GRADUATION PROJECT
TYPE 2
FASHION & MANAGEMENT
Amsterdam Fashion Institute
INVISIBLE MARKETING / ARTISANAL NICHE MARKET
Acknowledgement

This final thesis is written with the purpose to conclude my study Fashion management followed at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute.

I would like to take the opportunity on this page to thank a number of people who helped me through this process.

I knew that I had to take this opportunity to show my fashion personality, when I started the investigations of my last assignment on AMFI. I wanted to research something in the Fashion Industry what could be interesting for the small Dutch Fashion Industry, since there are so many opportunities in the Netherlands.

During my research I had the chance to meet many people in the Fashion Industry from all-over the world. The experts and professionals helped me to write this thesis and base it on facts. Next to that they gave me insights about the niche market, which draws my attention. The interviewees answered interviews by email, but they also took the time to meet me personally on an occasional base.

Talking with the people from the niche market and the fashion scene really broadened my horizon. After having meetings with for example Marcelo Maquieira who is one of the owners from Carmacoma Amsterdam, felt like coming home. It was very touching to talk to people so deeply about this particular fashion style. My highlight was my one-to-one interview with the co-founder Eugene Rabkin from the magazine and online community StyleZeitgeist based in New York. StyleZeitgeist is an offline and online communication platform for the believers of the niche market what I researched in this thesis.

I also would like to thank my first coach Ligia Hera who wasn’t in knowledge about the directions of my topic in the beginning but she always supported my ideas and guided me through those weeks. She was able to understand my thoughts and my passion for writing about this topic. And further I would like to thank my second reader Charlotte Corstanje who was able to give me valuable feedback due to the fact that she graduated from the Amsterdam Fashion Institute herself and her own experience in the field.

I took this opportunity to build up my network and gain the knowledge over this particular style of fashion what I investigate during this period and even took it abroad, which I could never have done without the friends & family around me, you know who you are.

Amsterdam, May 2013

Debbie Yard
# Acknowledgement

3

# Table of content

4

# Abstract

7

# Executive Summary

8

## Chapter 1 Introduction

10

1.1. **Problem definition**

10

1.2. **Research objective**

10

1.2.1. **Presentation of the research question**

11

1.2.2. **Sub questions**

11

1.3. **Restrictions and notes**

11

1.4. **Research methodology**

11

1.4.1. **Primary research**

11

1.4.2. **Secondary research**

11

1.5. **Structure of this report**

14

## PART 1 MARKETING

### Chapter 2 The Journey Of Marketing

15

2.1. **Introduction**

15

2.2. **Traditional marketing**

15

2.3. **The marketing mix the four P’s**

15

2.4. **Postmodern marketing**

16

2.4.1. **Product proliferation**

17

2.4.2. **Price paradox**

17

2.4.3. **Place participation**

18

2.4.4. **Promotion partnership**

19

2.5. **Postmodern marketing tools**

19

2.5.1. **Social media**

19

2.6. **The marketing mix the four C’s**

20

2.6.1. **Product - Consumer**

21

2.6.2. **Price - Cost**

21

2.6.3. **Place - Convenience**

22

2.6.4. **Promotion - Communication**

22

2.7. **Conclusion**

23

2.8. **Necessity of marketing**

23

### Chapter 3 The Invisible Portrait Of Fashion

24

3.1. **Introduction**

24

3.2. **Definition of invisible marketing**

28

3.3. **Strategy**

28

3.4. **Characteristics**

28

3.4.1. **Anonymity**

29

3.4.2. **Individuality**

30
3.4.3. Aesthetic 30
3.4.4. Value 31

3.5. Strategic tools 31
3.5.1. In-store 31
3.5.2. Social media 31
3.5.3. Word-of-mouth 32

3.6. The marketing mix the four I's 32
3.6.1. Customer - Individuality 32
3.6.2. Costs - Investment 33
3.6.3. Convenience - Invisibility 33
3.6.4. Communication - Involvement 33

3.7. Advantages - Disadvantages 33
3.8. Conclusion 34

PART 2 MARKET

Chapter 4 The Artisanal Niche Market

4.1. Introduction 35
4.2. Niche market definition 35
4.2.1. Process identification 35
4.3. The artisanal niche market 35
4.3.1. Philosophy 37
4.4. Strategy 37
4.4.1. Strategic distribution 38
4.5. Characteristics 38
4.5.1. Individuality 38
4.5.2. Loyalty 39
4.5.3. Aesthetic 39
4.5.4. Value 39
4.6. Strategic tools 40
4.6.1. Packaging 40
4.6.2. Labelling 41
4.6.3. Social media 42
4.6.4. Word-of-mouth (WOM) 44
4.6.5. In-store communication 44
4.6.6. Network 48
4.7. Niche forecasting & development 48
4.7.1. Observational research 49
4.7.2. Artisanal niche in the recession 50
4.8. SWOT 51
4.9. Conclusion 52
PART 3 CONSUMER

Chapter 5 Tribe Of The Niche Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The postmodern tribe</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Capitals of the tribe</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Tribe profile</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1</td>
<td>Meanings &amp; Symbols</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3</td>
<td>Clothing style artisanal tribe</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.4</td>
<td>Needs &amp; Desires</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.5</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 6 Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Sub questions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of figures &amp; tables</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of Sources</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

In the fourth year of the Fashion Management studies at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute my final thesis is written. In this report the results and findings of invisible marketing got researched within a specific niche market. First the report focuses on the development of marketing in general and how the developments lead to other marketing approaches such as invisible marketing.

Postmodernity is responsible for the big change in terms of how marketing approaches consumers. It changed amongst others how we communicate with each other but also the consumption behavior. One of the results is a society where people set independence and individuality as their priority. On the other side they try to belong to several different tribes and the specific niche market in this thesis described, as narrowly drawn aesthetic avant-garde and artisanal niche market, is one of them. According to the dictionary artisanal means a skilled work like craftsmanship, which applies to art.

The tribe of the niche market is a big research area of this report. First the postmodern marketing in general is described and the development of it. Afterwards the niche market and the strategy of the niche brands, is followed by the consumer part by looking at the niche consumer and its profile. The research has been taken abroad to conclude a realistic approach and recommendation to the Dutch market. Is this niche market an option for the Dutch fashion industry?
Executive Summary

The report is divided into three main sections; marketing, market and consumer. It discusses the invisible marketing communication of the artisanal niche market, in order to introduce the artisanal niche market to the Dutch fashion industry.

First the report discusses the marketing change and the new demand of the consumer in general. Due to the postmodernity the consumer got empowered and the marketers cannot push a product into the market anymore. The postmodernity is also responsible for the consumer demanding more individuality, interaction and involving due to the fragmentation of the society. Therefore the one-way communication of the modern marketing approach is also not applicable anymore and marketers are looking for new more consumer-focused marketing approaches.

In the second part the invisible marketing is being introduced. The invisible marketing is one of the postmodern approaches; it has the complete center of the consumer’s esteem for individuality and the need for involving. The invisible approach is a postmodern marketing method that is all about being invisible and anonymous as a brand. The approach works with the emotional value of a product or brand. It includes no advertising, non-ideology branding and the pureness of a garment. The faceless branding is triggering the consumer and he gets curious in reward. This teaser tool lives from the philosophy “absence equals presence” whereas the consumer gets more involved with the brand than a traditional marketing approach could ever do. It is all about investment, involving, individuality and invisibility.

The artisanal niche market sets itself apart from all other markets by using invisible marketing. This niche market puts the focus on craftsmanship, the feeling of exclusivity and the truth of a garment. The market lets the garments speak for themselves and that gets reflected in the communication towards the community, which is very loyal and almost obsessive. The niche market exists of two groups, the mature group of long experienced tribe members and the young adapters. The garments carry consistency, pure understanding of the garment and of the detailing of each piece. The artisanal brands are almost not accessible which makes it mysterious and tribe members get curious. It also creates brand loyalty and brand love.

The last part is about the consumer of this niche market that is being described as a tribe. The tribe shares certain symbols, values and meanings that glue the community members together. The niche consumers are very dedicated, something that holds the niche market together. The tribe shares the passion for craftsmanship that is almost religious to the tribe members. As a tribe member you feel very rare and individual wearing the artisanal niche pieces. The tribe members are very loyal because of its pure craftsmanship and also the community buys not because of a certain price but because of its high emotional value.

The Invisible marketing also brings up a lot of questions, how do these brands survive in this time of recession? By having financial recessions globally, you might wonder how such a niche market can exist. But the design consistency, no use of seasons, long-term garments and the curiosity of the human being will always exist. Also the distributional strategy helps the niche market to survive during financial times. The customer loyalty is so high that this is the main reason why these brands survive. Customers put such a high value on the quality of a garment and this niche market offers this high quality of garments.
Doing structured and unstructured interviews and travelling to different fashion capitals to investigate the niche market researched all three sections. In order to introduce the invisible approach in the Dutch fashion market, it was necessary to travel to Berlin and London. The artisanal niche market is growing in general but also in the Netherlands. Therefore this research report will be concluded with a product, that is a tool for the niche introduction into the Dutch market.
Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis investigates the philosophy of the niche market that communicates through invisible marketing. Better said, as a sense of invisibility incorporated into the DNA of the brand. This market is known as narrowly drawn aesthetic avant-garde and artisanal designer niche market and it uses the invisible way of communication to their tribe/community.

Until recently the relationship between invisible marketing and the niche market is still not known widely but it is growing quickly in the fashion industry worldwide. After researching this marketing phenomenon abroad in Antwerp, Paris, Berlin, London and New York and conducting interviews, it was possible to give profound findings.

Invisible marketing fits into the fashion Zeitgeist where the consumer aims for individuality. The growth of this niche market it is very interesting for the Dutch fashion market since it is not known in the Dutch fashion market yet. Therefore introducing invisible communication into the Dutch fashion market is an opportunity.

This all leads to the question whether this way of communication could be interesting for the Dutch fashion industry. What makes this way of communication so interesting in the time of now for brand communication; but also tribe communication?

1.1. Problem definition
With the rise of the social media, digitalization and globalization the whole communication system changes. The marketing changed with a result that eventually the consumer got empowered. The consumer position changed from being only a receiver to being a messenger. Due to the postmodernity the consumer is in the need for individuality and uniqueness. Nowadays consumers have so much more knowledge and choices then in the modern time that it is important to create a solid marketing approach because the traditional way of marketing is not applicable anymore. Especially the niche markets in general have the problem that traditional marketing does not apply to them, so they have to use different and new marketing techniques (Thilmany, 2002, pp.1-2).

Is invisible marketing then one of them? It is very important to come up nowadays with an innovative and original approach what focus on the consumer’s desires and what differentiates from others.

1.2. Research objective
The main objective of this research is to provide the niche brands and with the information, developments and research of communicating invisible and to introduce it into the Dutch fashion market to give an answer to the question: What makes this way of communication so interesting in the time of now for brand communication; but also tribe communication? Investigating this communication tool for this artisanal tribe is relevant since this communication tool fits into the philosophy of this niche market. This approach has to be relevant and has to match the requirements of the niche brands, its retailers and its tribe.
1.2.1. Presentation of the research question
The question, which further clarifies the objective, is the following:

What does invisible marketing mean for the specific niche market in order to connects with its tribe?

1.2.2. Sub questions
This question leads us to the sub questions, which need to be answered before the leading question can be answered:

1st What is this choice of invisible communication based on and what is the forecasting of it?

2nd What are the glue values for the tribe communication?

3rd What makes this communication tool so interesting for the niche market?

4th What are the possible implementations for the Dutch niche market?

1.3. Restrictions and notes
This research is restricted to the narrowly drawn aesthetic avant-garde and artisanal designer niche market, including the niche brands and its tribe.

1.4. Research methodology
In order to answer the sub questions, the required information is obtained by means of primary and secondary research. In the next section listed the specific methods for both types of research are mentioned.

1.4.1. Primary research
Especially for the tribe chapter and to answer the sub questions, the required information had to get collected with primary research. Mainly qualitative research was necessary because it is an expert-based report and mass surveys would not have brought the research onto a higher level.

- Structured and unstructured interviews
- Nethnographic analysis
- Unit of observation
- Observational research
- Market research

1.4.2. Secondary research
For all the parts I have been using the secondary research. Especially in the first and second part I had to use different secondary sources for in depth research. A first part has collected the information.
For this thesis the artisanal niche brands had to be researched, therefore a list with an overview of the artisanal niche brands is been profound. In order to portray the artisanal niche, the list also includes the locations of the artisanal brands.

- Books
- Web pages
- Articles
- Existing video interviews

Artisanal brands overview

Artisanal brands examples in thesis:
Men & Women collection – (M&W)

INAISCE – New York – M&W
RICK OWENS – Paris – M&W
BORIS BIDJAN SABERI Boris – Barcelona – M&W wear since AW2013
CAROL CHRISTIAN POELL (CCP) – Italy – M&W
LABEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION – Italy – M&W
CARPE DIEM – Italy – M&W
DAMIR DOMA – Paris – M&W
THAMANYAH – Paris – M&W
OBSCUR – Berlin – M&W
MAURIZIO ALTERI – Italy – M&W
PAUL HARNDEN – London – M&W
CASEY VIDADENC – Paris – M&W
SILENT – Paris – M&W
INAISCE – New York – M&W

Artisanal brands:

YOHJI YAMAMOTO – Tokyo & Paris – M&W
LUMEN ET UMBRA – Italy – M&W
MARVIELAB – Italy – Unisex
FORME D’EXPRESSION – Italy – M&W
THE VIRDI-ANNE – Tokyo – M
DEVOA – Tokyo – M
A1923 (AUGUSTA) – Italy – M
ALEXANDRE PLOKHOV – New York – M&W
SIKI IM – New York - Unisex
ALEKSANDR MANAMIS – Denmark – M&W
ZAM BARRETT – New York – M&W
SRULI RECHT – Iceland – M
MA+ - Italy – M&W
YOHAN SERFATY – Paris – M&W
LOST & FOUND – Italy – M & Children’s wear
JULIUS - Tokyo – M
ANN DE MEULEMEESTER – Antwerp – M&W
WERKSTATT MUNCHEN - Munchen – M&W – Jewellery
GUIDI – Tuscany – M&W - shoes
KUBORAUM - Berlin – sunglasses
HAIDER ACKERMANN – Antwerp – M&W
LAYER-0 – Italy – M&W
POEME BOHEMIEN – Italy – M
GORAN HORAL – Sweden – M&W
10SEI0OTTO – Italy – M

Artisanal stores:

EUROPE
DARKLANDS – BERLIN
CARMACOMA – AMSTERDAM
VOID – PARIS
DOVER STREET MARKET – LONDON
HOSTEM – LONDON
VERTIC LONDON - LONDON
DAMIR DOMA - PARIS
RICK OWENS – LONDON – PARIS – NEW YORK
XXX- BERLIN
L’ECLAIREUR – PARIS
TABO – ITALY
PROJECT 3,14 - MOSCOW
DANTONE – MILAN
TABO - ITALY
PRAGUE - ANTWERP
SEVEN – HELSINKI
SRULI RECHT – ICELAND

THE AMERICAS
ATELIER NEW YORK – NEW YORK
SECOND/LAYER – LOS ANGELES
GALLERY AESTHETE – CHICAGO
THE ARCHIVE – SAN FRANSISCO
HOTEVELI – NEW YORK
H. LORENZO – LOS ANGELES

AUSTRALIA
EASTERN MARKET FABRICA – MELBOURNE

ASIA
ETHOS – SHANGHAI
INK CLOTHING – BEIJING

ONLINE
KOMAKINO
INK-CLOTHING
1.5. Structure of this report

**PART 1**
- Marketing
  - Traditional approach
  - Postmodernity
  - Invisible approach

**PART 2**
- Market
  - Niche market
  - Strategy & tools
  - Forecasting & development
  - Advantages – disadvantages
  - SWOT

**PART 3**
- Consumer
  - Niche capitals
  - The tribe of niche market
  - Tribe profile

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**Figure 1:** Structure of the report
2.1. Introduction
In this chapter can be found the research on the following question; what is this choice of invisible communication based on and what is the forecasting of it?

