Independent Brands

And The

German Market
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Signature

___________________________________
The first time my interest in ethical and sustainable fashion was triggered when I attended the Beyond Green Event in the first year at the Amsterdam Fashion institute. It was the first time I heard people from independent brands talking about sustainability and ethics within fashion. I still remember the talk of P. Wesselink who just started her leather bag brand named O My Bag, which was actually the first independent brand I heard about. Since then I also have the idea in my head to start something meaningful and useful on my own at some point. Further on there was the group project on designing a fully sustainable fashion brand, which got me even more curious to see what processes hide behind a garment. During these projects and the thereby conducted research I got in touch with all the alarming facts of the environmental damage the fashion industry is causing our planet and the people. Working at a start-up whole foods store and at the independent fashion brand Kiss and Tell only strengthened my beliefs, got me first hand insight and a more profound perspective.

My personal observations and recurrent conversations have shown that forward thinking consumers demand more individualism, ethics and sustainability. Just the thought of mass production and consumption scares me and I do not want it to dominate the fashion industry anymore.

Therefore I started to immerse myself further in the topic of slow fashion. I participated in a course during my exchange semester, attended seminars and read books about the subject. I eventually came across the book called Indie Brands by Anneloes van Gaalen, which was recommended by my superior and got me thinking that this movement was something I could research about.

Eventually I choose for the topic of independent brand out of passion for the underdogs within this crowded industry. For the ones who believe that change is possible. I like telling stories myself and that is why I am fascinated with independent brands. I like it especially when someone asks about something I own, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about the origin or material of the product. This automatically makes me value it more.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would especially like to thank my graduation coach Marco Mossinkoff, who has supported me with guidance during this semester and has helped me through the process of this final thesis.

Above all, I would like to dedicate a special thanks to my parents. Without their longstanding and endless support, their motivation and profound belief in my skills I would not have been able to finalise this four-year study program in Amsterdam.
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

During the last decade there has been a rise of independent fashion brands in the Netherlands and in other western countries all over the world. These so called independent brands are independently funded, innovative, have a story worth sharing and are most of the time ethical and sustainable. The brands support the slow fashion movement and yearn for a more sustainable way of thinking about the planet and about ethical production of fashion.

Mostly do these independent brands sell to fashion retailers and do not have their own stores since most of them are start-ups. It is important for these brands to grow and become known by exploring new markets, which in this case could be the German fashion market. In order for the independent brands to find suitable retailers a proper market research in Germany is necessary to find the most suitable market entry approach.

Hence consumers have been progressively demanding more individualistic and environmentally friendly merchandise. A lot of consumers have realized that the fashion industry is one of the biggest environmental polluter worldwide and therefor a change is necessary (Stewart, 2012). Consequently there is a need for these independent brands to grow and expand and spread their compelling stories.

This research is thus relevant for independent from all over the world, which plan on entering the German market. The findings of this study will demonstrate what kind of approaches independent brands need to focus on when thinking about growth.

### 1.2 Research Question

#### 1.2.1 Main Question

What is a possible market entry approach, for an independent fashion brand, to enter the German market successfully?
1.3 A i m

The goal of this study is to investigate primarily the nature of independent brands and their marketing approaches and then of course the market they would want to enter – in this case the German one. It is essential to understand and get to the core what an independent brand is about and for them to find the right approaches on a new market.

This researched data and results are supposed to help independent brands to understand the German market, contribute significant insights and help them to enter it. Therefore possible entry strategies will be presented in the last chapter, while keeping both market and marketing goals in mind.

Next to giving an answer to the main research question, another outcome of this study is a final product, which gives practical relevance to the findings and will put this research thesis into perspective. The product constitutes of an article for the Danish online magazine namely LESS Magazine.

1.4 M e t h o d o l o g y

For the research approach of this study both primary and secondary research methods were used whereas at first the secondary research was employed and still continued while collecting also primary data.

Secondary research was used to establish a theoretical framework on the topic and get an understanding of Indie Brands and the German market. Therefore I chose a mix of the traditional and digital research method. This is because there has been mostly intensive research on the topic of Indie Brands. The few literature pieces on independent brands where first of all reviewed and evaluated and secondly in addition the digital research was taken into account. On the German Market there was found more extensive research. So overall most of the sources, which represent the relevance of the topic have been found online, including studies, research papers and articles. Additionally I purchased books and took them into account to strengthen the results from the intensive research.

Primary research was conducted for the purpose of adding first hand-data and more depth to the secondary research. The focal point on gathering qualitative data was selected as it features more relevance to the overall research topic. The approaches used for the primary research were interviews with people from the field and three case studies on relevant Indie Brands. I conducted two interviews with concept storeowners from Germany, namely the owner of Fraulein Bredow and Kiss the Inuit who both were able to present an insight
into the slow retail movement. Furthermore two interviews were carried out with the founders of the independent brands O My Bag and Studio Jux, who have successfully entered the German market and therefore have first-hand information on the process of market entry into Germany. To strengthen the interviews case studies of three Indie Brands (O My Bag, Studio Jux, Ace&Tate) have been set up. These cases were chosen based on their exemplary approach to enter the German market considering both marketing and sales. More detailed results of the interviews and information on the case studies can be found in the appendix starting at page? Additionally I took observations from my two-month part-time internship at the Dutch independent brand Kiss and Tell into account within this research process.

1.5 Structure

The structure of the research is determined by following sub-questions, which help to answer the main research question.

1.5.1 Sub-Questions

Chapter 2:
What is this new concept of independent brands, why is it relevant and on the rise?

Chapter 3:
Is there room on the German market for independent brands to enter?

Chapter 4:
What is a suitable communication strategy for independent brands to support to gain ground on a new market?

The overall structure of this research thesis follows the funnel model, which starts with the broader background knowledge and frameworks of the issues working towards the more specific ones. These are included in the three chapters who give answer to the sub-questions. Further on the overall conclusion in the end answers to the main research question.
1.6 Limitations

Although this research document was intended with the aim to be written in an objective way, my personal engagement and passion for sustainability and fair trade could have influenced the writing and the performed research. Furthermore yet not intended, the chosen brands for the case studies, my personal liking or opinion for the brands could have affected their presentation. Lastly I realized that I chose only Dutch independent brands, but this was due to the fact that I am living there and it was easier to get in touch with them. The same goes for the interviews held with the concept storeowners who are from cities in western Germany due to the closeness to my hometown I was able to visit them in person. So consequently all of these mentioned factors can act as limitations.
2. RISE OF INDIE BRANDS

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter will address the first sub-question of this thesis, namely ‘what is this new concept of independent brands, why is it relevant and on the rise?’ To answer these questions, the intentions of the format, its personality and most important the relevance for the fashion industry will be exemplified. In order to understand the difference of independent brands towards conventional brands a profound comparison of the two is set up. Lastly a projection is made on how the movement will continue in the future.

2.2 Description

This is a very different business world.
&
Indie is the new big.
&
The rise of the Indie Brand is coming.

- A. Lowry (2012)

2.2.1 Format

Indie Brands® is a format owned by Anneloes van Gaalen since 2011, a registered trademark where Indie stands for independent. Inspiring brands from all over the world that are independently funded, innovative, and have a story worth sharing can be named Indie Brands® according to the book. It presents thirty independent brands from all over the world and from different product and service sectors. The format believes in buying less, while buying better. With the assistance of her book, panel discussions and talks the author helps to raise awareness and promotes the outlook of these kinds of brands and the cause behind them within the Netherlands but certainly wants the movement to spread further. According to van Gaalen independent brands are born on the principles and values of working transparent and being credible, but most importantly stand out by consisting of a unique story and product. Nearly all of them focus on niche markets and emphasize their work ethics on sustainable and fair production because they see the future in it and do not want to substitute any longer to mass production (van Gaalen, 2011). In Addition describes professor B. Wolf the movement as a ‘philosophy that rethinks the values of our every-day actions, and proposes a new strategy for clothing consumption’. Of course independent
brands as described have always been there but not in the same dimension as the last couple of years. Nowadays the movement has been described in detail and has become more meaningful and powerful to really make a change.

2.2.2 Personality

‘in·de·pend·ence’ is ‘freedom from control, influence, support or the aid of others’


What differentiates independent brands from other conventional mainstream brands is their creative, personal and independent spirit. Independent Brands prosper because they want to take action in making the world a better place. Existing independent brands observed the increasing passive relationships between consumers, the product and its producers and saw the need to change this. Many of the newcomer entrepreneurs left a profitable career in order to take this risk to fulfill their dreams and ideas into something that is tangible and valuable. Even if they are small, autonomous start-up companies they want to distribute a change and hope that consumers continue along and make the movement more popular. The brands use another approach on marketing and focus primarily on telling their unique stories. To the owners of the brands it is most essential that they develop everything on their own conditions and terms. Therefore they try to keep away from investors to truly stay independent. These independent brand developers focus on an outstanding brand design, brilliant marketing and an innovative approach, while developing something absolutely new or by reinventing a common product in a totally new way (van Gaalen, 2011).

