, in semi-structured interviews, concerns about reliability are usually related to some sort of bias, and there are also several types of biases to consider. These could be interviewer bias and response bias. Interview bias concerns the fact about when there might be comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer that makes the interviewee to answer in some particular way on a certain question. Response bias refers to when the interviewee are reluctant to discuss a topic due to sensitive information (Saunders et al., 2009). Although the feeling of not having a big experience of interviewing, this issue was somewhat tackled by reading up on the method of in-depth interviews in order to reduce the possibility of making mistakes that could have occurred. Moreover, we prepared ourselves also by reading up on the subjects of the study at hand, allowing us to formulate questions linked to the research questions and the purpose of this study. Additionally, to increase the reliability for this research the recorded interviews are available upon request. Regarding the issue of response bias, this was reduced by keeping the respondents anonymous and securing their confidentiality in the thesis, thus, making them more open to answering the questions.

## **3.12 Chapter Summary**

Through the entire methodology chapter, choices regarding the different strategies and approaches have been presented and motivated. The main objective has been to answer the

purpose and the research questions. In Table 2 below, a summary of the whole chapter is presented.

Table 2 – Summary of Methodology

<b>Research Methodology</b>	
Research Approach	Abductive & Qualitative
Research Design	Exploratory & Descriptive
Data Sources	Primary Data
Research Strategy	Multiple Case Studies
Data Collection Method	Interviews
Construction of Empirical Material	Semi-structured Interviews on 15 Global Consumers
Sampling	Judgmental Sampling
Data Analysis	Data Assembly, Data Reduction, Data Display, Data Verification
Quality Criteria	Credibility, Conformability, Transferability & Dependability

## 4 Findings and Analysis

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*This chapter presents and analyses the results of the empirical study conducted for this research. The data collected from the interviews is presented and examined under two sections related to specific topics. Within these topics, overviews of the main findings are stated together with the usage of quotations from the respondents.*

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### 4.1 The Belief of What a Global Consumer is

This subchapter is related to the global consumer culture and why respondents believe that they are global, furthermore it also relates to their impressions of what a global consumer is. Since the thesis aim is to illustrate how consumers try to construct global selves through consumption, it was a natural first step to ask respondents how they perceived the global consumer and the global consumer culture.

People addressed three main directions regarding their belief of being a global consumer and the global consumer culture. They were related to; the manufacturing processes of consuming goods and products, influential forces behind consumption, and availability of products.

A part of the interviewed participants believed that they were global consumers for the simple fact that they purchased and consumed products that were made in different parts of the world. As an example, one respondent stated that buying a Swedish clothing brand at his local market in Flensburg, Germany, but which was actually manufactured in China, made him a global consumer. This suggests that for this respondent, there was a belief that as long as there is more than one country participating in the supply chain, he considered himself as global. Another direction of the answers was covered by people who believed that they were global because they did not limit themselves to the supplies of the local markets. One girl stated:

F2 - *“It was several months ago, when my cousin had a business trip to the USA, so I pleased him to bring me a product that was not available in Eastern Europe. He went to California and I really wanted a specific item. I made an active research on the Internet to facilitate him how to find the product and how to identify exactly the one that I wanted. Finally, when he came back, I received the product that I wanted. However, it is not only limited to people who go, or already live abroad. If he would not have gone there, I would have definitely gone for the online forms of purchasing. And this is not a special occasion; I believe it illustrates the way that makes me a global consumer”.*

Regarding this example, it is understood that the specific product the respondent was pursuing was not available in her home market. With the use of Internet, she managed to simplify for her friend how to find the product in a foreign country and bring it back. However, she seemed to already have made up her mind of purchasing the product even if without the help of her friend. Hence, this example further illustrates how the driving forces of the globalisation based on our theoretical framework have influenced this specific single purchase - technology improvement and innovations and lower transportation costs (Oliver et al., 2008; Sobolo, 2008; Ger, 1999).

M4 - *“I believe I am a global consumer because I have lived abroad and made friendships with people from different part of the world. I still keep in touch with some of them. Sometimes, I have bought products that my friends from Asia or South America have told me are very popular in their countries.”*

One aspect of the globalisation is the enormous progress of the innovation through communication which allows people from different parts of the world to be in contact with each other every day. It encourages them to share and talk about specific things from their



culture. As Cleveland and Laroche (2007) clarifies, culture is a transmitted phenomenon and the above example illustrates how the culture of consumption could be transmitted through different parts of the world. It grows into the trend of consumption homogenisation, a tendency that is marked by Belk (1995) and global consumer segments which are defined by Keillor et al. (2001).