First the report discusses the foundation of the marketing; the traditional marketing approach (Kotler, 2005, pp.9-15) and the reason why it changed during the years. Afterwards the structure of the invisible marketing approach gets introduced. The conclusions show that in postmodern times the foundation of marketing asked us to overthink how we should approach our market in today’s zeitgeist.

Marketing professor Kotler states, (2005, pp.87-94) “the aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself”. This chapter includes this understanding of this traditional approach but it also states the importunacy of marketing in the fashion industry nowadays. Followed by the developments of how invisible communication came in the picture of the fashion industry.

2.2. Traditional marketing
In general marketing is a collective process where individuals or groups can exchange goods or services based on their needs and wants (Kotler, 2005, pp.9-10). In traditional marketing the wants and needs of the consumer are being discovered and satisfied, through traditional channels of communication for examp example magazines or TV advertisements. Philip Kotler describes the human need as a state of felt deprivation. Also he states (2005, p.10) that marketers don’t invent the needs. The wants are related to the cultural exposure and personalities of individuals. The process results in when the wants are overwhelmed by the buying power and they become demands.

The techniques of the traditional marketing focuses on a few aspects namely identifying the right audience segment, understanding their behaviour, the buying aspect, and in the end the location or channel consideration.

Traditional marketing is a one-way communication approach. In the postmodern world of today one-way communication is not thinkable anymore (Angella, 2012 pp.5-10). Therefore marketers completed the traditional marketing mix, called the four P’s, the traditional marketing P’s are known; product, price, promotion and place a fifth P was later added on the marketing mix which stands for people (Kotler, 1996, p.113)

2.3. The marketing mix the four P’s
The marketing mix can be defined as the whole process of bringing a product or service to the market. The four P’s is the most known and most important framework of the base for identifying the product into the market. The framework of the four P’s is developed in (1960) by the marketer McCarthy. It helps to define and improve marketing options in terms of product, place, price and promotion (Ogilvy, 2011).

When a company brings a product or service to the market it is important to develop a marketing mix according to the company identity, which suits the company products and the target of the consumers. Focusing on the four elements of the marketing mix a company is able to satisfy their target consumers and achieving organizational goals (Kotler, 1996, pp.113-115).
2.4. Postmodern marketing

The traditional marketing approach has always been defined by the marketing mix the four P’s how described above. As mentioned earlier they added another P in the marketing mix, which stands for people. With this new P marketers were able to put the focus more on the “Person” that described the consumer. In the last decade traditional marketing was only based on the product. According to Grönroos (1994) the four P’s are not valid anymore. And the four P’s should be re-overthought because of the postmodern changed in our society (Grönroos, 1994, pp.31–43).

Postmodernity is described by individualism, the logical follow up of the modern time for liberation, a time where everybody can – and must – take personal action to show the individual existence. According to Jean Baudrillard a French sociologist the fragmentation of the society is the reason for postmodern individualism, for example social contact during shopping is not necessary anymore; products and services don’t need necessarily physical social interaction anymore (Baudrillard, 1999, pp.155-158). All the technology also increased the individual isolation while a person can be virtually in touch with the whole world via internet.

Postmodernity also means a reverse movement that is a search for belonging to something via online communities but face – to – face contact is not compulsory anymore. In today’s postmodern society people are driven to a group through emotions these groups are the so-called tribes.

Researcher Bernard Cova is one of the first researchers who translated tribes with regard to marketing. In the next chapter of this thesis will be explained the movement of the tribe more into depth.

The postmodern communities or tribes are not stable; they are small-scale, affective and not fixed by any established parameters from the society. Emotions, lifestyles, moral beliefs, fashion styles or consumption methods are the glue-value of the tribe. Whereas the modern society was very different; built up by social classes. Postmodern society is fragmented and the groups share emotional links, have subcultures and a vision of life.
Every individual person in the postmodern society belongs to several tribes and he can act as a different role in each of them; wearing a specific mask. Wearing a specific mask means that the rational tools of sociological analysis cannot classify him. Being part of the different tribes has become the main importance more so than belonging to a modern class. Therefore all traditional marketing attempts like consumer segmentation are not applicable anymore. Societal configuration is replacing it where every person gets positioned within and between his postmodern tribes.

The future of marketing is not based on the product anymore moreover it is all about the consumer being in control. The consumer of today is more critical then ever before. In the past the choices of products were so limited that consumers didn't have any choice to be critical (Schultz, 2006). Consumers bought things that were offered to them. Nowadays consumers are overwhelmed by many options, therefore the position of the consumer also shifted and the market turned into a customer driven market (Schultz, 2006). There is no need to believe in one product or brand anymore, so if a brand does not satisfy the expectations of the consumer there will be another one who will reach for your expectations.

Besides that the world of marketing has to deal with so many competitors that the consumers are given the freedom to choose and to change without any commitment to a specific brand (Kotler, 1996, pp.506-510). A growing amount of consumer doesn’t share brand love and loyalty with a brand anymore because the consumption behaviour becomes less stable nowadays. The consumers were they were so predictable in the past because they didn’t have any other choice (Kotler, 2004). Now the consumer of today is so unpredictable that marketers need to find well-suited postmodern marketing strategies. But marketers try to adapt the four P’s to the postmodern times.

**The adapted four P’s are:** (Krittinee, 2006)

- Product proliferation
- Price paradox
- Place Participation
- Promotion partnership

### 2.4.1. Product proliferation

Consumers in the postmodern times live multiple lifestyles in different tribes; where they also have different roles. Therefore it is necessary for a marketer to satisfy their different types of consumption needs by having a variation in offering products or services. A postmodern consumer is in the need of showing his individuality. Important are personalized applications in which the consumer is the centre. For example mass-customization or co-creation apply to this. This approach responds to our service economy in which consumers participate individually.

### 2.4.2. Price paradox

Usually consumers have the idea that luxury products that are expensive also carry a certain quality. But in postmodernity consumers put more emphasis on the symbolic and emotional value of a product / service. The consumers spend more money on an item when doing a purchase, when they feel an emotional value in the product.

An example is the purchase of a pair of Rick Owens sneakers, which has a high emotional value to artisanal niche consumers and they purchase the sneakers because of it’s coolness and individuality image. Marketers Pine and Gilmore state, “when a person buys a service, he
purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages to engage him in a personal way” (Glyn and Williams, 2009, pp.338–346).

Price paradox can also lead to customer frustration because of the inconsistent pricing approach. Therefore the price paradox is only effective when consumers perceive the symbolic value of the product or service over the actual exchange cost.

![Figure 3: Rick Owens sneakers recognizable item (AnUnknowQuantity, 2012)](image)

2.4.3. Place participation
The place in the postmodern times changed dramatically to new developments in distribution channels and logistics. In postmodern times consumers are looking for an experiential satisfaction, which is constructed by experience, exclusivity, engagement and emotion. In the past place was only about a product or service available for consumption. Whereas traditional marketing takes the consumer as a rational decision maker on functional features, experiential marketing sees a consumer as an emotional human being who has a desire for pleasurable experiences.

The focus is on the consumer experience and lifestyle. It delivers emotional value to the consumer. Also the Internet is a discovery of new and different ways to give expression to the desires of consumers. Experiential needs are met to give an emotional experience by relating to the different lifestyle structures of a consumer.

According to the journalist Kansara (2012) with the rise of e-commerce consumers prefer an on-line activity. Therefore many companies try to offer a diversity of participatory service; on-line transaction or an innovative strategy to encourage consumers to come from online to offline, for example to “hang out” in their stores.

Another example is the Darklands fashion store from Berlin that expanded their service to the e-commerce to serve the needs of consumer who prefer on-line activity.

Since the position of the consumer changed from being only a receiver this strategy fits good in the postmodern times where consumers got empowered to an active agent in the marketing process.
2.4.4. Promotion partnership
In postmodern times it is very important to engage with the consumer. Marketers consider these days that the consumers play an important role in their company. They even consider their consumers as promotion partners. It became an equal partner-relationship between brand and consumer. The traditional methods “push” and “pull” strategy operates around the company’s manipulation of consumers needs. But since the era of postmodern times the position of the consumer changed, they demand to take actions out of their own initiative. The consumers do not feel comfortable in making choices where they cannot decide for themselves. Therefore in postmodern times it is very important for a company to gain the interest of the consumers so they are able to interact with each other. For example, the online community forum and platform StyleZeitgeist work together with the concept store LNCC based in London. StyleZeitgeist is the main online communication platform for the artisanal niche market that since recently also went into a print magazine.

They even ask the members what they think about the new collection of a certain designer so they are able to meet the wishes and desires of the consumer to buy in their collection. And the store LNCC promotes its business by interacting. The concept store tries to turn a product into a tangible interactive experience. This approach works like a co-creation and it responds on our service economy where consumers participate individually. Tsai states; “increasingly, consumers are involved in the processes of both defining and creating value, and the co-created experience of consumers through the holistic brand value structure becomes the very basis of marketing” (Tsai, 2005, pp.427-452). It is all about creating an experience like interaction in a forum. The consumer needs to get the total emotion that brands create around the products. Co-creation is the approach and method of how companies let the consumer be an individual part of it (Grönroos, 2006).

2.5. Postmodern marketing tools
Postmodern marketing tools are marketing communication tools. Marketing communication is the “promotion” part of the four P’s marketing mix. The traditional marketing communication includes television, radio, direct mail etc. They have been primary marketing communications instruments for many years but they all act on a one-way strategy (Angella, 2012 pp.15-20).

The postmodern tools are interactive and they are two-way. With the rise of digitalization, globalization and social media the marketing communications expanded to digital marketing communications. Old-fashioned one-way communication changed into the interactive two-way direct communication and brands put themselves into a more personal position by creating Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest accounts. But this development is more than a marketing strategy. It is another world and the consumer is the leader of this. Interaction rules – where brand and consumer are on one level without any restriction in time, place and medium. In this way, brands and consumers start to work together – to create several new applications, products, values, services and more (Angella, 2012 pp. 22-30).

2.5.1. Social media
As discussed earlier in this thesis the consumer knows more than ever before, the choices are extremely endless. The development of social media is crucial when it comes to the position of the consumer. Social media is a tool for building brand awareness and for reinforcing brand identity. Social media gives the fashion industry many ways to generate interest. It allows companies in the fashion industry to capture a wider audience. Social media also provides an intersection between online communications and e-commerce. It helps to research the consumer psychology and mind-set of the users.
The creation of content is one of the main communication tools for fashion brands. It is the content that engages and gives an experience but both characteristics are worthless if they are not sharable with other users, fans, friends or colleagues. It is about the emphasis of content. The content needs to be able to get shared with others. It is about the user who can create individual content that he is interested in.

Social media brings advantages and disadvantages. On one side social media is a tool that continues to grow in importance for consumers. Social media platforms offer participation by sharing content for example on Pinterest. But it also changed the way of how the fashion industry operates. With the rise of the e-commerce the credibility of the product can get easily lost. Therefore many brands were sceptical of this way of communication. Joe Adams store manager of the Rick Owens store in London explains the following thing about his favourite brand Paul Harnden “he does not do any marketing, no Facebook, no Twitter, and no press. They make clothes, art and if you like them, you will find them”.

Not everyone wants to adapt to this phenomenon of being so accessible to a wider audience. According to Macala Wright Lee (2010), “the Fashion Industry has adopted social media as a marketing platform to reach their customers online and reignite brand passion and customer loyalty. Last but not least, brands and retailers face the social media problem to create the exclusive feeling or the atmosphere that has been created within a store. The owner of the high-end concept store and e-commerce LN-CC, based in London says no; “LN-CC.com obviously has global reach, however technology at the moment is not able to create the feeling or the atmosphere that has been created within our store.” He also mentions “You haven’t had the full LN-CC experience until you have visited the store” (Kansara, 2012).

2.6. The marketing mix the four C’s
The adapted four P’s showed the structure of the postmodern marketing, which improved the vision on the consumer and how to approach him. But the P’s still miss the concentration on communication and consumer. Therefore in this case the framework of the four C’s is a better solution when it comes to an engaging marketing strategy for the consumer. The four C’s are building a structure around the consumer and show how to communicate with them most efficiently. This mix is much more effective when it comes to delivering an interactive and engaging experience for the consumer.

It is important to have a new approach in today’s market, in which the consumer is the focus, especially because the demands of the consumer got personalized and need to get satisfied individually. The focus is on the consumer, since the demands changed crucially, being an individual in today’s market.

According to the article Lauterborn “It is time for a new formula”, (Lauterborn, 1990, p.26) this formula is the new marketing mix, which got introduced in 1993 by Lauterborn. The focus is on the consumer. The four P’s are not applicable anymore in today’s market; therefore the framework of the four C’s replaced the marketing mix of the four P’s. The four C’s build up a framework to define the consumer experience in a more consumer-orientated way. Figure 4 shows the framework of the four C’s.
2.6.1. Product-Consumer
The most import P, standing for product, got replaced for the most important C. – consumer. In the traditional marketing approach the producers were only focused on product thinking when they manufactured. The demands were high and supply was low. Back then the producers had the power and consumers had to buy what they were offered, since there wasn’t much choice. Segmentation models and positioning were the tools for the traditional approach.