‘Whatever happens, you need to preserve your independence and freedom against all odds and at all costs’

- Etienne de Swardt, creative mind behind the French perfume brand Etat Liber d’Orange (2013)
2.3 Relevance

Modern society demands urgently to modify their performing structures and systems every now and then in order to prevent breaking down. This necessity originated since humaneness consolidated the consumption of raw materials as if there was enough for a very long time. A study found out that if consumerism goes on like this, a ‘quantity equivalent of four planet Earths would be needed to fulfill the current consumer behavior’. From this point of view it is unimaginable that ‘industrial production and resource consumption’ go on at such rate (M. P. Saba & B. Wolf, 2014).

From a trend towards a movement – slow fashion is on the rise as well and out of it result the independent brands. While some experts from the industry still say that slow fashion is a trend many more identify it as a movement and as a consequence of the shortage of resources it is projected to stay forever. Slow fashion incorporates that the products are made sustainable and fair with the purpose of being used for a long time. It has become ‘more than just a concept of conversation, it is a business model’ which is in general about creating efficiency (J. Chung, 2012). These kinds of brands follow new approaches to generate profit; therefor it’s a new business model, which is about creating a product that is meaningful and authentic. A lot of consumers are no longer attentive to what everyone has but want to possess unique, consciously crafted products. The average consumer of today consumes 400% more clothing than what he consumed only 20 years ago (A. Adamczyk, 2014). It is the time of the appreciation for high quality goods and to go back to thinking that less is more.

‘It’s an entry point to changing the entire industry – and, perhaps a bit too idealistically, the world.’

- J. Chung (2015), journalist and reporter at neontommy.com

The reports of the company Intuit, where Doumpas projections are based on, deal with the U.S. market. These projections are applicable and relevant to the observations of van Gaalen since they confirm her format on the rise of independent brands. Intuit sees the rise of small businesses as something natural because educated consumers are done with mass production and consumption that is happening within the fashion industry. People want to get back to basics and desire to know where products they consume come from. They want it to be created with a long lasting purpose and do not want to throw it away shortly after use because it is not trendy or durable anymore.
This movement of the new artisan economy can be explained based on a historic background and on reoccurring market cycles. The American Ralph Nelson Elliot already stated in 1946 that ‘man is subject to rhythmical procedure’. This means once people are fed up with something that has been going on for a while, in this case mass consumption as the result of globalization, they want to shift it around again and go back to the roots, which in this case is the specialized artisan economy (A. Prasad Dash, 2009). Vivian Doumpa forecasts that the independent brands movement described by van Gaalen points into a direction ‘in the field of the new artisan economy’, which is a upcoming, growing urban development in the first instance noticeable within western countries.

Consumers care and yearn more and more for customized products coming from unique and personal brands, which are founded on ethical values. Most of the independent brands specialize on a niche market in order to stand out from the masses by assuring knowledge and craftsmanship within their individually chosen expertise. By entering the world of entrepreneurship these new artisans want to resist automation and external competition. Their urge to build up an independent brand mostly comes from a firm vision of shaping the future based on their own values (Institute for the Future of Intuit, 2008).

2.4 Innovative Rebellion

Independent brands are using innovation as a move of rebellion. In this case innovation means more deviation by thinking different than the masses, setting oneself apart and not conforming to standards. Innovation is usually associated with the most up-to-date technology but in this connection innovation can also be accomplished by generating new patterns of thought, systems and services within all kinds of domains. Consequently this will then have considerable effects on the consumer culture in its entirety. The founders of independent brands find that the existing approaches within the fashion industry are not enough anymore for the big and complex challenges they see coming. When thinking about design it is essential to create value for the consumers so they are able to cherish the products and give them a lasting space within their homes (P. Gangan, 2013).

2.5 Comparison

Within this table it is laid out how independent brands differ from mainstream brands. Examples of independent brands are Ace&Tate, Kiss And Tell, O My Bag and Studio Jux, which will be compared to conventional high street brands like Topshop, Zara, Only, All Saints and Cheap Monday. The most obvious starting point is the fashion approach revolving around slow fashion, which is based on conscious consumption and quality over quantity for independent brands. More conventional brands are in for most current fashion
trend coming right from the high street catwalks. Designs get copied and need to get produced quickly for low costs, which in the end results in a high number of collections and fast delivery terms. These brands originate from an economic standpoint wanting to build a successful business in the hunt for money and greater market expansion, not thinking about their surroundings and their impact on the people and environment. Whereas many of the independent brands started their business out of pure passion and wanting to take the problems and matters into their own hands. They observe what is going wrong on the planet, the intention to change it for the better while considering innovative approaches and thinking out of the box. They are able to do this because of their small sizes and can maneuver more deftly in a rapidly changing consumer landscape. Brands like Zara also try to be innovative but for them it is harder because they are abundant and rather focus on keeping up being consistent with their established brand image (Table 1).

Concerning the marketing strategies the focus lies on spreading the story of independent brands through accessible social media channels and word of mouth propaganda relying on their customer base, while keeping a genuine approach talking about their sustainable impact on the people and the planet. Having said that a lot of conventional brands use this upcoming eco-trend by introducing collections partially made out of organic cotton and ‘green-washing’ their pollution burdened image. Their use of traditional advertising channels is not as powerful anymore so they are shifting to storytelling and a more ‘personal approach’ as well. In addition they usually only publish information when they think it is profitable for driving sales and their brand image (Table 1).

In terms of the customer relation base, independent brands are ahead of the big players and are much closer to them due to their small size. Consumers are able to personally relate to the Indie Brands and value the often higher-priced products much more and put thought into the purchase. Whereas within fast fashion the companies cultivate a superficial relation and the customers’ acquisition is most of the time an impulse-purchase as a consequence of the low price. This is because the consumers are very price focused and since they can get these fashionable styles at various stores, it is only a matter of price comparison. In the stores there is usually a broad product range available, given that the companies are always in search of expansion. Independent brands on the other hand specialize in niche markets and their products compete on quality, individuality and innovation and not mainly on the price and a trendy style. Another topic where both formats drift apart is within financial issues and the risk management. Conventional brands belong to powerful conglomerates, where investors and shareholders are involved – on the safe side so to say. Independent brands are most of the time build up on their founders’ own capital with high personal involvement while getting support from crowd-funding campaigns and some compete in challenges to win start-up awards (Table 1).
‘Independent Brands are blazing the trails and creating the models that many major brands are starting to emulate.’

- J. Gurfinkel (2010), owner of Bright Inc. – an innovation agency

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<th>Conventional Brands</th>
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<td>Fast fashion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Honesty, transparency, unique product</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction, turnover, growth</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Origin /reason for existence</strong></td>
<td>Pure passion</td>
<td>Economic standpoint</td>
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<td><strong>Innovative approach</strong></td>
<td>Change for a better world, able to maneuver more deftly in a rapidly changing consumer landscape</td>
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<td>Image boosting information</td>
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<td>Use of storytelling on social media channels, work of mouth promotion</td>
<td>Use traditional advertising channels</td>
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<td>Honest approach</td>
<td>Most of the time ‘greenwashing’</td>
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<td><strong>Customer connection</strong></td>
<td>Able to relate, more personal</td>
<td>Superficial</td>
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<td><strong>Sales</strong></td>
<td>Thoughtful process, it is seen as an investment in the long-run</td>
<td>Often an impulsion purchase as a consequence of the low prices</td>
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<td><strong>Dealing w/ failure</strong></td>
<td>Able to admit imperfections</td>
<td>Try to hide them to sustain the image</td>
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<td><strong>Risk Management</strong></td>
<td>Own capital, high personal involvement, ability to even take risks</td>
<td>Large conglomerates, have experts to manage risks</td>
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<td><strong>Financial issues</strong></td>
<td>Get support through crowd-funding</td>
<td>Have big investors and shareholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product range</strong></td>
<td>Focus on niche markets, specialization, products compete on quality, individuality and innovation</td>
<td>Broad product range, it competes on price and a trendy style</td>
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Table 1: Comparison of Indie Brands and Conventional Brands (J. Gurfinkel, 2008)
‘Sure enough, it is this sort of honesty, imperfection and struggle that separates the independent brands from the mainstream’

- observed P. Gangan (2014), a journalist and independent brand blogger

In general one can observe that conventional brands are more and more shifting and trying to be and act more like independent brands, which indicates that they are on a legitimate and trend-setting track. Especially visible e.g. within the marketing approaches, where independent brands made it their mission to spread their one of a kind and truly captivating stories. Conventional brands started to hop on to the movement but need more time to adapt because of their extensive sizes. All of the above-mentioned comparisons reveal that independent brands come a hard and long way but if done properly they can truly make change for the better within this polluting industry.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on the conducted research on independent brands, taking the various expert opinions and my own observations into account, I can say that there is a need for more independent brands to develop, evolve and spread across the globe in order to end passive consumption among consumers. Independent brands want consumers to consume more carefully and attract them with purpose driven products.