When analysing the three patterns of what a global consumer is, we admit that they are all overlapped by the definition given by Keillor et al. (2001, p. 2) “*individuals around the world whose cultural, social, and other differences are becoming less important as influences on their consumer behaviour*”. Though, we find this definition as quite general. Based on our findings of the consumer perspective of how consumers construct and develop their global selves, we generate further descriptions. In terms of global consumption culture, a product is a function of many things, but the most vital things appear to be; the manufacturing process, the place where the product is purchased and the descent of recommendations, if there are any. Thus, it seems as the more countries that are involved in the products way to the consumer, the more consumers will feel as global.

## **4.2 How consumers try to construct global selves**

While, the first subchapter illustrated what a global consumer is in the eyes of our respondents, the second one is devoted directly to the purpose of this master thesis. Some examples have already been given in order to have a better insight of the myths and beliefs towards the global consumer and global consumer culture. Here, a deeper description will be given into how consumers try to construct global selves through consumption. This subchapter is divided into three different themes which all relate to different ‘hows’, these are; travelling and engaging in cultural experiences, consuming products from specific countries for certain reasons, and consuming local and global brands.

### **4.2.1 Travelling and engaging in cultural experiences**

Firstly, we are going to focus on a crucial part of consumers’ global self-construction – travelling and indulging in new cultural experiences. The effect of travelling appears to having an impact on the fading of national cultures and at the same time, making these national cultures converge into a more general global culture (Bird & Stevens, 2003). Some of the reasons for this convergence are for instance that evolving information technologies subject people to cultural norms, values and behaviours of other countries. For example, participants had a mutual understanding that nowadays, due to the effect of globalisation, travelling abroad was more accessible and affordable, a finding that correspondingly can be verified by Bird and Stevens (2003) and Parker (2005). Respondents also had a very positive feeling about it and it was appreciated by all of them that travelling helped people being exposed to new experiences and behaviours (Parker, 2005). At the same time, they believed that by travelling abroad and experiencing new cultures, they constructed their global self. However, it was also an instrument to reach new consumption habits that otherwise would not have been very likely. The effects are explained below:

F4 – *“I travel because I like getting to know new things. I think that when you are travelling abroad you broaden your horizon. People who stay at home or just within their own city they tend to be very narrow minded and not so open. So, by travelling I can form my character, develop my personality and at the same time get a better perspective of how people within other cultures live.”*

People consume goods basically every day; hence it is a significant activity of human beings. As Slater (1997) argued, consumption is however not only related to purchasing, but

also to the usage, pleasure and experience of objects. Since, it can be seen through the increased consumption possibilities (Featherstone, 2007), the respondents in this study has been part of the development towards a growing role for consumption patterns and style in people's self-identity construction. Due to the rise in consumption possibilities; the surplus of goods and the varieties in choice and styles has made many consumption choices, statements about personality, values, and a way of handling social relations (Lury, 1996).

By experiencing new things, it appears to help consumers form their personality and self-construct, which matches to Mead (1934) who expressed that consumers' form a part of themselves through relationships with other people. And by being members of a society, there is an agreement on shared meanings. Hence, consumers interpret their own self-identities, and this is something that is under constant development as they come across new situations and people. This in turn, makes people capable to answer the question of who they are (Mead, 1934).

In addition, due to more accessible and affordable travelling today than in the past, people are also interacting more with other cultures. This is in correspondence with the rest of the respondents, as there was a general sense that today the encounters of different cultures were much bigger than a few years ago. However, while respondents from developing countries, like Bulgaria and Moldova, actively embraced such process, the feeling from respondents from developed countries, like Germany, Sweden and Canada saw it as a two-edged process. They hailed the fact that they could embrace with other cultures, but at the same time they also found negative contribution of the globalisation as a driving force of decline to their traditional cultural values. On the case of decline of traditional values, this can be related back to the defensive attitudes towards globalisation. That with globalisation there is an existing process that might disrupt national cultures and individual identities (Ger, 1999). Thus, with the growth of capitalism, transportation, new communication systems, advertising, and cosmopolitanism, boundaries are softened and the appearance of a homogeneous global consumer culture takes place (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Maystre et al., 2014).

Moreover, since all of the respondents had lived abroad; they admitted that this fact had influenced their behaviour and consumption patterns over a longer perspective. For example, a Mexican male who had spent three years in Germany studying, started buying specific German brands when he eventually got back to his home-country. At the same time, a German man who had spent six months in Chile started buying Chilean spices and red wine from Chile at authentic stores in Germany. Which in order made them state that they were global. Finding certain authentic stores or products in a different country is a result of globalisation. However, it seems based on respondents' answers that authentic stores are mainly seen in developed countries since these were mainly mentioned by people from these countries. An explanation might be that the development gap is extensive between developed and developing countries, where the developed countries have 80 % of the world's wealth, trade, investment and access to modern technologies (Dicken, 2011).

