Dutch identity in fashion: Co-evolution between brands and consumers
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CHAPTER 4

ON METHOD
4.1 INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades research on the interactive relations between brands and consumers has increased. In the context of consumer studies co-creation and co-evolution have been critical terms in academic debate (Cova, Kohzetin and Shankar 2007). Fashion studies, however, have barely concerned themselves with the question how supply and demand are connected, and what factors are involved in the relationship. This study contributes to an understanding of the dynamic processes that govern the relation between clothing firms and their audience groups and is aimed at providing an understanding of how both parties co-evolve. To this day, there are still comparatively few guidelines to adding a co-creative component of the relationship. This chapter provides an overview of the methodological set-up of the study and explains the different reasons that motivated my choices.

Section 4.2 explains why a case-study based research design was the most suitable approach to realise the goals of this study. This section describes the method by which the individual cases were chosen and focuses on the process of data collection and the qualitative criteria of the study (internal/external validity). In section 4.3, an overview of the used methods is presented to understand the dynamic relationship between consumers and brands.

4.2 A CASE STUDY-BASED RESEARCH APPROACH

Yin (1994) outlines five much-used approaches in the social sciences: archival analysis, experiments, surveys, history and case studies. Each of them has a different focus and produces a different kind of knowledge about the research subject. By the same token, each of them responds to a different type of research question and requires a different degree of control over behavioural or situational events as part of the research process. In this context, the cases were chosen for several reasons as the most appropriate form of data collection. In section 4.1 I indicated that in a consumption context the majority of fashion publications deal with either the behaviour and attitudes of consumers (Azevedo et al. 2008; Beaudoin, Moore and Goldsmith 2005; Shim, Mornin and Morgan 1988) or the economical and organisational structure of brands (Djelic and Anzino 1999, Moore and Birnswistle 2004; Moore and Fionda 2009; Newman and Patel 2004). Hardly any publication, however, addresses the question how supply and demand relate to one another.

My own study is concerned with the question in what way and to what extent the attitudes of consumers intersect with the strategic positioning of firms. In other words, it targets the interactive component of fashion consumption and seeks to identify critical drivers in the relationship between consumers and brands. Furthermore, my aim was to explore recurrent cases of identifying criteria in this relationship that are typical for the Dutch fashion landscape. Due to the fact that my subject is largely unresearched, an explorative treatment of the field was necessary, for which case studies were considered the most appropriate form. Case studies were chosen so to look into the subject that is neither fair nor correct. In fact, it is a somewhat dated argument built on the assumption that it is impossible to make inferences from the micro to the meso or macro level. It is certainly true that every single study needs to be approached as a case in its own right. Still, it is questionable whether the argument is appropriate and productive in social research, considering that the subject is mainly context-dependent. Following Flyvbjerg (2006: 223), ‘there does not and cannot probably exist predictive theory in social science. Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and, thus, has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge’. Case study-based research by definition relates to a specific context and generates knowledge that is not always readily transferable. At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that a setting that is built around a number of cases, does not allow for cross comparisons and an understanding is therefore in connections that govern the relationship on the one hand, and allowed me to make a foray into a largely untapped field of study on the other.

Postivist science argues that because of their practice-dependence case studies are best understood as a hypothetico-deductive tool while the generation of knowledge and generalisations thereof are best left to quantitative studies (Mays and Pope 1995; Sandelowski 1986). In this context case studies do not represent an autonomous research strategy, but a means to generate preliminary insights that are being used for the design of ‘real’ (read: quantitative) studies. Qualitative research provides the ground for future research, but studies are exclusively suited to interpretative research because of their potential to analyse a subject in greater detail, and produce knowledge based on experiences and interaction. While both approaches coexist legitimately, it seems reductionist to look at them as binary opposite. For instance, there are cases where, the latter has methodological sound infinences. Generally speaking, we can distinguish two different types of case selection: random selection and information-oriented selection. Random selection is divided into two categories: entirely random or stratified. The difference is that the latter is restricted by providing general insights. In this context, it is useful to provide the truth about those facts that are actually true for society whereas the latter targets a specific sample of the population. Random selection is a method used to avoid systematic biases and to provide general insight into a phenomenon. Because of its non-specificity and broad scope the method relies on large samples and data sets. Information-oriented selection, by contrast, starts from an expectation about the outcome and is usually theory-driven to some extent. An information-based selection of case studies traditionally starts from a much smaller sample to maximise the use value of information from individual cases. Information-based selection can be divided into four categories: extreme/deviant cases, maximum variance cases, minimum variance cases and paradigmatic cases. Extreme/deviant cases are used to obtain information about unusual phenomena, which may be either particularly good or problematic. Maximum variation is a method used to obtain information about the importance of diverse circumstances pertaining to the research object and the study variables (e.g. choosing a number of cases which differ in one dimension: size, location, organisational set-up, and budget). Critical cases are a sampling method that is used to obtain ‘logical information of the type, “If this is (not) valid, then it applies to all (no) cases”’ (ibid: 230). Paradigmatic cases help to develop a certain scientific thought or make an example of a specific subject.