Founders of independent brands all around the world seek and value most the opportunity that they are able to develop their own concept on their own conditions and terms. And this independent spirit of the creative is what mainly separates them from large conglomerates and lets them shine through in this crowded industry. Indie Brands have the advantage over conventional brands that they actually have all the freedom over their brands, are open for quick changes and do not have to account for their decisions simply in front of their customers.

Most independent brand entrepreneurs concentrate on more hands-on projects and ideas in niche markets. Doumpa agrees with van Gaalen that this entrepreneurial philosophy needs to expand and be taken seriously. All in all both experts are positive that consumers will continue along the way and this movement will grow (Pop Up City, 2012).
Main characteristics:

Independent brands…

- are an upcoming, growing urban development
- are noticeable within western countries
- can be seen as a new business model within the field of the new artisan economy
- are about purposefully creating efficiency and creating value at the same time
- represent transparency and honesty and see this as their core
- make use of storytelling as their main marketing communication tool
3. GERMAN MARKET

3.1 Introduction

The second chapter expands on a broad analysis of the German Market - measuring its sales and promotion opportunities. Ultimately it will answer to the sub-question whether there is room on the German market for independent brands to enter. To answer this question various sectors and bases will be examined and described. It starts with the relevance on why especially independent brands should focus on the German market. Then the current situation is displayed, containing the mentality of the fashion retail market in general and its upcoming slow retail movement. Proceeding the consumer group named Lohas will be clarified. This is followed by a profound metropolis description in order to proof whether there is potential and a basis for independent brands to sell their collections to. Then the information from the interviews conducted with the concept storeowners go hand in hand with the presentation about relevant trade shows for independent brands to exhibit their concept. A comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of independent brands presenting at fairs is set up. Lastly are the findings supported by the multiple case studies compromising the brands namely O My Bag, Ace&Tate and Studio Jux, which all comply with the characteristics of independent brands mentioned in the previous conclusion. Lastly an OT (opportunity and threat) analysis is set up to show the result of the research and conclude to the sub-question.

‘Those looking to captivate a market, first need to understand it.’

- Textilwirtschaft (2014), Brochure: Fashion for Germany

3.2 Relevance

‘Germany is one of Europe’s biggest fashion market by retail sales volumes’ and provides various appealing capacities for international brands and labels. It is in fact the largest national economy in Europe and the 5th largest in the world according to a report of the CBRE published by the German Fashion Retail Association (2014). Due to its size, location and flourishing economic situation it seems like a logical consequence for foreign independent brands wanting to enter this market. For those, who intend to enter the German market it is important to focus on a congested urban area. This is because Germany is considerably large in comparison to other European countries and independent brands most of the time do not have the ability to manage that many new sales points at once. Germany can be mainly divided in the metropolitan areas in the north, east, south and west.
German fashion brands and the retail market in general was ‘one of the first who adopted green fashion’ and brought back the slow retail movement, while placing importance on sustainability and fair trade. The designer van der Grinten finds that ‘Germany is quite progressive in term of concept stores and knowledge on the consumer side’ about the slow fashion and retail movement. Since 2007 collectively 116 new retail concepts were registered within German metropolises and their alternative shopping streets. 78% of these independent fashion brands are foreign companies (J. Finger, 2009). Meanwhile did the ‘The German Fashion Magazine Textilwirtschaft find out that retailers are constantly looking for upcoming national as well as international brands, which have an one of a kind assortment and rather focus on a niche within fashion. The increasing awareness of social responsibility, sustainability and the desire for value and quality is observably among the German consumers. This consumer group is called the Lohas (explained further on), who are the forerunner of this shifting value movement. At the end of the day these independent brands will create meaningful and major customer adhesiveness while potentially infecting the mainstream consumers along the way (Report Textilwirtschaft, 2014).

Within this research document the main focus lies on the offline sales of independent brands on the German market. The online sales market can be relevant for some independent brands but generally speaking it is essential how they market themselves within the offline sales market. This is due to the reason that independent brands want to connect with their customers in a physical retail environment like a concept store or a more personal boutique. It is about creating meaningful experiences where the customer can try on the garments directly in the store and is able to build up a relationship with the brand. Overall want independent brands that the consumers engage in an active contact, which is also one of the reasons that they make intensive use of storytelling as previously explained and further elaborated in the following chapter.

3.3 General Mentality

Adriano Sack, the style editor at German Sunday newspaper Welt am Sonntag said that Germany is a ‘wealthy country but quite conservative and traditional when it comes to fashion’ and observes that ‘more subtle fashion labels’ work well. This could be due to the Germans’ general hesitation to flaunt and sticking to the ‘rules’. Well-known British editor Suzy Menkes finds that ‘there is something rather solid’ about the German fashion market, in which she sees as a great chance ‘because the ‘taste for spectacle is fading’ within the fashion industry. Nevertheless do experts observe that there is great potential within the German metropolises especially within the trending and upcoming neighborhoods namely in the cities like Hamburg, Berlin, Dusseldorf and Cologne. Consumers within these congested areas are in general more approachable and yearn for innovative and socially
conscious brands (K. Abnett, 2014). According to the GfK (German Market Research Company) ethics gain more and more importance within the consumption of German consumers. In a study 52% of the respondents indicated that they want to consume more consciously, which is 8% more than just three years prior to this (S. Knaeble, 2014). Therefore given the characteristics of independent brands, mentioned in the first chapter, it makes sense for them to enter the market within those cities. All in all the German consumers are open for new developments especially regarding slow fashion and so is the retail market in the larger and medium sized cities. (K. Abnett, 2014).

‘There is a transition coming - It is going to be cool again to buy clothing, which have a long lifecycle.’

- projects the German designer Michael Michalsky in an interview with the WWF (2013)

### 3.4 Slow Retail Movement

‘Engaging retail trade instead of mass processing in the shopping malls’

- U. Frers (2013), comment on a blog post

Slow retail stands for the stores, who daily live the unique passion for commerce and alternative retail concepts. Alexander von Keyserlingk, who is from Germany, identified the trend of slow retail and started a blog in 2007. Even though the specialist named this ‘a trend’ I would like to call it a movement as well, due to the fact that a trend is usually something that fades away after some time, and in this case it is will hopefully turn out, over the next decades, that this movement is going to stay. The goal is to slow down the commerce and built up a retail environment with soul and added value again. It is a channel offside the mass consumption of uniform shopping malls to the point of a conscious shopping experience and standing for the return of quality and core competences in these kind of specialty shops. Within this periodic concept of commerce, the basis for consumer loyalty, are high quality products with which the consumer is satisfied months after the purchase. Associated with high quality is a comprehensive product advice and sufficient transparency in order to legitimate the higher price. Von Keyserlingk finds it mistaken that shops in general feel that the consumer has the obligation to ask for the product information but that it is definitely the function of the shop owner to promote the products features and story (A. Keyserlingk, 2007).
Independent brands are made for the notion of boutiques and concept stores because in general the owners live their own creativity within the assortment and the presentation of the store as well. ‘For all products, which are emotionally charged and stand for lifestyle – the slow retail movement is ideal,’ states von Keyserlingk. It is essential to the storeowners to cultivate quality in the personal dialogs with the consumer and inform them about the products and their story (S. Zeis, 2009). Shortly said: they give their store a distinctive spirit.

In Germany, especially within the metropolitan cities, there is an active and increasing slow retail community, which wants to preserve a multifaceted retail culture. The mentality group is prospering: they are the so-called Lohas, the supporters of a lifestyle, which is embossed with enjoyment of health and sustainability. They boost the demand for high-value, ecological maintainable and ethical goods. At the same time they are well funded, have an affinity for the web and are willing to spend the extra amount of money (S. Zeis, 2009).

### 3.5 Lohas

#### 3.5.1 Characteristics

‘The development of the global market lies by now in the hands of the consumer.’

- J. Heim (2011), University Report

The market research institute NMI (Natural Market Institute) established the term Lohas, which stands for Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability, in order to describe and communicate this ‘cultural group into a real and new consumer group’ (Janina Heim, 2011). Other descriptions used for this new consumer group are for example – ‘pioneers of the value shift’, ‘value driven consumers’ or consumers who live the ‘conscious capitalism’ (Aburdene, 2007). NMI has now more than five years of ‘quantified and annually trended information’ on the movement of ethical consumerism. The main attributes and long-term orientations, which shape and affect the Lohas are notably their ideological and critical.

The Lohas are a group of active and critical consumers, mainly from developed industrial and service countries, who live this modern and mostly urban lifestyle. Like with many trends/movements, young people, from the Generation Y, the innovators and early adopters seem to lead the path to ethical behavior in fashion, because they have seen the rise of fast fashion and want to approach the problem. Education and income play an important part when thinking about this consumer group but this must not always be the presupposition (S. French, 2010). The deliberate mindset is decisive, since consumers can
nowadays also contribute with small purchase decisions for eco and fair traded products. Change lies in everyone's own hands and by believing that, the Lohas are actually able to guide and modify e.g. ways of production 'by favoring products but also by boycotting others'. Consequently the idea of slow shopping has been presented on various blogs as an upcoming movement as well. It demonstrates the new alternative consumer concept of consumption and stands for slowing it down and starting to appreciate the product on another level (Aburdene, 2007).