This also supports the argument from Cleveland and Laroche (2007) that when consumers come across individuals from two or more cultures, they adopt and learn from others. Nonetheless, it further supports the theories of Parameswaran (2002) and Daniels (2003) that local cultures will predictably be colonised by global brands. And that local culture will either critically adapt or resist this global phenomenon (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007). For the interviewed respondents, contact with other cultures and people has occurred through tourism and international studies. That in some cases has led to a long term of initial contact. This confirms Berry's (2005) standpoint since these circumstances has been

through learning, sharing or taking part of each other's food preferences and adopting some forms of social interactions. The following two examples illustrate the need for new knowledge.

M9 – *“I visit new countries because I want to get hold of new knowledge and experience around the world. I feel that it is important in learning more about different cultures as it helps you to see how people act in different situations and what their agendas are. I mean, you can get something from it. When you get to another country you automatically adapt to so many things in order to survive. Overall it is a natural process.*

M8 - *“I study abroad because I especially like the international flavor and influence. I like being around the international environment, it is more interesting when people are different from what you are used to, it makes you discover new stuff. I adapt to a degree consciously, but to a degree also unconsciously. It is important to adapt, because otherwise you will see conflicts.”*

The progression in which individuals learn and adopt the values and behaviours of a foreign culture is referred to as acculturation (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). What is possible to see here is changes at the individual level, which involves changes in a person's behavioural collection (Berry, 2005). These changes have taken place through travelling abroad during a longer period of time. Where learning about other's cultures and food habits has led to adopting new behaviours and change in consumption. An illustration that is also given by one of the females:

F5 - *“I am a person that chooses my products globally, for example when I cook Asian food, I look at specific products from Asia as I used to be a back packer there for 5 months and got to know the culture. For example, certain herbs or spices, because they have the best quality and they know how they are made.”*

The last quote illustrates the will of trying and purchasing new and local products, which in turn, states a part of consumers' global selves. By searching for better quality in goods and services, some individuals search for their products outside of their local markets.

#### **4.2.2 Consuming products from specific countries for certain reasons**

This subchapter continues with the most common ways of how people try to construct global selves. Looking for better quality or new experiences, consumers try to construct global selves by buying specific products from specific countries for several reasons. Thus, this part is distinguished into four main patterns that express what consumers base their consumption decisions on: experience in production; geographical prerequisite of quality; recommendations from natives, and, characteristics and/or stereotypes of countries and people.

##### **Experience in production**

Some respondents stated that when they bought specific products, they only looked at products from one or few countries that they considered as the best producers of these items. For some respondents, there was a will to only buy products/brands from specific countries. Some of these people were talking passionately about some product categories and countries, for example:

M2 - *“The Italian pasta and the pasta from the rest of the world are extremely different. The Italian pasta is the best one. I am willing to pay much more for the pasta from Italy since they know how to do it. It is the same with the prosciutto from Spain or Italy, cars from Germany and wine from France”.*

This respondent illustrates the beliefs and perceptions that certain countries are the best producers, and argues by saying; they know how to do it, which in turn can be reflected on

experience and knowledge in manufacturing. The comment corresponds with what Roth and Romeo (1992) pointed out, that decisions can be based on prior perceptions of the country's production and marketing strengths and weaknesses. These findings further prove that country-of-origin does have an effect on product assessments, and that consumers in general also show preferences towards products from specific countries (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Schaefer, 1995; Zhang, 1997). Additionally to the country-of-origin effect, it seems that the purchase, perception and consumption of the goods have been influenced by beliefs (Piron, 2000).

Nevertheless, there were also negative myths discussed, where some of the respondents, based on stories in the media, expressed that they were trying to avoid some products if they were manufactured in countries that for example had child labour and unethical working conditions. There was a mutual negative belief towards clothes produced in Asia, where some of them specified China as an example. These assumptions can be connected to Ferguson's (1992) arguments, which expresses that the modern world is found in the sets of ideas and beliefs about the world, its economy, culture, and communication.

### **Consuming products based on geographical prerequisite of quality**

Some respondents admitted that the country-of-origin was crucial to them, though, only within some industries and product categories, for instance, the food industry. Considerations were related to the assumptions that some countries are not able to produce products in a natural way due to geographical location and climate. An example:

M5: *"There are some product categories within food that are not able to be produced everywhere in the world. For example, I do not want to buy tomatoes from the Netherlands, because they will probably be artificial ones"*.

