Mini Processbook

A new Chapter

By & Other Stories

Fenja Flormann
International Fashion & Branding
Graduation June 2016
Welcome to A New Chapter!

This Processbook is designed to guide the reader through my graduation journey. It provides reflection on my research, decision making and how I applied these findings in my project.

The end product, a bridal wear brand extension for & Other Stories, which brings together my analytical and creative skills, shall prove that after four years studying International Fashion and Branding I am ready to enter the working world.
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**Note:** Highlighted passages mark important decision moments or key conclusions and key insights.
Phase 1: Research

After looking at previous AMFI projects and my personal strengths and interests I knew that my final graduation project should combine research, concept development and also the creation of a retail environment.
Is there an opportunity for & Other Stories to tap into the increasing demand for contemporary and affordable bridal wear?

1. The Bridal Wear Market
   What does the current bridal wear market look like and where is it heading?

2. The Target Group
   Who are the ‘new nuptials’ and what kinds of wedding styles are they interested in?

3. The Brand: & Other Stories
   What makes the success of & Other Stories?

4. The Retail Environment
   Is there a need for a modern bridal salon and what are trends and developments in the retail market?

Plan of attack

All these sub-questions to my preliminary research question above will be researched and discussed on the following pages (until page 39). They will lead me to my main research question and the conceptual starting points for the bridal wear project.
What does the current bridal wear market look like and where is it heading?

What are trends and developments in the bridal wear market? Is there a need for affordable bridal wear? Who are the closest competitors for the new concept and why? Where lies the biggest opportunity in price point?
ARTICLE:

High Street Retailers Step Up to the Altar

• There is a rise of alternative bridal salons and new retail ventures with a personal, more casual and budget-friendly attitude.

• Many high-street retailers as well as e-commerce brands are launching off-the-rack gowns at competitive prices.

• There is an opportunity for non-bridal brands companies to tap into their brand recognition and generate additional revenue from their existing customer base, since most customers aren’t familiar with wedding gown brands. Plus, the high street brands can move faster to follow trends than a bespoke wedding dress designer.

• There is a void in the mid-range bridal market

Which brands are already reacting to this development?

• J. Crew launched their bridal wear collection online as one of the first in 2004, and now operates as a stand-alone bridal boutique in NYC.

• BHLDN launched their lower prices wedding collection in 2011, and also opened a store in 2014.

• Needle&Thread launched a collection of contemporary bridal gowns in December 2015.

• Start-up label Reformation (image below), launched the first bridal range in 2014, now has four bridal collections and doubled its weekly bridal sales from 2014 to 2015.

• Self Portrait launched their bridal collection in Spring 2016.

• E-commerce giant Asos introduced a collection of 18 bridal pieces in April 2016.

“The majority of those getting married are millennial-aged who prefer the experience of a wedding and the sharing of it with the world.

This means shifting to more experience and less extravagance. Spend more on the place, the location and the band, but less on the flowers and the dress. The dress is just for one day, but the event itself lasts a lifetime of memories.”

M. Cohen (industry analyst, NPD group)
REPORT

2014 Wedding Market Review


- How couples think about spending and the value they place on the dress, invitation, flowers etc. has changed
- Even before the event, most couples are living together, waiting longer to get married and spending less on the ceremony
- 50% of brides said they spent less than 500 Dollar on their wedding gown

REPORT

Consumer insight 2015
“New Nuptials”


- The millennial generation (“new nuptials”) are steering clear from conventions and traditions
- Martial age rises, so couples are paying for their wedding themselves more often nowadays, compared to previous decades when the dad of the bride used to pay everything.
- They opt for less traditional, less expensive and less extravagant ceremonies.

ARTICLE

David’s Bridal Doesn’t Want to Be the Walmart of Weddings Any More


- 50% of brides-to-be consider it a priority to spend less than 800 Dollar on their dress, while 54% said a designer dress wasn’t important to them
- Growth in wedding dresses priced only 450€-1.200€, most brides want to spend less than 600€ on the dress
- Growth in bridesmaid dresses category, as well as bridal accessories, veils, shoes etc.

“A brand is missing that creates contemporary, yet classy gowns, which don’t feel stuffy. Simply dresses to have fun in.”

P. Wallack, CEO David’s Bridal

[cover of consumer insight report, WGSN. 2016]
BRIDAL WEAR MARKET

Complete Bridal Wear Market until 3,000€

Zoom 1 (next matrix)

market gap: unconventional bridal wear breaking with wedding clichés and focusing on contemporary silhouettes

<table>
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Zoom 1

Bridal Wear Market until 1,500€

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= closest competitors of the new concept
**COMPETITOR:**

**The Reformation**

Launched its bridal line in 2014. Effortless silhouettes that celebrate the feminine figure. Also embracing colour and subtly embracing trend silhouettes. They opened a Bridal Boutique in NY in March 2016.

Based: USA  
Price Point: 250€ - 700€

How we differentiate:

We set ourselves apart from The Reformation by embracing not only one very distinctive design identity, but being more experimental and playful in style. Another important point of differentiation is that we will have a collection of bridal accessories and beauty products to offer in store, not only garments.

**COMPETITOR:**

**ASOS Bridal**

The e-commerce giant’s house brand that launched in March 2016 features a variety of bridal styles, bridesmaids dresses

Based: GB (int. shipping)  
Price Point: 80€ - 350€.

How we differentiate:

They target a younger, trend-influenced audience than A New Chapter, since our concept is tailored to the needs of more sophisticated, style-conscious brides-to-be. Also slightly higher prices for a more exclusive feel and of course our brick-and-mortar shop make us the number one affordable, contemporary bridal wear destination in Europe.
BRIDAL WEAR MARKET

BRIDAL BOUTIQUE INTERVIEW

Delice Bruidmode

• Appointment only
• No concept, because everyone wants something else
• No brand identity
• Aims to make the bride feel at ease, like in her own living room
• Promotion: ads in wedding magazines and facebook
• Most brides bring about three people to the fitting
• They need space to feel comfortable
• Ball-gowns are best-sellers
• Brides-to-be try about 5-6 dresses before they choose one

BRIDAL BOUTIQUE INTERVIEW

I Do! I Do!