During the postmodernity producers have so many competitors they are not in the position anymore to offer products one-way or to push them into the market. Therefore producers have to understand their consumers buying intention and interact with them. It is necessary to build up a strong dialogue with a lot of back and forth communication frequently (Unknown author, 2013, pp.184-185)

Producers had to shift their focus from products to consumers and deploy a strategy to form an ecosystem around their products, to satisfy consumers with a customized product. Today consumers demand a product and since a few years the focus shifted from producers towards consumers, this process is still an evolving phenomenon, which results in a customer-driven market and it is a highly tenable inference (Allen, 2006).

2.6.2. Price – Cost
Cost replaced the price and it understands the consumers’ cost to satisfy the want and need. The price is getting irrelevant; emotional value for an item becomes part of the cost. Price is a producer’s phenomena seen from seller’s perspective, not a consumer’s. But cost for a consumer is not the same as the price. In todays market price is no longer producer’s phenomenon. Now it is the cost that takes the centre stage.
2.6.3. Place – Convenience
The focus is on Convenience instead of place. Since the C’s surround the consumer’s needs, also convenience is important. It makes the purchase of an item convenient to a consumer. Convenience is about how to deliver place utility (Lauterborn, 2011, pp. 249-250). The P of Place has always been looked upon as a marketplace where merchants make themselves and their offerings available. It is a physical space where products are stored and demanded to the prospects and then offered on exchange of either goods or some currency. Routes and trade channels changed, they became easily accessible and legalized. What remained was that the consumer had to travel to the closest marketplace and buy goods. Nowadays, a company has to know how a consumer prefers to buy, for example via e-commerce.

2.6.4. Promotions – Communication
Communication is crucial, it requires a give and take and a strong dialogue between the buyer and seller – cooperative; it is from the buyer’s perspective. Promotion on the other hand is outdated of the perspective from the seller and very manipulative. This contrast is in fact the fundamental difference between the four P’s and four C’s. The focus of communication of the brand lies individually; creating brand awareness and brand cognition is important in order to do a communication strategy. Every brand is perceived to have a personality. It becomes crucial to use different communication channels (Greenwood, 2013, pp. 26-78).

![brand strategy diagram]

*Figure 5: Brand strategy shifted from the P’s to the C’s (McClean, 2012)*
2.7. Conclusion
The marketing mix of the four P’s is not valid anymore. The postmodern era empowered the consumer’s position, so it would be impossible to still think from the perspective of a marketer. The consumer is all about communicating with the company and he demands individual applications. Philip Kotler suggests that the four P’s are too seller orientated and that is not the focus anymore in postmodern times. The four C’s model is more consumers oriented and fits better in the movement from mass marketing to niche marketing (Kotler, 2012).

The consumer of today is getting more sophisticated by the day and he likes to make his own decisions on things rather then being pushed into a marketing strategy. With the empowerment of the consumer, he is in the know how the marketing world works. Interaction and engagement between the marketers and consumers are very important in the fashion industry due to the postmodern times. The consumer puts individualization and self-expression as his priority when it comes to consumption.

2.8. Necessity of marketing
Marketing is a very important aspect in the fashion industry; by using the right marketing tools such as campaigns, websites a company is able to attracts his target. All businesses rely on their consumers therefore marketing is highly important. It is all about how a company gets the attention of it’s consumers. The fashion industry is an ever-changing industry and marketing is a tool to sell values and beliefs to consumers (Easy, 2009, pp. 5-7) Due to the digitalization the speed of communication increased and companies need to stay up-to-date to react quickly on the desires of their consumers. In the fashion industry it is all about creating a value, desire and emotion for consumers. Therefore knowing what your customer wants is very import.

Due to postmodernity the consumer got more important and the product is not the centre of marketing anymore. It is rather about creating an everlasting experience, therefore an intriguing marketing strategy for a company is very essential to target the right consumers and build up a long-term relationship which leads to a loyal customer behaviour (Kotler, 2012). Due to the rise of social media and the digitalization it got harder to attract loyal consumers. Constant interaction and a deep understanding for the needs of the consumer is base of a good partnership with the individual (Unknown author, 2013, p.211).
Chapter 3 The Invisible Portrait Of Fashion

3.1. Introduction
In order to understand the foundation of the new marketing approach invisible marketing, the foundation of the traditional marketing needed to be investigated first.

One of the first adapters of communicating through invisibility almost hidden is the fashion house Maison Martin Margiela (MMM) founded by the head designer himself Martin Margiela. As Patrick Scallon, the right hand of Martin Margiela describes the marketing strategy of MMM as “absence equals presence” and “the cult of impersonality”, that this was a central part of the brand identity.

Martin Margiela is a cult figure of invisibility and he quotes, “without a face to worship, we are left with a ‘cult of invisibility’”. Martin Margiela didn’t set himself out there in the fashion industry to communicate through invisible marketing.

In fashion circles, it is said that Martin Margiela would never want to engage with press because of the fact of having the wrong publicity or overexposure. He didn’t want to become a hype and focused on making a product instead of the whole façade (Frankel, 2008, pp. 1-378). Martin Margiela always stayed away from the hysteria and histrionics around the fashion industry. While his silence is maintained, the work of MMM speaks volumes (Frankel, 2008, pp. 1-378).

3.2. Definition of invisible marketing
According to the description from the previous chapter, the traditional marketing approach is a mass medium to draw the consumers’ attention and interest. It is a quick process to get the consumers mind-set. While invisible marketing distinguishes itself from this way of traditional marketing tools like, advertisement and it draws the attention on an invisible way. It is a reverse movement where consumers have to search the brand for themselves, which results in having consumers who really are interested in the brand and visa versa. The invisible approach is a more focused than the traditional one.

The brands do not use any or lets say hardly any marketing tools therefore they do not target their consumers like how the traditional marketing targets their consumers. By communicating through invisibility a consumer has to search for the brand itself in order to get the information what they are looking for.

The invisible marketing approach is not set on a fixed strategy; it is not really out there. It is an approach that creates a curiosity, were consumers want to know more about the brand because of their own interest.

This first step of getting to know a brand is done by the use of word-of-mouth this will be explained later in this thesis.

Communicating through invisibility, as a fashion brand is a growing approach worldwide that is been adapted in the fashion industry. The so-called ‘hidden identity’ of a brand started many years ago in the early 1980s by the Japanese designers Rei Kawakubo, Yamamoto and Issey Miyake also known as ‘The Big Three’. In the Japanese culture the cultural importance is ‘silence’ (Maynard, 1997, p.154). They believe in the aesthetic concept of ‘wabi’ and ‘sabi’ this concept focuses on the idea of being more temporal and the appreciation of the imperfect and incomplete of beauty of things. This concept plays an important role in the philosophy of invisibility. The Japanese culture value silence, and state that speech is silver and silence is golden.

In 1981 the Japanese fashion designers, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake were introduced into the international scene in the fashion industry.
When Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo showed their collection in Paris in 1981, the result was a stunned silence. They showed with pieces that we never ever showed before on a catwalk show. The Japanese designers became part of the French fashion system, which is recognized as the fashion capital of the fashion industry. Their cultural vision on work became by then known in the worldwide fashion industry (English, 2011, pp.9-91). The Japanese designers are known for shocking the fashion industry in the early 1980 because of their creations of new innovative designs and became known for their silent communication.

Rei Kawakubo is also the Japanese designer behind the guerrilla concept store Dover Street Market. The idea behind Dover Street Market is to bring a various fashion brands together with all their creations and give free reign, “fashion of now” would become chaotic, and within that chaos, through synergy and accident, the brands would stand out more powerful then when being alone.

Rei Kawakubo does not make public appearances also the stores of Dover Street Market are located in areas where no other fashion stores are. The stores are kept unobtrusive and low-key areas. Adrian Joffe, the husband of Rei Kawakubo stated that (2013), “it took years for people to understand and to come to Dover Street,” he said. “And I think the reason why it is finally been so successful is due to offering an alternative shopping experience — and extreme hard work, changing it every six months.”

This phenomenon of bringing a store silently into the market is a form of being invisible. The in-store communication is for invisible marketing a very important tool. It is important that stores communicate the same experience as the brand creates around their brand. In fashion it is usual to have a visible spokesperson of the brand but MMM embodied anonymity without showing any private life. It is all about the embodiment of the brand narrative, which lies not only in the brand work, it also questions the way the fashion system works. A press office is usually managing the brand narrative and brand managers are the pinpoints of journalists; they are visible celebrities who for example give interviews after showcasing. Martin Margiela himself participates in seasonal showcasing and he gives occasional interviews, so he doesn’t disregard entirely these practices (Margiela, 2009).

In 2008 Martin Margiela left his fashion brand MMM and an unknown author quotes, “Margiela is the Houdini of fashion - only he was already invisible before he vanished from his house.” His absence equals presence and he created a myth around his brand. He passed the “face value”, a value of a shared myth. Margiela quotes that without a face, the consumer is left with a “cult of invisibility”, that added a specific value to a brand via what appears to be a non-branding ideology. His anonymity became louder and increasingly interesting to others. This approach of invisibility also fits well into the postmodernity where consumers purchase an experience and pay for an emotional value (Lynge-Jorlén, 2011, pp. 136-145).

Invisible marketing is an approach of how brands communicate with their tribe. By being invisible they do not give anything, or let’s say as less as possible, away to the outside world and especially to the mainstream environment. The brands try to communicate as hidden as possible to attract a certain tribe that forms their community. Interviewee Marcelo Maquieira states via “invisible approach, they create a handicap, and it is their attraction”. Marcelo Maquieira is one of the owners of the artisanal store Carmacoma in Amsterdam.
To conclude invisible marketing is an ambivalent act, which goes silently. Invisible marketing is an approach that is a contradiction against all fashion rules but it is not anti fashion. It also fuels the brand concept with a certain belief (James, 2009). The facelessness leaves creativity and the imagination of the consumer to his fans. Martin Margiela applied the **imagination of a person.** When he left the house then the spirit of the invisibility lost its strength and respect. Martin Margiela was not only a cult figure for invisibility but he also spread a belief that fashion is a shared practice and not a solitary activity.

Another example is the designer of the brand Boris Bidjan Saberi based in Barcelona who launched a short movie of 30 seconds in 2013, without any information and only with intriguing background music. The movie got placed on the social media platform Vimeo and the video ended without any information except with the number eleven ‘11’. Immediately after the release online discussion rounds came up on the closed forum StyleZeitgeist. A member quotes, “does anyone have any information on the new Boris Bidjan Saberi ‘11’ line? What is it about, is it a new collection?” A couple of months later the brand revealed the concept behind the movie, by then the whole community already talked about the new project of the brand while the collection still had to come out. It caused a buzz and curiosity around the brand.

![Boris Bidjan Saberi “11” movie](SLAMXHYPE, 2012)
ON DAY 11 AT 11 O’CLOCK BORIS BIDJAN SABERI ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF “11”

“11” IS MUCH MORE THAN A SIMPLE NUMBER.
“11” IS A PHILOSOPHY.
“11” IS A LIFESTYLE.

BORIS BIDJAN SABERI MOVES ON TO A NEW LINE, “11”. BASED ON THE SYMBOLIC NUMBER OF THE BRAND, “11” GOES FAR BEYOND A NUMERIC EXPRESSION.

“11” CONNECTS PEOPLE AND IDEAS THROUGH A STREETWEAR PHILOSOPHY OF URBAN WARRIORS POWERED BY FUNCTIONAL AND DURABLE CLOTHING.

“11” IS A LIFESTYLE INSPIRED BY STREET CULTURE AND MUSIC TURNED INTO HIGH-LEVEL FASHION.

11 GARMENTS AND 11 ACCESSORIES COMBINE THE EXPERIMENTAL CREATIONS OF BORIS BIDJAN SABERI WITH THICK DENIMS, JERSEYS, HEAVY CANVAS AND TECHNICAL FABRICS.

BORIS BIDJAN SABERI

Figure 7: Boris Bidjan Saberi (2013)
Some fashion experts Marcelo Maquieira co-owner of the store Carmacoma in Amsterdam, McDougall owner of the store Darklands in Berlin stated that invisible marketing is a wave of the future; the postmodern times move the marketers into the direction to think about a new approach that is intriguing and engaging (Maquieira, 2013). Invisible marketing is market focused and puts the interest of the prospects and consumer centre stage in a very personal way, which results in approaching a consumer as if he would be your only consumer. This individuality part has a crucial strength because individuality is prior in postmodern consumption behaviour (Krittinee, 2006).

3.3. Strategy
As also mentioned before the invisible marketing approach is not set on a fixed strategy; it is not really out there. It is an approach that creates a curiosity, what consumers want to know more about the brand because of their own interest.

Invisible marketing exists until now within niche markets and it hasn’t been researched in bigger extend before. According to the research report often the brands that communicate on an invisible way often do not even work with a marketing department. Therefore these brands didn’t start with a regularly marketing strategy. Interviewee Luca Modesti works for the brand Rick Owens in Paris, he explains that Rick Owens does not use a marketing strategy, “he is just doing his thing and the right customers are falling for his aesthetic”.

There are a few of the artisanal brands within the niche market that choose for not doing any advertisement or refuse to do all editorials.

Is invisible marketing just a controversial movement? Does this way of marketing just happen to a brand whiteout having any strategy? And is the invisible marketing approach only interesting for a specific niche market? Could we say then that their strategy is all about communicating their aesthetic? Invisible marketing is attracting consumers in the opposite way of communicating through a certain traditional marketing approach. It creates a certain curiosity when using the invisible marketing approach.

3.4. Characteristics
The definition of a brand is an emotional and physiological relationship a brand has with its consumer (Keller, 1993, pp. 1-22). Within the invisible marketing approach a brand sees his consumer more than just a consumer, it is a strong back and forth dialogue and relationship that is based on the aesthetic of a brand. This aesthetic is a belief that a brand shares with its consumer about its own brand experience. It is the overall picture of the brand identity.

When communicating through invisible marketing it is important that a brand communicates its consistency, this is more important then when communicating through any other marketing approach. The brand has to make sure that the message has to be the red line in their brand identity that it sends out to its consumer base. Therefore creating brand awareness is usually the base of brand recognition.