As it is known, consumers are affected by intrinsic and extrinsic cues when selecting a product. Cues that influence consumers perceptions, evaluations and buying intentions (Zhang, 1997; Nebenzahl et al., 1997). For respondent M5, the extrinsic cue has created a negative attitude towards the product (Zhang, 1997; Hoffmann, 2000). Apart from that country of origin does have an effect on consumers' product assessment (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988). It is also possible to see that the reasons and explanations based on beliefs that some countries have more years of experience in producing specific products than other countries. Respondents' also revealed considerations which we can align to objective climate restrictions that particular countries might have, that in many cases disallows them to produce healthy and natural food. On the other hand, it also expresses that myths and/or beliefs do not need to be positive; instead they can also have a negative effect towards consuming a certain brand or product.

### **Consuming products based on recommendations by natives.**

Consumers' consumption patterns were not influenced only when spending time abroad, they also seemed affected by the recommendations and suggestions from people with different cultural and national backgrounds. The majority believed that if an acquaintance or a close friend from another country told them that their home country produced specific products in a well-mannered way, our respondents would most likely buy or try these goods.

Ferguson (1992) expressed that myths are stories that we are told and tell to others and ourselves. Since, consumer culture is full of myths; it can help consumers to better understand certain situations. Therefore, it can be expressed that the story in which a product

expresses or is based on has a vital meaning for consumption patterns. One example that corresponds with this was given by a Swedish respondent who stated:

M9 - *“When I studied abroad I made a few friends from Italy and they were always talking about their own local food and wine. One day when I had got back from my exchange semester I was celebrating my girlfriend’s birthday. To make it more special, I went to Systembolaget to buy some wine. But I am very bad at wine so I actually contacted one of my Italian friends on Facebook and he suggested a wine from his local region. It turned out pretty good.”*

Cultures develop their own stories and practices. Hence, each society holds a set of stories that describe that culture (Ferguson, 1992). From this, the consumption habit from M9 has been affected from his previous cultural engagements from studying abroad and connecting with people from different countries.

We also found out that the natives from the countries that are involved into these myths really believed that their own country produced the mentioned products better. For example, the Mexicans believed that the taco in Mexico was the best one, the Japanese believed that the best made sushi was produced in Japan and the Bulgarians had the same association for their yoghurt. As a summary of these reasons related to myth, it is a mix of experience towards the products, myths and beliefs about the people and products of countries and recommendations by native citizens.

### **Consuming products based on the match between the features of the stereotype citizens that the brand comes from**

Apart from that people relate certain products to certain countries; they also have stereotype images about people from these countries. A group of people stated that they buy brands which features are close to the characteristics of the people from the country that the brand comes from. The following quotes exemplify:

M3 - *“I believe that these myths and beliefs are kept because nobody fights against them. It is related to the fact that the people relate some countries to some products which are part of their culture. Let us take, for instance, my country Germany. To our culture it is adhered the belief that we love beer and this is in my impression completely true. We like beer more than most of the countries that I have ever visited. At the same time, if we like beer, it is natural to demand a better quality. So the actual reason for this belief is the fact that Germans like drinking beer, and why would anybody start arguing that this is not true?”*

M8 - *“For me it is more credible when the brand wants to promote the myths that are related to the citizens of the same country, for instance, when Volvo promotes features like safety, durability and long lasting. It is a Swedish brand and I also relate the Swedish people with these characteristics, so then I really will believe that some countries do some things better than elsewhere”.*

These quotes are illustrations of when stereotyping are influencing consumers’ consumption. The allowing of stereotyping taking place is based on opinions of the country-of-origin that consumers shape their product assessment on (Zhang, 1997). Moreover, the ‘cognitive approach’ of the country-of-origin cue affects consumers’ beliefs about product attributes, findings that are supported by Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999), Bloemer et al. (2009) and Zhang (1997).

Related to the topic country-of-origin, we asked our respondents about their attitudes and perceptions towards that many global companies had moved most of their manufacturing processes into other less developed countries, which conveyed an ongoing discussion. Some of the respondents believed that it decreased the credibility of the myths and beliefs.

However, others disagreed and believed that companies such as Volkswagen and BMW, for example, still were able to control the quality of their products. One of our respondents revealed and elaborated on it this topic.

F6 - *“The manufacturing process is easy to be transmitted into other countries; however, more importantly is where the research & development is located. My impressions are that it usually happens at the country where the brand comes from, so for me the fact that the product is not made at the same country does not influence”.*

This respondent seems to have more knowledge about the process of manufacturing and development of the product. That in turn makes her purchasing decision mostly related to where the research & development process is located.