For my own research maximum-variation selection was chosen as the most appropriate form of case selection. Since the selection of cases is critical for the external validity of a study and because only a limited number of cases can actually be studied in the framework of a dissertation, it is all the more crucial that the individual case studies are well chosen and representative of the field they are supposed to cover. In this respect Yin (1994) makes a distinction between theoretical and literal replication. Following Yin’s argument, cases should be selected either to strengthen or contrast results which can later be explained with the help of theory (theoretical replication), or to highlight similarities (literal replication). With the aim to explore one specific phenomenon across different dimensions – i.e., consumption dynamics in the Dutch fashion industry – in a virtually undeveloped field, the cases in this dissertation are supposed to reflect Dutch fashion in its diversity, and facilitate an understanding of the value connections at play across different dimensions of the local fashion landscape (theoretical replication).

To get an idea of what the Dutch fashion industry looks like and what aspects play a part in it, my supervisor, Prof. Dany Jacobs, and I conducted an expert panel interview in the context of this dissertation. As will be explained in \( \text{Chapter 5} \), we approached experts with a longstanding history in Dutch fashion, with the request to make a list of ten fashion firms that, in their view, best reflected the Dutch fashion landscape and to provide an explanation for their choice. In each of the interviews I distilled different brand categories and a list of features characterising the local fashion industry. The four brands I studied in this dissertation are the product of this foray, and are intended to present an idea of the dynamics between brands and consumers in each of the categories.
Phase 1 - Development of a theoretical framework

With the aim to define the field and form an understanding of the different aspects of that had to be taken into consideration for the actual research, I first developed a theoretical framework. During this phase the aim was not only to create a suitable theoretical basis for the research but to find out as well what direction it was supposed to take. It was supposed that this PhD is based on a proposal originally not written by myself. I had to find my way into the subject, position myself in the field, and identify key areas that appeared suited to the subject and interesting enough to study. My work during this period consisted of an extensive literature study and a number of talks with experts in the field. From this I distilled a number of critical aspects that later formed the point of departure for the case study research and data analysis.

Phase 2 - Development of a case study design

After defining the field and building the theoretical foundation of the study, the second phase consisted of developing the case study design. During this period the general setting of the research was established, with the aim to develop a conclusive and sound methodology to validate the concepts and research strategy throughout the research. This phase allowed for a plurality of different views and opinions. As indicated above, the expert panel was used in this context to define the choice of cases and to allow for a high degree of variation. The goal of the research was to look into the relationship between brands and consumers and explore the question whether there are typically Dutch characteristics involved. The research setting was designed to reflect the ambition and cover the different facets of the Dutch fashion landscape.

Data Collection

The number and selection of case studies discussed above primarily pertain to the external validity of my study and the extent to which it is possible to generalise and make inferences from findings. By contrast, the choices that I made during the phase of data collection have an impact on the internal validity, construct validity, and reliability.

Construct Validity

Purdue of case study research have variously argued that the method falls short of guidelines on how to justify data and make the research process transparent and reproducible. It is claimed that the data collection of case studies is based on subjective judgments and that it lacks empirical precision. In this regard, Perry (1998) suggests ‘data triangulation’ as a method to improve the reliability of the results. Most generally speaking, the concept advocates the use of at least three different sources of evidence rather than relying on a single one. In an effort to improve the construct validity of my study, I have drawn on multiple sources including interviews and websites, shop visits and observation protocols. Attempting to integrate evidence from a variety of sources, the qualitative data was enriched with questionnaires in order to facilitate an alternative view and complement the findings with data that indicate tendencies and patterns in the consumption behaviour of Dutch fashion consumers (see section 4.3.2 for further details). Added to that, the decision to work with case studies gave me the chance to cross-validate the concepts and research strategy throughout the study, and test the concepts in different economic environments.