When a brand is communicating through invisible marketing it has to deal with a few aspects of brand definition. Within invisible marketing it is not important that a big amount of consumers recognize the message but the brand has to make sure to follow certain aspects of brand recognition.
Invisible marketing has a few characteristics on what you can recognize them. The three important aspect of the invisible marketing are:

- Brand awareness
- Brand identity
- Brand loyalty

These three aspects are getting communicated through the main characteristics of invisible communication.

- Anonymity
- Individuality
- Aesthetic
- Value

3.4.1. Anonymity
According to the article The Maison Martin Margiela Reference Guide (2012), “anonymity is, a reaction against the ubiquitous star system, the desire to let the ideas do the talking. The product is at the center of everything” (Unknown author, 2012). When using the approach invisible marketing brands communicate through a so-called non-branding ideology, where the product is the centre. This is an ideology which doesn’t allow brand to any official branding or as less as possible branding communication towards the outside world. An example is labelling and packaging and brand communication on the clothes, which is almost or not at all visible for an outsider of the consumer tribe.

The anonymity movement against the usual fashion system, where everything is getting branded to show the brand identity, is refusing against the spotlight of fashion. It is a contradiction against all fashion rules but it is not anti fashion. It renders the construction of fashion garments through sincere craftsmanship. Fashion is about presence and appearance and a personification of a brand is usually an important PR technique. For example Maison Martin Margiela showed the truth and craftsmanship of a garment without the media and personification around it. On the other side the facelessness has its own PR technique because it works like a teaser, which creates curiosity.
3.4.2. Individuality

The evolution of postmodernism is the overall topic when it comes to the expression of the individuality. One of the main results of the postmodern fragmentation of the society is a consumer who sets independence and individuality as his priority (Cova, 1997, pp.297 - 316). According to the invisible approach the consumption is based on the consumer need for a personal brand experience and a direct dialogue with the brand. An example is a consumer of MMM has the feeling that he is the only consumer when he is purchasing a Martin Margiela product because he has the feeling that it is only reachable for him and not for others. It is an emotional value what is being transport through the whole DNA.

3.4.3. Aesthetic

In general an aesthetic can be a message that a brand believes in and wants to communicate towards the consumer it is a conception of beauty an art. Aesthetic offers a more passive involvement and high intensiveness. It has little effect on the environment such as admiring a collection video, which seeks to engage consumers with all the senses (Joy, 2010, p.9). The aesthetic of the invisible marketing approach is noticeable in every detail that the brand is communicating to the outside world. Also the aesthetic of invisible communication are optical delusions to draw attention to new practices of fashion. Usually fashion produces value by media discourse and shared cultural values but the invisible approach draws attention with the opposite of it, the product. The tools for invisible aesthetic are listed:

- **Signage**
  Example: Store addresses of MMM are not listed in a phone book

- **Packaging**
  Example: Logo free labelling, without any brand information
• **Labelling**
  Example: Own sizing language in the garments

• **Web page**
  Example: Artisanal brand Obscur doesn’t give access to its webpage, except an email address

• **Collective speaking**
  Example: MMM communicates to outside as “we” and never personal

• **Fashion Show invitation**
  Example: Invitation through a hidden message, which is only visible for the people who are invited

3.4.4. Value
Sociologist Bourdieu and Delsaut discuss in context with invisible marketing that in general designers’ work is rather a symbolic product instead of a material product (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975, pp.7–36). Invisible marketing embodies this idea by adding value to the products through a certain belief. Often fashion brands are also valued for its name rather for its craftsmanship or quality. That process happens when brands change its social characteristic. According to researcher Rocamora, symbolic production of the invisible approach is the production of beliefs and values of work (Rocamora, 2002 pp.341-362). Invisible communication practices the fundamentals how to engage consumers with shared beliefs that shape the consumers tastes.

3.5. Strategic tools
This chapter discusses the tools that brands implement them into their invisible strategy.

3.5.1. In-store
The communication of a brand inside of a store is a crucial aspect when communicating through invisibility, (Greenwood, 2013, pp. 26-78). A store is the platform where brands can communicate their aesthetic with the costumers. The stores, which carry brands with a different aesthetic, are mostly concept stores.

3.5.2. Social media
Social media is a tool for building brand awareness and for reinforcing brand identity. It provides an intersection between online communication and e-commerce. It helps to research the consumer psychology and mind-set of the users. When it comes to invisible marketing then social media is a helpful tool to interact with the brand’s target. In specific and closed online communities or forums, fans express their desires or discuss the brand developments. The five constructs of social media activities of brands are entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word of mouth. But the invisible approach applies only to word of mouth and interaction and hardly any entertainment. Some brands communicate through Instagram, Tumblr, and some use Facebook but hardly any brand is regularly active on social media. The communication is only for the own target and it is very specific. Some of the brands are not even to find on the web. For example the niche brand Paul Harnden doesn’t even have an own webpage. He is hardly visible online and most searches bring up fashion forums where his fans eagerly discuss his brand (Unknown author, 2011)
3.5.3. Word-of-mouth
Word of mouth communication (WOM) is a communication channel for consumers where the user is not dependent on the market. It is therefore seen to be more democratic, reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to push marketing or blogging. A consumer of invisible branded market identifies himself with the real character of the brands by unique brand-specific content and other tools (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). Word-of-mouth is ‘the communication tool for the invisible marketing. By using the invisible approach a brand is not out there, therefore a consumer has the first step to look up the brand out of his own interest to gain the information about the existing of a brand. This is done after he or she got to hear about it in the first place through someone else, which is known as word-of-mouth. The brands do not use any or lets say hardly any marketing tools to target their consumers like the approach of the traditional marketing. The targeting is actually done by the consumer. Therefore the right target is done by the attraction of the consumer, which results in having the right consumer.

3.6. The marketing mix the four I’s
The postmodern times shifted the market to a customer-driven market. The marketing mix of the four C’s have replaced the marketing mix of the four P’s. Invisible marketing sets also the priority to its consumer, but the focus is more on the individuality of the consumer. Since the zeitgeist pushed the consumer into being an individual, a new invisible framework has been created to express the invisible marketing approach better.

The most important C of Consumer replaced the most important P of Product. For the invisible marketing mix the most important C got replaced by the most important I standing for “Individuality”.

The key difference between invisible marketing and traditional marketing are the two marketing strategies push vs. pull marketing. Traditional marketing is based on “push” methodology this strategy is known for its literally pushing the products into the consumers. While on the other hand invisible marketing acts like the C’s on “pull” methodology, where the power lies in the consumer’s hand. Only the marketing mix of the four I’s focuses more on the consumer being an individual in postmodern times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Consumer</th>
<th>Individuality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Invisibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
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Table 1: Marketing mix for the invisible marketing

3.6.1. Consumer -> Individuality
The market of today is a customer-driven market; this means that the marketing strategies are motivated by consumers demand or expectations. The invisible marketing focuses more on the consumer desire for individuality. The focus of the invisible marketing lies on the self-expression of the individuality within a tribe. Due to the postmodern fragmentation of the society the consumer sets esteem for authenticity and individuality as his priority. The consumer needs to have the feeling that the approach is only reachable for him and not for others. It gives an added value to the consumer but also visa versa, if the brand gives the
consumer this personal feeling, the consumer will choose most of the time again for this brand experience.

3.6.2. Costs -> Investment
Investment is the second I that represents for value of the product (garment). The main reason for changing the C, Costs into investment is the emotional value the consumer pays for a product. Costs is no longer only the purchase value, it is better to look at what a product cost for a consumer during the time he uses it. Therefore the product needs to be seen as an investment for the consumer. This investment is showed in not only the product itself by the use of craftsmanship, but also the investment a brand puts in the relationship with its consumer.

3.6.3. Convenience -> Invisibility
Invisibility replaced the third C, Convenience. The convenience is usually the location of the products. By using the invisible approach consumers are almost not able to reach the brand, can be referred as teaser marketing, which creates curiosity but it also centres the product. The invisibility took the spot of convenience because it drives the interest of the consumer. Invisibility gets shown in labelling and packaging, design practices and the general brand language. An example is the unnamed “11” video by Boris Bidjan Saberi, that got represented without any brand information.

3.6.4. Communication -> Involvement
Involvement replaced the last C, Communication. Involvement goes even further than communication. It is an engaging approach to keep the consumers loyalty and brand love. Involvement is a value that consumers nowadays are looking for when searching for an experience. The most involving channel is the offline store. But also events and other invite-only gatherings or suspicious actions involve. For example a few brands post strategic threads in the main communication forum of the tribe StyleZeitgeist to start discussions about the consumer’s first favourite garment.

3.7. Advantages – Disadvantages
The invisible marketing approach fits well in the postmodern times, but it also brings disadvantages with it. The market is relying on consumers; and the invisible marketing approach is actually only reliable through word-of-mouth, therefore communicating by being invisibility needs to be very consistent. The brands that use the invisible approach are not out there they are basically anonymous. Therefore it could easily happen that the message is not well being received and this can cause for miscommunication. The message needs to get received well between sender and receiver; therefore a constant strong dialogue is necessary to succeed.

By using the invisible approach the brand teases the consumer. The consumer get’s curious and the next step is that the consumer wants to know more about the existing of a brand. By doing this the brand automatically connects the right target. The right targeting is actually done by the consumer himself. It is a reverse movement where consumers have to search the brand for themselves, which results in having consumers who are really interested in the brand and visa versa and causes brand loyalty and bigger interest, therefore the opportunities lie in creating a strong loyal consumer-brand relationship. Value creation practices, brand trust and brand loyalty can keep the invisible approach alive.
Consumers can develop unique and engaging relationships with their brands and to conceptualize these relationships has become increasingly important. According to professor Fournier (1998) brand relationships are important in the mind of the consumer. They can take place in different forms and are differently strong. An important character of the invisible consumer-brand relationship has been the brand community (Fournier, 1998, pp.343-345). The values can measure in terms of brand personality, brand attachment, brand love and brand experience (Van Veldhuizen, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ Customer loyalty</td>
<td>☒ Not well being received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Strong customer relationship</td>
<td>☒ Can cause for miscommunication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Fits into zeitgeist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Strong brand community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Right target group</td>
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Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of the invisible marketing

### 3.8. Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter is that invisible marketing fits into the movement of postmodernism.

The invisible approach puts the consumer as priority and focuses on the demands of the consumer: individuality, personal communication, involvement, curiosity and engagement.

The evolution of the postmodernism is the overall topic when it comes to the expression of the individuality. Invisible marketing is able to set this priority by engaging the consumer.

Invisible marketing distinguishes itself by using hardly any way of traditional tools like, advertisement and it draws the attention in an invisible way. It is a reverse movement where consumers have to search the brand for themselves, which results in having consumers who are really interested in a brand.

In postmodern time consumers are in need for an overall brand experience. Also invisible marketing functions on a so-called teaser marketing method, which causes for curiosity among the consumers this approach works for this niche market since it relies on word-of-mouth.

Invisible marketing is an approach that is a contradiction against all fashion rules but it is not anti fashion. It renders the construction of communicating through garments.

The invisible marketing approach is not set on a fixed strategy; it is not really out there. It is an approach that creates a curiosity, were consumers want to know more about the brand because out of their own interest, which results in the right target for the brand.
PART 2 MARKET

Chapter 4 The Artisanal Niche market

4.1. Introduction
After researching the difference between traditional marketing and invisible marketing researched showed that the invisible approach fits in the postmodern times. As mentioned before invisible marketing is a wave of the future; the postmodern times move the marketers into the direction to think about a new approach that is intriguing and engaging. This fourth chapter presents insights on the artisanal niche, which applies the invisible marketing approach. First the niche market in general gets explained and then a profile description follows.

4.2. Niche market definition
In general a niche market allows a niche brand to focus on its resources within a small market segment, which becomes more efficient and effective than offering it to the entire mass market. Therefore it is important for niche marketers to have a very unique market that is offering what consumer satisfies (Gordon, 2002). A niche market does not exist but community creates it in a way. Identifying needs, wants and requirements to satisfy the needs of the community. Also known as micromarketing. The result of niche market is that brands are being forced to target their marketing efforts on a specific target. This fact is one of the most important ones in a niche market because by specializing, the consumer recognizes the value of the product, because the aim is directly at its unique situation.

4.2.1. Process identification
In the description above the niche market got described as a creation of a community. The process identification shows how this creation happens. A niche market consists of a certain group, also known as a market segment within the marketplace (Thilmany, 2002, pp.1-2). Having the same buying behaviour and lifestyle characteristics can identify the niche.

For a niche brand it is crucial to understand how to target consumer segments when determining interest. Also business elements have to meet the needs of prospective consumers. When the consumers are being identified, it allows a brand to for example; understand the consumer’s motivation for consumption behaviour.

When the niche is identified the next phase is to identify the target and attract its attention. This can be done through many marketing tools such as, social media, word-of-mouth, personal communications and others (Gordon, 2010). The marketing tools need to fulfil the individual needs of the niche target but also manage interaction and engagement. It is important that this way of communication shows consistency to build loyalty with the niche consumers.

4.3. The artisanal niche market
The artisanal niche market applies to the invisible marketing approach and according to the process identification; a niche community has created it. This artisanal niche market is better described as a market with cutting-edge, narrowly drawn aesthetic, avant-garde, artisanal designer brands. The artisanal niche market communicates through its aesthetic. The artisanal niche market wants to set the truth and the craftsmanship of a garment without the media presence and personification around it. Mark Quinn storeowner of an artisanal store states (2012), “these producers are the antithesis of big, brand, big thinking, they are driven by a dedication to craft, these designers do not follow trends, with this they really distinguish themselves”.

This artisanal niche market started in 1994 by one of the first adapters Maurizio Altieri, he is seen as the leader of this specific artisanal fashion style. Maurizio Altieri is the founder of one of the first artisanal niche brands Carpe Diem, which is founded in 1996. Carpe Diem avoided the exposure of the fashion system, by refusing to give any editorials and advertisements, as the garments speak for themselves. Maurizio Altieri states, “after all, garment is fashion, everything else is filler”.

The artisanal niche brands and designers share the mentality to let the garments speak for themselves; the clothes have a story to tell - not a brand itself. In the opinion of this niche market, they make real fashion, fashion that you have to feel and what is about pure craftsmanship (Maqueire, 2013). The design concept starts with each garment and goes over to the packaging and the labelling to give it a consistent brand experience.

Rei Kawakubo states in an interview (2013), “I do not like to explain the clothes, how I made them, the theme, et cetera. It is because the clothes are just as you see them and feel them. That’s what I want...just see and feel them. How I thought about them, where any idea came from, what the process is, is not something I like talking about to people” (Newhouse, 2013).