Lastly, at the end of this subchapter, we enumerate the most common myths and beliefs related to specific countries and specific product categories that we faced during the interviews: German cars; Swiss watches; German beer; Belgium beer; French wine; Italian pasta; Norwegian salmon; French cheese; Swiss chocolate; Belgium chocolate; French bread; Mexican tacos; Chinese rice. There are also mutual associations to whole industries like French and Italian cosmetics, clothing and food.

### **4.2.3 Consuming local and global brands**

Contentiously, consumers try to construct themselves as global by both purchasing global and local products from other countries. A further elaboration will explain in which contexts the local products are symbols of global consumption and in which global ones are symbols.

There was a mutual understanding in terms of consumption of local and global brands. For example, claims that people especially purchase local products when they travel to other countries (especially authentic products), although, when they are in a foreign country for a longer period (study or work), they tended to buy more global ones. Due to that consumers' seemed to have a bigger preference for brands that has a global image over a local image, it is consistent with the statement of Zhou et al., (2008), hence also confirming that corporations should apply global brand positioning strategies. This argument is demonstrated by one of the females:

F5 - *“I consume more global products when I am abroad, because even when I know that the product is bad, I am aware of how bad it is. However, this is mainly related to when I live abroad for a longer period. When I am only travelling for a short period of time, I try to buy new products from the local market.”*

Another aspect in consideration was if the same thinking was made for products that were only going to be used for a short period or products that were going to be used for a longer period of time. What we noticed was that the longer the use of a product the more information would be needed before purchasing. Based on the assumptions that global brands are much more familiar for most of the people, we imply that the chance for people to go for a global brand is higher when it comes to a product which will be used for a longer period of time.

F2 - *“When it comes to a one time basis, I can allow myself to try new stuff and if the purchase is not worthy, it is not a big deal, however, for a purchase that I will use for a longer time, it is different. I still can try the local brands, but I need a lot of recommendations and assurance by the local people that the product is reliable and good.”*

It appears that consumers in these cases choose products to what they already know and can relate to, thus, making selective choices with a small amount of risk attached to it. This may be related to the work of Schiffmann and Kanuk (1991) and Mostert (1996) that recognition and interpretation is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, and expectations. In terms of quality and reliability towards global brands there was no mutual understanding. When asked about if they believed that global brands were more reliable in terms of quality compared to local ones, the majority of the people stated that global brands were more reliable and more quality laden in general. Nevertheless, they thought that their success and awareness could have been a result of good marketing and advertising approaches. Yet, there was a belief that global brands kept at least some general level of good standard. An interesting pattern that was found was that respondents from less developed countries had a higher perception and belief about global brands originated from the Western culture. One female from Moldova shared some of her insights and also gave an example.

F4 – *“When I am in my home-country, I mainly want to buy global products because they are considered as nice and have a certain quality to it compared to local ones. It makes me different from others, but if I consume the same products here in Sweden, I won't be so different. H&M is a good example, in Moldova it is considered really nice to wear their clothes, but in Sweden everyone owns something from H&M.”*

Her opinion could be used as a part of the explanation why sometimes global brands are perceived as global consumption, but sometimes local ones are as well. Since local consumption is the alternative of global consumption, being a global consumer could be examined as consuming different products than local people. The example also gives the impressions that the respondent tries to create her self-concept. The self-concept is discussed by Engler (1999) who defines self-concept as a function of how one perceives himself in addition to the feedback one has from others in society. Given that what others see consist of a person's clothing, car and other materialistic things, it might be expressed that these products also help to determine the perceived self (Levy, 1959; Fournier, 1998).

Furthermore, if we assume that conventional and local consumption in Moldova and Sweden is different, it means that being a global consumer in Moldova and Sweden is achieved by different consumption. Merz et al. (2005) stated that the functional meanings of goods are recognised more globally, while the symbolic meaning could be recognised differently in different parts of the world. For the quote from respondent F4, this statement is very accurate. For people living in developed countries, brands like H&M do not have the image of being a superior brand, compared to other clothing brands. While, in developing countries, wearing a brand from Sweden is something different. This could also be related to consumers' beliefs and myths that Western culture is superior and/or better to other cultures. Moreover, global brands are somehow a symbol of success, which makes people trust them more (Zhou et al., 2008). In addition, it was mentioned by some respondents that had travelled or/and lived in countries outside of the Western culture that many local people in these countries had a breathtaking attitude towards some global brands which in the countries of the Western world were perceived as common ones.