3.3.2 Proof

According to the ‘Lexicon of Sustainability’, around 12.5 million (around 15%) of the German population follow this alternative lifestyle described with the Lohas phenomenon. Furthermore a study conducted by the German ‘Association for Consumption Research’ (Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung) the clothing sector is the fourth most important one with 26% when it comes to environmental standards for the consumption behavior of the German population. The willingness to pay 10% more of the product price, which have a fair and sustainable background, lies around 74%. All in all does this group of consumers play an indispensable part within consumption patterns and have a high and constantly rising market potential in Germany (Kelkheim). In general do these consumers support and spend more money on independent brands, because they want to own something different and outstanding than the average consumer, while pleasing their conscience and follow the trend/movement in the first instance. Based on observations from the German Magazine Textilwirtschaft the German Fashion Market counts on longevity instead of seasonal trends and in the fast pace of life today the German consumer perch on tranquility and consistency (Textilwirtschaft, 2014). The perspective on the movement is astonishing and it projects to spread and expand further into the consciousness of the consumers. So consequently more and more businesses, also from other industries will rethink their strategies and ways of sourcing and production.

‘The Lohas model represents the new mode of activism for the 21st century - here's to sustainability and future generations.’

– S. French (2010), Natural Market Institute
3.4 German Metropolises

The following information is adapted from my own experiences and observations when visiting the cities and from conversations with friends who live in the mentioned cities next to web-based material. Each of the four presented urban centres have old-fashioned shopping streets with unique shops and are not based on malls. Based on research and observations I chose the four cities Hamburg, Berlin, Cologne and Dusseldorf due to their size and reputation of being fashion forward cities. Within these cities experts, bloggers and the interviewed storeowners observe the trends happening, which is in this case the trend of a movement towards slow fashion and slow retail. The absence of the congested southern metropolis Munich can be explained based on previous research where I found out that it is not that suitable and relevant for independent brands to focus on.

3.4.1 Hamburg

There are many trending neighbourhood quarters in Hamburg, where creatives and entrepreneurs have built up surprisingly innovative stores. Two of the neighbourhood quarters are Karolinenviertel/Stemenschanzenviertel and Eppendorferviertel. Young fashion designers have built up their own shops next to various new fashion boutiques and design- and green fashion concept stores. All three neighbourhoods are lively, trendy and individualistic and offer products, which are beyond mainstream. Something that sticks out is the focus on a more Scandinavian style and selection of brands, which seems likely due to its proximity. Of course most of the product are pricier than from the high street but Hamburg consumers and the numerous tourists are willing to spend their money on one of a kind pieces (K. Charpian, 2015).

The Karolinenviertel and the Stemenschanzenviertel are welcoming and colourful quarters within the Hamburg district St. Pauli. The Marktstraße, Susannenstraße and the surrounding streets gather unique boutiques, which are run by its owners and are completely free of chain stores. The Hamburg based designers and storeowners produce and purchase deliberately according to the slow fashion movement (A. Fingas, 2014). The most attractive and relevant concept stores and boutiques for this area are the Glore, Mono, Yeahboy, Purple Pink and Kauf Dich Glücklich Boutique.

This ancient district named Eppendorferviertel in Hamburg ironically congregates modern and avant-garde stores within the Eppedorfer Weg and the Osterstraße. It lies offside the crowded city centre and is described as an upscale nouveau quarter. It is a very trendy and youthful neighbourhood, which offer great stores from the middle end price segment (M. Hochstadt, 2015). Within this district interesting addresses are the Love It Green Concept Store, Mili Store, Anita Hass and Linette boutiques.
3.4.2 Berlin

The widespread capital of Germany is full of independent boutiques and concept stores. The retail environment in Berlin is very dynamic and diverse due to its subculture tradition. Furthermore the city is known for its trendy street wear, whose style is always wearable, often puristic and mostly individualistic. The quarters Indie Brands should focus on are Kreuzberg and Mitte, which are both spread out widely. In almost every street there are quirky and independent boutiques to find (P. Sulke, 2014).

The two parallel streets Brunnenstreet and Schönhauser Allee taper towards the Mulacktreeet and are the base for the Mitte quarter. Recently a non-mainstream concept shopping centre called Bikini opened, which hosts unique brands with innovative ideas and is located at a very good location close to the main street Kurfürstendamm. The most relevant boutiques and concept store to focus on are the Bikini Concept Mall, Umasan, Konk Concept Store, Wertvoll and The Upcycling Fashion Store.

In the quarter of Kreuzberg there is the Oranienstreet and Bermannstreet, which are no classical shopping streets but is a special mixture of the new and the long established. The owners of the boutiques and concept stores are consciously stocking products from local labels and designers. Within this area the De La Reh and Voo Concept Store would be addresses to consider.

3.4.3 Düsseldorf

The most trending and more unconventional neighborhood, in the otherwise quite posh and traditional city Dusseldorf is Pempelfort. The district is not in the direct city center but retrieves hip and cool shops. Nine years ago a fusion of designers, artist studios and retail stores took place in the Pempelfort neighborhood. Under the name ‘Perlfisch’ the collective organizes events and puts the products and services of the contributors in the spotlight, while raising awareness for the slow retail movement. They believe that they are stronger together and can raise more awareness when pulling in the same direction. On their website they inform consumers mainly about all participating companies, new store openings and other relevant events or sales. Furthermore does ‘Perlfisch’ publish a yearly shopping guide with compelling knowledge on the slow retail topic and naturally on each creative (V. Reig-Atmer, 2006-2015). Outstanding fashion stores are the Fräulein Bredow and Chrystall Concept Store.
3.4.4 Cologne

The Belgian quarter or also called ‘Das Mitte’ of Cologne has the character of a small city, is renowned as a creative hub and is a restorative alternative to the otherwise crowded main street. Throughout the last couple years great, alternative boutiques and concept stores found a place to share their products with interested consumers (A. Keyserlingk, 2007). Under the accurate term ‘Chic Belgique’ there are around 20 of the numerous creative retailers and service suppliers who got together and started this initiative. This concept guides Colognes’ consumers for more than ten years guides and informs them about the available stores through a shopping guide containing relevant information on all participants (T. Pöpping, 2015). Relevant fashion boutiques and concept stores within the neighbourhood are Kiss the Inuit, Super Store, Boutique Belgique, Le Shop and Golestaneh.

3.4.5 Conclusion of Metropolises

All of the four presented congested areas accommodate trending and suitable neighborhoods for foreign independent brands to approach retailers and thereby enter the German market.

3.5 Sales Opportunities

Presenting at eco-fairs in Germany can help upcoming Indie Brands from outside of Germany to get established within their operating market, which is in this case a sustainable and ethical background. It will help to raise awareness and get buyers, agents, retailers and general media attention on websites and social media channels. Based on the conducted interviews with concept store owners it is essential for independent brands, who want to enter a new market to present at fairs and get out there to spread their story and products. Presenting at fairs is a possible approach to enter a new market and can be seen both as sales channel but also as marketing channel. It goes hand in hand with each other.

After K. Partyka, the founder of Kiss the Inuit, got settled with her store and found a base of brands, she then started to visit fairs where she got in contact with other potential brands and agents. She finds it a very good experience to get to know the brands personally and talk to them about their work. She gains a better insight into their structures and characteristics. Currently Partyka gets informed twice a year at the Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin and the Innatex in Frankfurt about upcoming brands and if she is convinced about a new concept she makes space in her store and uses the open buying budget (Appendix ?).
Sia Bredow, the owner of the green concept store Fräulein Bredow in Dusseldorf got informed at both ethical trade shows in Berlin and at the Innatex in Frankfurt, previously to her store opening. There she contacted around eight brands she sensed adequate directly and another few through agents in a later on selection process. In general she prefers to work with agencies, which follow the same approach as her and support the slow sustainable fashion movement (Appendix ?).

The conducted interviews with the owners of O My Bag and Studio Jux are the base for the case studies on three independent brands from the Netherlands. The leather bag Indie Brand O My Bag has presented her brand at various fairs in Germany throughout the last years. She presented at the Bread and Butter, the Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin once and two times at the Innatex in Frankfurt. The last two are specialized fairs for ethical brands, which she enjoyed very much and suited to the concept of O My Bag but in the end she found the Premium to be the best choice. She presented her brand there the first time in January 2015 and favors it because it has a broader audience, more visitors and consequently the opportunity for greater sales. It is important to her that the brand gets known because of her story and therefor she does not only want to market her concept in that niche of ethical brands. The fact that she is fair trade and sustainable is decisive to her but even more significant is to promote the story on which the brand is built upon – and this she can do at a conventional fair as well.

The ethical and sustainable clothing brand Studio Jux presented their collection at the Showfloor Berlin and had a runway show there in 2013. The following years they presented the collection at the Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin, where they at first started to sell directly to retailers. But once they found a suitable agent they keep presenting at the fairs but sell the collection through an agent, which makes sales on another market much easier for them.