As mentioned before the mind-set of this niche market is a contradiction against the usual fashion rules but it is not a concept of “anti fashion”. It renders the construction of fashion garments through sincere craftsmanship. This niche market sets itself apart from all other fashion markets, by avoiding a common approach to promote its’ work by using invisible marketing.

Interviewee Marcelo Maqueira states the philosophy of the niche market, “it is a handicap, they create it, it is their attraction”. This handicap is the invisible marketing approach, a way of communicating the niches’ personal aesthetic towards its community.

The artisanal niche designers and brands are the leading framework of the niche market; these labels communicate on a very personal level towards the community and the brands get by this an almost obsessive extremely loyal community. The niche designers give their consumers the feeling to be an individual, by wearing their garments. “I do not regret to spend more than 1600 dollar for pants, I’m probably the only one wearing them” (Member of StyleZeitgeist, 2009).

Also another member of the StyleZeitgeist forum states “It gives the best feeling to not see anyone in this amazing of the hook, beautiful hand-made leather jacket of Carol Christian Poell”.

A design characteristic by some of the brands is the use of the colour black throughout their collections – examples are the niche brands Rick Owens, Obscur and Boris Bidjan Saberi. The aesthetic of the niche brands is the technical knowledge in tailoring, detailing, craftsmanship and a design feeling of languid melancholy.

As already said the artisanal niche market also distinguishes itself by communicating on a very personal level, when creating a garment, it first has to be for the creators themselves. The designers’ don’t work with the idea of a specific target. Rick Owens states, “I learned to think only of myself: only that way I can imagine something that is real and convincing. When I try to please others I get distracted. Maybe I’m conceited” (Owens, 2010). The consumer feels almost that they are honoured to wear their garments.

Another example is the artisanal niche label Casey Vidalenc based in Paris. The brand explains, “we just make things when we want to wear them ourselves” says Gareth Casey. “If clients want to buy them, then fine” (O’ Flaherty, 2012).
This mind-set/mentality is usually not applicable for the mass market and it is a controversial movement to how most other designers work. Another reason why all of these labels go against the fashion system is because the artisanal niche brands do not use any traditional marketing approaches. Next to that some of them even refuse editorial requests in defiance of the standards of the fashion industry. Most of them do not show any seasonal work and they do not follow a trend, that’s why a few of them also never do seasonal discount actions.

4.3.1. Philosophy
This artisanal niche market creates the clothes for their wearers but also for itself. Geoffrey B. Small explains (2012), “I create my pieces myself and for the individual that believes in my aesthetic”. The philosophy of most of the artisanal niche brands is to create timeless and non-seasonal garments. The brands pay attention to every detail and hand-made craftsmanship to deliver the highest quality, also in terms of materials. Eugene Rabkin, the co-founder of the artisanal niche forum and magazine StyleZeitgeist explains the philosophy (2011), “they call on you to touch, examine, and contemplate them. Their beauty is in their purity, just like the purity of the Carpe Diem house manifests in its refusal to advertise, produce seasonal collections, fashion shows, and engages in other activities that are expected of a fashion house. Such philosophy forces one to appreciate the garment itself, stripped -- and that is the final, most beautiful, and purest manifestation of creating clothes”

To conclude the philosophy is all about the craftsmanship and detailing for every single garment. Also the soul of the maker can truly be seen in the entire piece of the clothing because the designer itself wears it. The philosophy embodies the non-branding ideology that sets the product in the center of everything.

4.4. Strategy
The strategy of the artisanal niche market is non-existing. One of the leading niche brands, Rick Owens, explains in an interview (2011) “we do not really have a strategy, I suspect that my aesthetic is so narrow and specific that it only appeals to a niche group that does what they have to do to sleek it out. I’m surprised that we’ve made it this far” (Motwary, 2011).

The artisanal niche market overcame an idea by instinct, instead off planning a whole strategy. It is the same for the invisible marketing approach that just overcame them. Some of these brands hardly use any of the marketing strategies and communicate consciously or unconsciously on an invisible level. They believe that fashion is just about creating a garment. You can state that in a way by using the invisible approach, they apply against the usual fashion rules. Even though it is on an unconscious level.

The London based brand Paul Harnden is one of the first artisanal niche brand. Interviewee Bird familiar with Harnden says, “he hasn’t sold himself out, and he believes that producing exclusive, quality goods is all important. He does not talk to the press. He is a very solitary character, and he has a small staff that works full-time for him. He has a huge business in Japan.” Bird describes Paul Harnden as a “warm, interesting person. He plays music with groups and is involved in making underground movies. He’s just doing what he really likes without any pressure from the fashion world”.

The brand Paul Harnden also never has given a catwalk show. He refuses party invitations, interviews and online retail, and only sells in a few exclusive stores, for example Dover Street Market London, IF New York and L’Eclaireur in Paris.
Also Rick Owens states that his brand does not believe in making a strategy, and that he always wanted to protect what he did and found out that it was important to create an emotional connection with his wearers. He also states that he likes to provoke and that he can get away with certain things in terms of his fashion designs and his outspoken vision on fashion for example that he calls his fashion shows “a cheap magic act.” But to his audience, they’re the most amazing spectacles in fashion. He concludes that there will always be a certain amount of people cheering on him (Fury, 2013).

To conclude the artisanal niche brands build up a strong emotional relationship with their wearers and fans by offering them pure products. Hardly any brands of the niche market choose for creating collections via seasoning. The designers refuse to follow any trends and create their own with their aesthetic. Another example is the brand from Paris Damir Doma who refuses to follow trends and avoids seeking attention for its own sake. They communicate their aesthetic, they provoke a mystery what results in a certain desire, and it becomes a desire for their community. The moment a consumer is moving inside the artisanal niche circle, he learns about the philosophy and once a consumer gets into it, it is hard to get out.

4.4.1. Strategic distribution channels
The artisanal niche brands are hardly accessible, even for the niche consumer and especially for the retailers. The distribution goes via own showrooms, mainly in Paris and New York. But the niche brands are not attending any tradeshows because they don’t want to target to the mass. According to the owner Richard Söderberg from the brand Obscur, the niche brands only show their collection twice a year in a gallery in Paris or in their own showroom and invite the buyers to come to them.

An artisanal design tradeshow is missing in the market. The showroom addresses and details are almost not to get. For example the artisanal niche brand Obscur doesn’t state any brand or distribution information on its website. Other distribution channels are e-commerce and showcasing. But both channels are only fulfilled by some of the niche brands.

Also the niches are very selective and critical when choosing retailers. Very little stores get the opportunity to sell the niche brands. For example Paul Harnden sells not even to online retailers, and sells only in a few selected stores, which are only allowed to carry his collections. A few stores that carry the brand Paul Harnden are Dover Street Market in London, Envoy of Belfast in Ireland, If in Soho and L'Eclaireur in Paris.

4.5. Characteristics
The niche market has certain characteristics that make it remarkable and pinpoint it. Please find in the sections the findings of each of them.

- Individuality
- Loyalty
- Aesthetic
- Design

4.5.1. Individuality
Within the niche market the consumer plays a very important role. Invisible marketing sets the consumer as its priority and the focus is more on the individuality of the consumer. Also the artisanal niche market approaches on the expression of individuality through the garments.
“When I was young I purchased what everybody else was wearing, the bigger the logo the better, you belonged to a group, I guess you wanted to be a part of something. People always want to be apart of something tough, but with wearing CCP I know that I am a part of something, but being an individual. I guess these brands give you this feeling” (Member of StyleZeitgeist, 2013). The niche consumer needs to have the feeling that the garment is only reachable for him. It gives an added value to the consumer but also visa versa, if the brand gives the consumer this personal feeling, the consumer will most likely choose for the brand experience again.

4.5.2. Loyalty
The involvement part of the invisible marketing approach is also coming back in the niche market. Involving goes even further than mass communication but is rather a personal approach that engages the consumer to keep them loyal. Back and forth dialogue and strong relationships with the niche brands are important. The emotional value that niche designers’ give also is a strong desire. It glues the consumer and brand together to a strong and loyal partnership. Interviewee Marcelo Maquieira explains, “customers are extremely loyal to a brand. There lives a client across the store, he only purchases CCP garments. We only have had 3 collections so far, within every collection 3 coats. He bought every one of them”. The niche products are only available in the niche market therefore less competition but also a smaller market give more chances for loyal consumers. Next to that the niche labels create a world around them; a community, which exist from almost the same people as behind the brand. They speak the same language in order to understand each other to the fullest.

4.5.3. Aesthetic
The aesthetic approach of the artisanal niche market feels very personal and intimate to the community and the designers. Rick Owens states, "My aesthetic is so personal and intimate that it would have been dishonest not to completely commit myself. When I was younger I always wanted designers to look like they meant what they said” (Owens, 2012).

The aesthetic is also a divorce fashion from consumerism and celebrity culture. Another one is the fusion between individual expression, utility and commerce. The artisanal niche brand Carol Christian Poell (CCP) states (2011), that most of fashion is marching in the same direction, covering all the same trends. He feels it is very important to show that individuality is the key to a serious fashion house. He adds, “I want to make my trends personal”.

4.5.4. Value
The design value of the niche market is a long-term style. Gareth Casey says, “quality garments, like good wine, improve with the patina of age” (O’ Flaherty, 2012). Creating timeless, hand-made clothes from the highest quality materials is the design philosophy of this niche market. Design details are for example invisible stitches and detailing for inside seams. These brands are known for their uniqueness when it comes to the craftsmanship of handmade quality. An example is the collaboration between the designers Altieri with Alessio Zero. The team made a collection of footwear using leather they had buried years earlier. This uniqueness took years of preparation. Another example is the brand Carol Christian Poell and his small team who dye leather in ox blood. He states (2012), “customers buy their clothes for decades, not seasons”. Also interviewee Mark Quinn, store manager from Hostem based in London explains, “these producers are the antithesis of big brand, big thinking. They are driven by a dedication to craft”. 
The collection characteristics of the niche brands are divided into two groups. Some of the brands create two collection lines; the first & second line. The second sub line is often a more accessible version of the first line. On the other side other artisanal niche brands are not creating a second line, just because they don’t want to give everybody the chance to get a piece of them.

4.6. Strategic tools
The strategic tools are the important tools to fulfil the strategy above.

- Labelling
- Packaging
- Social media
- Word-of-mouth
- In-store communication

4.6.1. Packaging
The packaging plays also a key role in the entire concept of this niche market therefore it is part of the artisanal niche strategy. A member of StyleZeitgeist forum says (2008), “finally I was able to buy my new pair of Paul Harnden shoes the amount I will not even mention, but I do not know with what I should be happier, the amazing coated hand-made shoe box which is made out of recycled thick wood or my shoes”. Also the niche designer Rick Owens uses packaging. By purchasing a product of his collections, the consumer gets a cotton bag with it and community members widely wear this bag in their daily life. It became a recognizable piece in the community. The packaging carries out the invisible marketing approach as well, since there are no logos visible on the outside. In figure 9 you can see the invisible packaging tool by Rick Owens.

![Figure 9: Rick Owens invisible packaging, part of the strategy tools](image-url)
4.6.2. Labelling
In order to communicate always the same experience the artisanal niche brands communicate also through a certain consistency in labelling. The brands are known for their unique way of labelling their garments. The labelling provides the same invisibility as the communication towards their community. For example the brand Label Under Construction can be found in the best artisanal niche stores like Atelier New York in New York and Vertic London in London. They developed a cashmere shirt, which is reversible, and it does not have any tags in the garments. The only thing what you can recognize the brand from is a small hole underneath the shirt.

Figure 10: Labelling no branding only recognizable by metal piece – Label Under Construction, (Katz, 2013)
4.6.3. Social media
The artisanal niche brands are hardly visible online in an age when fashion labels are eager to broadcast their interactions via different social media platforms. It is very fascinating to see that there are a few brands that hardly use any of the social media tools that exist. Hardly any artisanal niche brand has an own Facebook fan page. The brand Paul Harden as mentioned before has not even a website which is functioning. In the era of presence the niche brands seem to not exist even online. Also here the brands succeed in being invisible to the outer world. This leads to a strongly connected community that finds a way to get the brand information offline via other community members or on closed online communities and forums, such as StyleZeitgeist.

Eugene Rabkin is the co-founder of StyleZeitgeist and he started this web-based community out of his own fascination for this artisanal niche market. “Every underground scene has needed a dedicated publication to act as its hub and documentarian”. When it comes to the dark, minimalist, androgynous, designer-centric world of men’s clothes that has gained popularity with artists as distinct as Cold Cave and A$AP Rocky (Rabkin, 2013).

![Figure 11: Online platform StyleZeitgeist (2013)](image-url)
StyleZeitgeist provides that particular scene with a foundation. An example is the collection discussion of the new collection from Thamanyah or the video “11” of the brand Boris Bidjan Saberi, fabric sourcing and other shareable experiences. The magazine StyleZeitgeist also works together with artisanal niche retailers like Atelier New York, LN-CC, an example the London based concept store carries niche brands that fulfill the invisible approach; LN-CC works closely with the online community and forum StyleZeitgeist. The owners take it as source of conjecture for both upcoming and established collections, as well as relevant feedback about their own selection and its fulfillment.

Next to that a certain amount of the artisanal niche brands adapted to the Instagram and Tumblr development recently and started using the platform to show new collection pieces and other engaging content.
4.6.4. **Word-of-mouth (WOM)** “A brand is no longer what we tell consumers it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is” (Cook, 2012).

Tribe member Jouw Wijnsma explains (2013), “my first thoughts are "word of mouth", so in essence you hear about it through friends or a website etc. A small group of people talk about it, it is more in crowd”.

This is a very huge advantage in this niche market. Because this niche market hardly uses any other marketing tools in order to succeed in the invisibility approach. The main communication goes within the tribe via word-of-mouth, offline and online. Events and gatherings but also the forum StyleZeitgeist leaves enough space to communicate. Several designers, brands and retailer draw inspiration out of the discussions of consumers and professionals.

WOM within online communities is one possible way of connecting between tribe and invisible branded market (Brodie, 2010).

4.6.5. **In-store communication**

The in-store communication is also an important strategic tool for the artisanal niche market. One of the most important retailers in this niche market is the store Atelier New York. The store carriers this artisanal niche market brands and organizes events with the artisanal niche companies, for example a collaboration with the StyleZeitgeist. Next to organising events some of the retailers also use social media like Facebook or cooperate blogging to interact with the scene of this niche market. In general retailers that carry artisanal niche brand, speak the
same language as that the niche market does. The stores are a very important aspect for this niche market. The philosophy of the brands is one red line that goes through the entire brand experience, this also includes the stores for these niche markets. Interviewee Marcelo Maquieira states, “it is part of the virus and they are allowed to spread it around”.

Figure 14: Atelier New York, (2013)

Figure 15: Atelier New York – artisanal brand JULIUS (2013)
The in-store communication needs to reflect the aesthetic of the brand and the other way around, the storeowner of the artisanal retailer Darklands states his buying behaviour, “I buy using passion and intuition”. I am not drawn by what will sell or what customers are looking for. I buy based on what I like and what fits our narrowly drawn aesthetic” (Campbell, 2012).

The store Darklands in Berlin is a temple when it comes to communicating these artisanal fashion brands on the highest level. The store adopted Rei Kawakubo – Comme des Garçons guerrilla store tactic and changes its location every 18 months. A space of monochrome contrast and directional design is how the community describes the store (Stylezeitgeist, 2012). The staff is completely dressed in multi-layered outfits and serve to you because you are a part of it. All the clothes are black or thereabouts. The store itself is completely white and the clothes are the central point of the store by displaying them on metal rails running through the entire space of the store. Darklands also collaborates with brands to communicate the collections in a form of an art exhibition. At the moment Darklands is located outside the city of Berlin in an industrial environment. The purpose of this is that the store does not want to be discovered by the mainstream crowd. Interviewee Campbell storeowner of Darklands added to the conversation that he does not like to be found, he states, “if the customers want something they will find it anyway”.

**Figure 16:** Store Atelier New York uses own blog to interact with the community of the artisanal niche market
Figure 17: Store Darklands Berlin, (SOME/THINGS, 2013)

Figure 18: Store Darklands Berlin - clothes are central point (DARKLANDSBERLIN, 2013)
Most niche retailers also apply to the invisible approach of marketing by not using any advertise methods and less use of social media. The retailers rely on guerrilla marketing such as word-of-mouth and collaborations for example with StyleZeitgeist. A forum member states (2012), "although I couldn't afford any clothing, my friend purchased a StyleZeitgeist magazine which was carefully wrapped up as though we were designer shoppers - with the receipt hand written to add a personal touch. A truly spell binding experience".

4.6.6. Network
The main communication tool for this niche market is the multi-disciplinary agency SOME/THINGS. More than over 125 brands, designers and stores are connected with the company. SOME/THINGS engages with its collaborators, partners, and clients in order to communicate the conceptual storytelling and creative strategy of the niche market. An example for network gathering is the upcoming exhibition by SOME/THINGS, called “& HE WENT TO THE SEA IN HIS CARRIAGE & HORSES”. The exhibition features niche brands like Carpe Diem, Boris Bidjan Saberi and others in Paris, June 2013. Another example is the debut party of the magazine SOME/THINGS hosted by the artisanal store Atelier New York. The event offers to gather with people from the niche community.

![Figure 19: Launch party of the magazine SOME/THINGS hosted by Atelier New York](image)

4.7. Niche forecasting & development
This niche market distinguishes itself from other markets. It brings several advantages and disadvantages. Some of the brands choose to develop a second line next to their existing line this is a more accessible line in terms of garment price. For example the Paris based brand Damir Doma launched in 2010 their diffusion line under the name 'SILENT', which is more accessible in terms of the price point. Also the Paris based brand Rick Owens includes two diffusion lines alongside the main collection. They go under the name 'lilies', which is a more simple collection existing out of basics and 'DRKSHDW' which is a denim collection.

By diffusion the brands have different pillars to grow to, some of the brands would not even exist today if they had developed a second line to make the story more accessible (Maquieira, 2013).
On the other side there are also brands within this niche market that will never develop a second line, because they believe it is only about making clothes. And if this means they are only accessible for a very small market then so it will be. By developing a second line some of these brands are busy with expanding to reach more clients. The broader accessibility can have the advantage to grow as a company but it has the disadvantage of being attractive for a bigger mass that can destroy the niche market.

With the rise of digitalization, the niche market is becoming more accessible which is not the purpose of the brand’ philosophy. So the question is how do those brands can stay exclusive for the niche community (Maquieira, 2013).

Last but not least the artisanal niche market is getting more “crowded” with new artisanal brands. This results in an increased amount of younger consumers who adapt the experienced tribe. This can mean that the niche market is getting bigger in size. Until now the development is only visible by doing observational research but the coming period will show how it affects the market.

4.7.1. Observational research
The artisanal niche market is a recently growing market in the fashion industry. It is noticeable that more young designer brands are entering the market of this niche market. Interviewee Marcelo Maquieira states, “they all feed each other like any other brand they are inspired by the big players in the fashion industry and so also in this niche market. But this entry of many new and young designer brands could turn this niche market into a different direction”.

Currently the artisanal niche market is becoming increasingly popular within the fashion market of the young consumer adapters. This is a risky development within this niche market, because it can mean that the niche market can move towards a more mass market (Maquiera, 2013). An example is the stockist amount of Rick Owens in Amsterdam. In the last seasons the amount of retail spots that carry the brand changed from 2 stores up to 9 stores.

There is one store in Amsterdam, Carmacoma founded by Marjon Visser the co-owner is one of the interviewees in this thesis Marcello Maquieira.

The store is located in the famous Spiegelkwartier of Amsterdam; among the finest art galleries Carmacoma is located in a very unique atmosphere. Carmacoma offers a rare selection of timeless artisanal pieces for men and women.

The store itself is an ambiance of a minimalistic design with the main ambiance of the use of dark. The store translates the same aesthetic as that the artisanal brands do. This is showed in the personal way of serving to their consumers and also the use of packaging (bags) are a part of this. The bags from Carmacoma are hand-made by a Dutch artist, which gives a very high value to the product.

Carmacoma is worldwide known within the community of the artisanal niche market and has a wide range of consumers from all over the world (Maquieira, 2013). They even collaborate with the main communication tool of the niche market SOME/THINGS agency. SOME/THINGS launched their magazine chapter006 in the store of Carmacoma. The communication from Carmacoma is also done on through an invisible way they hardly use any social media tools.

According to the interviewee Marcello Maquieira is the niche market growing and that he thinks Amsterdam offers the perfect surrounding to grow with them.
4.7.2. Artisanal niche in the recession

The distribution strategy is to survive but not to extend too quickly. According to Simon Munz from Darklands brands decide to grow slowly but healthy. It is also not about making money by moving towards the mass. The niche brands just want to tell their story through what they make, and if people like it they buy it. Also storeowner Campbell from Darklands states (2013), “they do not need to make huge profit; they only want to make clothes. They can afford to communicate like this, because they make such extremely beautiful clothes, and consumers
want the experience”. The production size is therefore also always small. Interviewee Simon Munz adds that most new collections sell out quickly after the arrival because of the scarcity and the growing demand.

The clothing style of the niche market is long-term which is one of the reasons why the niche market can stay alive during financial recessions. It is not about quick trends but rather one good outfit per season. The consumers are not able to purchase these products and the emotional values anywhere else. The niche brands are with a small team and have small production sizes. The locations of the design studios are mostly outside of the expensive areas, which make it easier to survive. An example is the niche brand Obscur, which settled an hour away from Berlin, where the rent is minimal costs. Last but not least the brands are so less available in the average locations that the community is traveling around the world to get the pieces. Interviewee Richard Söderberg founder of the brand Obscur states (2013), “the marketing from our brand is zero, for good and bad. I think for brands to survive in these niches it takes a lot of time and patience. If you have a good product and create / innovate within your own world (of course your world needs to have some connection to reality) good things will happen, with our without the power of Internet, blogs. When I started no one knew me, but there is no need to within this tribe, people are so extremely obsessive to search for you, I think we created this mentality within this niche. Actually it is amazing to see, that you can create this, only because people love what you make. The tribe sees the beauty in the things what you make and I think there is no other niche that has so dedicated passionate customers”.

4.8. SWOT
The SWOT analysis is based on the artisanal niche market within the invisible marketing approach.

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<td>Design consistency</td>
<td>Expensive, because of its craftsmanship / High quality</td>
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<td>Craftsmanship / High quality</td>
<td>Too personal approach</td>
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<td>Production size small</td>
<td>Low quantities</td>
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<td>No seasonal collections</td>
<td>High garment prices therefore garments expensive investments</td>
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<td>Invisible marketing approach</td>
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<td>Exclusivity, not easy accessible</td>
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<td>Personal approach</td>
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<td>Garments investment = Loyalty</td>
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<td>Growing market</td>
<td>Adaption of young designer brands</td>
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<td>Young designer brands entering the niche market</td>
<td>No seasonal collections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right consumers find them</td>
<td>Invisible marketing approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong customer relationship</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-Of-Mouth</td>
<td>Only communication by WOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less competitors</td>
<td>High production costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: SWOT Matrix
A swot exists out of internal and external factors, the strengths and the weaknesses are the internal factors and the opportunities and the threats include the external factors.
In this swot it is clear to see that the strengths can easily turn into weaknesses, this also applies for the opportunities, which can also lead in to being a threat.

4.9. Conclusion
The artisanal niche market certainly has strengths and weaknesses, mentioned in table 3. One of the biggest strength is the creation of curiosity because people are always curious but in this niche market the consumers have to search the brands eagerly. To conclude the niche market itself sets itself apart from all other markets by using invisible marketing. This can get achieved by putting the focus on craftsmanship, the feeling that you are the only consumer and the truth of a garment. The designers of the garments wear their own collections and they don’t design pieces for a specific target by creating this desire, the community wears the garments intensively. The market let the garments speak for themselves and that gets reflected in the communication towards the community, which is very loyal and almost obsessive. The consumers are very dedicated which holds the niche market together. By having financial recessions globally, you might wonder how such a niche market can exist. But the design consistency, no use of seasons, long-term garments and the curiosity of the human being will always exist. The main reason is of course the very loyal and almost obsessive tribe. Because of the invisible communication they start to search the brand instead of the other way around as how the traditional marketing works were the brand targets his right consumer. This results in having a very interested consumer that knows exactly what he is looking for. The tribe of the artisanal niche sees the beauty and the dedication and hard work what the designers put in their garments.
Also the distributional strategy helps the niche market to survive during financial times. The brand teams are small, most ateliers and brand headquarters are located in suburbs, all of this helps to decrease the general costs to maintain such business.
After having analysed the SWOT matrix it can be concluded that there are enough opportunities for this artisanal niche market.
With the worldwide known store Carmacoma within the community and the recently growing niche market all over the world and especially in Amsterdam. This could lead to an interesting angle for the Dutch fashion market.
PART 3 CONSUMER

CHAPTER 5 Tribe of the artisanal niche market

“Carol Christian Poell’s work was breath-taking and fascinating for me at my first visit in Darklands and afterwards I decided to study fashion technology to learn more about making clothes” (Munz, 2013).

5.1. Introduction
This part of the report concentrates on the consumer of the niche market. Better said about the new way to describe a consumer; a tribe. The findings had to be conducted by structured and unstructured interviews with niche experts from all-over the world, by traveling to London, Antwerp, Paris and Berlin. The new form of consumer is getting described in the next section according to the sub question: What are the glue values for the tribe communication?

Figure 22: Being part of a tribe (Boris Bidjan Saberi Tumblr, 2013)
5.2. The postmodern tribe

The postmodern social dynamic – a tribe, has the notion of an ethnic group but on a smaller scale. Much of the tribe development lies in the postmodern perspective (Maffesoli, 1996). Postmodernity is getting described by individualism, which is the follow up of the modern time for liberation, a time where everybody can – and must – take personal action to show the individual existence.

The fragmentation of the society is the reason for postmodern individualism and reproduction of imagery. Social classes built up the modern society whereas postmodern society is fragmented into groups that share emotional links, have subcultures and a vision of life. For example the digitalization made social contact during shopping is unnecessary; products and services do not necessarily need physical social interaction anymore (Cova, 1997).

Postmodernity also means a reverse movement that is a search for belonging to something via online communities but face – to – face contact is not compulsory anymore. The postmodern communities or tribes are not stable; they are small-scale, affective and not fixed by any established parameters from the society. Emotions, lifestyles, moral beliefs, fashion styles or consumption methods are the glue-value of the tribe. Whereas the modern society was very different; built up by social classes. Postmodern society is fragmented and the groups share emotional links, have subcultures and a vision of life.

These tribes even create their own complexes of meanings, symbols. Every person in the postmodern society belongs to several tribes and he can act as a different role in each of them; wearing a specific mask. Therefore the modern and traditional tools cannot classify a consumer anymore (Cova, 1997, pp.297-316). Being part of the different tribes has become the main importance than belonging to a modern class. Therefore are all traditional marketing attempts like consumer segmentation not applicable anymore. Societal configuration is replacing it where every person gets positioned within and between his postmodern tribes.

Strong relationships can be categorized as cults and tribes in a social and structured context; to put people together through a shared social and interpersonal experience (Cova, 1997). The consumer and the brand are not dependent on external criticism (Luedicke and Giesler, 2007, pp.275-295) yet members of the tribe have limited contact with one another outside that created allegiance of the brand.

The members are loyal and the tribe takes time, effort and emotion in the brand. Having said that a tribe is hard to measure because the existence can always change. It is a shifting “gathering of emotionally bonded people” (Cova, 1997).

5.2.1. Capitals of the tribe

In order to introduce the invisible approach to the Dutch fashion market, it was necessary to understand the language of the tribe behaviour abroad since the communication is not known in the Dutch fashion industry.

After visiting the niche locations in Berlin, London, Paris and Antwerp it can be concluded that the size of the community is everywhere the same. The tribe has such specific aesthetic and style that you cannot tell a difference in behaviour or other remarks. It was fascinating to see that the tribe members are very dedicated in all cities and that they are not particularly working in fashion, most of the tribe members are the consumer from day one that buys occasionally a garment.
To conclude the tribe is spread all over in the world and the brands are only situated in the specific locations because the fashion scene in general is there. Interviewee Simon Munz adds, “our customers come from all-over the world to find the specific garment and sometimes we send pieces to the weirdest locations, Mexico, South Africa…then I am thinking, what do you do with these clothes over there”.

Several artisanal brands are located in the fashion capitals that were investigated in this thesis. The situation in the Netherlands is that the market is growing slowly but there are retailers who carry the brands and the invisible approach throughout their concept: As mentioned before the store Carmacoma is an example. There are no designer ateliers or headquarters of the niche market in the Netherlands yet. The amount of retailers in the Dutch fashion market is growing slowly. And as mentioned before within the last seasons the amount of retailers that carry the artisanal niche brands increased from 2 stores up to 9 stores. Another indicator for the growing niche scene in the Netherlands is the increased amount of art collaborations between Dutch participants and the niche market. An example is the collaboration with the artisanal brand INAISCE from New York and the Dutch artist Claudy Jongstra. The Dutch textile artist Claudy Jongstra made three pieces for the current INAISCE collection in 2013 (Unknown author, 2013).

Figure 23: Collaboration INAISCE – Claudy Jongstra, (Vimeo, 2013)
5.3. Tribe profile
The niche tribe has like every other tribe certain characteristics. It doesn’t have a central power to maintain the tribe rules or order. The tribe shares the same passion for the aesthetic of the niche. The community is held together by an emotional bond but is not fixed by any parameters (Cova, 1997). The tribe’s identity lies in shared experiences. The niche tribe is in a flux like all other tribes, by repetitive symbolic rituals of members.

Niche consumers use consumption to make statements about themselves, to create identities and to develop a sense of belonging. Avant-garde goods symbolise how consumers see or imagine themselves; it is a personal-oriented perception. In 1980s and 1990s the consumption of especially luxury goods was primarily by status seeking and appearance. But these niche brands are looking for new approaches to capitalise these new consumers who seek for individuality.

This niche market exists of 2 different groups of adapters: one is the experienced consumer and the other one is the young consumer who just discovered the scene recently. But also an increasing amount of young designers joins the niche market recently, one of the examples is the young designer Damir Doma. Both groups of brands, the younger and older ones, feed each other constantly with knowledge and innovation. The experienced consumers are loyal and they know the market already for several years before brands made the choice to expand and produce a second line. As mentioned before the movement of developing a second line makes the market more accessible to the young consumer.

5.3.1. Meanings & Symbols
Karlo Steel, owner of Atelier New York states, “the garments are in tune with “the current zeitgeist” in certain areas of men’s fashion: global traditional garb has been used a source of inspiration for designers for several years, so it was only a matter of time before the kandora would be embraced” (Burimsky, 2010).

Another tribe member says; “The niche market is successful because it speaks to something deep inside the human consciousness of today, the need for individual expression, and a kind of realistic beauty that in of touch with reality.”

Please find here the shared meanings of the niche tribe:

- Conceptual fusion art and design
- A veil of languid melancholy
- Technical knowledge in tailoring
- Detailing
- Melancholic visual language
- Handcraftsmanship
- Fine quality
- Timelessness
- Innovation
- Non-seasoning
- Passion for materials
- Pure understanding for the garment
- Less accessibility creates myth and curiosity
Figure 24: Innovation in design - highest quality – (Obscurarchive, 2013)

Figure 25: Pure detailing and handcraftsmanship - highest quality – Carol Christian Poell (ANY, 2013)
5.3.2. Behaviour
The tribe behaviour of the artisanal niche has some significant communication channels and tools. They range from online forums, agencies and blogs. One of the main communication channels is the online forum StyleZeitgeist that is only fixed on the language of these artisanal niche brands.

The tribe of the artisanal niche is able to discuss their extreme passion among other passionate but also professionals, who can also give them advice in the questions that they might have, for example the use of detailing in the new collection of one of the artisanal brands. These professionals are for example the owner of the forum StyleZeitgeist Eugene Rabkin, but also retailers of artisanal stores.

The artisanal tribe shares the same extreme behaviour of researching the most possible of a brand. They follow a brand through offline and online tools like, video contents, Instagram, Tumblr, blogs, magazine StyleZeitgeist

After they have done their research they come together and share their knowledge on the forum StyleZeitgeist on a very occasionally base.

Please find listed under the shared behaviour of the niche tribe:

- Purchasing long-term garments
- Collecting and gathering of brand material
- Collecting unique pieces (garments)
- **Being loyal to the brands**
- **Studying the niche into detail**
- Saving for one specific garment
- Traveling to succeed in a purchase
- **Communicating via online forums**
- **Attending niche events and gatherings offline**
- Buying occasionally / 1 piece at the time
- **Daily visits on the online forum StyleZeitgeist**
5.3.3. Clothing style artisanal tribe
The tribe of the artisanal niche market has a specific style and the use of the colour black either this is in the garments or the interior of a store; the use of the colour black is preferable within this tribe, wearing shades of dark tones and are drawn to dark. And are not searching what they relate to such a thing as following a trend interviewee Simon Munz states (2013), “it is all about work from hard-working people for me and I’m not buying things because its a hype, I'm more a collecting person”. The artisanal brands are not depended on the speed of the fashion cycle and follow any trends where they offer the consumer seasonal collections. Therefore the artisanal brands are not dependent and this fashion cycle and therefore offer no seasonal work, which makes the garments timeless. They offer their work with the mentality that you can wear the piece anytime and anywhere. They do show collections, but they always remain to a consistency in their work. For example Rick Owens shows his work on fashion shows, the set is changing every season, the clothes do not. If you once bought a Rick Owens jacket 10 years ago when he began showing in Paris, it could be worn today (Fury, 2013). Also Rick Owens states (2009), ”I'm not really into clothes. I wear one outfit like a uniform, and I have for years. Black sweatpants, black baggy shorts over them, a black or white cotton T-shirt, and a black cashmere T-shirt over that. I couldn't imagine having to change outfits every day or having to change for the gym. This outfit takes me to the gym, to work in the studio, and then to dinner with a mink coat over it”. The artisanal brands make clothes with a minimal chord changes, they mixed textures, silks, leather and all kinds of fabric to add something to the garment, but not to change the look completely. The style of the artisanal niche is therefore seen as a fixed style and only changes in the use of innovation in the craftsmanship of designs. Designers are always looking for something special for example the brand Obscur uses for several collections the same cuts, but the dying process of leather he changes constantly to not give the product a complete different look, but only experiment with the use of craftsmanship.

Please find here the clothing style of the niche tribe:

- Timeless
- High quality
- Preference to the colour black
- No dependence on trends
- Multilayer
- Raw edgy
- Leather use
- Beanies
- Sneakers
- Hand-made Paul Harnden shoes
Figure 27: Artisanal tribe
5.3.4. Needs & Desires

The specific mask and the desire of the niche tribe is the expression of individuality and the esteem for reality. This tribe shares self-expression, self-fulfilment and shared experiences with brands, products and services. The niche tribe also shares the need for uniqueness and self-monitoring. The tribal consumption is based on a brand experience. This experience can get interpreted into many different ways but the main one is the ethno-sociological approach that focuses on the glue value between a person and a tribe. The glue can be an emotional value or an experience, for example the passion for a specific product.

Interviewee Jouw Wijnsma describes, “I believe they get such a loyal clientele is because of the clothes they create. Many do not work seasonal; they create clothes from a passion for handcraft and innovation. At the same time they also present a certain aesthetic that you could almost call dark. They do not work with a lot of color but the attention to detail is fantastic. Also the consistency you mention is part of it, because they build their work on what they have done previously, perfecting it slowly, they take their time. This attention to detail is also a part of their charm. Plus I guess since they work small and therefore do not have a big presence it keeps the mysteriousness as well”.

The members are conscious about the bond between themselves and they share rituals and traditions but in general the tribe member is a loner and a social person at the same time. The tribe members have a shared sense of commitment to the brands. The shared emotion of passion, the consumption behaviour towards the lifestyle and the brands is holding the tribe together.

Figure 28 shows the signs that can be found in the tribe environment. Both axes show the moments when tribal members gather for rituals (occasions) but also when they meet physically (institutions). The invisible axe shows the personal experiences but also trends.

![Figure 28: The Tribal Clover (Cova, 1997)](image)
Figure 29 shows the tribal clover designed according to the artisanal niche tribe. Each of the clusters has four examples that can change unregularly. The examples are snapshots in time.

![Tribal Clover](image)

**Figure 29**: The Tribal Clover edited the artisanal niche (2013)

5.3.5. **Network**

Word-of-mouth is a communication channel for niche consumers in which the user is not dependent on the market. It is therefore seen to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to push marketing. Consumers need to be able to identify the real character of a brand by unique brand-specific content and other tools.

The tribe talks offline and online in forums like **StyleZeitgeist**. In general they communicate about a lot of different topics but there are some key issues, which drive the connection and communication. Creative interactions, presentations, performances and film screenings are part of networking occasions.

5.4. **Conclusion**

The tribe shares certain symbols, values and meanings that glue the community members together. In general the emotional values are the most important glue values. The passion for craftsmanship is almost religious to the tribe members. The clothing style is timeless and qualitative high. As a tribe member you feel very rare and individual wearing the artisanal niche pieces. The personal treatment of the brand results in loyal tribe members. The artisanal tribe values the personal anonymity. They do not search for trends and do not want to belong to the mainstream.

The artisanal brands are almost accessible which makes it mysterious and tribe members get curious. Therefore the invisible approach is very suitable which results in having a very loyal tribe.
The tribe understands the hard work of the designers and value the craftsmanship therefore they care for the emotional value instead of the price. The purchase of a garment is like a serious investment to a tribe member. The garments carry consistency, pure understanding for the garment and for the detailing of each piece. This is also the overall view on the artisanal tribe the understanding for the value of a garment. And take this value into researching into every detail of the artisanal niche.
Chapter 6 Conclusions

6.1. Research questions
The purpose of this final chapter is to answer the main research question that was formulated in the introduction of this research. This question was as followed:

What does invisible marketing mean for the specific niche market in order to connect with its tribe?

In order to be able to answer the main question several sub-questions need to be answered.

6.2. Sub questions
1st On what is this choice of invisible communication based on and what is the forecasting of it?

Choice of invisible communication is based on:

- Postmodern consumer demands; individuality & interaction
- Consumer changes from receiver to messenger
- Creation of emotional value
- Reaction on consumer desires
- Brand awareness, brand identity and brand loyalty
- Human curiosity (draws the attention)
- Non-branding ideology
- Approach of anonymity, individuality
- Customer loyalty

Forecasting of the invisible marketing:

- Communication approach for the future
- Attraction will remain
- Moving towards the mass

Niche in the recession, how do they survive?

- Customer loyalty very HIGH – main reason they survive / GARMENTS ARE investment / emotional value HIGH instead of price value
- Garments are pure truth craftsmanship = REALLY A NEED within the NICHE / NICHE & BRANDS speak the same languages / Tribe has understanding for craftsmanship
- Low accessibility – Tribe is travelling worldwide to get the garments
  - Also means exclusivity
  - Wealthy early adapters (main community part of the niche)
2nd What are the glue values for the tribe communication?

The glue values are:

- Conceptual fusion art and design
- A veil of languid melancholy
- Technical knowledge in tailoring
- StyleZeitgeist
- Detailing
- Melancholic visual language
- Handcraftsmanship
- Fine quality
- Timelessness
- Innovation in design
- Passion for materials
- Pure understanding for the garment

3rd What makes this communication tool so interesting for the niche market?

These aspects make invisible marketing interesting for the artisanal niche market:

- Invisibility approach applies only to niche
- Individuality and involvement
- Creates experience
- No celebrity endorsement
- No mass communication tools like advertisements
- Creates curiosity
- Right targeting

4th What are the possible implementations for the Dutch niche market?

INTEREST
Growing interest for artisanal niche designers is growing
More young artisanal adapters

STOCKIST
Increasing stockists of artisanal brands

COLLABORATIONS
Collaboration opportunities
Fusion of art and artisanal niche market

GAP IN THE MARKET
Tradeshow
Figure 1: Structure of this report

Figure 2: Marketing mix model with the Four P’s

Figure 3: (Anunknown Quantity, 2012)

Figure 4: (Kearney A.T., 1999)

Figure 5: (McClean, 2012)

Figure 6: (SLAMXHYPE, 2012)

Figure 7: (Saberi, B., 2013)
http://borisbidjansaberi.tumblr.com

Figure 8: (Saberi, B., 2013)
http://borisbidjansaberi.tumblr.com

Figure 9: (Anunknown Quantity, 2011)

Figure 10: (Katz, 2013)
http://le-21eme.com/category/designers/atelier-new-york-tenth-anniversary-party/#/page/2

Figure 11: http://www.stylezeitgeist.com

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Figure 14: Anknownquantity.com

Figure 15: http://le-21eme.com/category/designers/atelier-new-york-tenth-anniversary-party/#/page/2

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Figure 22: http://borisbidjansaberi.tumblr.com

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Figure 26: http://ateliernewyork.com

Figure 27: Streetystylerickowens / Anknownquantity.com / obscurarchive.tumblr.com
Figure 28: (Cova, 1997)  62
Figure 29: http://www.slideshare.net/euromed/reduced-brand-tribes  63
Table 1: Marketing mix for the invisible marketing  32
Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of the invisible marketing  34
Table 3: SWOT Matrix  51
LIST OF SOURCES

• BOOKS
• ARTICLES
• WEBPAGES
• WEB VIDEO

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interview Eugene Rabkin
Appendix 2 Interview Jouw Wijnsma
Appendix 3 Interview Simon Tilman Munz
Appendix 4 Interview Carol Christie
Appendix 5 Interview Notes & Remarks
Appendix 1

Interview Eugene Rabkin, NEW YORK, co-founder Stylezeitgeist

The main objective of this thesis is to create an original and innovative new project after I researched the invisible communication in relationship with the specific niche market. I will be introducing this into the Dutch fashion market because it is a new way of communication approach and it fits into the fashion Zeitgeist, which is very interesting for the Dutch fashion market since this particular fashion is growing recently.

Choosing for the specific niche market of cutting edge / narrowly drawn aesthetic / conceptual art / raw & edgy / avant-garde and artisanal designer brands. I noticed that this niche fashion market does not use the traditional way of marketing like advertisement or commercials etc. With the traditional way of marketing I mean a marketing system, which is based on “push” methodology, where literally the products are getting pushed into the customers through advertisement etc.

It is very fascinating how brands like Rick Owens get such obsessive and extremely loyal community worldwide. The communication towards this community is almost closed, incognito and not visible to people “from outside” - which causes curiosity around the brand. However could invisible marketing be the new marketing approach in the future?

Examples to clarify my statement: Rick Owens – “Although he is never seen in any act of socializing, commercial networking or frivolous appearance, he is always somehow at the top of the list.” - Or for example the Boris Bidjan Saberi 11, which never got pushed into any digital channel or media. Or the brand Obscur, not having any brand information on their website.

Another example is Margiela who tried to communicate as secret / invisible as possible in the beginning. His anonymity became louder and increasingly interesting to others. He also quotes “Without a face to worship, we are left with a ‘cult of invisibility’ that adds value to the label via what appears to be a non- branding ideology.”

1. What do you think about traditional marketing like product placement, advertisements etc.?
I think most of it is cultural and visual pollution. Some of it is well done, but at the end of the day it's about selling product.

2. What are your first thoughts when you think about invisible marketing? ("Absence equals presence" quote by Margiela)
Same as above, marketing is marketing, the method is irrelevant. Margiela did not set out to be invisible with marketing in mind. He simply found glamor vulgar.

3. How would you describe the marketing approach of these cutting edge fashion labels like CCP (Carol Christian Poell) or Rick Owens? (Can also be another avant-garde label). What kind of impact does it have on you?
Poell does not have a marketing approach. For Owens it is two-fold: a) marketing is expensive, b) marketing is not cool.

4. People who love this particular style carry out a specific philosophy throughout their
whole lifestyle, almost like a religion; but actually in interviews I got to know that the people live this philosophy on a very personal level. So how would you describe the philosophy of the artisanal / avant-garde designers?

I can only speak for myself. Style is external expression of internal worldview.

5. Do you recognize any similarity when it comes to the marketing of these bespoke brands?

The only similarity between them is they don't have money to buy advertising in magazines.

6. Do you think invisible communication (for example closed websites by brands or agencies) is strong enough in the time of the digitalization and rise of social media? No, it's not. But perhaps they don't want to be the next Gucci.

7. Do you believe that style forums (like StyleZeitgeist) and online communities will have a bigger impact for more personal marketing in the future?

Undoubtedly.

8. How do you see the future for this niche market in terms of their communication towards their tribe?

Like with any underground movement it will grow and be coopted by the big industry forces and watered down for mass consumption.

9. Trend adaption becomes something “normal” in the industry and especially small designers can hardly keep their uniqueness. What do you think about this development?

I think it will be harder and harder to be unique, but not impossible.
Appendix 2

Interview Jouw Wijnsma, AMSTERDAM, tribe member of the artisanal niche

1. What do you think about traditional marketing like product placement, advertisements and celebrity endorsements etc.?

I have no special feeling towards this kind of marketing. Unfortunately it is all around us, we can hardly escape it. It is not a marketing I relate to, it is often pushed in a way that it feels inconvenient. An example is when you open a Youtube movie and you first have to watch an advertising.

2. What are your first thoughts when you think about invisible marketing? ("Absence equals presence" quote by Margiela)

My first thoughts are "word of mouth", so in essence you hear about it through friends or a website etc. A small group of people talk about it, it is more in crowd.

3. How would you describe the marketing approach of these cutting edge fashion labels like CCP (Carol Christian Poell) or Rick Owens? (Can also be another avant-garde label). What kind of impact does it have on you?

A brand like CCP almost does no advertising. Only a small niche group know about the brand because of speciality stores (such as Darklands, l'Eclaireur, Atelier New York). CCP does not lend out clothes for advertising in magazines for example. I like that not everybody is wearing these clothes, it gives individuality. At the same time it frustrates me that not everybody is aware how and where clothes are made. Why it does not make sense that a t-shirt of H&M only cost EUR 5,00. To know more about what you wear and why would be interesting.

4. Do you recognize any similarity when it comes to the marketing of these bespoke brands?

Yes, I have never seen advertising from brands like CCP, LUC, Lumen et Umbra, Devoa, Individual Sentiments, M.a+, Paul Harnden, etc.

5. Do you believe in brands that communicate by the so-called - invisible marketing? (With this I mean no traditional marketing like commercial spots, print ads or direct mailings etc.)

It is a different approach, for each it's own. I rather prefer silent marketing or word of mouth then in your face marketing.

6. How do you see the future for this niche market in terms of their communication towards their tribe?

I think they probably continue with what they are doing, which is creating special and unique clothing that is available only in selected stores around the world. Perhaps they might want to do collaborations with magazines like SomeThings Magazine or on website like StyleZeitgeist. But only small scale.

7. “It is very fascinating how brands like Rick Owens get such obsessive and extremely
loyal community worldwide”. Brand loyalty is created by consistency. Often labels use different strategies to get brand loyalty. How is it possible that these labels get such a strong loyal community?

I believe they get such a loyal clientele is because of the clothes they create. Many don't work seasonal, they create clothes from a passion for handcraft and innovation. At the same time they also present a certain aesthetic that you could almost call dark. They don't work with a lot of colour but the attention to detail is fantastic. Also the consistency you mention is part of it, because the build their work on what they have done previously, perfecting it slowly, they take their time. This attention to detail is also a part of their charm. Plus I guess since they work small and therefore don't have a big presence it keeps the mysteriousness as well.
Appendix 3

Interview Simon Tilmann Munz, BERLIN, Fashion engineering, sales and marketing for Darklands. Berlin

1. What do you think about traditional marketing like product placement, advertisements and celebrity endorsements etc.?

I’ve never been a fan of celebrity endorsements, as well in the shops i used to work we never favored a person because of a celebrity status. However i think it can be a useful tool for labels to get some attention to their brand, if this is necessary.

2. Do you believe in brands that communicate by the so-called invisible marketing?

Traditional marketing in the fashion business only works for famous brands or the mass industry. A start into marketing for small brands is mostly based on lending clothes for fashion editorials or marketing through a social media strategy on blogs or other platforms.

3. What are your first thoughts when you think about invisible marketing? ("Absence equals presence" quote by Margiela)

Invisible marketing or the marketing via social media for example is a way of marketing which can be very useful for small brands. On one side it communicates for any label an "underground" touch and on the other hand it is very useful for brands to get in a direct dialogue with their costumers.

4. Do you think that this way of invisible marketing communication is the future for the fashion industry?

Social media communication in general has an increasing influence on the fashion industry like on any other consumer goods industry. I don't believe it will be in future the only way of marketing though.

5. Could you describe what this avant-garde and artisanal style philosophy mean to you? How would you define it?

Avantgarde is a term which has been used too easily in the fashion industry. Artisanal means a lot to me though and i believe an artisanal production mode can be the basement for the development of many designers work.

6. How did you become part of this particular fashion tribe? What is your style philosophy?

My fascination started many years ago visiting Darklands 1.0 in Berlin. At this moment of time i've been working as a screen printer for art prints, textiles and other materials and surfaces. I've always been a self-educated person who was mostly interested in traditional craftsmanship (church restorer, furnace constructor, boat builder). After my regular labour time i've been playing around with many materials and method of production to learn more about my profession. Carol Christian Poell's work was breath-taking and fascinating for me at my first visit in Darklands and afterwards i decided to study fashion technology to learn more about
making clothes.

7. How would you describe the marketing approach of these cutting-edge fashion designers like CCP or Rick Owens? What impact does it have on you?

To be honest an offense marketing is often frightening me away from something. I'm not a psychologist and I don't believe I'm totally aware of marketing, but I'm always looking for special things besides the mainstream. It's all about work from hard-working people for me and I'm not buying things because it's a hype, I'm more a collecting person.

8. What is your style philosophy?

I seriously don't have one. I'm too moody for something like this….
Appendix 4

Interview Carol Christie, ANTWERP, artisanal fashion engineer

1. What do you think about traditional marketing like product placement, advertisements and celebrity endorsements etc.?  

I think traditional marketing doesn’t work anymore in 2013. Fashion companies need to listen to the needs & desires & intentions of the customers. Even that I think that this extreme interaction destroys partly the creativity of the fashion industry since retail chains and brands start looking only at trend adaption and copy big designers. But back to the traditional marketing: I think that companies empowered the consumer that much, it won’t work anymore to communicate only one-way. Also advertisements have no power anymore, nobody will listen to the TV commercials and other traditional tools anymore because you can make your own picture of it.

2. Do you believe in brands that communicate by the so-called invisible marketing?  

I think that you can communicate with non-branding ideology if you are aim to stay in a small market. I am not sure if this can work for bigger brands because at some point too much attention might destroy the non-branding ideology.

3. What are your first thoughts when you think about invisible marketing? (“Absence equals presence” quote by Margiela)  

I think if can cause miscommunication if the brand doesn’t have a strong concept and doesn’t offer good service. There should be enough factors who make clear what the brand stands for.

4. Do you think that this way of invisible marketing communication is the future for the fashion industry?  

Yes only suitable for small fashion companies since the bigger size might destroy the non-ideology.

5. Could you describe what this avant-garde and artisanal style philosophy mean to you? How would you define it?  

I would like to be approached by brands in a personal way. I like when brands listen to the thoughts of the clients but I swear for good service. If a online retailer offers good service then he won my heart already halfway. I also would like to get approached by a brand via events and directly in the store with a convincing experience.

6. How did you become part of this particular fashion tribe? What is your style philosophy?  

Yes I think a small amount of people with passion & depth & the right motivation understand this. But in the end the brand must maybe know to how do they talk to them or? Maybe secret events are the right way to do that.
7. How would you describe the marketing approach of these cutting-edge fashion designers like CCP or Rick Owens? What impact does it have on you?

I think good service & quality convince people. I mean right now it is trend adaption that most brand carry out but especially dark brands have to stay true to themselves which brings brand loyalty.
I think (especially in fashion) there are also a lot of people who love personal anonymity and they don’t search for trends and they don’t want to belong to the mainstream.
I don’t know (yet) other people who like the same brands like me because I am very much ahead than most others. Two years later they come with the brand names, which I found. But in general I find them in the Internet by reading a lot in online magazines and in online retailers who specify in small new brands.
I think it will remain important and a lot of people are sick of being so present everywhere, so it will become even bigger.
I quote Phoebe Philo, head designer of CELINE: “The chicest thing is when you don't exist on Google."
It is the opposite of what is happening right now – and I can imagine that more people will be her opinion in the future. Until now everybody is overwhelmed by the digital media – but some people want to keep their privacy.
Appendix 5

Interview Notes & Remarks

CITY TRIPS, SKYPE MEETINGS ETC.

Notes Trip Amsterdam

Jouw Wijnsma – Amsterdam – 12-04-2013
Collection research/blogs/instagram
Checking StyleZeitgeist everymorning

Planed travel trip to Rome within 2 weeks / studied the concept stores where 2 go!!!

Why is this tribe so loyal? PURE HAND-MADE people are willing to spend money on this!
What is important to you?
- Handcraftsmanship
- Quality
- Timeless
- Innovative
- No seasonal
- Aesthetic aspect
- Materials
- Doesn’t work in fashion / loyal customer

Marcelo – Amsterdam – 23-04-2013
Shared information, not everything can be shared

- Interesting topic GROWING MARKET
- The brands are hard to get
- Customer invest – experience
- Learn about it
- Designers are the leaders / MAURIZIO ALTIERI 12/10 years ago
- 2 types of clients REAL / POTENTIEL (YOUNG CONSUMERS)

“There lives a client across the store, he only purchases CCP garments. We only have had 3 collections so far, within every collection 3 coats. He bought every one of them”.

- Process in loyalty / desire is strong
- Different pillars to grow
- (second line)
- Without second line no exciting / made the story accessible

- NOT MASS THINKING
- Paul harden WILL NEVER DO SECOND LINE
- Only about clothing

Rick Owens expanded busy with expanding (defusing) to reach the clients
- Young consumer from head to toe
- Older make their own choice they will mix
- Critical consumer you dont take the whole look

Dangerous part
- Mainstreeem direction
- Not special

- Example
  Biker jacket

- Margiela
  Lost his experience
- Expanded -> MASS

- Rick owens contrals

- CCP
- PAUL HARDEN
- IMPORTANT IN THIS SCENE

- Rick Owens
  Influenced by his own dark fashion
  BBS

- Look up NO seasonal

How would you see the future of invisible marketing?
Attraction would remain
Different levels to experience

Some / things
Communicates what they do, otherwise only clothing
Otherwise you only understand 1 way of fashion
Bind them toghether, to make it more understandable

Fashion forums – Blogging is not this WORLD, invisible
its it a handicap they create it (invisible marketing)
it is their attraction

Stores ARE HIGHLY IMPORTANT  my world is your world
VIRUS
Mutional understading make sus a part of it (network)
Sensation the rest doesnt understand it (special)

CONCLUSION:
Because of expanding / its gets more accessible -> very loyal old consumers don't take the brand serious anymore (second line)
Notes Trip Berlin 26-03-2013

- Group discussions
- Observational research
- Unstructured interviews
- Profiles (tribe) Facebook profiles?

Obscur – Berlin
Changed location -> no showroom

DARKLANDS
No marketing (brand) ideology. People who really want it, they will look for it themselves.
Selective community

- Profiles (facebook, behaviour of these kind of people)
- Berlin (how do the people in Berlin look at this kind of communication? how does it work in Berlin?)
- Brands Darklands, they don’t need to make huge profit, sales. They only want to make clothes. They can afford to communicate like this.

Exclusivity -> Darkfashion -> People look it up themselves (online must for this tribe) ->
Community who wants to be invisible (you don’t see them).

- Simon notes (tribe member)

Notes Trip Paris

Luca Modesti – Rick Owens – Paris – 5-03-2013

Info that can not be shared
CULT / DEATH
Social media this generation
- Don’t wanna be big, just wanna do their thing
- No celeberite, no adoresment

HOW DO YOU REACH THEM?
Instagram
Tumblr

RELEVANCE..
WHY ARE SO MANY BRANDS DOING THIS – Time of now
COMMUNICATION INVISIBLE -> LONG LASTING
LOYAL TRIBE

Void Paris

- Recently op this month
- Paris we don’t talk about competition – not accessible
- Buy collection out of on interest
- Loyalty, not even open and collection almost sold out! (hard to get)
SOME/THINGS agency / STYLEZEITGEIST

Notes Trip London

Aberdeen James – London
“When I was young I purchased what everybody else was wearing, the bigger the logo the better, you belonged to a group, I guess you wanted to be a part of something. People always want to be apart of something tough, but with wearing CCP I know that I am a part of something, but being an individual. I guess these brands give you this feeling”

- Young consumer
- Fascinated by the craftsmanship & detailing
- Stylzeigieist member
- Works in fashion

Spotted tribe in COS??
- Experienced consumer
- All dressed Boris Bidjan Saberi
- Expensive, but so much worth
- Hand-made

Notes Trip Antwerp

Spotted tribe?
- Prefer wearing only black
- Rick Owens admire
- Travel

Store manager – Rick Owens
- Stylezeitgeist member
- Scene is small / everyone knows each other / gatherings / events etc.
- TIP -> HOSTEM other specific store in London -> CCP BBS etc.

Joe – Hostem – Store manager
- Loyal customers
- Worked for Rick Owens
- Bought already 6 pairs of the same Rick Owens shoes
- They give you a magical feeling, pure hand-made

Vertic London

NICOMEDE TALAVERA young designer

- People with money or people who really save for a purchase
- Most of the time not in fashion