Taking into consideration of our findings that in the long-term consumption towards global brands is higher, because of the safety factor, it is also crucial to pay attention to what consumption of local brands could give more to the people. The following quotes illustrate:

M5 – *“Trying to get the best from different local cultures makes you different and one step ahead of others, because soon the globalisation will naturally spread the best from the different countries everywhere in the*

*world. Looking outside of your national boundaries, you can identify some needs and wants that you have never thought that you had before. Or also better solutions for already recognised needs”.*

F2 - *“The world does not stop and end at the national borders. And me neither. I try to positively find the best from every part of the world and to form myself more strongly”.*

Relating to McCracken’s work (1990), people use consumer goods to show of principles and to create and sustain certain lifestyles. Since, consumers also buy goods and services for their symbolic meaning and for what they mean, they have a preference of consuming products that demonstrative a meaning coherent with their own identity and the values they try to construct themselves with. It can show the type of person they are, or want to be (Levy, 1959; Sirgy, 1982). Freud (1965) discusses the ideal self, and that an individual’s conception of how they would like to be and is somewhat formed by elements of consumer culture. Products can therefore be bought for the reason that they are believed to be helpful in achieving personal goals. These respondents want to be perceived as global and different from others. Buying local products from certain countries and at the same time maintaining a global self-identity appears to be making them distinctive in their own mind-set.



## 5 Discussion

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*In this chapter, the findings from the previous chapter will be discussed with a more broad perspective.*

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In the preceding chapter we revealed what a global consumer is in the eyes of our respondents and how do they try to construct global selves through consumption. In this chapter, we will discuss our findings and simultaneously take it one step further, in other words, trying to find out what stands behind this construction of global selves and discovering their motives and reasons.

Mazaheri et al. (2014) expressed that culture is a main factor of consumers' attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles, which in turn create needs that consumers try to satisfy through the acquisition and use of goods and services (Mazaheri et al., 2014). One of the aspects that were found regarding this topic was that being a global consumer in the eyes of our respondents refers to the already existed term in the literature of cosmopolitanism. Cleveland and Laroche (2007) related cosmopolitanism as a desire of engagement and involvement to other cultures. Furthermore, these are people who have a certain set of knowledge, familiarity and understanding of foreign cultures. In addition, their expressed aspiration towards being adaptive to other places in the world also refers to the definition of Konrad (1984) who claim that cosmopolitanism are those intellectuals who are at home in the cultures of other peoples as well as in their own.

Another aspect was the feeling of superiority and need of uniqueness that some of our respondents had of being a global consumer. It was found out that most of the respondents wanted something more, something that was not available everywhere in the world. The sense of superiority is discussed by Taylor and Brown (1988) that stresses out that it is inherent for those individuals who regard themselves as possessing higher levels of desired personal qualities, e.g., higher levels of self-esteem. Hence, we can determine that for the interviewed respondents, being a global consumer is an instrument to achieve and satisfy their sense of superiority which is a part of their self. It is known as well that consumers obtain and display material possessions for the purpose of feeling differentiated from other people, and to enhance self-perceptions of uniqueness. By being different, it helps consumers create a want for uniqueness (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001), which in these cases can be exploited through the purchase and disposition of specific consumer goods for the reason of evolving and increasing one's personal and social identity

The idea that the globalisation gave something more to the people was adhered to more respondents. These participants believed that through global consumerism, they would see themselves as stronger, and based this belief on more knowledge and more experience. In these two cases, the terminology of uniqueness plays a role too. As related to Tian et al. (2001) some individuals consume some products to become classified as being outside of the norm, and hence a symbol of being somewhat special or different. An additional pattern that was found regarding this topic was the match between personality and globalisation. The majority defined openness as one of the first characteristics that they associated themselves with. In these terms, trying new things from different cultures directly matched their personality. There were further common beliefs that global consumption made people more adaptive which in turn could help them in different situations of their lives. Studies have consistently found a positive association between openness value and life satisfaction, and a negative association between security value and life satisfaction (Oishi et al. 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2002). In addition, Le (2011) proves a path from openness to self-transcendence. The latter could be related to the already discussed sense of superiority.

Related to the self-conception theory, most of our respondents saw themselves as curious persons. They also indicated a connection between their curiosity and being global. By trying new products, brands and experiences from different cultures, they agreed on it as an indicator of their global selves. The need of curiosity is explained by Bowler (2010) who classifies it as an intellectual state, as a desire to know. According to him, curiosity propels consumers towards inquiry and discovery. Additionally, Silvia (2008) debates that curiosity is closely associated with interest, an emotional state that helps to motivate an intrinsic desire to learn and explore.