Internal Validity

The cases I studied all present an idea of how audiences and brands relate to one another at a specific point in time. Due to the fact that a research setting based on multiple case studies does not lend itself to a longitudinal study and that it lacks empirical precision, within the context of this research I have relied on qualitative data triangulation, which is a way to cross-validate the concepts and research strategy throughout the study. I conducted interviews with patrons (i.e., complete questionnaires, it was decided to conduct the research in cities where each of the firms had outlets. Each of the cases in this dissertation has been studied.

Reliability

Yin (1994) refers to two different types of reliability. On the one hand the term relates to whether identical results would have been obtained if the study had been repeated for a number of times (if not, results would have been obtained if another researcher had conducted the study. For my study I relied on qualitative content analysis, a guided method of data analysis that is presented in section 4.3.1. In addition, I have kept a detailed case study database to organise the results and access them in a structured way. Following Davis (2009), the quality of a database is evaluated by the extent to which other researchers are able to understand the collected data support claims made in the final case study report through cross-checking of the database. Furthermore, Yin (1994) suggests developing a detailed code book to structure the data and keep track of the research process and changing the code as the project progresses. According to the criteria of qualitative content analysis (section 4.3.1) the structured data with the help of a code book and a guided scheme for the analysis.

Next to the approaches mentioned above, the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research in general, as the final results have been extensively discussed with the group of fellow PhDs and professors who constituted the NWO project ‘Dutch Fashion Identity in a Globalised World’. Opening up the preparations and results to discussions with an informed group of scholars allowed for a plurality of different views and opinions. Arguably, not every kind of input is equally valid. In an effort to avoid an eclectic treatment of the results, my supervisor Prof. Dany Jacobs and I therefore followed up the group discussions with brief reviews integrating and analysing the main points.

Research Set-Up

Prior to the actual period of research I worked out a scheme for the different brands in order to guarantee that the research was going to take place according to identical criteria. The scheme included a detailed list of each of the firms’ outlets and the actual retail settings, as well as preliminary studies of each of the cases. Moreover, in order to get a first insight into the organisational set-up, media profile, and range of products. Furthermore, the research plan set forth in what way, in what location, and during what periods of the research was supposed to take place. To ensure that there was a yardstick for comparison between the consumers I was going to interview, besides going to collect complete questionnaires, it was decided to conduct the research in cities where each of the firms had outlets. Each of the cases in this dissertation has been studied.
over a period of three to four months, depending on the progress rate and the extent to which I was able to gather a sufficient amount of data.

During the period of data collection I actively participated in the retail setting, which included helping out with minor tasks when the shops were empty, and asking questions to the shop assistants in order to better understand the process of value exchange with consumers. By doing so, I have been able to develop an understanding of different types of consumer approaches as well as the different manners in which the brands I studied interact with their audiences.

I completed the questionnaires together with the consumers in order to avoid possible misunderstandings concerning the items and to make sure that no items were being skipped and the forms were completed outright. Only consumers who had actually completed the act of purchase were approached. This choice was motivated by the fact that I wanted to make sure the sample was comprised of actual consumers rather than passers-by. I admit that this decision produced a smaller data set compared to a set-up where every person coming into the shop is approached. However, in keeping with the goals of the study, it seemed more sensible to focus on actual consumers than on potential ones.

For the in-depth interviews I relied on the shop assistants who convinced regularly on my behalf to participate in the study, as well as on my own judgment. Whenever the answers, given during the process of completing the questionnaire, indicated that the respondent visited the shop on a regular basis and purchased larger quantities, I approached them with the request to participate further in an in-depth interview in the company’s back rooms. The interviews usually took between 20 and 30 minutes, depending on progress and the amount of time respondents had at their disposal.

As far as the interviews I conducted with employees from the companies are concerned, I did not have a fixed target regarding the number of people I wanted to interview. Rather, I attempted to cover all the relevant functions within each fashion company (marketers, PR assistants, designers, sales assistants, visual merchandisers) to get a complete picture of how the firm as a whole is organised, and detect patterns in the way different individuals and departments execute the brand philosophy. Most of the interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes, in a few cases they took between one and a half and two hours.

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACHES: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE

Consumer behaviour in fashion is studied primarily in two ways. One strand of scholars relies on qualitative research methods and an anthropological approach (Banister and Hogg 2004; Bovone 2006, Kawamura 2006, 2011; Piacentini and Maier 2004) whereas others typically use quantitative research methods and statistical analysis including data mining of sales figures (Birtwistle and Freathy 1988, Birtwistle and Shearer 2001; Goldsmith, Flynn and Moore 1996; Kim 2000; O’Cass 2000; Smith and Bryjofsson 2001). The former is traditionally related to studying consumption habits as a social phenomenon, whereas the latter analyses the relationship in a psychological or commercial context. Both approaches have their benefits and drawbacks. Qualitative research is often claimed to be impressionistic and based on personal accounts that do not reflect ‘the facts’, hence suggesting that the findings, even when discussed by a group of experts/informed scholars, remain subject to individual interpretation. On the positive side, the method permits an explorative treatment of the subject: by not starting from a fixed set of assumptions the method allows for an open and informed in-depth analysis and leaves the potential for unexpected findings and insights (Bryman and Bell 2003). By contrast, quantitative research relies exclusively on statistical analysis and pre-formulated hypotheses, which exclude new theoretical insights as the research question determines the outcome to some extent. By definition positivist research conforms or refutes one or more pre-formulated hypotheses, which limits the scope of analysis to a specific set of variables and a rather narrowly defined area of research. The great benefit of this approach is that it produces fairly exact statistical data that allow for comparisons between different economic environments.

For many years scientists working on the basis of statistical models have argued that qualitative research lacks methodological precision and cannot be quantified properly (Sandelowski 1993). One of the main reasons for this allegation was that the method fell short of structural criteria to actually define the process of data analysis and conclusion drawing. In other words, the replicability of findings was at stake, due to an absence of clearly defined binding principles (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Avoiding the dilemma traditionally faced by qualitative research, Claser and Strauss published their famous ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’ in 1967, an approach which practically starts from a reverse set of assumptions. Rather than starting from a theoretically driven research set-up, the first step is data collection. According to the original theory, data can come from a variety of sources including more obvious ones like interviews and observation protocols, but also informal ones like newspaper reports. After a first viewing of the material a coding scheme is being developed that at a later stage translates into a number of concepts that guide the research as well as the data analysis. In turn, these concepts form the basis of a set of categories that inform the process of theory building. Theory is consequently developed as a function of a specific research model or, in other words, it is ‘grounded in’ the phenomenon that is being studied. Instead of examining one precise phenomenon, Grounded Theory looks at separate incidents, the sum of which represents the basis of the theory-building process and analysis. The relevance of categories is constantly challenged by what Claser and Strauss call ‘fit’. As a result, ideas and concepts that emerge from the research are subject to an ongoing process of comparison between different incidents and old and new data, leading to a continuous refining and adaptation of categories (Claser 1978).

4.3.1 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Over the years the Grounded Theory approach has been met with both praise and criticism (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Robecht 1995). More recently, a number of scholars have broadened the perspective in an attempt to define guidelines explaining how to analyse data and frame them against the background of the complete research setting (Ritsert 1972; Witzkowski 1994; Altheide 1996). In this context Mayring (2000) has developed qualitative content analysis (‘qualitative Inhaltsanalyse’ and ‘Leitfaden-Interviews’), a practice which prioritises a content-based approach and includes formal aspects in the process of data collection. Following Krippendorff (1969: 103), ‘content analysis’ is the use of replicable and valid method for making specific inferences from texts to other states or properties of its source. The underlying idea is to use the guiding principles of quantitative content analysis as developed in communication studies, and advance them in the field of interpretative research. Fuelled by Becker and Lissmann’s (1973) model which emphasises ‘layers of content’, qualitative content analysis not only looks into the manifest contextual matter of transcripts, protocols, and documents, but makes a distinction between ‘primary content’ (main reasoning or chain of thought) and ‘latent content’ that only becomes apparent from either the contingent context of the transcript or the larger body of the interview. In that way it is a technique that breaks down the material within its communication context, based on a set of given criteria.

Mayring (2000: 4) defines a set of principles guiding the analytical process:
• Placement in a communication model: Defining the aim of the analysis with respect to the
During my first year as a PhD candidate I was fortunate to get introduced to this method in a one-week workshop, under the direction of Dr. Jan Kruse at the University of Amsterdam. From my very first view the great advantage of qualitative content analysis is that it strives for transparency and replicability of findings within the confines of the research, while taking into account the possibility of (minor) structural changes during the process of data collection. The aim is to analyse qualitative data according to principles that are similar to those used in quantitative research – with the very difference that the goal is not to actually verify causalities between different variables but to gain deeper insight into social phenomena. FIG 4.1 details the different steps used during the analytical process.