Independent brands need to make sure beforehand to choose the right fair and think about the market they want to target, whether it is a broader or a more specialized one with focus on ethics and sustainability. The example of O My Bag, who experienced that the more general fashion trade shows are more for her because she is not mainly focusing and promoting the ethical and sustainable background of her products. Nevertheless did the research show that most independent brands show their products at the ethical and fair trade shows because they feel more comfortable there being in that specialized niche and clearly promoting their beliefs (Appendix: Interviews 1 & 2).
In the following table the advantages and disadvantages of a presentation at fairs for independent brands are explained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad media presence – bloggers, journalists from fashion magazines etc.</td>
<td>Require a substantial investment (stand, equipment, travel costs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great promotion, creating awareness among retailers, buyers and agents</td>
<td>Time consuming: a trade show requires great amount of organization and preparation and careful planning to make sure the benefits will outweigh the costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to a large number of potential, interested and involved buyers or agents in one place and time → personal contact is an essential and valuable way</td>
<td>It is competitive, because all brands from a niche come together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct sales opportunities</td>
<td>There might be no instant results because it takes time to get established at a fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant feedback on products and prices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to learn about the competition, trends and other unknown markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about booth display and techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Identifying new market opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Comparison of advantages and disadvantages (Artisanwork, 2012)
* not necessarily negative but the need to look out for those disadvantages and taking them into consideration
3.6 Conclusion

OT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helpful - Opportunities</th>
<th>Harmful - Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>- A lot of growth potential</td>
<td>- Competition is considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More and more consumer decide to live a more conscious lifestyle</td>
<td>- Big conglomerates take up the spaces in the cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Consumer group the Lohas are resident</td>
<td>- Businesses/retailers can demand quick results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is the era of the individual – what the consumer wants is in the focus</td>
<td>- Germany is large so its metropolises are widely outspread – complex channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Existing platforms, blogs and communities throughout all regions</td>
<td>- Presenting at fairs is a big investment for start-up Indie Brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Various biannual fairs are happening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: OT Analysis of the German market

This chapter presented a broader picture of the German market and showed that there is definitely a basis for foreign independent brands. The retail market in Germany and its consumers are ready and open in the metropolises for independent brands to enter and spread their stories and products. Especially within these mentioned metropolises the slow fashion and retail movement has been initiated a while ago and is welcoming other like-minded companies to join. The conducted research for example laid out that retail stores in the mentioned metropolises joined forces to approach the slow retail movement in a more effective way to establish a base for independent brands to flourish. These city centers could not be imagined without them. Further on it became clear that the consumer base, in the first instance the Lohas group, is residential and that this group demands the availability of independent brands products.

Based on the presentation of the three widespread metropolises it is wise that foreign independent brands concentrate their market entry on a region within Germany. The conducted interviews with the independent brands illustrated that it is always a challenge to
get foot on a new market at first but that the investments and preparations for presenting at a fair are definitely worth it. It is necessary to create awareness predominantly but also to eventually find retailers and agents. This implication is predicated upon my own experiences and on the statements from the interviewed concept storeowners, who select their assortment consisting of a mix of sources – their own research, fairs and agencies.

Over all it became evident that the greater relevance for foreign independent brands to enter the German market is doubtlessly existing – namely the slow retail movement, the Lohas as a consumer group and more fundamentally, groundwork like the relevant fairs and agencies. To conclude, the selection process for independent brands is essential. Also to pre-elect carefully, which metropolis, trade shows and agencies are suitable for their needs.

‘It is tricky because Germany is such a big market to develop but absolutely worth the troubles and risks.’

- Paulien Wesselink (2015), founder of O My Bag
4. Market Communication

4.1 Introduction

Based on the first chapter and its conclusion on independent brands and their essence this one will focus on topics revolving around a suitable marketing communication approach. It will give answers to the sub question of ‘What is a suitable communication strategy for independent brands to gain ground on a new market?’ To begin with, an explanation is given to describe the technique of storytelling, which became clear is playing a decisive role for independent fashion brands.

Further on, storytelling as a part of content marketing will be compared to traditional brand advertising in order to understand its long-term benefits. Then various angles of storytelling are pointed out, amongst others on how independent brands can educate and connect emotions with the help of compelling stories. While explaining the origin of storytelling it becomes clearer why independent brands use this approach to attract consumers. In order to spread their stories independent brands will need the help of platforms and other mediums, which will be presented in this part of the chapter. The answer to the question ‘How can an independent brand make sure its story gets communicated with the consumer on a new market?’ will be stated. Lastly the conducted case studies will be implemented and taken into consideration as well as in the afterwards oncoming conclusion of this chapter.

4.2 Relevance of Storytelling

In times where the world revolves around the Internet, the plain communication of a message, of a product or a brand has become unsatisfactory. Given that many of the commercials are completely overlooked and as the case may be not even taken seriously anymore. Trust has become the most essential currency in times of transparency and omnipresent information flow. The consumer of today is much more educated and understands the techniques of the marketers. For this reason there is a need for brands, which are producing and communicating authentic and profound content. Especially the credibility and conformability play in my opinion a fundamental role because every little falsehood or misinformation will eventually be identified and can lead to a negative image (J. Sachs, 2012). Consequently, taking all these points into account, I am positive that emotional stories based on content are most suitable to mediate messages towards the consumer. Almost more important is the verification that all of the content is authentic and respectively truthful. It is necessary to find a good mix of communication channels and way of combining them optimally and coherently. Particularly for sustainable and fair independent fashion brands it is a valuable tool to communicate complex information and
get noticed in the crowded marketplace. The method of storytelling was found a striking instrument for a differentiating and communicative positioning on the German market (M. Joel, 2013). And since this is the essence of independent brands the storytelling aspect is elaborated much further within this chapter. They have made storytelling their own and used this strategy to gain foot on a new market more easily.

4.3 Case Studies

The independent fashion brand Studio Jux mainly use their website, Facebook and Twitter as channels to connect with its customers. Above all they focus on connecting their producers in Nepal with their customers. On the website the customer is able to look at images and messages from the tailors and explore which tailor made his purchased piece. In doing so they show that they truly care about the origin and the supply chain of their products. A similar approach has the independent brand Kiss And Tell who distributes silk goods produced in India and initiated the possibility to ‘Meet the Weaver’. On each articles’ hangtag is a note with the name of the silk weaver and on their website the customer is able to view a photo and send him a thank you note with an image wearing the item. The independent indie O My Bag produces eco-leather bags in India. On their website the consumer is able to watch videos and look at photos from the production site where the work of the suppliers, tanners and manufactures is introduced. Based on my observations, the conducted interviews and case studies it became clear that it is always helpful if independent brands approach platforms, blogs or other social media profiles for a feature before the launch on a new market. This will help to spread the story and get consumers curious beforehand.

4.4 Attributes

4.4.1 Definition

Storytelling is a part of content marketing, which is centered on building a long-lasting and clinging relationship with the consumer. With brand storytelling it is essential to primarily connect with the consumer and get him to buy the product as a consequence. In traditional marketing it is mainly just about showing off the plain product and its features with the help of conventional marketing approaches. An all around coherent, relevant and authentic story will help to get the consumer’s interest, loyalty and eventually his investment in the company, when he purchases a product. Different studies conducted on consumers’ perception on brands have shown that consumers will remember and cherish the story of a brand rather than its facts and numerical data (K. Meskanen, 2014). For example are stories
arousing the discharge of dopamine, which helps the brain to memorize and stirs the imagination (Figure 1). The Content Marketing Institute in North America found out that ‘92% of consumers would prefer media messages to sound like a story’ (A. Weinroth, 2014/ Figure 1).

Storytelling (as a part of content marketing) versus traditional brand advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Marketing</th>
<th>Traditional Brand Advertising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A PULL strategy – interactions occur before, during and after the purchase</strong></td>
<td><strong>A PUSH strategy – a one way message for everyone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individualized</td>
<td><strong>mass market</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time occurring and suitable for start ups and small to medium sized brands</td>
<td>Used by larger firms who cater goods to a lot of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Postmodern approach’ – ‘interactive marketing’ where ‘consumers are in the lead’</td>
<td>‘Hypermodern approach’ – consumers perception on brands and their buying behavior is manipulated (M. Mossinkoff, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social engagement and involvement</td>
<td>Self serving and strictly feature-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is about engaging, entertaining and educating an audience with the help of stories, which truly feel natural and native</td>
<td>It is about the front-loaded advertising piece, to get quick attention (but fading easily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ social media channels are used to inform</td>
<td>➔ TV commercials, magazine ads, billboards etc., which all help to inspire to a potential purchase and create awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading with a story and value first</td>
<td>It is about the transactional piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is about building true longer-lasting and clinging relationships. The value comes over time. (J. Sachs, 2012)</td>
<td>It is often about the buy upfront/ the quick sale and the brand image (M. Joel, 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is possible at a low cost

⇒ Comparable to a ‘relationship’ with a brand

Most of the time very costly

⇒ Comparable to a ‘one-night stand’ with a brand

Table 4: Comparison of content marketing and traditional brand advertising

4.4.2 Education

Within a brand’s story should always be a factor of educating the consumer about relevant issues the brand is dealing with. The brands should use their status and impact to inform their audience. The characters within these stories should serve as role models and inspire to follow the lead especially within topics of ethics and sustainability. Their fortune will effectively implicate what will happen to the consumer if he joins a comparable direction within the whole movement of slow fashion and considerate consumerism.

4.4.3 Connecting Emotions

Another result and important factor of a captivating story is the built up of emotions the consumers develops when hearing about e.g. the foundation of the brand, its ethical production ways or sustainable local production. I observed this for example when I attended the Local Indie Goods Market in Amsterdam with the Indie Brand Kiss and Tell. This adds value to a brand image and leaves a mark on the consumers’ mind. Therefore it is essential to explain the often-complicated issues, brands are facing in a compelling, uncomplicated and fun way. The use of illustrations, photos or videos, which tell a short story is helpful and makes it easier to understand the informative content, since the human brain is able to process images 60 times faster than words (Figure 1). The brands should tell their stories in various ways in order to keep their customers excited, informed and involved.
Figure 1: Your Brain on Fiction (J. Sachs, 2012)
4.4.4 Origin of Storytelling

‘Stories are the way that humans make sense of the world.’

- C. Uganec, 2013

According to the author J. Sachs the market is degenerating to the origins of storytelling. Due to the new technologies the people are ‘returning to an oral tradition’, with the significant difference that it is now digitally. The conscious consumers, especially the Lohas and consequently marketers are fed up with the broadcast era and its marketing strategies. Consumers seek the truth and want to be involved. Indie Brands will need to appeal to them with high valued messages. Stories that worked best and lived on, back in the ‘oral tradition’, were the ones, which contributed and maturated society. Here we observe that it is again about a recurring phenomenon and periodic trend within consumer culture. In the ‘broadcast era’ brands that dominate/d want to reach as many consumers as possible because they have/had the budget to placard their advertisements everywhere. It was simple the ‘survival of the richest’, where wealthy brands could get their message out ‘regardless of the quality’. And the consumer was consequently exposed to ads and even if they did not like it - it influenced them in their purchase behavior. In spite of everything consumer perceptions change these days and brand messages and stories with meaning and value appear once again. Independent brands have the best chance in this ‘survival of

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**Figure 2: Evolution of Storytelling (J. Sachs, 2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Oral Tradition (Nearly All of Human History)</th>
<th>The Broadcast Era (The Past 100 Years)</th>
<th>The Digitorial Era (Emerging Today)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone owns ideas</td>
<td>Ideas are exclusive property of their creator</td>
<td>Everyone owns ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages move through social networks</td>
<td>Messages broadcast one to many</td>
<td>Messages move through virtual social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival of the fittest</td>
<td>Survival of the richest</td>
<td>Survival of the fittest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories dominate</td>
<td>Many ways to speak to captive audiences</td>
<td>Stories dominate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the fittest’ and ‘digitorial era’ since virtual social networks are easy and free to be used for the purpose of telling their compelling stories to whomever is interested. And it is the time of the audience again to decide whether a story is worth sharing and spreading (Figure 2 // J. Sachs, 2013 // J. Chung, 2015).

Tell the truth.
Be interesting.
Live the truth.

- John E. Powers (1895), Father of modern creative advertisement: (quote from the book: Winning the Story Wars)

4.4.5 Truth

The story, an independent brand originates from and is built upon, should always be based on truth. Independent brands should have an honest, straight-forward and transparent approach of handling problematic issues in order to show consumers that they are not perfect. Being vulnerable is totally normal nowadays and by showing that the consumer can relate to the brand. As another consequence the consumer wants to support the brand in order to connect with it and its story. Telling its customers about personal stories and developments of the brand all adds up to the value they connect to the brand. Within all aspects the story should be coherent and include accurate information about e.g. the origin especially when it comes to the product offered (Mitch Joel, 2013)

‘Indie brands are the frontrunners of truth,’

- declared John Weich (2013), creative director and writer

4.4.6 Attention

More and more brands try to use elements of storytelling for their marketing strategies and easily use descriptive terms like being sustainable, independent and socially responsible to describe their values, boost their corporate image and try to trick the consumer. Often these terms are carelessly used, not always true and utilized with a broad meaning. So it is important for Indie Brands to be totally honest and stay true to their roots, even if that means admitting to failures.
4.5 Spreading the Stories

There are mainly two ways independent brands can communicate their story – on or offline. The more mediums used in a coherent manner the better. The following paragraphs discuss different approaches on how independent brands can spread their stories on a new market. There are so many great ways this can be done – with phrases, images, videos and information graphics – and it is without doubt worthy to tell it in more than one way.

‘After all, we are not ‘businesses’ connecting with ‘consumers’; we are people connecting with other people.’

- C. Uganec (2013)

4.5.1 Word of Mouth

K. Meskanen observes that 'we tell our friends stories at work, over dinner and drinks and, later, maybe we relay those stories again to new audiences. Humans live in stories every day and dream in stories all night long. We are all storytellers and story listeners.' One of the most important actions the consumer realizes for the brand, is telling the story he has been informed about previously (by the information on the product itself, or by the shop owner when purchasing, etc.), to his family and friends when he is convinced about the product. So if properly done, storytelling, which is the brands and retailers task, goes hand in hand with word of mouth promotion. It is then a consequence of the good interaction of a captivating story and the convincing quality of the actual product. Another approach is the 'word of mouse', which means that consumers tag their friends under a picture or an article of a brand they like and connect them like this (M. Mossinkoff / D. Jacobs, date unknown). The brand hands the marketing/promotion over to the consumer so to speak and he becomes a brand ambassador in a way (K. Meskanen, 2014).

4.5.2 Fellowships

Finding partners who share the same mind set and values and aligning with them is a smart move in a world where big conglomerates dominate the fashion industry. Connecting and collaborating with other brands to help each other out, for example by lending out products for photo shoots, is something that P. Wesselink the owner of O My Bag finds very meaningful and supporting. Thereby independent brands can get more attention when appearing and being linked on other Indie Brands website, Facebook posts or Instagram photos. Another example of affiliation is the Local Goods Market, which is organized by the
Organization Indie Brands twice a month in De Hallen in Amsterdam, Netherlands and where brands foregather to present their concepts and products. According to P. Wesselink this is a great way to create awareness about the brand but not the best method to drive sales. Nevertheless it is all about joining forces and coming together to stir up the movement and create buzz. As described in the second chapter the examples of Dusseldorf and Cologne show, that communities or collaborations and their like-minded creatives have come together to built up initiatives, which support each other and attract more customers in the end (Appendix 7.2.3 / 7.2.4).

4.5.3 Influence of Social Media

C. Uganec is the marketing director at hootsuite.com and recalls that ‘Stories are inherently social and social media is about making connections.’ The combination of social media and storytelling suggests itself because there is not better platform to capture the interest of the consumers of today. It is logical and obvious for independent brands to use social media channels (like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter) since they are mostly free of use and the chances of reaching thousands of prospective customers are high. Consumers love to share and discuss interesting, relevant and emotive content on social media sites. Independent brands needs to create content that gets shared and this will as a consequence eventually drive sales. With the help and support of the social media movement Indie Brands can reach consumers worldwide and let them help to spread their story. As a consumer I observe, that I mainly concentrate on the social media channels Facebook and Instagram to follow independent brands and their stories, but nonetheless there are others who mainly use e.g. twitter and Pinterest, therefor it is important to cater to all different channels. Using the same content but displayed in another suitable way while also making sure that the content fits to each channel and is communicated properly with no overload on information.

In the digitorial era we live in today, these channels have become the most powerful connection tool and are in addition easy to use for newcomer independent brands. Attention needs to be paid to the time and especially the relevance of the content, which will be shared. There are various manuals on how to use the various channels due to the fact that each of them is more or less qualified for different purposes like e.g. Instagram is primarily used to post pictures and short videos.

‘We have a connected consumer revolution.’

- C. Uganec (2013)
Consumers are in full control what kind of information they want to contemplate and are able to carefully select online, which brand to follow and which one to give their 'like'. Storytelling within social media is all about involving the consumer actively in all developments of the brand. The social media platforms empower the consumer to vote so to say and show them that their voices and opinions matter. It is not about the brands being out there pushing consumers to buy their product. However it is about brands, which need to pull potential consumers and earn the attention of the audience (Table 1). They have the ability to be interactive and discuss and compare the products with other likeminded consumers on various platforms. On that account is the consumer in charge and in the end carries the power with his purchases decision (C. Heathcote, 2013).

4.5.4 New World of Commerce

All of the interviewed independent brands find it essential that the retailers' job is to communicate the story of the products and the brand, which will help to reinforce and establish a value connection among the customers. Consumers enter boutique and concept stores with the prospect of getting a special experience and therefore it is valuable to demonstrate individual personality within the stores appearance and on top of that act as a brand ambassador. The retailers should appoint their staff to be the characters in the plot and get the messages across the customers. Additionally many of the independent brands have special hangtags, packaging or in store handouts, which inform about the brands' story and origin, about the people involved in the production processes and/or about relevant environmental issues. It is about consolidating the messages effectively with simple tricks for the consumer to remember.

4.6 Platforms & Blogs

Getting foot on a new market can be difficult for yet unknown independent brands and therefore it is important that they get help from bloggers or journalists who can act as ambassadors. It is key ‘to leverage the power’ of these kind of influencers, who can take hold of their social media followers and help to amplify and create buzz about the independent brands’ stories and the general movement (J. Sachs, 2013). When K. Partyka, the founder of Kiss the Inuit with concept stores in Cologne and Bonn, got started searching for potential brands for her stores she also researched the web first and came across those platforms and blogs, where she got informed and inspired. Getting a feature on those platforms will definitely help to raise awareness and attention for Indie Brands on the rise. Consumers who search the web in order to get informed come across those platforms easily as well and if there is a link to the independent brands it is a great
promotion. In the following two different professional platforms and blogs are presented to give an overview and show that Germany is involved in the slow fashion movement.

4.6.1 Guidance - Utopia

Utopia is a German sustainable guide for consumers to get comprehensive information about the newest slow fashion developments in the economy and society. The network wants to bring people, organizations and companies together in order to promote and inspire them towards a conscious consumption and lifestyle. Furthermore it combines competent purchase advices of an autonomous editorial office. They share the opinions and suggestions of their registered community members (up to 80,000), who evaluate the products and services of those fair and independent brands (Dr. M Gebhard, 2010). Their motto is: ‘WE are already going to begin…’

4.6.2 Connection - Get Changed

The Fair Fashion Network – GET CHANGED is a platform, which connects stakeholder and informs fashionable and consumers, who think critically about fashion news around the fair fashion theme. The basis is of the network evolves around the Fair Fashion Finder, which allows consumers to explore information and get an overview about fair and independent fashion brands, boutiques and concept stores in an easy and fast way. Furthermore informs the platform the consumer about the social and ecological production terms and conditions of the presented collections of the brands. In order to join the community the brands and stores also have to fulfill certain criteria within the divisions of transparency, ecology and human rights. For new fair and independent fashion brands the network offers a free option for a basis entry including an outline as well as one image. There are more possible options to choose from in order to get a broader feature on the website and their Facebook page with reasonable prices. Over all there are 95 brands displayed, 27 concept stores and over 250 boutiques in Germany, Switzerland and Austria (M. Stärmanns, 2015).

4.6.3 Inspiration - Beyond Fashion

Marina Chahboune is the founder of the blog Beyond Fashion who has been online in Germany since 2010. For a decent amount of time she has been dealing with the issue of sustainable fashion and in particular with ecology and integral sustainability entries along the value creation chain of textiles. Being the end consumer it is most of the time difficult to find out, what kind of steps a piece of clothing undergoes. This goes from high use of
pesticides, unto chemical treatments, enormous energy consumption and environmental pollution to degrading working conditions at the production places. This blog wants to place evidence that there is another way of doing things. It wants to inform, inspire and encourage to cogitation while dealing with our own consumer behavior. Chahboune features upcoming Indie Brands on her blog with a compelling but critical modality and offers a presentation space for them in order to get heard (M. Chahboune, 2010).

4.6.4 Navigation - Green is the new black

Green is the new black is the slogan of the fashion blog of the journalist Ellen Köhrer. The focus lies on brands, makers and news with a sustainable background. She writes about sustainable fashion, the economy and about NGO’s, while researching in Germany and in Asia. In her opinion it is essential to promote and support the slow fashion movement as much as possible to change consumers perception. Therefor she frequently presents new Indie Fashion Brands and other social enterprises to help them getting foot on the German market. Furthermore she reports about the eco fashion week and fairs in Germany, while giving a lot of food for thought on her blog. Köhrer offers affordable consultancy, conceptions and storytelling approaches mainly for Indie Brands but also for other blogs and platforms going into the same direction as she is.

4.7 Conclusion

‘People build their lives around the stories that give them meaning. That’s why they will build their lives around brands and causes that tell meaningful stories.’ - J. Sachs

It is in the essence of an independent brand to tell and spread their story. The conducted research made clear that storytelling is the best suitable communication strategy for independent brands to gain ground on a new market like the German one. It will have a positive impact on the prospective consumers and supports the product as an added value. A coherent combination of all various channels – if its social media, word of mouth promotion and the help of the retailers – will underline the effects an independent brand has on a new market. Consumers are much more able to relate to a brand if it is based on a great, compelling story and can actively approaches them. Independent brands understand the magic of interactive marketing and through their storytelling approaches they are able to reach consumers properly with a lasting effect. Overall does storytelling function as an added value and supports the perception of the quality and uniqueness of the products.
To conclude further it is essential for independent brands to constantly think about their storytelling approach, especially if entering a new market like the German one. When the approach of storytelling is used right consumers pick up on the idea and the products, the story gets spread and consequently drives sales, this of course assuming that the product fits the need of the consumer. Even before the entry on a new market independent brands can already start to get consumers interested. Additionally they have an advance towards conventional brands because they have a different approach on marketing and can use the different social media channel way more effective and successful. Furthermore as found out in the second chapter it got proven that there is a considerable consumer base, namely the Lohas residential in Germany, who are willing to share these stories.

The independent brands O My Bag and Studio Jux would not have become as known and established within the German market if it were not for their compelling story, the broad social media and word of mouth attention. These independent brands put thought into how to tell their stories and put reasonable content in their messages, posts and pictures so they are worth spreading among consumers. Here we see again that it is an interaction of various parts, which makes for a successful market entry.

Main characteristics:

Storytelling…

- is defined by honesty, consistency and transparency
- is an essential part of independent brands and therefor used as their main marketing communication tool to spread authentic and compelling content
- is about actively involving the consumers
- consumers are much more attentive to information that sound like a story and will remember it much longer
5. OVERALL CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter takes the previous three chapters into consideration and gives answers to the main question of this research document, namely ‘What is the best market entry approach, for an independent fashion brand, to enter the German market?’

Overall one can say that this research document focuses on the market development strategy described by the Ansoff Model. The independent brands have an existing product they want to distribute on a new market – in this case the German one. There are two possibilities of exporting their collections to retailers (concept stores, boutiques), which is either directly selling to the retailers or in-directly selling to them through the help of an agent. All this is supported with the help of content marketing, which includes compelling storytelling and the use of communication channels like social media. Within this research document an overview of sales and promotion opportunities within the German market has been laid out and measured. Thereby independent brands get a better insight and understanding of it and they can prepare their market entry beforehand. In the following paragraphs I will explain the possibilities more in depth for available market entries and elaborate what the best market entry approach is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales indirectly through agent</th>
<th>Sales directly to retail buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>• Knows the market – improved efficiency – can provide national distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eliminates lines of contact – routinization of transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less organization required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Usually work on commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work closely with their brands, representing their values and interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No intermediaries – more efficient profit wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal and more flexible relationship with retailers – feel more secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater degree of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Direct feedback on sales and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a better understanding of the market place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>• Loss of profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No direct relation with retailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Takes a lot of planning, times to set up the sales meetings – immense work load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be a challenge for small start-up companies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This Sales and Marketing Plan Model considers the long and short term planning goals for an entry onto the German market and is in favour of independent brands. Looked from a strategic and operational point of view this plan can be used to guide and measure operations and explain how sales and the market relate to marketing. It can help them to put their actions into perspective and demonstrates that there are various factors, which need to be considered. A combination of the described sales approaches and marketing efforts of the independent brands is needed. Therefor the best go-to market program is a mixture, which includes a content sales and content marketing strategy for the entry on a new market (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales // Market</th>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic level (long-term planning goals)</strong></td>
<td>Present at fairs Find suitable agencies within different regions Further growth potential within Germany Build up a network/ community</td>
<td>Spread the stories further Work on value proposition and content marketing Cultivate consumer relationship → social media channels, other available platforms, word of mouth, help of the retailer Educate agents – generate new sales leads Engage with influencers, join platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operational level (short-term planning goals)</strong></td>
<td>Exhibit at fairs and get in contact with retailers, first sales Decision for a region → Successful market entry in Germany</td>
<td>Introduce story of the brand and its product Establish brand awareness and build relationship with consumers → use of social media channels and other available platforms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Comparison of sales channels for independent brands
Characteristics of a successful market entry approach:

- Spreading content during both sales/market and marketing/branding steps
- Independent brands need to establish their image at fairs – efficient platform for the creation of awareness and a possibility for direct sales
- Building up a relationship with agents and retailers
- Coherent storytelling will fundamentally support the market entry of an independent brand
- Combination of marketing and sales efforts
6. B I B L I O G R A P H Y

6.1 B o o k s


6.2 V i d e o


6.3 S t u d i e s

D. Jacobs / M. Mossinkoff (date unknown). Pomo-hypo: fashion marketing at two extremes


6.4 Online


7. APPENDIX

7.1 Case Studies

7.1.1 O My Bag

The leather bag brand from Amsterdam brings fashion lovers and sustainability together. The founder Paulien Wesselink wants to produce leather bag, which are made with respect for the planet and the people who live on it.

Where do they sell and through what channels do they sell?
- The handbag brand sells in 19 countries and 121 shops mainly all over Europe and in some other places e.g. at a boutique in New York City.
- They sell the bag collections to boutiques and concept stores in the first place and worldwide online through their own website.

Where do they present their concept?
- My Bag presents at sustainable fairs like MINT (part of the Amsterdam Modefabriek), the Ethical Fashion show in Berlin and at the Innatex in Frankfurt.
- Furthermore at conventional trade shows like the Bread and Butter in the past and recently at the Premium in Berlin.
- From time to time the brand presents the bags at the Local Indie Goods Market in Amsterdam.

What is their storytelling approach?
- The founder travelled to India to source authentic, untreated leather, which is made while respecting the environment and the people.
- The manufacturers only use the leather of cows that die a natural death and have lived in grasslands.
- On the website the consumer can connect to the origin of the bag, watch videos and look at pictures of the manufacturers.
- The brand connects with the consumers on a transparent basis and communicates with them amicable.
- The brand is about creating social change as much as possible one bag at a time.

‘There is only one thing better than the perfect leather bag: the perfect leather bag with a good story behind it.’
7.1.2 Studio Jux

Studio Jux is a young Dutch design label for men and women’s wear established in 2008. The team consists of Jitske Lundgren who is the founder/designer and of Carlien Helmink who is the manager in charge of the communications and production processes. The collections are characterized by minimalistic designs, which they produce in Nepal.

‘Do good and look good at the same time.’

Where do they sell and through what channels do they sell?
- They are represented in boutiques and concept stores in countries all over the world, they e.g. just explored the Australian market, but their main focus lies on the Dutch, Belgian, UK and German market
- Additionally they sell through various online shops in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and the UK

Where do they present their concept?
- They are a member of platforms like the Fair Wear Foundation and the Strawberry Earth Academy
- They show their collection at the MINT fair (part of Modefabriek) and at the Amsterdam Fashion Week in the Netherlands
- Shows at the ethical fashion show in Berlin, at the international trade fair Heimtextil in Frankfurt (2011) in Germany
- At the Showfloor Berlin and had a fashion show there in 2013, then in 2014 and 2015 they presented the collection at Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin
- Participate in competitions: winner of the Green Fashion Award made it possible for them to expand to the UK

What is their storytelling approach?
- They stay very transparent and it is possible for their customers to connect with the manufacturers on Studio Juxs’ website
- Half of the collection is made from organic cotton (the organic cotton is GOTS certified) and the other half is made out of natural materials like bamboo, silk etc. and also from recycled polyester use this as their unique selling point

‘Fashion should be fun: for us as the consumer, for the designer and the manufacturer.’
7.1.3 Ace & Tate

Where do they sell and through what channels do they sell?
• They sell in the Netherlands, where it all started. Then they tapped onto the German and UK market
• They mainly use online channel retailing
• Customer can order up to four styles of glasses and try them on at home and decide which one he takes and send the others back
• They offer a free home try on service

Where do they present their concept?
• For one month in December 2014 they set up a Pop-Up store in Berlin
• Sell selected styles at the Voo concept store in Berlin
• Present the collections at fairs like sleek

What is their storytelling approach?
• They work with no retailers and people who hold the license in between – that’s how they get quality and a good fair price
• Support a selected charity, who provides eye-care for people in low income countries
• Through their simple, minimalistic and timeless design the glasses are made for a lifetime

7.2 Interviews

7.2.1 O My Bag

Results of the interview with O My Bag

Paulien, the owner of O My Bag has presented her brand at various fairs in Germany throughout the last years. Once she presented at the Bread and Butter, the Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin and two times at the Innatex in Frankfurt. The last two are specialized fairs for ethical brands, which she enjoyed very much and suit to the concept of O My Bag but in the end she found the Premium the best choice. She presented her brand there the first time in January 2015 and favors it because it has a broader audience, more visitors and
consequently the opportunity for greater sales. It is important to her that the brand gets
know because of her story and therefor does not only want to market in that niche of
ethical brands. The fact that she is fair trade and sustainable is decisive for her but even
more significant is to promote the story on which the brand is built upon.

By being present at the fairs she got in contact with an agent who sells the collection in the
north and east Germany since September 2014. This has been going well so far; therefor
she also wants to find an agent who will take care of south and west Germany, where she
herself has managed the sales with the individual retailers up to now.

‘It is tricky because Germany is such a big market.’

She favors selling to specialty concept stores and boutiques, which sell likeminded brands
and spread the awareness of slow fashion among the customers. When she thinks about
expansion it is meaningful to pick retailers, who have a mindset alike and are able to
understand the importance of storytelling. In the end they should be able to convey this to
the customers and offer a shopping experiences where they can learn about the
background of the brand.

‘When the store believes in our brand, we believe in the store and work towards a mutual
success.’

She is well aware of the Indie Brands format and likes that Mrs. van Gaalen embraces the
topic and raises awareness among consumers. O My Bag presents the products at the
Local Indie Goods Market in Amsterdam and supports other indie brands whenever she
can, e.g. by providing her bags for photo shoots.

First of all the website is essential to inform customers about the products and the story of
the brand. Instagram is next to other typical social media channels the easiest and
widespread channel to use because it supports the story of the brand very well and keeps
the customer up to date.

Paulien advises others indie brands to get out there and present themselves on fairs in
order to get in touch with people from the market. She holds that ‘it is worth the effort
and the investment’ and ‘if you don’t go out there and present yourself, they definitely
won’t see you’. Furthermore working on storytelling marketing is essential for young indie
brands since it is their ‘true foundation’ and the principal point, which distinguishes them
from the masses.
7.2.2 Studio Jux

With what kind of actions/ strategies did you approach the German market? - Presenting at fairs? Selling through an agent? Selling directly to retailers?

We started with presenting at fairs and selling directly to retailers, once we found an agent we switched to presenting at fairs and only selling through an agent.

What is important to you when you expand your brand to new markets?

To find retailers, which understand our brand and our collection and are willing to present our products in a representative way. So they make a solid selection from our collection (not only two styles or only basics, that’s just not what we do) and they share the brand story to the consumers.

7.2.3 Kiss the Inuit

Results of the interview with the owner of Kiss the Inuit

When K. Partyka found the perfect retail space in Cologne she decided to open a green concept store called Kiss the Inuit. The store in Cologne is part of the initiative called ‘Chic Belgique’, which supports the slow retail movement. After a year she opened a second concept store in Bonn. The idea was there long before, because she observed it to be a gap in the market and wanted to show the consumers how cool eco and slow fashion can be. Her passion for sustainability came from her working as a journalist for a sustainable magazine. While doing research she bumped into a young eco brand, which fascinated her and got her thinking about opening her own store focusing on eco brands. Her main criterion is that the Indie Brands she carries have a compelling story behind their products. It is essential that the design appeals and matches her concept, while the clothes are produced fair and as sustainable as possible. The publicity of the brand is the least important criteria for her.

The assortment of the stores is situated in the middle price segment since she wants eco fashion to be affordable. Per season she is able to spend an average buying budget of around €2000 on a new brand. When she first started she explored the brands through internet based research and started to buy directly from them. Throughout time she also started to buy brands from agents and carries now up to thirty brands. Nowadays she finds that the supply of brands is increasing and brands approach her on their own. Twice a year she gets informed at fairs like the Ethical Fashion Show in Berlin and the Innatex about
upcoming brands and if she is convinced about a new concept she makes space in her store and uses the buying budget.

7.2.4 Fräulein Bredow

Results of the interview with the owner of Fräulein Bredow

Katharina studied fashion design and worked for big companies and observed that there is too much going wrong in the industry and quit her job. She loves fashion but the concept of fast fashion is alarming to her and therefore she decided to open green concept store. Her green concept store Fräulein Bredow has been open for 1,5 years now and she sells around 14 international brands. She got informed at both fairs in Berlin and the Innatex in Frankfurt and got in contact with agents there. She likes that she can be sure that there are selected brands where she can be sure that they are sustainable and fair.

She is still in the beginning phase so she tries out different brands and orders a couple of fresh brands every season to get a new impression on what is out there on the market. If it is possible she buys on commission. She is flexible with new brands and understands that it is always hard at the beginning but it is important to her that they comply with certain sustainability and fair trade standards. Nevertheless she does not want the clothing to look like eco fashion and therefore the most important aspect stays the design.

For all that she stays realistic and offers affordable and timeless products where she at the same time able to tell the story and the origin of the various brands she carries. A close customer contact is essential within the slow retail movement and therefore she is a member of the ‘Perlfisch’ initiative in the neighbourhood of her store in Pempelfort. In general she holds that the variety of brands is definitely out there but she finds that there are not enough stores yet in Dusseldorf who sell eco and fair fashion.