Birds and Stevens (2003) convey that the emerging global culture was being influenced from North American and Western Culture. Likewise, with the help of mass media and the internet, Western brands together with the English language are widely used in advertising around the world and have thus become a signal of modernism and internationalism to many consumers. We believe that by being more modern and international, consumers feel as discussed before, more superior or different towards their local acquaintances.

## 6 Conclusion

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*In this chapter, we answer to the purpose and the research questions that were raised at the beginning of the thesis.*

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The purpose of this paper was to explore and illustrate how consumers try to construct global selves through consumption. Using different leverage points such as myth and beliefs, country of origin and global brands, we examined the purpose through three research questions; **RQ 1:** What are the myths and beliefs about the global consumer culture? **RQ 2:** How does the country-of-origin matter when it comes to consumption? **RQ 3:** What is the function of global brands related to the Global Consumer Culture?

Consumers try to construct their global selves in a variety of ways, the most common ones are through travelling and engaging in cultural experiences, consuming products from specific countries for certain reasons, and by observing the market as one whole global market, thus not limiting themselves into the boundaries of specific countries, regions or continents. This consumption is then grounded on myths and beliefs that they have accumulated about global consumer culture while gaining experience in different parts of the world. These myths and beliefs are however based on their perceptions towards global consumer culture, not objective reality per se. One of the strongest mutual shared myths towards global consumer culture is the intentional looking for authentic products from different parts of the world.

Related to the second research question, we can conclude that the effect of country-of-origin does matter. Consumers intentionally look for specific product categories or even at whole industries for brands that originates from certain countries. The country-of-origin effect comes mainly into play when people associate some industries or product categories, for example food, with certain countries based on beliefs that the countries have more years of experience in producing the product. Another matter was related to the assumptions that some countries are not able to produce products in a natural way due to geographical location and climate, thus affecting the quality. Moreover, important factors included recommendations by natives and when a brand promotes the characteristics of stereotypes of their citizens as features. The latter entailed more trustworthiness to the consumers.

Since, there are products that are associated by consumers as a symbol of globalisation; we also explored the role and function of global brands in terms of global consumer culture and local ones as their alternative. There is a dominance of global brands expressed by consumers based on awareness which is more vivid when it comes to a purchase decision for the long term. Consumers are prone to choosing global brands because they have a presence and reputation on the market and since there is a belief that they at least have a certain level of quality standard. However, when travelling, consumers try to construct their global selves by also buying local products. In, addition some global brands are perceived differently in different parts of the world. In opposition, consumers from developed countries see global brands as mainly conventional choices.

## 7 Further Research and Implications

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*Suggestions for further research will be provided, and lastly, both academic and managerial implications will be given.*

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Taking into consideration the complexity of the topic, we decided to go for a qualitative research in order to find out how consumers try to construct themselves as global. However, these findings exclude generalisability over a bigger population. As a first future research topic, we propose these findings to be used in a quantitative study to confirm generalisability.

Moreover, we conducted a research that covers a very broad spectrum of processes, theories, industries and related subjects. However, we believe that some industries are more globalised than others. Further researches could narrow down the area of study to specific industries, for example, the food industry. As from the findings in this thesis, most of the respondents used food as examples when illustrating their perceptions and beliefs. From our study it was also possible to see some patterns and differences between developed and developing countries, where the perceptions and beliefs regarding global and local brands varied. For that reason, we recommend further studies to emphasize on what the usage of global products symbolise.

Additionally, the influence of demographic characteristics was not examined in this investigation. Given that one of the main driving forces of globalisation is the technology, we assume that the younger generation is more aware of innovations within technology. Thus, it would be interesting to see how globalisation has affected consumer culture on an older sample selection. Moreover, the respondents in this study had apart from travelling around the world, also either studied or worked in an international. So, in a way they have had the chance to easier experience other cultures and see consumption patterns of other people with different backgrounds. Thus, it would also be interesting to examine if there is a difference between their perceptions of global consumer culture compared to the ones who have lived in their home country during their entire lives.

Lastly, we focused on people with academic backgrounds. Most of them had studied business which made them aware of the globalisation through a theoretical point of view, and not only through personal experiences. Hence, it would be interesting to see the beliefs and myths of globalisation and global consumer culture through the eyes of people who do not have an academic background.

### 7.1 Academic Implications

One of the objectives of this paper was to give a contribution to the literature that could be used as leverage point in future consumer researches. When we started reading the literature related to the topic of global consumer culture, we found many discussions and arguments of how the globalisation had affected consumer culture. However, we also discovered that people who believed that they were part of this culture were rather unexpressed. Now, we might say that this gap has at least started to decrease since we have contributed to several ways that show how consumers actually try to construct a part of their global selves.