The process is structural and analytical at the same time. Starting from a subject or research question, in the first step main and sub categories are defined on the basis of theory. Next, definitions and coding rules guiding the aspects through which involvement becomes manifest were developed. The final coding scheme exploring brand involvement, for instance, looked as follows:

**C1 HIGH LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT**
- Definition: Emotional relationship with brand and product. Consumer sees brand/clothing as extension of his own identity.
- Consumer is enthusiastic about firm/clothes.
- High relevance in social/professional environment.

**STANDARD EXAMPLES**
- “Whether I consider myself a fan of the brand? Oh yes! I come here at least once a week and most of the time I don’t leave empty-handed.” (CKCII, 13)
- “Of course, it’s not really my identity, but...” (SE)

**CODING RULES**
- All the aspects need to apply and surface during the interview.
- Otherwise: moderate involvement

**C2 MODERATE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT**
- Definition: Only partially identifying with firm and product.
- Moderate relevance in direct social/professional environment.

**STANDARD EXAMPLES**
- “No, clothing is not part of my self-identity. I do of course choose clothes that I like, but that’s something different.” (VCI, 2)

**CODING RULES**
- C2 applies when not all the criteria indicate ‘high’ or ‘low’ involvement

**C3 LOW LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT**
- Definition: Non-emotional relationship with brand and product.
- Clothing mainly fulfils utilitarian function.

**STANDARD EXAMPLES**
- “You see, I’m not very much into clothing or anything. I dress like this because I have to. It’s part of my job. But whether it’s this or another brand... I really don’t care.” (SE)

**CODING RULES**
- C3 applies when all the criteria indicate a low degree of involvement

**TABLE 4.1 CODING SCHEME FOR CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT**

During the research in progress the categories were being revised and adapted to new insights obtained with a larger data set, while eventually all interviews were coded according to one final scheme. The formative evaluation of the categories and coding rules returned back to the original research question and theoretical framework, in order to control fit and applicability and make sure that the categories were still in sync with the original aims of the study. During this phase key concepts like ‘brand/product involvement’, ‘identification’, or ‘co-creation’ were framed against the categories and definitions. By extending the coding rules the process of data collection was completed I made a summative evaluation of the entire material, checking for completeness and, again, suitability. This was followed by the actual analysis of the data set. The data was evaluated according to the final criteria of the coding scheme, and the case was assessed with respect to the goals of the research and its main subject.

My approach is beneficial to guarantee reliable qualitative data and develop methodological approaches that are comprehensible and stand up to scrutiny. The method is based on the division of a broad field into subfields, and requires a deep understanding of the specific and general aspects involved in the field of study.

**4.3.2 A BROADENED PERSPECTIVE**

Beyond an in-depth understanding of the relations between supply and demand, my research called for a second measure to find the dynamics in the different ways and allow for more general inferences about the nature of the subject, specifically with respect to the Dutch fashion landscape. My aim was not only to show how certain consumer groups relate to their preferred brands – a goal for which an interpretative approach would have been indeed sufficient – but to also facilitate an understanding of the value constructs governing the purchase behaviour of Dutch fashion consumers in general. The reasoning behind this approach was to present an idea of the value connections and general purchase behaviour for each brand, thereby establishing a comparative measure between the different cases. To arrive at this goal I complemented the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews and observations with quantitative data obtained through questionnaires that were completed together with consumers.

My reasoning in this regard is informed by Berardi (2000) who advocates a less clear-cut distinction between the different approaches, arguing that ‘while the boundaries between the disciplines remain to an extent, those boundaries are no longer about method – if they ever were. Whatever our epistemological differences, the actual methods by which we collect and analyze our data belong to everyone across the social sciences’ (Ibd: xviii). His approach is interesting insomuch as it does away with the classical divide between qualitative and quantitative research. By extending the definition, the approach he outlines has come to be known as mixed-methods research. In recent years this approach has gained more and more currency, mainly due to its (supposed potential to facilitate insights into research areas where a single-method approach falls short of covering the full spectrum of research.

Instead of staging them as binary oppositions, mixed-methods research has been advertised as ‘the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research’ (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004: 14) while others have promoted it as the latest approach in social research due to its epistemological benefits of both traditions (Giddings 2006: 195). Perhaps, there is some truth to these arguments – in spite of their apparent hyperbole. When framed in such a simplistic way, however, there is a danger of methodological eclecticism, because the unquestioning combination of interpretative and statistical approaches negates the fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative research traditions. Both quantitative and qualitative models are based on a particular paradigm, a patterned set of assumptions concerning reality (ontology), knowledge of that reality (epistemology), and the particular ways of knowing that reality (methodology) (Sale et al. 2002: 44, see also Guba 1990). Quantitative research aims at measuring and analysing causal relationships between a number of variables within a value-free, unbiased setting (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). By contrast, qualitative research is to a certain extent based on the assumption that reality is socially constructed. Epistemological speaking, investigation of the object of study are intimately connected, which turns the findings into a direct product of the circumstances and framework the research has taken place in.

As the juxtaposition makes clear, mixed-methods research may involve a structural quandary, which has to do with the fact that the two models stem from a different phenomenological basis. In itself this is not necessarily a problem. Indeed, it can be beneficial to combine different frameworks. Qualitative methods can be used to add more detailed insights to a quantitative analysis, while statistical data can form a sound basis to contextualise interpretative analysis (Howe 1988). I agree with the argument that epistemological differences do not have to be a disadvantage in a research setting that, next to an interpretative-explorative treatment, calls for statistical evidence that allows for a different kind of generalisation. In order to apply such an approach successfully, however, both models can be used as complementary frameworks that cross-fertilise each other while they cannot be used for cross-validation purposes.

For my own research, the implications of this approach are critical. Sale et al. make a clear distinction between the phenomena studied by each method and suggest clarifying this distinction by labelling the phenomena studied by each according to whether or not they are a focus of the different examination. **TABLE 4.2** shows in what way the individual research paradigms are used throughout my study. Quantitative methods are used to indicate certain
tendencies in consumer behaviour and describe the way consumers perceive and connect to the different brands under scrutiny. The goal is to establish a measure for the value connections that define the relationship and make the criteria identifiable that play an important role in the consumption patterns and during the purchase decision-making process. Qualitative methods, by contrast, are employed to study the dynamics between supply and demand. In-depth interviews and observation protocols are used:

a. To explore the lived experiences of consumers to develop an understanding of their life-worlds and identity
b. To provide insights into the way brands seek to connect with their audiences and lay open the strategies used to retain consumer loyalty

In short, although the phenomenon 'consumption and co-evolution in the Dutch fashion industry' may appear the same across the methods of analysis, the distinction between 'measure' and 'lived experience' reconciles the phenomenon to its respective method and paradigm (see also Sale et al. 2002: 50)

### Qualitative
- Consumers’ life and experience worlds
- Dynamics between brands and consumers
- Branding and retention strategies
- Quantitative: Consumption patterns, Purchase frequency, Value connections, Brand perception

### Quantitative

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<th>TABLE 4.2 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE PURPOSE IN MY STUDY</th>
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The questionnaires ([APPENDIX I](#)) consisted of 16 items in total, including:

- 10 items using statement-based questions and a 5-point Likert scale to measure general consumer behaviour and subject-related areas
- 2 items using a 3-point scale with predefined response options for measuring visiting frequency and the number of items purchased at a time
- 2 open-ended questions for measuring brand perception in relation to the firms’ Dutch national background
- 1 multiple-choice item (choice rate: 3 out of 15) to measure brand-specific consumer values

It was decided to show the results in the form of percentages. This choice is motivated by the fact that throughout this study the quantitative data is not meant to respond to (or even create) binary oppositions like ‘significant / insignificant’ or ‘correct / incorrect’. Instead, it was my ambition to indicate tendencies and directions concerning the purchase behaviour of different groups of Dutch fashion consumers. In keeping with the exploratory nature of the study, the research did not start from a fixed set of assumptions but sought to develop an understanding of the ruling demands in the field. While confirmatory approaches traditionally produce knowledge that is conclusive and axiomatic, the aim of my study was to create a measure illustrating a general idea of the demands and purchase dynamics at play. In line with the dynamic nature of the study, the goal was to develop a way of showcasing the studies side by side and to be able to compare the findings according to identical dimensions.

### 4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the study’s methodological set-up to give insight into the way the research was structured and executed. I started out discussing case study-based research at a general level, in order to explain why I considered case studies the most appropriate form of data collection for this research. Next, I discussed the external and internal validity of the study and clarified in which way the research was structured and what different steps it has taken from start to finish. After discussing the general distinction between interpretative and statistical research methods, Mayring’s approach of qualitative content analysis was introduced as the main method by which I kept track of, and analysed, my data sets. Finally, I clarified my reasons to enrich the interviews with quantitative data.

In the appendices I and II the questionnaires are presented and an example of the questions in the in-depth interviews with consumers.