• Appointment only
• Also bridesmaid and flower-girl dresses
• Only a few selected accessories
• Nicely branded yet conservative interior
• Big dresses sell best: ball-gown and princess dresses
• Most brides know in advance what they want, they bring pictures to the appointment
• Most brides are between 25 and 35 years old
• Budget matters, but doesn’t influence the final decision that much

Conclusion:

The new concept should include that:

• Brides should be able to stop by spontaneously, not only with an appointment
• There is enough space to sit for the entourage
• Also accessories, bridesmaids dresses etc. are sold, not only dresses
• Brides don’t have to print and bring images to the appointment (there must be a more innovative way)
• Brides who don’t want a ball-gown for their wedding have modern and fashionable alternatives, also in colour
• The affordability of the dresses is not overly communicated, in the end it’s about style and the look and feel of the brand, not (only) the price tag
CONCEPT RELEVANCE
“contemporary bridal wear”

WEDDING CONVENTIONS & TRADITIONS? NOT FOR MILLENIALS!
(WGSN Report 2015)

The World’s Most Fabulous, Most Affordable Wedding Gowns

THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE, CONTEMPORARY BRIDAL WEAR IS RISING.
(The Wedding Report 2015)

Here comes the ASOS bride!

[relevance board: check 1, 26 February 2016]
Key conclusions: Bridal wear

1. Why affordable bridal wear?
   - The millennial generation are steering clear from conventions and traditions concerning their marriage.
   - Wedding priorities currently are shifting to more experience and less extravagance.
   - Couples spend more on the place, the location and the band, but less on the flowers and the dress.

2. The current situation?
   - Most brands offer bridal dresses between 1.000€ and 3.000€
   - There are many brands focussing on modern silhouettes already, but are very expensive
   - A majority of brands is still offering the traditional ‘kitsch/tulle/princess/fairytale’ wedding dress style
   - Wedding dress brands in general (both on their websites and social media) have very stereotypical visual identities that can be clustered by groups: romantic glamour, vintage bohemian or fairytale princess styles.

3. Which competitors?
   - More and more high-street retailers as well as e-commerce brands are launching off-the-rack gowns at competitive prices.
   - Closest competitors are J.Crew, Reformation, ASOS and Needle & Thread (based on the strategic positioning and the price range they are offering)
   - Most competitors are based in the USA, so there is a huge opportunity to tap into the European market. Only two brands are based in GB and none in the Benelux/Germany/Scandinavia yet.

4. The market gap?
   - There is a void in the lower mid-range bridal wear market (400€-800€ for a gown)
   - A brand is missing that creates contemporary, yet classy gowns, which don’t feel stuffy or like being dressed up too much
   - Most brands only focus on dresses and miss out on the opportunity of selling bridal accessories and shoes as well.
   - There is an opportunity for non-bridal brands companies to tap into their brand recognition and generate additional revenue from their existing customer base.
Who are the new nuptials?

Is marriage still relevant in the 21st century? What are the target group’s thoughts and opinions on contemporary bridal wear? What kind of styles are they interested in? What is their budget? What are their wedding priorities? What is their buying behaviour? How does the customer journey from inspiration to purchase look like? How and where do they get in touch with bridal wear brands?
ARTICLE

The Institution of Marriage: Still Going Strong


- Young people still embrace the idea of marriage, but it means something different than it once did.
- By 2011, average marriage age had climbed to nearly 29 years for men and 26.5 years for women.
- 74% of young Americans think that marriage is still relevant, but they prefer to delay marriage a bit, because they are much more concerned about the economic situation.
- Millennials have new perceptions of what marriage means to them but they still value stable, long-lasting relationships and families.

ARTICLE

Millennials: Society Will Be Just Fine Without Marriage


- An online poll (Gallup) in 2013 states that 75% of Millennials in America were either already married or want to get married someday.
- Only 9% stated that they will never marry.
- The idea of spending thousands on what’s meant to be the best day of your life - including a dress they’ll never wear again - puts off many young people. Still they are practical enough to realise that marriage will offer their future babies more security.

ARTICLE

For Europeans, Love, Yes; Marriage, Maybe


- Changing attitudes towards religion among Millennials.
- Marriage today is a deeply personal choice free from traditional moral, judgement of the community, friends or family.
- In Northern Europe there is littler commitment to the institution of marriage, but many people are getting married for practical reasons: to ensure legal and financial protection for their family.

ARTICLE

Skirting the Issue: Since when did getting married become so unfashionable?


- Getting married has become an experience to be marketed with the ‘cult of wedding’ with its endless preparations of invites, flowers, the expensive dress,...
- Marriage is not outdated, but the entire wedding industry is. The big fancy wedding, splashing thousands on a princess gown will be outdated very soon.
- BUT: The romantic idea of marriage, which is two people celebrating their love for each other, will remain relevant also in the 21st century.
ARTICLE:
The Beta Marriage: How Millennials Approach ‘I Do’


- Unconventional, fictional marriage concepts in questionnaire: most popular one was the “beta marriage”, which would be a two-year-marriage trial.

- Millennials are not scared to make commitments, they commit more wisely.

- They are a generation raised on a booming wedding industry, but marriages that end before the ink has dried. They’re not trusting the fancy wedding industry that is known from public media.

- The vast majority of Millennials: 69% (according to a Pew online poll) still want to get married. They just need a little more time to make the commitment.

INFOGRAPHIC

Goldman Sachs:
Millennials Coming of Age


- In 2016, Millennials are 16-35 years old, it is the biggest generation ever. They have a different world view, expectations and priorities than previous generations.

- They have less money to spend in the years after college because of study loans. Also afterwards, they have less income an thus less spending power.

- They are putting of major purchases like luxury items, expensive cars or big houses or avoid them completely.

- Only 23% of Millennials (aged 18-31) were married and living in their own house, which means they marry later in life.

- Still 70% of Millennials (aged 18-31) want to get married someday. Median marriage age will be 30 years.
**FIELD RESEARCH / SURVEY:**

**Millennial Wedding Attitudes**

Questionnaire and short interviews in the Kalverstraat. Respondents were women between 24 and 32 years. (date: 15 February 2016)

Top 5 insights:

1) Modern brides don’t want to be ‘dressed up’ to a certain degree that they don’t look like themselves any more. They prefer a dress that reflects their personal style and makes them feel comfortable in their own skin.

2) Brides-to-be don’t want to spend a fortune on their wedding dress. Even if they say they would be willing to spend a lot their limit was around 1.200€ (which is not that much for a wedding dress). This budget was even including shoes and accessories.

3) Most of the women would prefer a white/crème/nude dress. Only a few would go for a colour.

4) They don’t like to shop the extremes for their wedding day. Neither kitsch/princess styles nor very minimal/modern - a visual survey revealed that they prefer timeless styles with modern influences.

5) Even though they like shopping online for everyday clothes, they wouldn’t necessarily buy their wedding dress online, since they could not fit it properly and they were already looking forward to the experience of buying the right dress in a bridal salon.

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**BEST QUOTES FROM SHORT INTERVIEWS**

“I am looking for a timeless gown, but not old-fashioned. Something with an original twist.”

“The most important is to have a great festivity with my friends and family that I will remember forever.”

“I would also rent a bridal dress. I refuse to spend a fortune on a dress I’ll only wear once.”

“I want a dress that reflects my personality, not just a show-piece.”

“I could image myself wearing a casual two-piece...”

“I’d rather spend my money on a great location and a good DJ.”

“It just needs to feel right! I certainly don’t want to look like somebody else on my wedding day.”

“I want to have a great party in the dress, so it should be comfortable and not restrictive.”
INTERVIEWS

Creative Brides-to-be

Interviews held at UXUS Amsterdam. (date: 23 March 2016)
Respondents were women between 26 and 34 years.

THE DRESS

• Comfort is key to every dress, women feel the most like themselves and can enjoy the day.

• Colourful dresses are a bit difficult; better are white, crème, nude dresses, some other shades like grey, beige, pastels or subtle prints are also an option.

• For women with less average body shapes, it is very hard to find a nice fitting dress in a normal bridal store.

INSPIRATION

• Pinterest is the main source of inspiration, but quite outdated, so up-to-date shoppable Pinterest boards of the whole current collection would be the best, so brides can actually buy what they see.

ACCESSORIES

• Veils are nice to wear, but very uncomfortable, but most brides still want to wear headpieces.

• Shoes matter a lot, some even buy the shoes before the dress.

THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

• You have to try the dresses and feel them on your skin, see what suits your body shape and personal style. It’s all about what feels right to the person.

• You need a space to try everything on and feel it, the dresses need to be exposed in the shop, so the women can go there and feel the fabric, no plastic wraps

• It is better to see and choose the dresses you want to try yourself, instead of a sales associate taking everything from the stock room to try

• There needs to be enough space in the retail environment for the people, who join.

• The bride-to-be wants to feel special, so it’s all about good service, the sales assistants need to be friendly and trained to not be too pushy.

• Even though it’s a high-street brand, it would be a good idea that brides still can make appointments and others, who just want to browse just pop in.

• Most brides have a vague idea about the kind of dress she wanted, but are open to try new shapes and styles as well.

• Ordering dresses is very hard to do, because the size norm varies so much.

Conclusion:

The new concept should include that:

• I have to make sure to have a big selection including different fits, colours, shapes etc.

• Shoes and other accessories need to be part of the product range, because accessories lift the look to the next level and add a personal touch

• Personal style is key for most brides, they want to feel like themselves on their wedding day

• Wedding dress shopping is a social event.

• A bridal salon is needed, because they want to try the dresses and fit them before a purchase
Telma Caldas (29)
Occupation: Architect
Nationality: Portuguese

Heidi Coleman (30)
Occupation: Graphic Designer
Nationality: British

Laurel Harple (28)
Occupation: Digital Marketing
Nationality: British

Twannie de Ridder (33)
Occupation: Operations Manager
Nationality: Dutch

Asell Yusupova (29)
Occupation: Brand Strategist
Nationality: Russian
THE TARGET GROUP

“new nuptials”

THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR ME IS TO HAVE A GREAT FESTIVITY WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS THAT I WILL REMEMBER FOREVER. (survey respondent, 2016)

I REFUSE TO SPEND A FORTUNE ON MY WEDDING DRESS, SINCE I ONLY WEAR IT ONCE...I’D RATHER SPEND THIS MONEY A GREAT LOCATION! (Survey respondent, 2016)

I AM LOOKING FOR A TIMELESS GOWN, BUT NOT OLD-FASHIONED - SOMETHING WITH AN ORIGINAL TWIST. (Survey respondent, 2016)

I WANT A DRESS THAT REFLECTS MY PERSONALITY, NOT JUST A SHOWPIECE. (Survey respondent, 2016)

(target group board: check 1, 26 February 2016)
Key conclusions: New nuptials

1. Who are they?
- The Millennial generation is the biggest ever. In 2016, they are between 15 and 35 years old.
- Millennials are less bound to traditions.
- They have less money to spend due to lower incomes and high study loans and want maximum convenience at lowest cost.
- Social connection plays a central role in their daily life (and so is social media).
- They are putting off major purchases (cars, luxury bags, house) or avoid them entirely.

2. Is marriage still a relevant concept?
- There is a changing perception of marriage amongst Western Millennials, it is not so traditional any more, but still valuable as an institution.
- The cult of wedding is outdated for modern women, but the concept of marriage itself with two people celebrating their love is still relevant.
- Millennials are not scared to make commitments (like marriage), they just try to do commitment more wisely
- 70% still want to get married.

3. How do real brides feel about contemporary wedding and THE dress?
- Modern brides-to-be want a dress that reflects their own personality and style, a dress that doesn’t make them look like a completely different person.
- They want to feel comfortable in their skin, but then even more beautiful and alluring than every other day.
- They don’t want to spend a fortune on their wedding dress: most women indicated a maximum budget of 700€-900€ for the wedding gown, including shoes and accessories.
- Even though they like shopping online for everyday clothes, they wouldn’t buy a wedding dress online, since it needs the perfect fit and just ‘feel right’ for the special day.
- Pinterest is the main source of inspiration
- They see wedding dress shopping as a social event and want to take their loves ones.
- In the bridal salon, service is key. They want to be guided when making an appointment, but also have the opportunity to stop by and browse dress styles spontaneously.
What makes the success of & Other Stories?

What is the core identity? Values, vision, mission? Who are they targeting? How do they communicate and on what channels? What is the visual identity, the look and feel? What does their store look like? What is their strategic positioning in the market?
A brand extension for & Other Stories, should "emphasize the brand’s key attributes" which are creative sophistication, affordable luxury and belief in diversity in order to "enhance consumers’ perception due to the core brand equity"

Vision
We believe that personal style tells a story.

Mission
Empowering women to create and emphasize their own style.

Emotional USP
Collections that are built around inspiring fashion stories.

Strategic USP
Ready-to-wear for high-street prices

Tribe
• She wears things that feel right to her and reflect her personality.
• She is style-conscious and confident.
• She is a creative soul and values the opportunity to emphasize her personality through carefully selected fashion items.
• She prefers quality over quantity and makes a purchase only when the item feels “perfect”
• She doesn’t want to be limited to a certain style, but enjoys experimenting with new shapes, colours and trends.
• To her, age is nothing but a number, she doesn’t necessarily want to dress “according to her age”.
• She is a strong, independent, sophisticated individual, who knows who she is and what she wants.
Colours, shapes, materials & textures

The brand identity comes to life through the unique combination of colour, materials, textures and simplistic shapes.

Collages

They love to play with different styles of collages in their visual identity. The “work in progress” attitude is reflected by this art of collage.

Logo

The handwritten logo is one of a kind and visualises what the brand stands for: originality, imagination, inventiveness and inspiration.

“The name & Other Stories reflects our ideas on telling stories. It’s an old way of saying short stories and the ‘&’ gives us the ability to share things together.”

& Other Stories Press Release (2013)
The collection is internally segmented into sub-collections based on international fashion metropolises.

They are not communicated to the customer to make them buy various pieces of different collection instead of relying on the preference of a certain city.

Stockholm
Scandinavian, minimal, clean

Paris
Country, chic, feminine

Milan
Tailored, basic, sophisticated

New York
Quirky, glamorous, bold

Berlin
Edgy, denim, young
COLLECTION

Product range

& Other Stores successfully expanded into many product categories. The product range is diverse, with the ambition to give people the opportunity to express their personality. & Other Stories aims to design lasting wardrobe treasures within a wide price range (3€ - 295€).

![Image of different product categories]

Ready-to-wear  lingerie  jewellery  accessories

shoes  bags  beauty  beachwear

[all images above: www.stories.com, 2016]

STORE

Retail environment

The store is structured like a "one-stop-shop" experience, where accessories and beauty are as important to styling as the clothes.

Collection are made to provide styling choice and salesman push you to select and mix items into your own personal taste.

The environment is "instagram-ready", there is so much stuff that would look good photographed.

[& Other Stories store in Amsterdam, 2016]
THE BRAND

& other Stories

“OUR ANNUAL LOVE STORY REFLECTS OUR BELIEF IN DIVERSITY. (& other stories newsletter)"

“WE ENABLE WOMEN TO CREATE A STORY ABOUT THEIR INDIVIDUAL STYLE. (www.stories.com)"

CREATIVE NATURE
DIVERSITY
AFFORDABLE LUXURY

“OUR BROAD PRODUCT RANGE ENABLES US TO OFFER SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY IN THE STORE. (www.stories.com)"

(target group board: check 1, 26 February 2016)
Key conclusions: & Other Stories

1. What are the criteria to choose a brand for the bridal wear brand extension?
   • Well-known fashion brand, to tap into their brand recognition.
   • High street, fast-fashion, trend-focused, so they can move faster to follow trends.
   • Retail prices have to be between 20€ and 200€, so bridal wear would be around 200€-700€.
   • The brand has to have a positive turnover currently.
   • The brand’s target group needs to be between 20 and 40.

2. What makes their success?
   • Design style varies from feminine chic to tailored
   • Fun and creativity
   • Creative nature, work in progress mentality
   • Affordable luxury for high street prices
   • Straying from trends, but timeless in design
   • “Suits everybody” mentality

3. What makes & Other Stories and bridal wear a perfect match?
   • A bridal wear concept would emphasize the brand’s key attributes of creating stories around personal style.
   • They already enjoy high awareness and a good reputation among the potential target group (25-35) who are very style-conscious and confident and wants ready-to-wear styles for a high-street price.
   • The internal segmentation into sub-collections will be taken over to the bridal wear concept:
     1. Stockholm (Scandinavian/minimal)
     2. Paris (country/chic)
     3. Milan (tailored/basic)
     4. New York (glamorous/quirky)
     5. Berlin (edgy/denim)
   • They like to provoke - always in the name of breaking down stereotypes. A less traditional take on bridal wear would reinforce this.
   • They design everything in house (two ateliers: Paris and Stockholm.
   • Being under the same roof as H&M, they have a big financial back-up to roll out the new concept.
Preliminary Research

Is there a need for a contemporary bridal salon?

What are current trends and developments in the retail area? Where is retail heading? How do other bridal wear retailers set themselves apart? What are ways to merge the online and offline experience and which brands already do this? What are inspiring retail spaces within and outside of the bridal category?
ARTICLE:
I went bridal dress shopping and here’s what I learned.

What do brides-to-be want?
• Helpful, not stoic assistants
• To touch the dresses and the fabrics
• To feel special
• To get value for their money
• Some choice in styles and sizes
• To have a dress that fits their style

What don’t they want?
• Only being able to enter a store by appointment and long waiting times
• Only a few dresses to choose from
• An assistant that doesn’t get their style and tries to push them into a dress that makes them feel uncomfortable

ARTICLE:
It’s all about the customer.

Customers:
• Consumers today want a product range that suits their needs perfectly, they have very high expectations.
• They switch back and forth across channels.
• They do online research but purchase offline and vice versa.
• Nearly 40% of offline customers have gathered information online before they become active offline.
• They are expecting a seamless shopping experience.

Online + Offline:
• There is an increased requirement for exciting product presentation to surprise and excite the customer both online and offline
• Omni-channelling is key, interesting crossovers make the difference - Developing a comprehensive brand story with its own product design, graphic, packaging and communication
• Good presentation of the brand both online and offline

Service
• For a well-functioning retail environment, you need brand ambassadors.
• Good service is when you aren’t aware that it’s happening.
• The best brand story is useless unless the staff and the POS don’t live it.

Conclusions:
The new concept needs to:
• stage themes in-store and tell stories
• digital presentations/screens
• implementation of the brand concept in the store design and the visual merchandising
• excellent customer service in-store
• seamless omni-channel experience online and offline
ARTICLE: Personal Shopping Services

• Personal shopping apps are on the rise
• Product is paramount, but in some ways it just gets you in the game.
• It is more important to focus on superior customer service nowadays.
• People are reaching out for some input when they search fashion products.

ARTICLE: The Future of Retail is the End of Wholesale

• The store as media: best place to articulate brand story, excite consumers about products and funnel their purchase to any number of channels, devices and distributors.
• Sensory and experimental quality of brick-and-mortar: the experience is the product.
• Allowing space for in-store media and interactivity with the product.

ARTICLE: The Evolution of the Internet of Things

• Distinction between on-and-offline is blurring
• E-commerce has led to more focussed and impactful physical store identities
• Stores have become part of the brands’ communication and sales strategy
ARTICLE:
Technology helps Brides say Yes to the Dress

- Using technology to research clients in advance before the appointment
- The flow in the store needs to be thought through, checking out and paying with portable iPads prevents long queues.
- Streamlining payments with mPOS in the dressing area.

ARTICLE:
Lover.ly Is Bridging The Gap Between The Online And Offline Wedding Industry

- Brides discover bridal brands from their favourite blog or social media accounts
- Pinterest and Instagram are a digital destination for brides-to-be, this is where the taste-makers of wedding styles are active
- Digital one-stop for brides: content, logistics, inspiration, 24 hours support, packaging, labelling,...
- Only 12% of sales take place online
- Modern brides research bridal brands and inspiration about 15-20 hours a week online
- They want somebody who guides their journey of planning the perfect wedding

Conclusions:
- To reach the best level of service, the sales associate needs to understand the individual style and needs of the customers.
- Encouraging social media engagement with specific visual merchandise.
- In-store technology to save and review dress options in the right sizes that were tried beforehand.
EXAMPLE

In-store Technology: Digital Changing Room Mirror

• Display mirror at Rebecca Minkoff
• Interaction to request assistant help
• Change lighting in dressing room
• Save sizes and colours of fitted gown
• Videos and inspiration
• Connected to social media

Conclusions:

• Good option to include in new bridal wear boutique, not virtual fitting rooms, but rather a help to have an easy and organised fitting session.

• Mirror can take pictures, save sizes and styles of fitted dresses and gives styling options that match the gown.

EXAMPLE

Omni-channel retailing: Styling assistant apps

• Tinder-style styling apps are a recent trend in e-commerce, improving product discovery on mobile
• Personalised offers and serving individual taste in clothing

Conclusions:

• Doesn’t work for the new concept, since the clients know what suits them anyway, they already have an idea of what they want to wear.

• I need to look for a more inspiring way to make them discover new products than this app mock-up I created as a try-out (see right).
Unconventional Bridal Boutique: Mociun White

- A jewellery designer in New York expanded into Bridal wear and opened an appointment-only bridal boutique with custom made jewellery, home wares and gowns for brides.
- Encouraging the brides not to wear white on their wedding day with the “not so bridal bridal collection”.
- “We don’t want a little girl’s dream but the dream of an adult woman, who is really into design.”

Unconventional Bridal Boutique: Reformation

- By-appointment pop-up—which may stick around permanently if it’s well-received.
- The simple space features white walls, a white carpet, natural light, and subtle plant life.
- Spacious dressing rooms with multiple mirrors.

“The studio is designed to be a fun and meaningful experience for the bride and her bridal party.”

Yael Aflalo, Reformation founder

Conclusions:

- There are already a handful of innovative, unconventional bridal boutiques out there, but only in the US.
- These studios have a very different, less inspiring look than what & Other Stories would create.
Key conclusions: Retail space

1. Is there still a need for brick-and-mortar bridal salons?
   • Even though the journey starts online, brides-to-be want the experience and try on many dresses to find the one that feels right.
   • Assistance makes the difference: women want someone to guide them through the collection and the many different style options.

2. Any market gaps?
   • Modern brides are looking for alternative bridal salons with a personal, more casual and budget-friendly attitude.
   • More than one product category is a good opportunity for growth (like bridesmaid dresses and accessories).
   • A convincing digital identity is essential, because the search for a bridal dress starts online nowadays.

3. What are the trends, developments in retail?
   • Omni-channelling: Customers today switch back and forth across channels. For example they do bridal research online, then try on dresses in store, then compare prices online and finally make a purchase in store.
   • Social media infusion: Brides-to-be are in generally very active on social media. The new concept needs to find a way to grab their attention with the new retail concept and make them create the (visual) content and share it.
   • In-store technology: Digital presentations/posters implement elements of online identity into the store. Technology can be used to create a memorable trip.
   • Service: Service is what makes the main difference to e-commerce. Brides want to be taken by the hand and be in dialogue with an expert, who guides the purchase form beginning to end.
Yes, there is definitely a huge opportunity for & Other Stories to tap into the increasing demand for contemporary, affordable bridal wear!

Here is why:

Relevance
Changing attitudes towards marriage in the 21st century: modern brides-to-be are steering clear from traditions and conventions concerning their marriage and want to spend less on the dress.

Key Insights

• There are already a few high-street brands selling affordable bridal wear (The Reformation, ASOS, J.Crew, Needle&Thread), which grow incredibly fast and make huge revenue.

• Modern brides are looking for bridal styles that reflect their personality, instead of functioning as a show-piece.

• Even though the journey starts online when brides look for inspiration, only 12% would buy their dress online. They want to have the fitting experience with their friends and try on the dress to make sure it feels right.

• & Other Stories and bridal wear are a perfect match because it would emphasize the brand’s key message of creating stories around personal style.

Challenges in Phase 2

• Create out-of-the box story-telling with bridal styles

• Rethink the outdated perception of a bridal salon, while implementing current retail trends/innovation in the store

• Translate & Other Stories’ visual signature style into a bridal wear concept whilst staying true to the core

• Mapping the omni-channel customer journey and simplify and modernise the journey of buying the dress for brides-to-be

• Conveying a feeling of individuality even though the brand is offering off-the-rack gowns
Phase 2: Concepting

The aim in phase 2 is to create a concept for an affordable bridal wear brand extension for the high-street brand & Other Stories.
KEY CONCLUSIONS AND CONCEPTUAL STARTING POINTS

How can & Other Stories best tap into the increasing demand for contemporary and affordable bridal wear?

1. The Bridal Wear Market

What are trends and developments in bridal wear?

Obvious market gap: contemporary bridal styles for high-street prices 150€-700€ for a dress.

Starting point: Offering the customer affordable and unconventional bridal styles, straying from fashion yet timeless in design.

2. Target Group

What are the target group’s thoughts and opinions on bridal wear and what does the customer journey look like?

Embracing personal style: Brides-to-be often have difficulties to find a dress that fits their own personality.

Starting point: A New Chapter will guide the brides journey of finding the right dress while embracing their personal style.

3. The Brand: & Other Stories

What is & Other Stories’ value proposition for a new bridal wear concept?

& Other Stories essence: creating stories around personal style.

Starting point: Including many product categories like headpieces, shoes, lingerie and jewellery for brides to create their own personal story by mixing various items.

4. The Retail

Is there a need for a contemporary bridal salon?

Even though the search for inspiration starts online for modern brides-to-be, most purchases are still made offline. They want to fit the dress to ensure it feels right.

Starting point: A physical retail store is essential and A New Chapter needs to rethink the outdated perception of a bridal boutique.
GETTING STARTED

The new brand name

• Refers back to & Other Stories logo because of the handwriting and also because of the contextual relation with story-telling.

• Implies a new beginning after the wedding as a metaphor for writing a new chapter together after tying the knot.

• Is not too obviously bridal wear related, but one gets the connection immediately when you know about the new concept.

• The additional ‘by & Other Stories’ line ensures the connection to the mother brand.

MOTHER BRAND LOGO

& other stories

NEW LOGO

A new Chapter

FINAL LOGO

A new Chapter

By & Other Stories
CONCEPTING

Creative concept starting points

1) Creative idea:
A bridal one-stop-shop, a destination for brides to gather inspiration and get everything they need to pull off a memorable look.

2) Creative idea:
A brand that encourages brides to not abandon their personal style and to truly look like themselves on their big day. Personal style is celebrated so fervently in real life, but oddly it’s often disguised when it comes to weddings. Daring to think outside the “white box” is something many brides want to do – but often feel it’s more trouble than it’s worth.

Conclusions:
• This second one is the creative concept I was looking for, based on a consumer insight and supported by the obvious market gap and trends in society and fashion.
• I can easily combine these two, since one is more focussed on the brand USP and the other idea on retail.

Concept:
We encourage brides to embrace their personal style and truly look like themselves on the great day.
INSPIRATION

Collage Creation

After looking at multiple collage artists at and being highly inspired, I decided to implement collages in the visualisation of A New Chapter.

• Collages will help me to add original work to the booklets, since I am not planning on making a photo shoot besides retail.

• It makes it easier to balance the “not-so-bridal bridal feel”.

• It is a great way to visualise the different styles of the sub-collections.

• Design principles for collages: Sensual, yet modern, not too abstract, influences of modern art, feminine with quirky edge, freshness.
VISUALISATION

Subcollection collages

Each of the five city-based sub-collections has a very distinctive look and feel that needs to be tied together by A New Chapter.

- Paris (country/chic)
- Milan (tailored/basic)
- Stockholm (Scandinavian/minimal)
- New York (glamorous/bold)
- Berlin (edgy/industrial)
GETTING CREATIVE

Key visual

The most important collage that represents my concept and will be on the cover of the concept book took me some time to get it right. Landon Metz’ abstract art was a great inspiration, but the girl in the first version looked too religious, because of the skin color and the veil.

The bride in the final version has the fresh look that inspired me a lot.

Say ‘I do’ in a dress that’s very you!
Creative concept

Personal style is celebrated so fervently in real life, but it’s often disguised when it comes to weddings. Modern-day brides have difficulties to find a dress that emphasizes their own style and doesn’t break the budget of a casual, confidential celebration.

USP

Offbeat nuptial styles for the aisle and beyond.

Vision

We believe that personal style tells a story.

Mission

Empowering women to create and emphasize their own style.

Values

Belief in diversity
Affordable luxury
Creative sophistication

The Tribe

A New Chapter is tailored to the individual needs of modern brides-to-be. Between 25 and 35 years old, they are steering clear from traditions and conventions concerning their wedding.

They are optimistic, social and confident women, who know exactly who they are and what they want to achieve in life. Having a sense of humour and creativity in common, they are highly influenced by the world of social media, in touch with their personal style and keen on reflecting this.
Phase 3: Execution

With A New Chapter’s creative concept as a starting point, I will focus on designing a contemporary retail environment, a one-stop bridal destination for women seeking a more modern approach to marriage.
1. The Concept Book

Includes the creative concept, the brand essence, USP, vision, mission, values and the target group as well as the tone of voice and look and feel.

2. The Strategy Book

Explains the brand extension’s strategy, main target group insights concerning the communication strategy and the complete marketing mix, including the customer journey and online presence.

3. The Retail Book

Covers the retail concept, all relevant target group insights and gives detailed visualisation of the modern bridal salon.

Challenges in Phase 3

- Staying true to & Other Stories’ current look and feel, while innovating in the new retail store at the same time
- Including the online part of the “shopping experience”
- Finding the right balance between not communicating ‘bridal wear’, but letting consumers know what the concept is about
INSPIRATION

Artists and painters

The British painter Landon Metz served a great inspiration for my creations. The fresh and unconventional mixed colour palette on canvas reflects the creative sophistication of the brand that I want to show.

For the visual style of A New Chapter, art served as a great further inspiration. The collages by Rose Marie Auberson for example in their intriguing simplicity visualise what I envisioned for the brand extension.

Also the idea to include hands and forearms in vintage-inspired black and white style, derived from the idea to add a more atmospheric retro element.
TRANSLATION

Collage creation

Of course, the key visual and the collages are not enough to fill three booklets, so I decided to create more collages that capture the brand essence and reflect the creative concept in the best way. The following examples show a selection of the best collages from the booklets.
Why I want to focus on retail?

- This is where I can add the most newness to and innovation to the bridal wear market.
- The brick-and-mortar store is the place to go for brides, only 12% buy the dress online.
- It is very hard to innovate in the online/inspiration part of the experience because websites like lover.ly already offer great multi-brand inspiration and planning platform also for budget brides.
- ...and because I’m good at it, enjoy the process and can show my strengths.

Retail starting points

In line with the core value of diversity and a contemporary approach to bridal wear, my aim is to rethink the current perception of a bridal salon as an outdated, wannabe luxurious store, overstuffed with white polyester and tacky tulle. I want to guide the women’s exciting journey in the most inspiring way and design a contemporary “one-stop bridal destination”.

Visual hook

Creative atelier/studio with focus on personal style and diversity.

Wedding = blank canvas
Accessories and dress = colours to paint it

“Your wedding is your blank canvas, paint it your way.”
RETAIL LOOK & FEEL

The Sofa
A simple, high-quality brown leather sofa, for maximum comfort. Needs to look used, but not torn apart.

The Racks
Hanging racks are multifunctional and look lightweight with a subtle luxurious vibe.

The Floor
Wooden panels for a cosy loft atmosphere, and some inserts of some areas with terrazzo details.

The Displays
An atelier table made from light, natural wood, topped off with a marble surface.
The Walls
Brick walls for the ultimate loft feel make colour contrasts pop.

The Window
The clean, rectangular shape goes perfectly with a bright and airy loft-like space.

The Shelves
Shelves are made from matte brass with colourful marble shelf surfaces. The clash in style with wooden board details adds excitement.

The Plants
Small succulent plants in concrete pots for the windowsills and shelves are mixed with tall fig trees.
The Chairs

These chairs look comfortable and subtly luxurious, inviting to lounge during a fitting session.

The Lights

Studio lights are also used in & Other Stories interior, they add to the creative studio feel.

Changing Room

I did not find a matching dressing room, so I will combine these elements in the model.

The Details

Hooks on the walls for extra display opportunities and a floor-to-ceiling mirror adds to the depth of the room.
INSPIRATION

Architecture collages

The Portuguese architecture Atelier Fala has a very distinctive way of visualising their projects. Reduced to colours, textures and light and shadow, these visuals convey a lot of mood.

Conclusion:

- Even though the colours make the pictures very interesting, they look a bit flat and depth is missing.

- That is why I will build scale models for my final retail collages and photograph these in interesting angles, to add more depth and even more atmosphere, whilst still keeping it very simple.
**MOODBOARD**

**Colours and materials**

The creative atelier feel should be supported by matching materials and colours. Fresh, and exclusive yet still very approachable and young should be the vibe they are conveying.

- a mix of light and soft structures
- work-in-progress look
- white with splashes of colour
- many plants!
- arty feel
- low key/unconventional yet hints of exclusivity
- multifunctional
- atelier/studio feel
- bright, airy space
- not overly ‘designed’
- affordable luxury
- fresh & clean

I need more light, untreated wood as a contrast to the white walls and for a more cosy, comfortable vibe!
VIEW 1:
Dressing Room Area

I built a scale model (1:20) and photographed the inside in the right lighting to get the light and shadow effect. The small pictures show before and the big picture my photoshopped visual.

In the first version of the mock-up the retail space looks a lot more empty than the final version.

The composition is the same, but I added another couch, a carpet, a city environment in the windows, more plants and a few other details.
VIEW 2:
Main Shopping Area

Another scale model enabled me to show the viewer a glimpse into the small patio. The desk in the foreground gives a hint of the bridal story display, without going into too many details.

In the first version of the mock-up, the background in the patio was not added yet. This adds a lot more depth to the final composition.

I decided to not add more details to the table display to keep the composition very simple and not distract from the colours and the woman.
VIEW 3:  
Dressing Room Area

Another scale model of an atelier table enabled me to create an authentic looking mock-up of the bridal stories display.

The final version of the bridal stories display has a lot more atmosphere, mainly due to the wall and the fairy lights photoshopped in the picture.
VIEW 4:
Dressing Room Area

I built a scale model (1:20) and photographed the inside in the right lighting to get the light and shadow effect. The small pictures show before and the big picture my photoshopped visual.

VIEW 5:
Dressing Room Area

I built a scale model (1:20) and photographed the inside in the right lighting to get the light and shadow effect. The small pictures show before and the big picture my photoshopped visual.
VIEW 6:  
Floorplan Overview

The floor-plan sketch is created by the architect Mauro M. in ArchiCAD, based on my sketches. I then photoshopped textures and details into the environment, to make it visually more appealing.

It was the biggest challenge to make the floor-plan collage visually similar to the other retail collages.

(1) Entrance area: displayed Bridal Stories, clothes and accessories mixed

(2) Shelf area for accessory display

(3) Dressing room area

(4) Small tiled patio with plants
DETAIL VIEWS:
Interior close-ups
How to bring more innovation to the concept?

The best way to do this is by combining the online and offline experience!

- It gives the brand more reach.
- Smart to make use of the high social media activity of the target group. They want to share and exchange thoughts, opinions, and inspiration.
- To bridge the gap between online inspiration and offline purchase and to guide the whole customer journey across channels.
- Social media is a great way to actually tell stories.

It’s about the story of each individual bride and her journey from inspiration to purchase.
**INNOVATION IDEA 1:**

**Interactive mirror walls**

**The idea: An easy, memorable shopping experience**

An interactive, connected mirror in the fitting room can take pictures and make short movies of the bride, then saves them for a certain time with notes (of certain dress qualities, the size of the fitted dress etc).

Brides can digitally access the whole store inventory on this interactive mirror, to find more dresses they'd like to fit. These mirrors could also have additional functions like changing the lighting in the dressing room and calling for a styling assistant through one finger tap.

This mock-up visualises what is shown on the mirror:
INNOVATION IDEA 2:
Authentic Bridal Stories

The idea: Making real weddings come to life

On the website, but also on small in-store displays, visuals of real weddings are shown, including short film sequences of intimate moments make the wedding story come to life.

Next to the display, the dress/shoes/jewellery of the bride are exposed with some little personal quotes.
The Bridal Stories on the homepage of www.anewchapter.com give an insight into the location, the party and the styling of a very personal wedding. Little quotes make the story even more authentic.

“Our overall aesthetic was relaxed and romantic with an air of ease.”
Authentic Bridal Stories

It is very important that the bridal stories are translated in the store in an inspiring way as well.

Framed posters function as POS material and are casually put on the atelier tables, while everything the bride wore on her special day is carefully arranged around this.

A digital screen shows moving images of the bride's wedding, very intimate moments, for example during the preparation for the ceremony.
INNOVATION IDEA 3:

Pinterest Inspiration Boards In-store

The idea: Evaluating personal Pinterest boards during the appointment with the stylist.

The idea is not existing yet in any bridal store I know, but I already got confirmation in the focus group at UXUS that brides are using mainly Pinterest for their bridal inspiration and would welcome an opportunity like this.

Also during the interview with the owner of the bridal salon Delice in Amsterdam, it turned out that brides often bring their own images. But isn’t it much more convenient when they don’t have to print anything but can just browse Pinterest??

Innovative elements of the concept

• **Curated collections:** Creating a coherent and compelling assortment for the customers, for example through the bridal stories to ensure a memorable shopping experience and maximum inspiration.

• **Social Retailing:** Creating a place for social gatherings, a place for fun & relaxation at the same time.

• **Online-Offline Mashup:** Seamlessly blending the online and offline experience together, allowing the customers to shop on their terms. Online tools, like the iPad for Pinterest boards, are adopted for in-store use and the Bridal Stories are shown both online and in-store in 3D.
RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS:
Omni-channel customer journey

1) Need to respond quickly to individual customer needs

- Which channels in which situation? Mobile is often dominant!
- Many different touch-points: which channels do they prefer?
- Best and most convenient shopping experience
- Engaging users along multiple channels requires the creation of a consistent experience that fulfils on brand promises and is appropriate to each digital platform
- Create content that they are encouraged to share or create content themselves

2) Customers swipe from one app to the next

- What are new ways to engage potential customers?
- Figure out where your customer is searching for you and make sure you are active on those channels
- There is no such thing a an offline customer!

3) Multi Channel Customer Journey:
1. Discovery of brand’s services and products
2. Engagement with brand experiences (on and offline)
3. Conversions
4. Reward and loyalty programs

- Creation of behavioural personas
- Consumer needs are directed to the context of specific situations, the type of technology and channel varies
- Scenario-based customer journeys: a day in the life of a typical user by recreating likely events that bring customers in contact with the brand

4) Guiding the customer

- A journey as a story with multiple touch-points as chapters
- Each chapter guides the customer to the next one
- Power of brand storytelling, actionable take-aways, real content
- Journeys aren’t linear: customers never do exactly what you expect them to do, so it’s about dynamically react to the moves as the customer makes them instead of planning ahead
- Don’t frustrate or confuse the customer at critical moments in their journey!
**NEXT STEPS:**

**Mapping the customer journey**

- Need to understand how customers are engaging with the brand, when and on which channels to identify key moments in the customer journey.
- I need to create behavioural persona and map their potential customer journey.
- I can also layer many existing channels (app, website, social media, retail etc.) rather than focusing on one or two of them.

**GRAPHIC**

**The non-linear customer journey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspiration</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
<th>Post-sale engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>discover A New Chapter</td>
<td>get personal advice</td>
<td>purchase a dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compete to competitors</td>
<td>create wedding moodboards</td>
<td>Add extra items like a veil or shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv, 29 (bride-to-be)</td>
<td></td>
<td>give feedback on customer satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara, 26 (bridesmaid)</td>
<td></td>
<td>share wedding story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe, 33 (bride-to-be)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these three behavioural persona, I created an example of a non-linear customer journey, which shows how many different channels customers touch during the journey of finding the right wedding style.
The Bridal Customer Journey

The exemplatory customer journey of Liv, 29 years old, a bride-to-be.

1. Research
   - Browse Pinterest + Instagram for inspiration + mood boards

2. Brand Awareness
   - There she suddenly sees a beautiful image of a dress from the latest collection

3. Inspiration
   - She visits the website and discovers the desired dress for her wedding

4. Desire
   - Wow, that is exactly what I want to wear on my wedding day, but I'd rather try it on.

5. Appointment
   - She makes an appointment with the store assistant

6. Store Visit
   - A New Chapter: They talk about the bridal story and the desired dress

7. Conversion
   - She eventually buys a dress, but is inspired by the bridal story displays in store

8. Social Media Engagement
   - Finally, she happily posts a picture of this funny outfit on social media using the new chapter

CUSTOMER JOURNEY
The Bridal Customer Journey

The first version looked uninspiring, I added more personal touch to the journey with the colour and the vintage hands.

In this designed customer journey in the style of A New Chapter brand, I merged the ‘Research’ and ‘Brand Awareness’ and ‘Desire’ Phase. Also the steps ‘Store Visit’ and ‘Conversion’ become one to simplify the visualisation.
CHECK 3:
Green Light

Shown during the Red/Green check:

- Concept Book, Strategy Book, Retail Book
- Boards showing the concept idea, the customer journey and the retail
- iPad with homepage mockup showing the online bridal stories
- Processbooks

FINALISATION

- A solid pass, well thought through project, relevance proven, creativity shown and executed on a professional level.

- To get a high grade, I still need to show slightly more innovation in the retail / customer journey sector.

- I still need to create the mini-processbook revise the booklets and prepare the oral and 3D-presentation on the exam day.

Feedback:
A little extra branding...

In the last weeks, I executed a few packaging and POS and communication ideas.

The final 3D presentation

For the final presentation, I want to keep it very simple. Sophisticated, yet with a creative feel - just like the brand. The three boards will be frames in light wood and I will add a few details to evoke the same feel like with the bridal stories in the retail collages.
Source list

Articles (online and offline)

Phase 1 + 2


Phase 3


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**Art**

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Metz, L. (2012) On Water. Dye on canvas, 95 × 77 cm

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Simply Love. Dutch Issue. (January 2016)
Sportsweat Illustrated. German Issue. (February 2016)

**Field research**

Expert interviews at Wedding Fair, Zuiderkerk, February 2016
Individual interviews and focus group at UXUS with five brides (-to-be), Amsterdam, February 2016
Interview at Delice Bruidsmode, Amsterdam, April 2016
Interview at I Do! I Do!, Amsterdam, April 2016
Street survey in Amsterdam, Centrum, February 2016
Wedding Fair Amsterdam, Zuiderkerk, February 2016

**Videos**


**Websites**

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www.and-other-stories.tumblr.com
www.brides.com
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A new chapter