Within our qualitative research we also established an understanding that that through being a global consumer, a certain group of people is trying to achieve a sense of superiority, specialty, cosmopolitanism and/or uniqueness. Being a global consumer correspondingly

helps some people to form themselves and recognise needs and wants that they did not know from before, but also to find better solutions for already recognised ones. Global consumer culture also matches people with characteristics such as openness and curiosity as part of their personality.

## **7.2 Managerial Implications**

The managerial implications are made in order to facilitate marketers of how to promote their products in the future to reach a maximum value for their organisations. We interviewed a specific group of people who intentionally try to construct themselves as global consumers through consumption, and who sensors react when they are attracted by tools of making them global consumers.

Moreover, there is a certain group of people from developing countries who reacts more to brands that are promoting themselves as a part of the Western Culture. It seemingly activates their sense of belonging to be part of a culture which in their eyes is perceived as superior and modern. Another successful configuration that could be used by marketers in order to reach the desire of certain people that wants to be global is through creating an authenticity through products that come from different part of the world. An additional objective for international marketers and global organisations should be to try convincing their customers that they are able of maintaining the same quality in production even after production has been moved to another country or continent.

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# Appendix I- Interview Guide

## Warm up questions

- 1) Now you live in Sweden, is it your first time you're living abroad or have you had previous experiences?
- 2) What has been your motivation of living/studying/working abroad?
- 3) Do you feel that you are/were adapting to the culture of the specific countries that you have lived in? (Even to the international environment?)

## Globalisation

- 4) What comes to your mind when you hear the term globalisation? What do you associate with it?
- 5) How has globalization affected the life of you or your family members?
- 6) Do you believe that there is such a thing as a global consumer culture?
- 7) What does the phrase "global consumer culture" mean to you? How would you describe members of this global consumer culture?
- 8) English is increasingly being spoken around the world. Does this widespread adoption of English promote the spread of Western or American culture?
- 9) In your view, does the rise of the Internet help the spread of Western culture?
- 10) Would you say that multinational companies are largely responsible for the spreading of a Western culture of Consumption?
- 11) More than ever before, people are traveling and moving about in the world. Does this help to spread global culture? How and why?
- 12) Do you believe that there are people who want to be seen by others as global consumers, or members of this global consumer culture? Who? Examples?

## Culture

- 13) What kind of groups do you feel that you belong to? Do the other people within these groups come from the same country as you?
- 14) What characteristics do these groups have?
- 15) Would you say that you enjoy being with people from other countries to learn about their unique views and approaches? How is that? Why?
- 16) Do you find people from other cultures stimulating? Why?
- 17) How would you describe that coming into contact with other cultures has benefited you?

## Country-of-origin

- 18) With which kind of nationalities do you usually connect best with? Why do you connect with these? Do you have any stereotypical images of certain nationalities?
- 19) When purchasing a product, does the country of origin behind the brand affect your choice? Does it matter for you from which country a brand comes from?
- 20) How much attention do you pay to the "Made in" label when purchasing?

## The Self

- 21) How would you describe yourself?
- 22) Do you try to pattern your lifestyle, way of dressing, etc. to be a global consumer? How? Why?

- 23) Do you actively seek to buy products that are not only thought of as 'local'? How? Why?
- 24) When do you "consume" your global identity?
- 25) Do you try to construct yourself differently in terms of global/local when you are at your home country and when you are abroad? (the question is related also to globalization)
- 26) Do you buy more global brands when you are abroad based on the assumption that you know them better than the local ones (here can we give examples with MCdonalds/Max ; etc.)
- 27) How is your ideal-self presented in terms of global consumer culture? Do you want to be more or less global in terms of consumption? Why?

### **Consumer Perception and Culture Meaning of Consumer Goods**

- 28) What are the products that could be perceived as a symbol of globalization and why? Are they specific product categories or specific brands?
- 29) Are there specific goods that you still relate to your local identity? Can you find them now at Sweden or at the other foreign countries that you have lived?
- 30) Could you tell me a little bit about what goes around in your head when purchasing something?
- 31) Are you more interested in what a product does for you or more what it means?
- 32) Do you think that you or people around you consume specific brands only because they are global or they are objectively assessed as good purchasing in terms of their characteristics?
- 33) Do you believe that the global brands are more reliable in terms of quality than the local ones?

### **Demographics:**

- Age:
- Gender:
- Nationality:
- Occupation: