



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

**Master Thesis**

**Construction of Identity and Nightwear Consumption:  
A Qualitative Study to Explore Danish Females**

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## **Abstract**

The Master Thesis contributes to the existing literature on consumers' attitudes and perceptions of the self, and tries to fill in the gap in consumer studies on the inner wear products. The purpose of this study is to explore and investigate Danish female consumers' perceptions and behaviors towards a privately consumed product – nightwear. According to the literature review, little research has been devoted to this particular topic. The research was a small-scale exploratory study of 22 women in Denmark. The research was a small-scale exploratory study of 22 women in Denmark. The age of interviewees varied from 22 to 59 years old. In this study, the nuances and ambiguities around describing a feminine woman are uncovered by discussing what constitutes Danish female consumers' evaluation of nightwear. There were several major themes identified.

It was found out that the majority of Danish females interviewed consider nightwear to be a basic T-shirt which should be both comfortable and practical. A number of women start using nightwear only for practical reasons discussed in the paper, otherwise they tend to avoid buying any kind of sleepwear. The findings show that the majority of women avoid wearing nightwear found in shops due to the same reason of comfort. Some respondents stated that they would rather spend money on publicly consumed rather than privately consumed products, as the latter cannot be seen or noticed by others as much as other apparel products. Meanwhile, according to some interviewees sensual nightwear might be used as a means to recover while going through difficult life situations or used as a tool to enhance the strength of relationships.

It was discovered that the majority of Danish female consumers interviewed do not use sleepwear as a medium to express themselves or their feminine sides, as wearing sleepwear brings some unattractive values. Femininity by Danish women interviewed is rather expressed in their behaviors which might be considered as masculine traits, implying that some masculinity is present in Danish women's femininity understandings. This could possibly explain why many Danish females choose to sleep in an old worn-out T-shirt and consider it unimportant to dress up for their significant others for the night. Some social and cultural factors of the Danish society are presented in order to possibly explain the findings.

The findings suggest that consumers' attitudes towards a product and their perceptions of the selves are complex phenomena which can affect fashion and apparel business. The findings provide implications and insights for fashion manufacturing companies which strive to develop their products and business in Denmark and probably in other northern countries. Before developing their products and businesses fashion practitioners should take into consideration a females' preferences for clothes and perceptions of femininity of a particular culture. Further research on this topic focusing on different products, samples and countries are recommended.

# IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	6
1. 1. Problem Statement .....	9
1. 2. Delimitation.....	10
1. 3. Structure of Thesis .....	11
2. Conceptual Framework .....	12
2. 1. Producing Identity and Consumption.....	14
2. 2. Gender and Gendering .....	17
2. 3. Femininity and Sexuality .....	19
2. 4. Nightwear and Clothes.....	22
3. Methodology .....	26
3. 1. Subjectivism.....	26
3. 2. Social Constructionism .....	27
3. 3. Research Design.....	31
3. 4. Research Sample .....	33
3.4.1. Qualitative Survey .....	33
3.4.2. Expert Interviews .....	34
3.4.3. Participant Interviews.....	34
3.5. Methodology of Analysis .....	39
4. Analysis.....	41
4. 1. Attitudes towards Nightwear.....	43
4. 2. Construction of Identity .....	50
4. 3. New Results and Theoretical Contribution .....	57
5. Assessing Qualitative Data and Limitations .....	62
6. Conclusions .....	64
7. Recommendations for Further Research .....	66
8. Bibliography:.....	67
9. Appendices .....	74

## 1. Introduction

The world has become much closer as people have become interconnected through a vast network of transnational relations and interlinked patterns of consumption (Wes, 1996; Maynard, 2004; Westerfield, 2004; Shaikh, 2006; Okpara, 2008; Bettignies & Lepineux, 2009). Maynard (2004) argues that although the world seems to be concerned with such issues, for example, global warming, refugee and migration problems, apparel industries might seem insignificant. Yet, the apparel and textile industries are the largest source of industrial employment in the world (Dickerson, 1999; Maynard, 2004). Dickerson (1999) shows that almost all nearly two hundred nations produced textiles and apparel and to some degree contributed to the world apparel market.

The global knit and underwear market is one of the segments of apparel industries. Global Industry Analysts (2011) in their report claim that this segment of the market is highly competitive and fragmented ([www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)), consisting of small and medium enterprises with no dominant national or worldwide brands, for private labels also have considerable power in the market (GIA, 2011). GIA (2011) also claim that this product segment is seen as the most dynamic and vibrant, where the sales have grown even when sales in other product segments of the market decreased ([www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)).

General economic conditions have had an impact on the market's long-term prospects. The recent economic crisis in 2008-09 negatively impacted retail sales on the whole market (GIA, 2011). However, GIA (2011) claims that the essential nature of the product's utility helped this segment of the market to be more resilient to the economic crisis than the larger clothing industry and rebound back on growth track by the year 2010. The segment is forecast to grow at the fastest compounded annual rate through 2015 ([www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)).

According to Wood (2010), the knit underwear and nightwear market nowadays is driven by changing consumer lifestyles, transforming style and fashion trends, innovations in fabric usage, new and innovative fabric/fiber developments, and shifting consumer preferences for more sophisticated and stylish innerwear. This demand for unique products as well as style and comfort in women's clothing may sustain the expansion of the market (Wood, 2010; [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)).

Last year, I was accepted for an internship in a Greek nightwear and home wear firm *Vamp! S.A.*,

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

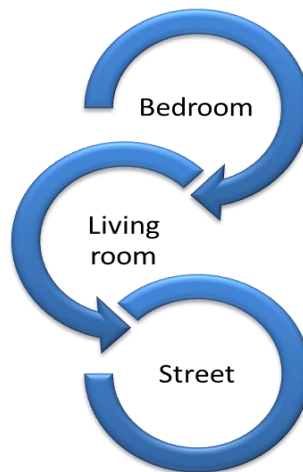
and was responsible for the Danish nightwear market. *Vamp! S. A.* is a Greek firm with over 30 years history producing high-quality nightwear and home wear for women and men. *Vamp! S.A.* is run by a workforce of more than 70 people, having a distribution network of about 1000 stores in Greece, South-East and Central Europe. *Vamp! S. A.* sells its goods through sales agents to retail stores which are only lingerie boutiques ([vampfashion.com](http://vampfashion.com)). Kostas Tsamados, the managing director and the main shareholder of *Vamp! S.A.*, shared that currently the company is trying to enter new markets, such as England, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and Denmark (see Appendix 4). Kostas Tsamados answers comply with the information on the market described above. He also stated that the nightwear industry, as other clothing spheres, has been affected by the recent economic crisis, however, the up and down market fluctuations are not significant (see Appendix 4). Moreover, according to him, the competition among firms today is more fierce, as nightwear manufacturers have to differentiate their products not only from the competition but also from rival users, like day wear clothing manufacturers (see Appendix 4). As far as Denmark is concerned, during the internship in the company, some nightwear market research has been done in order to understand Danish female customers' preferences by visiting managers of lingerie boutiques in all regions of Denmark and participating in such exhibitions as CIFF, Copenhagen (Copenhagen International Fashion Fair; <http://ciff.dk> ), MODEmessen, Vejle ([www.nordfair.dk](http://www.nordfair.dk)), and the findings were analysed in the 9<sup>th</sup> semester project at Aalborg University (see CD). Additionally, the attempt was made to find some retail stores and sell goods in Denmark (see Appendices of 9<sup>th</sup> semester project). However, the sales statistics (see Appendix 5) show that Danish female consumers did not express much interest in the company's production and have different preferences for nightwear and home wear than the other countries mentioned above, as Kostas Tsamados says “[...] *the Danish market has proved as a difficult one. [...] we saw that our colorful collections with our Mediterranean style weren't so attractive for the women. Most of them prefer more simple patterns, with pastels colors and a more minimal aesthetics*” (see Appendix 4). This knowledge raised an interest to investigate Danish females as consumers of nightwear and to really understand why such differences in sleepwear preferences exist.

Denmark was chosen by the company strategically. According to Kostas Tsamados (Appendix 4) Denmark's geographical location with easy access to other Scandinavian countries, Northern Germany, the Baltic States and other parts of Eastern Europe means that the country is well situated as a centre for activities in these areas. Denmark is known as the country where many

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

European firms have benefited by locating their Northern European distribution centers (Kroman, 2007), thus choosing Denmark as their Northern central point *Vamp! S.A.* should benefit. Denmark also often serves as a test market for products which are later to be introduced on the international market (Kroman 2007).

Now products of the nightwear/intimate apparel market should be discussed. According to some scholars (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001; Rahman et al., 2008), pyjamas are often considered a basic commodity or homogenous product with little generic differentiation. However, Brown (1993) and Baudrillard (1998) argue that the meaning of pyjamas has gone through a process of re-signification in the twenty-first century, and consumer perceptions and attitudes toward pyjamas seem to be quite different in today's consumer culture. The growing trend of wearing innerwear as outerwear has richly benefited the lingerie and nightwear market ([www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)), meaning that people started wearing pyjamas for many reasons and they do not necessarily wear them only in their bedrooms. For instance, Alleyne (2010) claims that pyjamas started to be viewed as “emotional and physical comfort” at the same time creating the so-called “new lounge” culture. It is also not surprising today to see individuals walking down the high streets in pyjamas ([www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk); [www.mirror.co.uk](http://www.mirror.co.uk)). However, it should be noted that although the nowadays consumer culture has appreciated the versatility of pyjamas, some people may never buy or ever wear pyjamas in their lifetimes. The self-created Figure 1 below demonstrates the evolving process of wearing pyjamas and making it a versatile clothing item:



**Figure 1.** Self-created model of the evolving process of pyjamas becoming a versatile clothing item

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

The concepts of *pyjamas* and *nightwear/sleepwear* should be addressed and explained, as not to misguide the reader what kind of consumer product is under investigation in this thesis. *Nightwear* is defined as “*clothes worn in bed or while preparing to go to bed*” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>) which can be any kind of clothes, ranging from boxers and a T-shirt to a luxurious nightgown. *Pyjamas* is defined as “*soft, loose clothing that is worn in bed and consists of trousers and a type of shirt*” (ibid), meaning that pyjamas is a kind of nightwear worn to sleep, however, as discussed above, nowadays, pyjamas can be a versatile clothing item. In this thesis the concept of *nightwear* (*sleepwear* for a synonym) is used including all kinds of clothes females use for sleeping.

Only a small number of studies was found that have investigated intimate apparel such as pyjamas (Rahman et al. 2008), lingerie (Bye and Reiley 2003; Jantzen, 2006), or sleepwear (Labhard and Morris 1994). However, studies on sleepwear and pyjamas found were quantitative and focused on young female students. Results of a recent study on pyjamas (Rahman et al., 2008) show that for female Chinese consumers pyjamas' functional values (comfort, quality and fit) are more important than the symbolic ones (brand name and country-of-origin). Another study on sleepwear (Labhard and Morris 1994) in the USA revealed similar results: 82.5% participants rated comfort as the most important feature (style/design - 40.4% and fit – 35.1%), while brand name was rated the least important attribute. This thesis may be seen as aiming to provide additional input to the knowledge on consumption of pyjamas to support further studies. This thesis is also one small step taken to fill one of the most obvious research gaps within consumer studies on the innerwear product – pyjamas. The findings may provide implications and insights for fashion companies which strive to develop their products and businesses in Denmark and to some extent in other northern countries.

### 1. 1. Problem Statement

During the internship in the company, although due to security reasons I was allowed to use only general sales statistics for a year, the market research project (9<sup>th</sup> semester) on the Danish market approved by the company and Aalborg university (see CD) showed that there are differences in Danish consumers' preferences towards nightwear in contrast to sleepwear *Vamp!S.A.* firm specializes in. The nightwear that Danish females, northern consumers, like seems to be different from the one a southern company from Greece produces, and Kostas Tsamados, as discussed, also highlights these differences. This study, therefore, aims to further explore and really



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

understand existing differences in Danish female consumers' preferences for nightwear. By using qualitative approach the thesis is going to test to what extent women's perceptions of the selves influence the decision to choose particular sleepwear.

The thesis hereby seeks to answer the main research question:

**How do Danish women construct their identities through nightwear?**

In order to answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were distinguished:

1. What are Danish females' attitudes towards nightwear?
2. How Danish females perceive *femininity* and *feminine* identity?

It should be noted in the beginning of the research, however, that the study focuses on qualitative interviews of 22 Danish females who agreed to be interviewed between the age of 26-59, as I aimed to speak to a broad range of women in order to understand attitudes and behavior towards nightwear and their perceptions of the selves.

### **1. 2. Delimitation**

In my opinion, the topic of this thesis encourages many interesting research perspectives. However, I limited this study to Danish female consumers, as I am interested in women's attitudes towards nightwear and their perceptions of the selves in order to grasp deeper understandings of differences that were found after having tried to enter the Danish nightwear market. I concentrate only on women from 26 until 59 years old, although young Danish women's (until the age 26) opinions on nightwear could have benefited this study. In this thesis, due to the time span given I exclude males, but it would have been interesting to compare Danish males' perceptions of femininity and their attitudes towards women wearing and women not wearing nightwear. Additionally, it would have been interesting and beneficial to have a comparative study with other Scandinavian countries, for example, Norway, Sweden and/or Finland. Such comparative studies could provide some valuable insights for the fashion and nightwear industry in particular. Further delimitations will become apparent after having read the methodology section of the thesis.

### **1. 3. Structure of Thesis**

In order to reach an estimation of the problem statement, the thesis consists of seven parts: introduction, conceptual framework, methodology, analysis and discussion of results, assessment of qualitative research, conclusions and further research considerations. After these introductory remarks I am going to outline the conceptual framework for this study.

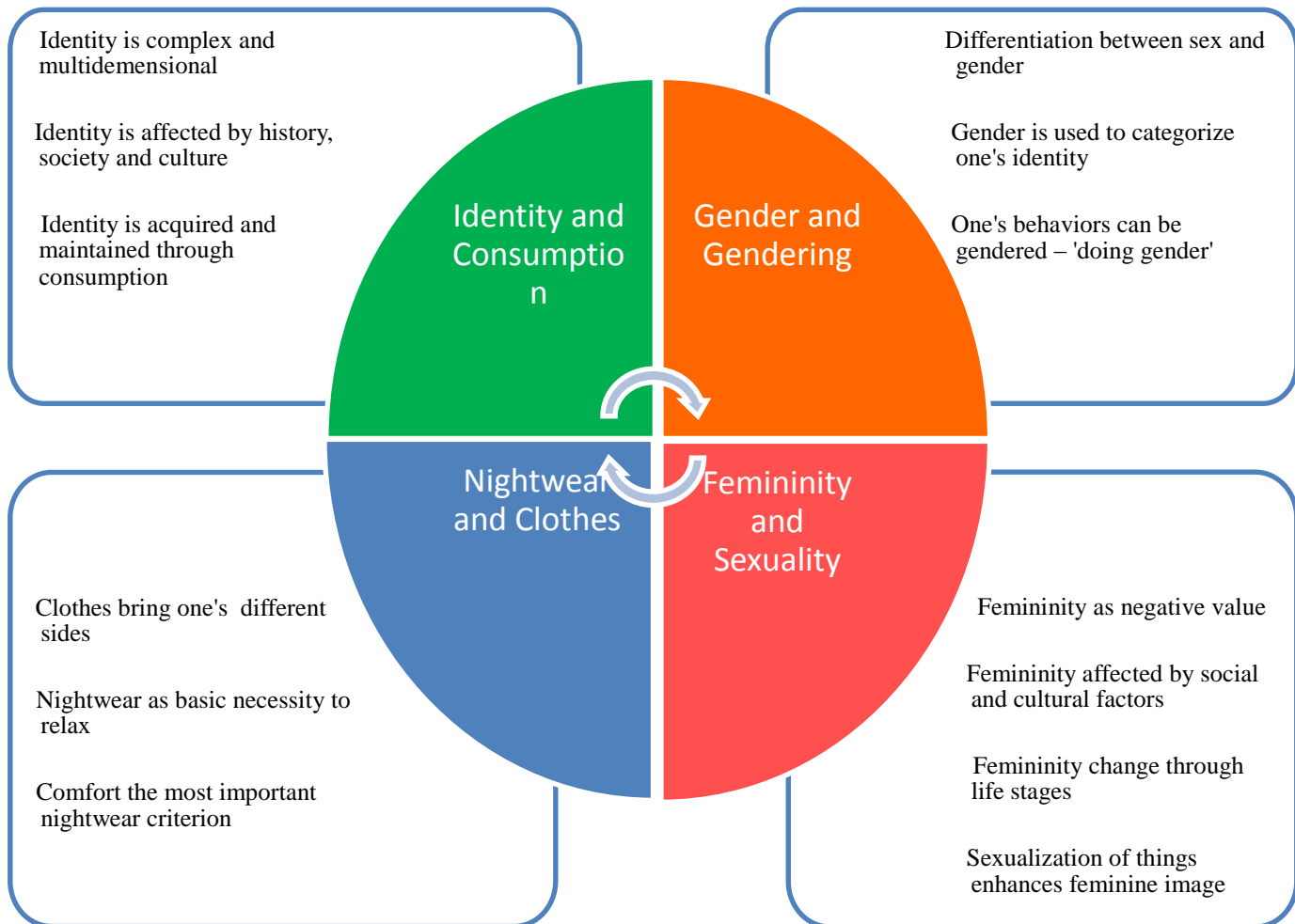
## 2. Conceptual Framework

To understand how women construct their identities through nightwear consumption, it is necessary to review and understand theory found. Theories are crucial, as they both guide research and give a meaning to what we see (Costley, 2006). Thus, theories help to stay focused through the research process in order not to get lost in the amount of information while choosing the data that would help to find answers to the research questions. Furthermore, as I aspire to make my own theoretical contribution, it is crucial to know as much about the topic as possible by extensive literature reviews and building a conceptual framework (Berg, 2003). However, having such a large amount of available theories, it is problematic to build the best theoretical framework for guiding research, especially when my fundamental ontological position is that multiple realities exist, thus I construct the theory through my own understandings and experiences of the world around me (Guba, 1990; Murphy, 1997), meaning in order to approach the question in focus other researchers could have chosen completely different theories. In this thesis a variety of theories and ideas from studies have been employed in order to grasp an overall understanding of the complex topic of women's identity construction by consuming nightwear, and to build a conceptual framework. I decided first to understand the complexities regarding identity and gendered identity, as that could provide information on how women establish their sense of selves, and also, how females perceive gender, what are their feelings and thoughts on *feminine*. Without a basic understanding of these issues on gender and identity the following aspects could have been difficult to place successfully. The next aspect discussed is *femininity*, where I seek to discover how society imposes values, ideas and actions on *feminine* behavior. This aspect of the thesis is important, as having discovered what some Danish women (as mentioned in the introduction – 22 women) wear for sleeping, the data on *femininity* could underlie the reasons behind their choice of sleepwear.

As in this study I seek to understand what nightwear women wear, how they feel about it, and how they perceive themselves, because this could reveal reasons behind their choices of nightwear, the following aspects of identity, gender, femininity and nightwear should provide a frame necessary to answer the main research question. The theory built is extensively used while creating the interview guide (further discussed in *Methodology* section) for females. It also helped later to decide which bits and pieces of a vast amount of data should go into the analysis section, as having theories at hand I could focus on information necessary to answer the sub- and

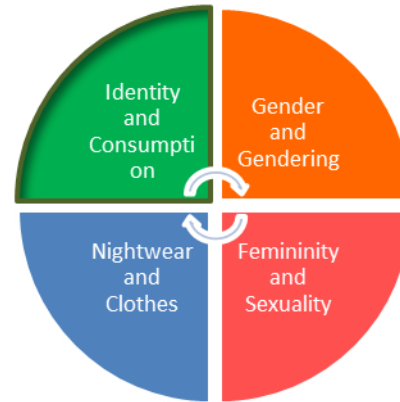
## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

main research questions. To illustrate all of the above said, the following figure represents how the different aspects interact with each other. By this interaction it should be possible to understand how women construct their identities through nightwear, the figure is below:



**Figure 2.** Self-created conceptual framework on identity construction through nightwear, adapted from theory discussed below.

### 2.1. Producing Identity and Consumption



To be able to understand how women construct their identities, it is important first to discuss how identity might be negotiated. A number of scholars (Foucault, 1988; Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; Stets & Burke, 2000; Brewer, 2004; Jenkins, 2008) argue that identity is a process that aims to uncover to oneself who one is in relation to one's surroundings. One's identity, according to Jenkins (2008), is constructed by means of various interests, behaviors, actions, motivations and numerous other factors, where one places himself/herself to differences and similarities. A few scholars (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; Jenkins, 2008) further argue that one's identity is multidimensional, there is no single identity construct and identity can be viewed as an ongoing process (Jentzen et al., 2006), meaning that we possess a primary identity and several secondary identities. The primary identity, as Jenkins (2008) claims, can be seen as the aspects we primarily identify ourselves with, such as our name, gender, location. These primary identification aspects are fixed and we do not change them easily. Secondary identities can vary depending on social contexts, for example, family and work roles, religious and ethnic beliefs, interests, and are easily changeable (Jenkins, 2008). This means that every woman's perceptions and behavior towards nightwear may differ, consequently, creating a unique identity regarding nightwear consumption. Jentzen et al. (2006) provide several characteristics that describe identity as a consistent ongoing concept of the self, described by:

- *Continuity*, which despite changes gives a sense of sameness (hence identity) to the self over time;
- *Distinctiveness*, which makes the self to feel unique through social comparison;
- Self-efficacy, which brings the self a sense of agency, competence and control in interactions and situations;
- Self-esteem, which brings value and worth to the sense of self.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Hogg and Abrams (1988) further claim that the construction and experience of identity work on two levels: a social level associated with an external world of shared symbols and values, and an intra-psychological level associated with an internal world of feelings, longings and bodily (re)presentations. In other words, where social identity is a question of being acknowledged by others for what one is, personal identity is about feeling comfortable and personally gratified with whom one is. It is important to differentiate between the social and personal identities, as I am interested in each interviewed woman's individuality.

In addition, Ashmore & Jussim (1997) argue that in order to understand the process of identification 3 crucial contexts should be taken into consideration: history, culture and society. In this study I will to some extent question some of the Danish society (the Gender Law) aspects in order to acquire the most knowledge out of the research. Agustin (2011) argues that one of the possible reasons why preferences and self identification by Danish women could differ from other cultures could be due to the Gender Law. In Europe, gender equality is perceived as a Danish trademark and it is a reality for majority of Danish women (Agustin, 2011). The Law on gender equality came into force in 2000, and equality was being integrated in all public spheres: administration and public institutions at all levels (Agustin, 2011). It is interesting to see whether and to what extent Danish women believe that any historical, cultural or societal contexts affect the formation of their identification.

Recently, much research has been carried out concentrating on the relationship between consumption practices and the formation of identity (e.g. Belk, 1988; Warde, 1994; Wheaton 2004). Many researchers (Landon, 1974; Belk, 1988; Wilk, 1997; Belk 2001; Kastanakis et al. 2012) argue that through consumption one acquires and maintains the identity. Further, Belk (1988) and Kressmann et al. (2006) argue that one's possessions, such as nightwear, may serve as an instrument to self-expression. One of such self-expression instruments for females could be nightwear and this study may show to what extent some Danish women see nightwear as a product for self-identification. According to Hosany and Martin (2012) consumption of an individual is often affected by a self-image one is fond of, meaning that the decisions related to buying nightwear depend on the idea of the self that one admires the most. For instance, a woman in her 30s could buy a flannel pyjama to wear on Christmas holidays, as this kind of nightwear allows her to feel well while walking in such pyjama at home around the family members. Another example could be a woman buying an expensive delicate nightgown for a special night

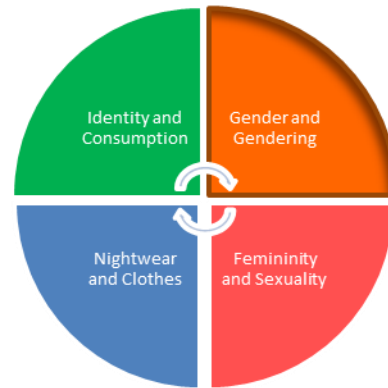
## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

with her significant other, because she desires to feel sensual that night. Brewer (2004) also argues that a basic goal of identifying ourselves is pleasure to feel good about ourselves, evaluating ourselves positively, and feeling that one is a person of worth, which means that females interviewed should choose to sleep in nightwear that would make them feel positive about themselves as individuals.

Although nightwear will be discussed in the part *Nightwear and Clothes* of the theory section, when the discussion shifts to the identity and consumption of nightwear there are numerous options one can choose from. Such fabrics as cotton and flannel are very-well known and a wide range of styles having different quality and prices available today could make the options endless. It could mean that having numerous options available women might choose nightwear that they believe will help them to achieve an image they strive for, as products allow them to define, maintain and enhance their image of self (Kressmann et al. 2006; Hosany et al 2012). Wilk (1997) claims that people may consume a certain product by negative emotions, for example, fear and envy, in other words women could choose a specific nightwear as they are afraid to show their bodies, or wish others to envy them, for example, on a girls' pyjamas party. Some researchers (Kasser, 2001; Chang & Arkin, 2002) argue that people whose self-esteem is low are more tempted to consume products that allow them to feel better about themselves. This might suggest that women who may not consider themselves *feminine* enough might choose nightwear which they believe will add to their femininity. Banister and Hogg (2004) note that consumers may reject certain products due to negative meanings they bring to them, meaning that a woman might refuse to wear nightwear if she finds something that gives her a negative feeling about wearing it.

Having discussed the concept of *identity*, the following section argues how we, as humans, perceive gender and how we gender our surroundings.

## 2.2. Gender and Gendering



The notion of gender is more difficult than one might think in the beginning, and authors' views vary on this subject. For instance, several scholars (West et al., 1987; Bohan, 1993; Tucker, 1998; Baron & Kotthoff, 2001; Schrock et al., 2009) argue that differentiating between sex and gender is important, as sex refers to biological characteristics that distinguish men and women, whereas gender can be seen as socially constructed behaviors, activities and roles that a society perceives as appropriate for men and women.

Although much discussion exists on differentiating gender and sex, according to Bohan (1993) gender may be defined as “a construct that identifies particular transactions that are understood to be appropriate to one sex” (Bohan, 1993: 7). Gender roles, in other words, are not related to one’s sex and are built through socially agreed feminine or masculine transactions (Stoller, 1986; Baron & Kotthoff, 2001). Women, in this case, may share the same sex and build their identity through recognizing feminine transactions and their roles of being a woman. Further, it can mean that by recognizing roles of men, they will reject them. In references to wearing nightwear women might have learned, by observing their mothers, that wearing nightwear is *feminine*, or that nightwear is unnecessary in their wardrobes. This study also tries to find out how some Danish females construct their gender, as it may help to understand their nightwear preferences and how they perceive their born sex in comparison to men. While the men, on the other hand, might have seen their fathers sleeping wearing trousers, hence they start perceiving wearing nightwear as feminine. This, therefore, might imply that sex is established at birth, while gender can change. Although according to West et al. (1987) gender may be *formed* at an early age, and is fixed, unvarying and static, other researchers (Tucker, 1998; Schrock et al. 2009) claim that the construction of gender can be perceived as not static and variable depending on time and place.



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Thus, defining someone as either *masculine* or *feminine*, often according to one's sex, the perceptions and roles attached to the specific gender are varied.

Stoller (1986) and Tucker (1998) argue that humans use gender to categorize people's identity, as gendered behavior is assumed and expected based on a person's sex. These behaviors can be described as gender roles or acts, meaning that actions are defined as being *masculine* or *feminine*. Tucker (1998) mentions everyday activities are influenced by gender and argues that gender may be expressed or possibly modified according to those activities. Thus, it could be assumed that these perceptions on *feminine* behavior might be modified due to individuals who perform the actions. In relation to wearing sleepwear, one might perceive it as being a more *feminine* act; however that image might be changeable if men were to perform the act thus making it more *masculine*.

Schrock et al. (2009), Kane (2006) and Tucker (1998) mention that things and concepts can also be perceived as gendered and used to show ones 'belonging'. They notice that parents often use various props, such as names, clothes and toys, to express their child's gender identity. According to West et al. (1987) and Schrock et al. (2009) a woman has to demonstrate a convincing womanhood act, in order to be recognized as *feminine*. Respectively, a man who shows some *feminine* behavior might be seen as not *masculine* in comparison to a man who demonstrates *masculine* behavior. These observations suggest a possible gender hierarchy within one's gender, where some women are more *feminine* than others. This will later be discussed in the theory section on femininity.

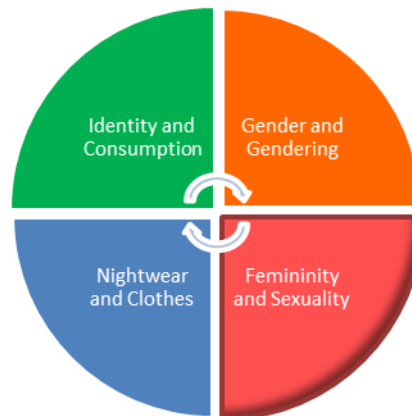
The next issue that should be addressed focuses on gender actions or, as West et al. (1987) and Stamou et al. (2011) call it, 'doing gender'. This term implies that a woman will 'do' her femininity by actions and props which she and her surroundings perceive as being *feminine*, meaning that gender may not be described by who we are, but may be seen by something that we do (Bohan, 1993). For instance, a woman 'does' femininity by wearing only nightgowns when going to bed, as it is perceived *feminine* in her society. West et al. (1987) and Bohan (1993) also claim that 'doing gender' is something inevitable, in other words, if women are the ones wearing nightwear, the act becomes *feminine*. Furthermore, West et al. (1987) argue that it is not possible to define all actions by gender clearly, but if necessary, actions may be pushed to seem like *feminine*. Bohan (1993) claims that experiences are the guide for humans to perceive certain behaviors being gendered. It could mean that as humans 'do gender' in a proper way, according to

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

one's experiences, a person shows his/her gender, which is tied to sex, and then he/she reproduces the gendering appropriate for that behavior. Thus, I may state that the construction of gender is constantly re-created by the ongoing process of 'doing gender'. However, Bohan (1993) highlights that in particular circumstances people do *feminine*, while in others, they do *masculine*. Purdie et al. (2007) also argue that how humans identify themselves is important, as this identification influences behavior and thoughts in regards to one's gender. Humans tend to think and act 'gender' as being a natural part of their sex, for they are in line with the expectations of one's gender without taking notice of it. They become so used to the process of 'gendering' that naturally it becomes a part of them. On a cultural level, it is also argued that people behave accordingly in order to fit into the group or culture they identify themselves with (Purdie et. al, 2007). This might indicate that if a woman identifies with other women because of their shared sex, she is more likely to consume the same product, in this case, nightwear, as the other women within her culture. On the other hand, a woman may refuse to wear nightwear if other women in her culture tend to do the same in order to fit into culture.

In the next section the notions of femininity and sexuality will be addressed in order to elaborate more on 'doing gender' and the way nightwear may be seen in this regard.

### 2.3. Femininity and Sexuality



Recent years have been characterized by increased female involvement in the work force and heightened female consciousness in the world (Burnett, 2010; DeLauro, 2010; The Economist, 2010; Broderick, 2012). One of the consequences of these trends has been rising interest in the relationships of women's self-images and perceptions of stereotypes of *femininity* to their affective and behavioral responses (Aldag & Brief, 1979). Thus, this section of the theory part

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

looks at the concept of *femininity* which is much more complex than one might imagine.

As this paper focuses on grown-up women in Denmark, it is important to distinguish transition periods in women's life: adolescence, adulthood - motherhood, and climacteric change and menopause (Alizade, 2003). Walker (2012) shares her observations that throughout life a woman goes through a number of considerations behind her choices in life because of the age. The relevant age of women are in second and third stages of life, mainly 25 – 59 years old females (the choice will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology section).

As discussed in the previous section, humans are not gender, they 'do gender'. However, it is complicated to define and measure to what extent a person is *feminine* (Eagly, 1995; Bateson, 2001; Jones, Peskin & Livson, 2011). Most recent work of Lippa (2002) on measuring femininity and masculinity indicates that femininity is seen as negatively or only loosely linked to one's psychological health, whereas masculinity is positively linked to one's psychological health, for both men and women. More specifically, masculinity appears to be positively tied to such traditional measures of psychological health as self-esteem, and femininity is linked to psychological health in terms of relationship strength and relationship satisfaction (Helgeson, 1994). At the same time, extreme levels of both femininity and masculinity may be undue for both sexes (Helgeson, 1994).

Typical feminine and masculine personality traits (e.g. compliance versus assertiveness) should be also taken into consideration, as well as typical feminine and masculine interests, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g. watching soap operas versus sports programs) (Spence, 1993). In order to grasp a better understanding of women's selves, this study looks at females' leisure activities and hobbies, as these details will allow to unveil better the feminine side of women. Recent research also makes clear that conceptualization, measurement, and levels of masculinity and femininity may differ importantly by historical and societal context (Lippa, 2002). As it has been mentioned before in the *Identity and Consumption* section, one of the possible reasons why preferences and perceptions of the selves by Danish women could differ from other cultures could be due to the Gender Law (Agustin, 2011). This aspect is relevant for the study, as due to the law, consequently, women may perceive themselves as more masculine or do not consider *femininity* as being an important feature of their identities.

Jones et al. (2011) looks at a few studies and reports that women's individual levels of *femininity* change with age: increasing from age 21 to 27, decreasing from age 27 to 43, and decreasing

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

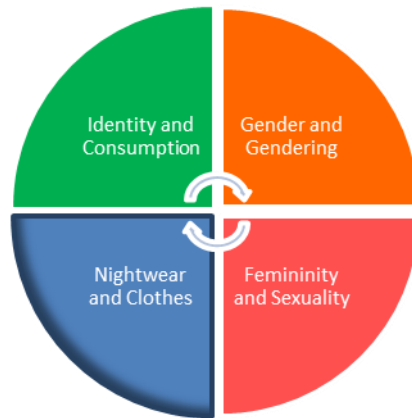
again from age 43 to 52 (Helson and Moane, 1987). Helson and Moane (1987) state that although *femininity* decreases, women become more confident and independent, which may imply that they become more *masculine*, as it was argued that self-esteem is more a *masculine* trait. Gutmann (1994) also theorizes that midlife provides an opportunity for men to drop confining role demands of early adult *masculinity* and become more emotionally responsive and aware (more *feminine*), while women may similarly drop prior props of femininity and become more assertive and active (less *feminine*). The reason behind the decrease of *femininity* from age 43 could be related to a release from active parenting (Sarlin, 1963; Gutmann, 1994; Huyck, 1999), as most men and women stick to traditional gender roles while parenting their children. However, when children are older and parenting lessens, both men and women may discover elements of their personalities that were simply unknown to them before. However, Jones et al. (2011) argue that although it is proved that throughout the lifespan the average man becomes much more higher in femininity, while the average woman, initially high in femininity, becomes much more lower in femininity across the lifespan, but change in femininity is unconnected to marital or parental status. These findings allow to conclude that due to new experiences in midlife development femininity in middle and later adulthood may be multidimensional, not merely staying in the same stage of early gender demands. In regards to nightwear and femininity, the research questions the feminine side of Danish women and tries to relate it to nightwear. It further considers to what extent Danish women believe family affects their feminine side. Having these results could help to uncover whether women choose to sleep in nightwear or not, and why they choose particular nightwear.

As far as the relationship between femininity and a product such as nightwear is concerned, it could be argued that one of the most conspicuous features of commodity culture is its sexualization of the commodity, its eroticization of objects (DeGrazia & Furlough, 1996). Thus, the feminine image serves as a means to rise desire, to intensify and reflect the commodity's allure, and women may use sensual nightwear to enhance their feminine side either on special occasions or maybe every night. Wearing nightwear and feeling feminine and sexual could be seen as connected to pleasure, which can be related to a broad range of various feminine expressivities, including cosmetics and clothing (Grazia & Furlough, 1996). In this regard, women may be *lady* or *hussy*, both terms today rather refer to 'types' and 'moods' defined largely by external signs. Products of a consumer culture, such as different kinds of nightwear, nowadays have become integral to self-expression and the belief that identity could be a purchasable style

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

(Grazia & Furlough, 1996). It is interesting if and to what extent Danish women look at nightwear as one of the means to express themselves, as well as, which type of nightwear is the most appealing for them and when they see wearing particular nightwear styles in their everyday lives. The final section brings us to nightwear and clothes and discusses views on nightwear.

### 2.4. Nightwear and Clothes



The following section argues that nightwear is as much a clothing item as other clothes a person wears depending on the occasion. It is pretty obvious how much clothes help humans to 'be ourselves', and how much they help humans to be someone else, such as a role model, a star or someone else they admire. According to Harvey (2008), clothes are used to bring out one's different 'sides': the serious side, the fun, sexy or reckless side, or the masculine or feminine side. One may do this deliberately, or quite unconsciously, but when clothes are used in this way humans are bringing something that is inside them outside, perhaps magnifying it in the process, and changing a view just of who one is (Harvey, 2008). The ethical balance may be changed by clothes as well. For example, a pair of bright pyjamas, Harvey says, for his granddaughter has associations with being naughty (Harvey, 2008: 35).

As much as clothes can bring something from inside to outside, they can also bring something from outside to inside. Clothes have various designs and textures which can make a person feel as if a piece of clothing would melt if it could through the skin into bones. Clothes may often match the mood or intensify the mood of the moment (Harvey, 2008). Thus, it may also be that clothes can make feelings deeper, for instance, wearing a special nightdress at a wedding or a silky nightgown for the wedding anniversary may give an extra and special lift to a rather delicate pitch of happiness.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Harvey (2008: 38) argues that pyjamas “*are our rest and relaxation. Our muscles ease, we de-stress as we put them on, but they are inner clothes, not for public sight; we would change even if a friend came around*”. This view on pyjamas may be easily adapted to all kinds of nightwear humans choose to wear at home and see to what extent this argument would be valid when talking about Danish women and their perceptions on wearing nightwear.

Nightwear, as any other kind of clothing, has certain attributes that are taken into account by consumers all over the world when choosing it. This study looks at some product values, developed by Rahman et. al (2008). Seven product attributes are important for this study: four *intrinsic* values (style, quality, fabric, and comfort) and three *extrinsic* values (brand, price and country-of-origin (COO)). As Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) had proposed, consumers often used both *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* cues for product evaluation. This study also tries to see which cues are the most important for Danish females and reasons behind their choices.

In their study of young Chinese female consumers of nightwear Rahman et.al (2008) found that most of consumers perceive or consider pyjamas to be basic necessities. If the values of owning pyjamas are non-existent, a percentage of consumers will not even consider making a purchase. According to the results, the consumption of pyjamas could be summarized according to three primary motives on the basis of buying a pyjama:

- First, some respondents bought them as replacement items, and did not shop for them on a regular basis.
- Second, some respondents bought pyjamas only when they were on sale or they were part of a promotion. These consumers were more value conscious.
- Third, some respondents purchased new pyjamas because of their style, design, colour and fabric.

Their results also show that many individuals like to put on pyjamas as soon as they get home. They wear them while watching television, reading the newspaper, playing games or working on the computer at night. However, some individuals only wear pyjamas for sleeping and they do not want to be seen in pyjamas by other people. In general, consumers are willing to spend money on prestigious and publicly consumed products than products that are to be consumed in a more private context.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Furthermore, the results of their survey show that the majority of their respondents selected comfort as the most important evaluative criterion for purchasing decision of pyjamas followed by quality and fabric. The results showed relatively low scores for COO and brand, but slightly higher scores for the price attribute. The research findings suggest that young adult Chinese consumers are more conscious of the price of pyjamas than the brand name. Interestingly, a number of respondents disliked pyjamas for the same reason – comfort. They found wearing pyjamas to be uncomfortable, hot and restrictive. In other words, if pyjamas could not provide the essential comfort values or satisfy an individual's needs, many young consumers would never consider purchasing a pair for their own use. Based on some of the respondents' answers, the fabric softness, breathability and warmth were important factors for the selection of pyjamas. These findings are relevant for this study, as they allow some comparison for possible patterns of consumer behavior towards nightwear. A self-created model below allows to have a clearer vision of the values assigned to nightwear:



**Figure 3.** Self-created model inspired by Rahman et.al (2008)

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

The theories discussed guide the research process. Accordingly, the themes discussed in this section (Identity and Consumption, Gender and Gendering, Femininity and Sexuality, Nightwear and Clothes) guide fieldwork, for the interview guide was created using theories, and, hopefully, questions will trigger extensive dialogues with interviewees. The first version of the interview guide can be found in Appendix 3, however, as interviews are meaning-making processes, during fieldwork the interview guide is altered and refined as new knowledge accumulates. Although this theory section is based on extensive (and hopefully sufficient) literature reviews, one cannot ever know whether the themes are the ‘best’ or even the ‘right’ ones to base fieldwork and analysis on. As the more exploratory parts of fieldwork were done while building the theoretical framework, these themes do seem relevant in to answer the research question. Nevertheless, other concepts and themes that I am not aware of could have provided completely different views on this study. In the following section I elaborate on the methodological procedures taken in this thesis.



## **3. Methodology**

In this section, the research strategy is going to be discussed. Methodological considerations are important to overview in order to have a clear understanding of how the thesis was developed. The aim of this thesis is to produce valid scientific knowledge concerning Danish women's perceptions of the self and attitudes towards nightwear. It is therefore essential that I, as a researcher, confess to a philosophy, a paradigm, which shows what, how and why the research was carried out (Guba, 1990). The section is divided into subcategories. In the first sections basic beliefs such as epistemology and ontology are discussed to guide the research. Thereafter the various phases of this study as well as the research design are discussed, followed by the basic beliefs of qualitative research. Finally, considerations relevant to the analysis, such as the thematic analysis, are presented. Before the discussion of these issues, it should be mentioned that the research design, under my paradigmatic stance, reflects what methodology 'is' according to my beliefs and personality. According to Guba (1990) a paradigm can be defined as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry” (Guba, 1990: 17). This quote implies that basic beliefs guide action, whether it would be work responsibilities or everyday practices (e.g. choosing what to wear or not to wear for sleeping), consequently any research undertaken will to some extent reflect the researcher's (my) worldview. When choosing sleepwear, some females prefer to sleep in long cotton nightgowns, because their mothers have practised such sleeping routines, while other women prefer sleeping in flannel pants due to seen advertisements or commercials, or there will be some females who prefer sleeping without having anything on them. My beliefs are that there are various reasons behind sleepwear practises and choosing particular sleepwear.

### **3.1. Subjectivism**

As it has been mentioned before the aim of the thesis is to go further beyond realisations that Danish women prefer different kind of nightwear than a company from the South produces, in other words, women's preferences in the South and in the North of Europe differ and it was documented earlier. It is important to understand how Danish women perceive themselves and what their attitudes towards nightwear are in order to know why such differences occur. It should therefore be noted that the study is rather exploratory and not a definite report on the subject.

The epistemology, according to Lincoln and Guba (2013), is concerned with the relation between the researcher and reality and poses such questions as “What is the nature of the relationship

between the knower and the knowable?” Epistemology, in other words, is concerned with the question what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge, whether the social world can and should be studied based on the same principles (Bryman, 2008). Carter and Little (2007) further mention that epistemology is the justification of knowledge, meaning it is how humans justify what they know. The epistemological approach in this study is subjectivism, where, as Guba (1990), argues, “Inquirer and inquired are fused into a single entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two” (Guba, 1990: 27). This means that, according to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the researcher is also involved in the construction of knowledge, as the researcher's own viewpoints, opinions and explanations are an inseparable from the investigation and therefore will be reflected in all parts of this project. In other words the research will always to some extent include preferences, values and understandings of the researcher (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, it may be pointed out that if someone else would have conducted this study, it would be entirely different; accordingly, my personality, work experience and my attitudes towards nightwear consumption significantly influence the research process of this study.

### **3.2. Social Constructionism**

The ontology, according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Lincoln and Guba (2013), is concerned with reality and addresses such issues as: “What is there that can be known?” or “What is the nature of reality?” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In other words, it is the assumptions that humans hold about the physical world. This means that one has to consider matters of existence or being (ibid). I agree with social constructivists’ view on ontology, as I recognize that multiple realities, which are socially constructed, exist (Bryman, 2008). This means that each individual constructs his/her own reality through experiences and understandings of the world around him/her (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Murphy, 1997). An example of this is the multiple social constructions of what it means to be a woman or what is considered as nightwear. Having these multiple constructions in mind, Guba and Lincoln (1989) make an observation that it is impossible to define ideally these matters, because such definitions imply agreed social constructions discovered by a specific group of people, however, knowledge and 'truth' are not discovered, but are created by the individual, the knower, as there is no 'real' 'truth' to be found (Murphy, 1997). I therefore expect to uncover various ideas, constructions and experiences in regards to women and nightwear consumption. Additionally, I also co-construct my research

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

(Lincoln and Guba 1985; Kvale, 2007). During the process of gathering data I was engaged in reconstructions as I was the one selecting and excluding certain phenomena, and by choosing phenomena of interest, gathering and analysing data I transform my reality (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Kvale, 2007).

As pointed out, my fundamental belief in this study is that multiple realities exist (Guba, 1990; Murphy, 1997). Social constructivism, as MacMohan (1997) claims “argues for the importance of culture and context in forming understanding” (MacMohan, 1997), in other words, through externally available modes of the social world, individuals create meanings of behavior. For example, most consumers have more or less similar everyday sleeping routines. Women choose particular ways to sleep for various reasons that depend on different factors that are going to be uncovered in this study. Put in a different way, women construct their realities through the social world and these constructions are 'borrowed' as they observe meaning-making behavior and to some extent copy this in order to engage in socially acceptable behavior (Bryman, 2008). As Beaudrillard (2002) argues, people communicate using a system where the values assigned to objects refer only to other values. Thus, although I am interested in individualities, I acknowledge that the individuality is always influenced by others. It is interesting to see if women believe that their perceptions of the selves and the way they see nightwear are influenced by any cultural or societal factors and to what extent they care about their sleeping routines. As with attitudes towards nightwear consumption, it will be interesting to investigate them from two perspectives. On one hand it is interesting to find out how women view nightwear and whether women feel appraised by their other halves when wearing it on the other hand, if women avoid wearing nightwear, it is meaningful to try to understand what stimulates them to refuse wearing sleepwear. The term *attitudes* in this paper is used in a broad sense including such terms as values, thoughts, opinions and beliefs, as an attitude can be defined as “*a person's evaluation of an object of thought*” (Pratkanis, 1989: 72), thus, women's personal evaluations of nightwear.

In regards to the identity construction, gender and femininity, the constructionist argument is that, as Bohan (1993) argues, gender is rather “a construct that identifies particular transactions that are understood to be appropriate to one's sex” (Bohan, 1993: 7). In other words, gender may be perceived as an agreement that resides in social interchange, the factors defining particular actions and interactions as *feminine* are the situational circumstances within which actions occur. As a researcher of this study I firmly believe that gender may be seen a relational construction

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

created by the individual and society, meaning that the individual is not born with gender and gender roles, but they are built by negotiation and on perceptions of their born sex, and the constructionist approach is used in this study also supports these beliefs.

It is important to note that a constructionist position accommodates the necessity for recognizing diversity among women. Being a universal woman does not alone shape and gender one's experience. Distinctive circumstances of necessity generate different meanings of *gender* and elicit distinctive gender transactions, just as they order other aspects of individual women's realities. No two women share exactly the same nexus of identities; no two women exist in exactly the same contexts (Bohan, 1993). Thus, it is necessary to realise that every woman's experiences and attitudes towards nightwear may be completely different. Because constructionism sees gender as residing in context rather than in the individual, the focus shifts from the person to the situation. Thus, the issue of power, the reality underlying women's oppression, is revealed in full light. Gender, therefore, is exactly about power, and it becomes possible to recognize the role of power in the construction of gender (Bohan, 1993). This aspect is important for this study, as in Denmark the power between women and men is equal, so it is relevant to see in what way Danish women perceive nightwear consumption due to power equality (Nelson et al., 2006).

Before I started the research, as a constructionist, I could not guarantee what kind of knowledge I will receive after each interview which ultimately brought a completely new perspective to my study. As it was mentioned before, this research aims to explore women's attitudes towards nightwear and constructions of the selves. The results vary based on the data collected, and even in the end of the study, the interpretations are not definitive. In social constructionism meanings are constructed through interaction, in this case, this interaction is between the researcher and the interviewee and occurs through interviewing (Etherington, 2004; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The conversation to me, as a social constructionist, is the basis of discovering how participants view nightwear and construct their identities, consequently, I chose interviewing as a method for gathering data at the same time introducing the voice of my interviewees as female nightwear consumers (McCracken, 1988).

MacCormack and Strathern (1980) argue that the nature of people depends on culture, so in order to understand the Danish females, as a constructionist, I have to gain knowledge on the Danish culture as well. It is interesting to see how females construct meanings in the cultural context and

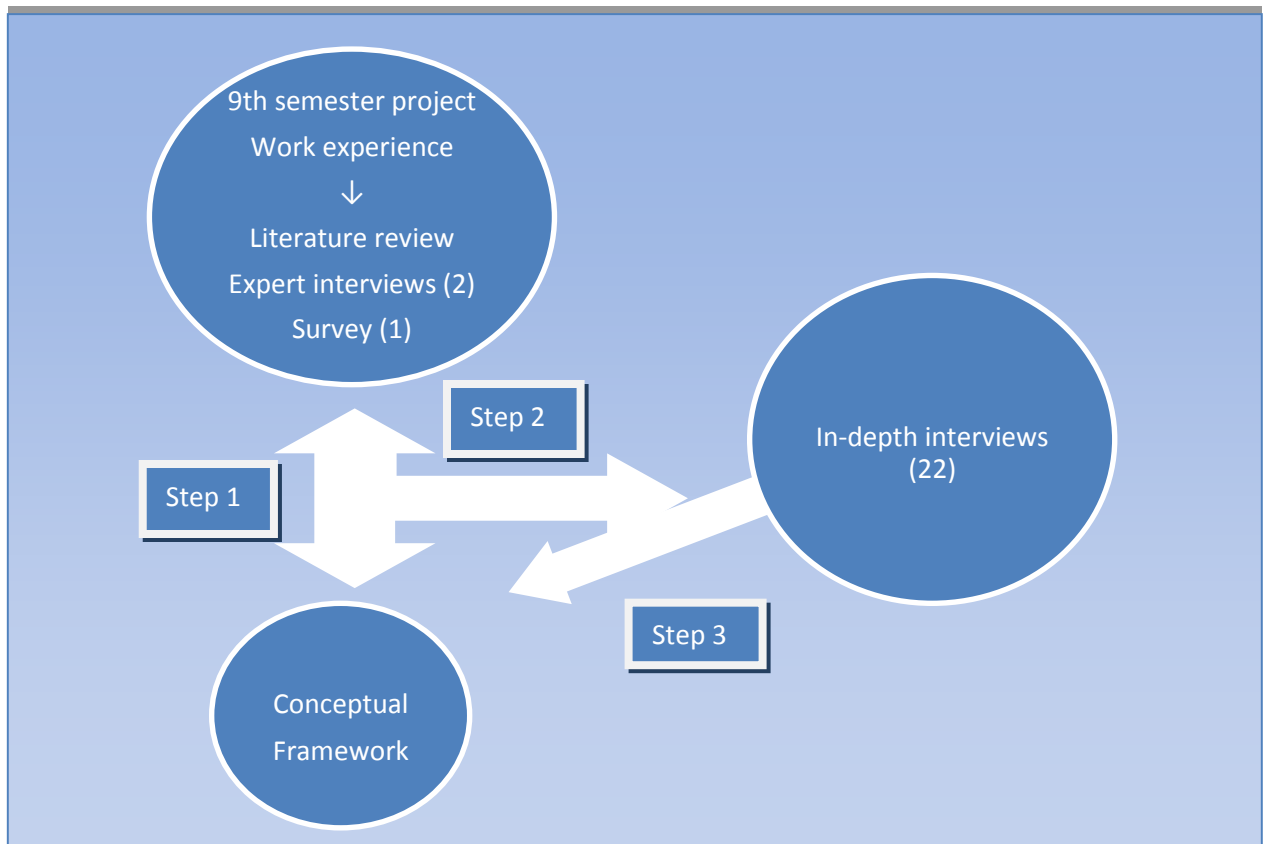
## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

make sense of their worlds (Kral et.al, 2002). In this study I focus on culture as the outcome of women's perceptions of the selves, meaning, the findings should show some aspects of Danish females culture. Culture establishes how people use clothes, in this case nightwear, and affects their fashion habits, in this case females' behavior towards nightwear (Davis, 1992; Heiden, 2001). Culture often may be seen through the way humans speak, their beliefs and products consumed by a particular culture (Levy, 1959). Formerly, things like food, home, clothes were essentially important matters and the consumers thought more in economic ways (Levy, 1959). However, according to Levy (1959) the consumers changed along with the marketplace, consumers are not economic anymore, in fact, a woman may probably not remember well what she pays for her goods and sometimes she does not even get to use (or wear) them before she disposes of them.

To sum up, this thesis is conducted within the social constructivist research paradigm. The epistemology therefore is subjectivism, meaning that the researcher and the informants cannot be separated. Consequently, ontologically it is thus acknowledged that the truth about reality does not exist and reality can be understood in different ways, depending on the person experiencing it. In this regard, Guba and Lincoln (2005) state that a having relativist ontology and subjective epistemology it is impossible for the researcher to separate emotions and values from science. In other words, science is subjective (Carson et al., 2005; Darmer & Nygaard, 2006). Accordingly, this thesis does not claim to uncover the objective truth concerning the women's perceptions of the selves in regards to nightwear or their attitudes towards it. Instead, it presents my interpretations of some Danish women's individual realities regarding nightwear consumption. This means that I regard each woman individually taking into account her daily routines and the fact that all experiences, thoughts and ideas are unique depending on a female. Therefore, generalizing on behalf of all women is not possible; however, as each female is a part of a social world the research may reveal some social tendencies. Additionally, I was not able to uncover more than one study on adult (older than 25 years old) women and nightwear, so I hope to bring a small contribution to this topic, highlighting the *feminine* and *masculine* identity, which depends on the findings, within nightwear consumption. In the next sections the research design and the methods to analyse the data are discussed.

### 3.3. Research Design

Research questions in focus may be answered in numerous ways depending on the aim of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). However, as most constructivists, I use qualitative research methods (Bryman, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that qualitative data is individual constructions. In this regard, the analysis of qualitative data may be seen as reconstructions of those constructions. Thus, when I analyse empirical data in this study, I aim to ‘discover’ which product values are the most important for females and how they perceive themselves as women having nightwear as a consumption product, which may show why they choose particular sleepwear. In other words, I aim to scholarly interpret women's attitudes and experiences related to nightwear, and capture complexities of the issue. Hereby I try to slightly contribute to a better understanding of this social phenomenon (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Figure 4 represents my research design. Having in mind that research questions may be answered in many ways, the design created for this study is one of the many possible solutions to answer the research question. The model below outlines the phases this study has undergone in order to give the reader an overview of the research. The overall phases are outlined in figure 4:



**Figure 4.** Stages of the research process

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

The different illustrate that rather than beginning with the hypothesis, I had some ideas on the Danish nightwear market and Danish females preferences towards nightwear due to my working experience in a Danish nightwear market and a 9th semester project which also focused on the Danish market (see CD). Having a general topic, I started extensive reading looking for some concepts that would be relevant to come up with a research question. The main research question as well as sub-questions were refined after lots of reading and a fruitful interview with the owner and shop manager of the “Big Beauty” lingerie boutique Lotte Christensen in Randers (see CD). The managing director of Vamp S.A. Kostas Tsamados also provided some valuable insights into developing the research. The 22 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in order to collect the data. Ideally, the researcher should continue to do interviews until 'the point of saturation' is reached (Bryman, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), but as a constructivist I admit that the point of saturation is difficult to reach (Bryman, 2008), as I acknowledge that new knowledge is to be gained in each interview for individuals will have their own sleeping routines and nightwear experiences. Thus, when having conducted 15 interviews major themes began to recur, I reached somewhat a saturation point (Bryman, 2008), and then, I conducted 7 more until no additional information emerged from the interviews and the research questions were judged to be sufficiently covered (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ambert et.al, 1995) (found on CD). During the early stage of the interviewing process, I managed to interview Lise Rolandsen Agustin, the expert on EU gender policies and Associate Professor at Aalborg University. Her insights allowed me to better understand gender equality and gender roles in Denmark, consequently, I was able to understand women's certain understandings and behaviors towards nightwear and themselves. In the final stage of the research process, I found it necessary to come back and do minor changes in my conceptual framework in order to better correspond to the empirical data. Accordingly, I use qualitative data which is closely connected to my paradigm of being a constructionist (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Bryman, 2008). As I investigate a small group of women, qualitative data allows to understand deeper peculiarities related to women wearing nightwear and how they perceive themselves, as this type of data favors “depth rather than breadth” (Bryman, 2008) and is more related with quality rather than quantity (Hiller & Diluzio, 2005).

During the interviewing process I focused on each woman individually taking into consideration that every woman constructs her own meanings of everyday life, and these meanings change over time due to various life situations. Consequently, I acknowledge the contextuality and multiplicity of interviewees' thoughts on nightwear, and recognize that even something as simple

as pyjamas might mean something different to my interviewees during ordinary days, weekends, and big celebrations such as Christmas. In addition, consumption patterns (including nightwear) vary depending on interviewees' everyday life situations their where they are throughout a life cycle (Wells & Gubar, 1970). For example, the acquisition and discard of some types of goods or consumption practises vary throughout a life cycle, for example the sleeping practices of mothers that raise small children most probably differ from empty nesters. These women are in different stages of their lives and thus have different life situations. This research focuses mainly on women in such life situations as: young adult women (age +25) without children, mothers and empty nesters, as there were no studies done with these women in these stages of life. The studies found before carrying out this research were based on young female students consumers. I assume their sleeping practices should differ, for example when and how they are sleeping and what they are wearing for sleeping. Thus, although at first I had one interview guide (Appendix 3), I adjusted questions to the age, marital status (having children) for each female interviewee.

### **3. 4. Research Sample**

#### **3.4.1. Qualitative Survey**

For this thesis, one survey was conducted with the managing director and main shareholder of *Vamp! S.A.* Kostas Tsamados. In general and during the thesis writing process, the managing director is exceptionally busy and it took a few weeks to receive the answers for a survey. Surveys generally are seen as favoring the quantitative approach and investigating population variables (Sapsford, 2007; Marsden & Wright, 2010; Andres, 2012). However, according to Flink (2003) and Jansen (2010), although it is a relatively new phenomenon, there may be qualitative surveys which aim to explore experiences and meanings. As Flink (2003) argues: *“Their purpose in using qualitative surveys is to provide depth and individual meaning to the questions of interest”* (2003: 68). In this case, I am interested in individual experiences of Kostas Tsamados as the person who through survey answers can share his expertise and knowledge on the nightwear business in general, in Europe, the way his company operates and what are wins and losses in the markets the company currently develops.



## 3.4.2. Expert Interviews

In addition, two experts were interviewed. First expert, Lotte Christensen is the owner and manager of the boutique “Big Beauty” in Randers, Denmark. Another expert interview was conducted with Lise Rolandsen Agustin, the expert on EU gender policies and Associate Professor at Aalborg University, Denmark. *Purposive sampling* was employed in order to choose experts (Bryman, 2008), meaning the interviewees were chosen due to their expertise in their fields (Given, 2008) which are relevant to this research and might improve my understandings and possibly introduce new perspectives on the subject. The aim of the interviews is to gain explanatory knowledge on relevant issues, such as the market and Danish female consumers, and the gender law and policies' implications in Denmark.

Lotte Christensen, the expert on the Danish nightwear market shared the information about Danish female customers, their preferences, how her clients reason the choice of sleepwear and how, in her opinion, Danish women see themselves in comparison to women from southern countries. Another expert Lise Rolandsen Agustin shared her knowledge on gender policies' implementations and challenges in Denmark and the EU, the way the Danish society sees gender equality as well as consequences of having established the gender equality (questionnaires are in Appendix 1 and 2, both summaries in Appendix 7; see CD for audio files). Additionally, the expert Lise was asked to share her experience regarding nightwear consumption and the possible reasons behind her choice of sleepwear. At a later stage of the research, the information gained is used for the semi-structured interviews with Danish women and explaining some of the issues found during the analysis of the findings.

## 3.4.3. Participant Interviews

In order to answer the research question of how women perceive themselves and look at nightwear, in this thesis the qualitative method of in depth semi-structured interviews is employed. This kind of interviews allow me to have a chance to understand an interviewee and see the world from her point of view and, as a result, learn from her subjective beliefs and experiences on nightwear consumption (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The topic of nightwear consumption may be seen as delicate, thus, the *snowball* sampling method was employed in order to reach interviewees (Bryman, 2008). In seeking participants, I aimed to speak to a broad range of women, from those who shop for nightwear regularly to those who have never done so. As stated earlier, individual interviews were conducted in person with participants recruited through

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

a range of *snowball* sampling methods, making use of my own existing networks both online and offline. As Browne (2005) has demonstrated, *snowball* recruitment means that the researcher is more likely to be trusted by the participant and the conversation may be more open and 'natural' as a result. I ended up interviewing 22 Danish females, although I did not have a specific number in mind.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that the questions served as guidelines, for I wanted freedom to form dialogues around topics which arose during interviews (Bryman, 2004; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The interview questions were modified and adjusted during the interviewing process, depending on the interviewee and emerging patterns and themes. This means that the interviews vary, as each woman had individual feelings, thoughts and experiences with nightwear and perceptions of *femininity*. However, having an interview-frame with themes like *gender*, *femininity* and *nightwear* provided me with an opportunity to have comparable interviews.

The interview guide (see Appendix 3) was created having 4 themes which guided the open-ended questions. In order to become familiar with an interviewee, each was asked such questions as name, age, occupation, marital status. The second theme entailed questions regarding a woman's views on gender roles in a family and gender roles in her culture. The third theme was created in order for me to acquire knowledge on how the interviewees related to ideas about various forms of nightwear and femininity. The questions for the themes were created using theory built and discussed in the conceptual framework, by taking inspiration from the Rahman et al. (2007) study on young Chinese attitudes and buying behavior of nightwear as well as the interview with Lotte Christensen from "Boutique Big Beauty", Randers.

It should be mentioned that the use of online interviewing via Skype or telephone was necessary as sometimes participants were situated in various parts of Denmark or it was more convenient for them. However when possible, and most of them, the interviews were done face to face and I went personally to interviewees' living places when it was convenient for them. One interview was conducted in a coffee shop, as it was more convenient for an interviewee. Being a constructivist, I may argue that there is no perfect way to carry out interviews. Skype as an interview medium was used to interview otherwise busy women on hours were they had time and energy to be interviewed; such times were early mornings or evenings. Although it was somewhat time- and money- consuming, my flexibility with time and place was an important aspect of why

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

some women agreed to be interviewed. Furthermore, due to needs of some interviewees (need to take an important call or a customer came to the shop), some interviews were recorded a few times and are marked accordingly (see CD). Each interview was recorded with consent. That is to say that I do not have interest in the way the interviews were carried out (Skype or other medium), but I am interested in the data collected.

Yet, it should also be noted that this method is subject to the same limitations as other qualitative methods, such as data overload and lack of reliability, validity and generalizability (Hair et al., 2006; Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In addition, informant bias and interviewer errors may occur. According to Hair et al. (2006), informant bias may occur due to faulty recall, the social desirability effect and exhaustion, whereas because of inadequate listening, poor recording procedures and tiredness interviewer error may occur. These issues are discussed further in section *Assesing Qualitative Data and Limitations*, where the implications of these limitations are evaluated.

Although social science literature (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Padgett, 1998) strongly encourages pilot testing of the interview guide, this may not be a viable strategy when conducting such rather intimate interviews (Peabody et al., 1990). Instead I have followed the recommendations made by Peabody et al. (1990), testing the interview guide on a few of my female friends in order to attempt to identify and correct possible flaws prior to the interviews. The pilot interviewees contributed to the development and subsequent revision of the interview guide, together we considered the clarity of questions, providing feedback on the experience of being interviewed, comments on (in)appropriate questions for probing. However, I must acknowledge that it was somewhat challenging conducting very first interviews with women, as I lacked practice. Therefore, in the first interviews I struggled to obtain 'rich' data and missed some 'proper' moments to ask for clarifications and examples. After a few interviews, it became easier to feel when the right moments are and how to ask questions to obtain the most valuable information.

Levy (1959) and Bryman (2008) argue that qualitative research methods try to unveil deeper people's inner feelings, thoughts, which results in descriptions that better realise the subjective nature of the phenomena studied (Levy, 1959, Bryman, 2008). The interviews involved open-ended discussions of specific topics that were guided by me. However, it sometimes proved difficult to obtain data on women's sleeping routines, especially about their feminine side and nightwear, clothes. It could be partly due to hesitation, and partly due to finding it hard to

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

describe what femininity for them is and what women they see feminine. Perhaps this is because it is something women do not think much about as they consider femininity a natural aspect of their lives.

At the end of each interview the women were shown some photos of nightwear from different brands (found on CD), which together with their interview would provide valuable knowledge since visuals could enrich and enhance the understandings of the constructions made (Schwartz, 1989). The pictures do thus not place meaning but simply trigger meaning that is already in the viewer (Hall, 1966). Some of the images are found below in order to give some understanding on nightwear peculiarities for the reader, the rest can be found on CD.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR



1. Nightdress “Femilet” (femiletinshop.dk),  
(vamp.gr), found in Danish lingerie boutiques now



2. Nightdress “Vamp”  
chosen due to bright colours



3. Pyjamas “Ringella” (femiletinshop.dk),



4. Pyjamas “Vamp” (vamp.gr)

The images are taken from the ones shown to interviewees. As one may see, these nightwear examples differ. On the left side more neutral colours and less details prevail, as it was found out that Danish females like rather this kind of nightwear (9<sup>th</sup> semester project on CD and the survey of Kostas Tsamados prove this), while Vamp S.A. production is shown on the right and it clearly differs from what one may see on the left – bright colours and prints.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Danish females were interviewed in English, as I, the interviewer, am not Danish. Sometimes it appeared to be difficult to understand the interviewee or the interviewee could have misunderstood my questions, consequently, some ideas and meanings might have been lost. I also had to sometimes explain the meaning of a question or repeat it several times in order to receive an answer. Furthermore, the parts of poor quality recordings where it was hard to understand answers were omitted. The next section looks at how the data were analysed.

### **3.5. Methodology of Analysis**

Before moving on to the analysis section, it is necessary to discuss how the data were analysed. This discussion should also ensure trustworthiness of the analysis (Frogatt, 2001). Having recorded interviews, they were transcribed, however, as mentioned earlier, some parts were omitted. Such parts of interviews as detailed descriptions of nightwear or sleepwear routines were not transcribed, as they were not considered crucial to the research. Although I admit that it would have been the 'best' option to transcribe all interviews fully (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), I can argue, being a constructionist, that there numerous ways to approach the data (ibid).

Having collected the data, the thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008) was applied in order to shed the light on general themes related to the research question and other data were discarded. This method is one of the most common ways for the qualitative data analysis. The general strategy for assisting the thematic analysis of qualitative data is provided by *framework* (Bryman, 2012). The idea is to construct an index of central themes and subthemes, which are then represented in a matrix using main ideas from interview extracts and quotes (ibid) (see Appendix 6), where vertical axes present interviewees and horizontal axes present the themes.

However, due to the abundance of data, as mentioned, only relevant quotes that formed the basis to answer the sub- and main research questions have been transcribed and appear in the matrix.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

This means that some of the responses have been omitted or shortened. Furthermore, pauses, non-verbal vocalizations and response tokens have generally also been omitted (Kvale, 1996). Hence, the process of transcribing the interviews involved a series of judgments and decisions as to the significance of each informant's responses. The quotes in the matrix are therefore not representations of the interviewees' original reality, but interpretive constructions, as I emphasize some aspects of the interviews and exclude others (Kvale, 1996).

Yet, it must be recognized that my subjective evaluations regarding the inclusion of specific quotes, increases the possibility of neglecting important information. In addition, the flexibility exerted as to the order of the questions during the interviews, made it somewhat difficult to categorize and calculate the prevalence of the statements in the matrix. It was also necessary to exclude some of the (minor) issues raised by the informants. On this basis, I acknowledge that the following sections, which report and interpret the results of this study, are influenced by the constructivist philosophy, in the sense that the data collected for this thesis may be analyzed in several ways. In other words, data is interpreted from my point of view and the research would have been entirely different if it was carried out by someone else.

#### 4. Analysis

On the basis of the theoretical framework created and the data collected it is now possible to analyse how nightwear is seen by Danish females. In this section, I explore the behavior, perceptions and meanings that the interviewees construct about nightwear and how these findings may be related to women's constructions of the selves. In this section only relevant and more extensive findings are presented and I try to connect results with the theory discussed before. I have also tried to add results that would have some theoretical contributions. The theory in this section is also used to look for comparisons with the studies done on the subject discussed earlier in the paper with consumers from different countries and cultures, when applicable.

As my scientific approach is constructivism I do not aim to get a 'true' definition on the matter, as my beliefs are that such 'truth' do not exist, but there instead are multiple 'truths' and realities. Each interviewee has her own definitions and associations with nightwear, which need to be addressed prior to examining how Danish females perceive themselves in regards to nightwear. As I am a constructionist it is appropriate to have some information on females interviewed before the analysis of their statements. Below some personal details about the interviewees are listed.

Elin (50), Ry	Living with a second husband, 2 grown up children from the first marriage
Sophie (27), Aarhus	Single, no children, studies biology, master student, intern at Folkekirken
Karina (32), Aalborg	Single, divorced 2 years ago, no children, Sales person at Falck
Anete (34), Ikast	Single, 2 small children, sales intern at boutique Lingeriet, Ikast
Jeanette (32), Klarup	Married, 2 small children, sales person at PICO Huset, Aalborg
Sanne (31), Aalborg	Married, 1 small child, engineer in urban planning at Rampbell, Inc.
Johanne (26), Aarhus	Single, no children, working with children in a local music school
Christine (37), Ikast	Married, 2 adolescent children, owns boutique Lingeriet
Stine (27), Aarhus	Living with a boyfriend, together 7 years, no children, master student in medicine at Aarhus University



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Sofie (29), Oedsted	Married, currently expecting twins in May, master student in biology in Aarhus
Eve (42), Aalborg	Has a boyfriend, 1 child, shop manager
Tina (33), Aalborg	Single, divorced, 1 child, runs a day-care {Danish - <i>dagpleje</i> }
Lise (35), Aalborg	Married, 3 small children - 4 years old child and 1,5 twins, Associate Professor at Department of Culture and Global studies, Aalborg University
Line (37), Noerresundby	Married, no children, administration in Region Nordjylland, in a public health sector (did not want to specify),
Inna (59), Biersted	Widow 1 grown up child, lives alone, social pedagog
Camilla (34), Aalborg	Married, 2 children, Assistant Professor at University College of Northern Denmark
Camille (29), Aalborg	Unmarried without children, sales assistant at Femilet "Friis"
Charlotte (37), Noerresundby	Married, 2 small children, a teacher in Aalborghus Gymnasium
Marie (26), Aarhus	Single, no children, studies biology at Aarhus University
Anja (40), Aalborg	Never been married, 2 children 6 and 10 years old, and 4 years in a relationship with a new partner, living together; AAU Civil Engineering department secretary
Henriette (49), Aalborg	Divorced, mother of 3 teenage girls; civil Engineer in a steel structure company
Lotte (50), Randers	Married, mother of 2 grown up daughters, "Boutique Big Beauty" owner and manager for 8 years, customers range 35-60 years old
Wiebke (53), Biersted	married, 2 grown-up children, unemployed, works sometimes in the kindergarten

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

From the descriptions of interviewees it is obvious that I interviewed a wide range of women and each of them has unique experiences and perceptions of her identity and attitudes towards nightwear. In order to understand interviewees' perceptions of nightwear and themselves, the section is divided into 3 parts. The first part is related to attitudes towards nightwear:

- What is nightwear?
- (Un)comfortable
- Practical comfort
- Nightwear only for sleeping?

The second part is related to the women's construction of the selves:

- I am a Woman: my 'sensual' me
- I am a Woman: femininity is behavior not appearance
- I am a Woman: I am a SuperWoman

The third part revises all the findings and tries to bring new perspectives to the theory discussed earlier in the paper.

### 4.1. Attitudes towards Nightwear

#### What is nightwear?

Having analysed the data, overall it seems that females interviewed consider nightwear as a basic piece of clothing without paying much attention at what they are sleeping in. Accordingly, nightwear of the majority of interviewees consists of a basic T-shirt, consider the following examples:

“That's what I do. When I change in the evening, I put on these lovely home-knit trousers and my T-shirt. It's very comfortable.”

[Wiebke, 15:41]

“Right now I'm sleeping in a work T-shirt, because I think it's really soft and it's like a little stretchy, so I think it's really comfy to sleep in.”

[Stine, 2:33]

“I always sleep in... it depends on... if it's cold I sleep in a T-shirt and shorts and when it's warm I don't sleep in anything.”

[Karina, 3:44]

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Wiebke, Stine and Karina, as many other females interviewed, share that they prefer to wear a T-shirt for sleeping. Camilla, furthermore, is well aware of fabrics used for the production of nightwear and has tried to sleep in it. She shares her experiences of trying various kinds of nightwear and explains that due to negative outcomes of her trials with sleepwear, none of it was satisfactory enough to keep using, so she comes back to an old T-shirt. Old, worn-out, oversized or tight, given in various events (e. g. volunteering or at work) T-shirts were named by the majority other interviewees as sleepwear (can be found in the Thematic analysis, Appendix 6). Lotte, the owner of the boutique “Big Beauty” in Randers, showed me a big oversized shirt as one of the best-selling nightwear examples, the example is below:



**Picture 1.** From boutique  
„Big Beauty”  
([www.big-beauty.dk](http://www.big-beauty.dk))

Although the T-shirt on the image is not a completely plain T-shirt as mentioned by my interviewees, still, this shirt for sleeping is big, oversized, with short sleeves and corresponds to the main characteristics of T-shirts named by women. Considering a T-shirt to be the best option for night clothes demonstrates that women do not think much about what they use for sleeping. I may therefore conclude that none of interviewees stated that pyjamas or nightdresses would be an essential part of a their wardrobes.

### **(Un)comfortable**

Additionally, as it can be seen from the quotes above, the majority of interviewees stated that they prefer a simple T-shirt because of the value it provides them - *comfort*. This intrinsic product attribute was named as the most important product quality when considering what should be worn for sleeping. In this case, nightwear found in shops will be purchased by women only if it makes them feel *comfortable* while sleeping, otherwise they will choose a simple, big, oversized T-shirt. These results comply with the findings of Rahman, et.al (2008) and Labhard and Morris

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

(1994) whose study show that the majority of their young respondents selected *comfort* as the most important evaluative criterion for purchasing decision of nightwear.

On the other hand, the majority of women were open enough to share with me that the best feeling for them is to sleep either naked having underwear on, consider the examples below:

“I think I felt like a bit claustrophobic, is that the word? [...] wearing too much clothes. [...] I think I would prefer to sleep almost naked, but that would be a bit too cold for my arms and my chest, but that would be an ideal thing, actually.[...] I think it would make me feel like free, and I wouldn't have this claustrophobic feeling of wearing too much clothes, and... I wouldn't be wrapped in it.”

[Stine, 7:24]

“At home I don't wear much, I actually prefer to sleep in nothing. Because...I feel like I am getting wrapped... It's annoying... [...] Maybe it's because I don't have any special nightwear, because, you know, sometimes I have a T-shirt, and it's terrible, just a normal T-shirt.”

[Line, 0:47]

Stine and Line both share that they use some kind of nightwear sometimes, but they would rather sleep naked, or as in Line's case, she does sleep naked. A number of interviewees, as Stine and Line, said that they feel swaddled whenever they sleep having something on. Therefore, the assumption may be made that by being naked women feel comfortable and dislike nightwear for the same reason: *comfort*. Rahman et.al (2008) also found out that young women like and dislike nightwear because of *comfort*. Apparently, nightwear consumption is highly influenced by the product attribute *comfort*. Although, as a constructionist of the exploratory study, I cannot make any generalizations, but, having in mind Rahman et. al (2008) findings and mine, the assumptions may be made that the factor of age is not relevant when it comes to consumers' decisions to buy nightwear, as in every stage of life such product attributes as *comfort* may be significant for female consumers.

### **Practical comfort**

In addition to being comfortable while sleeping, the value of *comfort* could be extended by adding that nightwear should also be *practical* in order to wear it and therefore, I came out with the notion of *practical comfort* discussed in this section. A number of women used the word *practical* in order to describe their sleeping clothes, consider examples below:

“[...] I think in general... or... too sexy {nightdresses} so that it's not very comfortable or very practical. So, that's why I dislike nightgowns. [...] They {pyjamas} are more practical. You can keep them on when

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

you get up in the morning if you like to.”

[Charlotte, 3:42]

“I think mostly is just because the old one is getting too worn out. But, and of course, it can be if, for instance, you are going into a new relationship or something like that, and you want to be sexy, but I think mostly is just practical reasons.”

[Line, 3:20]

Both quotes illustrate that Charlotte and Line are concerned with nightwear being practical and will choose sleeping in something that would go beyond comfort. Note how Charlotte uses both words *comfortable* and *practical* together when describing why she avoids sleeping in nightdresses. For the majority of my interviewees sleepwear should be both comfortable and practical and it is not necessary for it to be sexy or fashionable. In this study, several reasons for having some practical nightwear, most often T-shirt or some pyjamas top, were found: keep from freezing and stay with children. If not for these reasons, most women would not even consider sleeping in something:

“When I slept in a T-shirt it was only because I was cold and then I just grab a T-shirt, and the best was if it was big, you know. It was never tight, always a big one then.”

[Anja, 4:58]

“When it's cold I wear a T-shirt and... what's you call... night pants... and when it's not so cold I just have a T-shirt and my underwear, and when it's warm I always sleep in my underwear.”

[Sophie, 7:58]

“In winter the T-shirt is enough. I think, like practically speaking, it's like... there has to be something around your neck, because... like for me it's very important to sleep with the window open, I enjoy that a lot, all around the year, but if there's nothing like around my neck in the winter, then I get sick.”

[Sofie, 14:52]

Anja and Sophie share that they sleep naked and wear a T-shirt *only* when it is cold to keep their bodies from freezing. Sophie separates cold, not so cold and warm nights which shows that she is aware of avoiding any kind of nightwear on her body if she can do that and will wear something exceptionally for cold nights. Sofie's quote shows that there may be special sleeping preferences which also influence the decision to wear something for sleeping. She mentions that she sleeps with the window open and it is necessary to cover some parts of the body not to get cold during

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

the night. This implies that a T-shirt is a practical clothing item which is necessary for cold winter nights. Another reason for having something on is usually because of children:

“[...] When you have small kids it has to be very practical.”

[Wiebke, 13:10]

“[...] I would go to underwear store where they have nightwear usually as well. [...] Well, usually I am looking for something comfortable, not too hot, and not too revealing, so just regular nightwear I can wear with kids around the house [...] I've only tried it twice in my entire life.”

[Camilla 9:45]

As it was revealed before, most women tried to wear some nightwear, some of them, as the quote above shows, just twice in life, but they reveal that sleeping having nothing on becomes unfavorable when children are at home. These findings may also be supported by the view of women who do not have children yet, as those women view nightwear as unnecessary, luxurious and expensive goods:

“If I wanted to sleep in a nightdress or pyjamas, I would like to get a proper ones, and it's quite expensive.”

[Sophie, 11:28]

“I think I would think of it as extra luksus {Danish – *luxury*; [www.ordbogen.com](http://www.ordbogen.com)} thing, and not a thing that I really need.”

[Stine, 13:14]

Interestingly, both females who do not have children and sleep in T-shirts perceive nightwear bought in shops as a luxurious asset in their wardrobes. Stine emphasizes that nightwear is not something she cannot live without and because of that she is not interested in acquiring any night clothes to sleep. Rahman et.al (2008) findings also show that consumers are not willing to pay money for items that are consumed privately and they correspond with my findings, as it is seen that most females were not interested in spending money on the product that is consumed only at home. Many women interviewed stated that they have never thought to make a purchase of nightwear, as Sophie reassures “it's not even an option, never considered to buy” [Sophie, 17:10].

However, a number of women stated that even though they may not sleep in nightwear at home, many use some kind of nightwear when they know that unknown people will be somewhere

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

during the night, consider the examples below:

“In the summer time, when I am together with my friends in camping, then it's too cold to sleep without anything, but then I sleep in as little as possible. But when I have to go out and go to the toilet in another building, I have to put these night trousers. [...] They are very old... they are blue with small flowers. And if they are dirty, I have some other old one, and they are black with small white flowers. I don't look very sexy, but it suits me well.”

[Inna, 9:59]

“When I travel and I don't know if I end up sharing room with somebody, like in conferences or something, with people that I don't know, like in order to... like if it's somebody you don't know, it's maybe nicer to be a bit dressed, when you have to get up of bed to the bathroom [...] then I wear a pair pyjamas pants, like not fancy ones, one of those old ones I have, and a T-shirt again. [...] the ones I use the most, they used to belong to my grandmother.”

[Sofie, 18:00]

Inna uses some night trousers only when she needs to go out into public during camping, but stresses that she still sleeps in as little as possible. She does not buy anything new for camping, but rather uses the same pants every year. Sofie also underlies that cases when she uses nightwear are when she is traveling and may be surrounded by people that she is not acquainted with, but also stresses that she wears just a T-shirt and some old pants, which she received from her grandmother. Inna is 59 and Sofie is 29 years old respectively, yet both females share that they use some nightwear looking night pants only to cover themselves in front of someone else, but this nightwear is worn-out and it is not something they buy in shops. These findings are worth discussing, as they once again show that females interviewed do not care much about their sleepwear.

### **Nightwear Only for Sleeping?**

Many women stated that they wear or not wear nightwear for various reasons. They shared that they avoid wearing nightwear they find in stores, because it is not appealing to them due to looking either childish or for elderly ladies:

“That [cotton] would be a lot better. But I just feel that sometimes the design that they have in the stores it's either with a big Hello Kitty something on the front and I am way too old for that, or it's with Mickey Mouse and it's like no way ever, so it should be a bit more plain and without being with roses and flowers, because that's my grandma.”

[Camilla, 7:14]

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

“Well, nightgowns tend to be more either for small children or for old women, so...”

[Charlotte, 3:42]

As Camilla and Charlotte say, the nightwear they have found in stores is not appealing to because it does not match their identities as grown-up women. It may be therefore said that there is perhaps no nightwear on the Danish market for most women that would correspond to their needs of feeling comfortable, practical, and taste. Although I tried to understand their taste preferences by showing pictures, I was not able to draw valuable assumptions from their observations, the point of saturation was not reached at this point and additional research is necessary. The only observations could be made that bright colors were not preferred by interviewees.

What women interviewed are really interested in is to have such pieces of clothing that would be more versatile, meaning nightwear should have more functions, as Elin claims “I didn't know there was a world called home wear before” [Elin, 1:09:22] when she is asked why she did not wear anything besides a T-shirt before. Home wear is different than nightwear, as home wear, or how some women call it *lounge wear*, is more versatile. Wearing home wear, as one of the biggest nightwear and home wear brands “Freye” suggest, a female can do both sleep and do many things in and around the house ([www.brasandhoney.com](http://www.brasandhoney.com)). The same view on nightwear being more as home wear is expressed by many of my interviewees:

“Night clothing, it's usually the thing I wear *before* going to bed. Just when sitting on the couch reading a book or watching tv.”

[Camilla, 4:43]

“Definitely in the weekend if we stay at home like in the morning or something like that I don't change. And then, as I said, I prefer to have things that are more sporty kind of nightwear, because then I can even go if my kids want to go playing in the garden, I can still go with them, even if I am wearing something that is sleepwear, but it's more like sporty kind of sleepwear.”

[Lise, 28:38]

Camilla uses nightwear only when she is going to bed, but she associates *going to bed* with reading a book and doing some other leisure activities, in other words, she wears sleepwear that can be used as home wear. Such nightclothes women prefer also in the mornings, as Henriette says “So, I can get out of bed without putting something over if I go down to make coffee” [Henriette, 14:22]. Lise shares with me that she enjoys staying in her nightwear during the



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

weekend mornings and going to play with children, she may stay in the same clothes for a long time if the clothes are not obviously sleepwear. Lotte's observations, the manager of the lingerie boutique, support this view on nightwear:

“I think if the nightclothes or the pyjamas look less sleep-wear, then people tend to say 'oh, that's nice, because then you can take it on in the evening, and wear it after the bath, and even if there come some people to the door, you can go out and open without thinking you are going in nightclothes.’”

[Lotte, 19:14]

The retailer is well aware that Danish female consumers prefer the so-called 'lounge wear' instead of regular nightwear. Nowadays nightwear should be more than merely a clothing item to sleep, it should be multifunctional - from going to sleep to welcoming unexpected guests. Rahman et. al (2008) results also show that many individuals like to put on pyjamas as soon as they get home. They wear them while watching television, reading the newspaper, etc. Danish women shared with me that there is a lack of versatile nightwear on the market which would be multifunctional, however, additional research is necessary to find out what exactly Danish females would like to wear at home. The next section of the thesis looks at how women construct their identities through nightwear.

### 4. 2. Construction of Identity

#### **I am a Woman: my 'sensual' me**

Very few women stated that they use some sexy looking nightwear to attract men's attention, the majority of women think that nightwear is irrelevant in this regard or they believe that wearing a T-shirt can also be sexy:

“Boyfriend's oversized T-shirt can be cute in a way, because it's oversized.”

[Johanne, 8:30]

“I could also put it on, because... it's nice! It's not sexy at all, but maybe if it was his T-shirt he would think 'oh my God, this girl is so hot, she's wearing my T-shirt'.”

[Karina, 8:55]

Both females share that a simple T-shirt used for sleeping may be related to being sensual and attractive for a man especially if this T-shirt belongs to a male. A regular T-shirt may not seem

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

sensual, but both females could put on a partner's one with the possibility that he might find it attractive. The boyfriend's T-shirt, therefore, is a type of nightwear which may be seen as eroticized, according to DeGrazia & Furlough (1996), and intensifying sensuality and desire. In other words, females may use a boyfriend's T-shirts to enhance their feminine side when they are with their partners. My question was then, why most females are not interested to put any sensual nightwear found in stores? A number of females shared that they do not understand the reason behind doing it:

“Wearing something pretty or even sexy for going to bed it would be like a bit stupid, because then the purpose of it would be just to take it off.”

[Stine, 25:27]

“It's silly to wear high heels. The same with wearing laces and things that are scratchy, and just... to feel special, because then you say 'I spent money and I spent time putting on this and I am willing to feel uncomfortable because I want to do this for you.' [...] I think it's also a strange priority to spend your time on that.”

[Marie, 16:34]

Stine and Marie clearly state that they do not see the actual reason to wear any sensual nightwear, and it is shown by saying that wearing this kind of nightwear is *a bit stupid* and *silly*. A number of women were open enough to share with me that wearing sensual nightwear found in stores is not necessary, as a man will take it off anyways, thus they do not understand why they should spend their time on it, as Stine's words illustrate. If it is necessary, a woman will rather show her femininity through underwear than nightwear, “if you have a man, and you wanna look pretty for him you do it your best, and you put some lingerie and some nightwear, maybe” [Karina, 5:36]. This quote illustrates that lingerie goes first when it comes to showing your femininity and nightwear may be only an additional asset, however, most women told me that underwear is enough.

However, another point of view on sensual nightwear should be presented as well. Some women shared their beliefs that wearing some sensual nightwear sometimes brings something new to the relationships with their significant others, for example:

“I have a nightdress in satin, but it's only when I have to be feminine.”

[Tina, 3:08]

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

“I think men needs that {for a woman to dress up for a night}, men needs that they can see that we like them. They think we like them more, if we do something for them.”

[Anja, 6:52]

In the first quote Tina states that she uses satin nightdresses when she needs to be *feminine*, which implies that she uses some sensual nightwear when she is with someone special in her life. Anja believes that men need to see women dressing in some sensual nightwear and, in her opinion, it is an act of showing that a woman appreciates her significant other. Thus, wearing sensual nightwear could be seen as the tool to keep relationships going. Additionally, it can be the tool to help healing from the unsuccessful relationship. Consider the quotes below:

“I had a period after my divorce... I was using small nightdresses with spaghetti straps”

[Elin, 1:08:47]

“Well, actually, if you look at the divorce rates in this country, it's huge! Even also, ask people 'why are you getting divorced?' - 'we have no time for each other, as husband and wife, everything goes into practicalities: kids and the house and the daily jobs in general', so people have a tendency to forget each other. So, if we could sort of focus on that and say 'okay, it might help your marriage', if you actually chose to dress up for sleeping, and then you would be sexy and attractive and maybe you would not end up in a divorce situation.”

[Camilla, 16:15]

Elin was honest in her answers and her quote demonstrates that it might be that some sensual nightwear is used to help a women during the healing process after an unsuccessful relationship, as then she might feel weak and vulnerable. Tina, who got divorced, also tends to use sensual nightwear to enhance the feminine side, which is seen in the quote above: „*I have a nightdress in satin, but it's only when I have to be feminine*”. However, no studies were found on this matter and it is a sensitive issue that I did not dare to elaborate on this time if my interviewee was not eager to speak about it. Camilla during interviewing pointed out also the theme on divorce and started thinking loudly that maybe if women would dress a bit more for the night, the relationships would be more stable. Overall, during the interviewing process my interviewees started thinking about the possibility to add something extra for the night in order to add

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

something new into their daily routines, but they acknowledge the fact that even though they understand that some additional effort could be needed for the night, it is pretty hard to achieve, as Line says: “*I think, together with the rest, it's so easy to forget to do something. I mean, in the beginning you wear make-up and look nice all the time and try to be sexy, but after 10 years it's like 'oh', you just do a minimum.*” [Line, 11:04] So, even though some women interviewed try to stay sensual in the beginning of the relationship, after some time being busy they start ignoring paying much attention to how they look like at night, and the following sections elaborate on these views.

### **I am a Woman: femininity is behavior not appearance**

The question, then, is what Danish women see as being *feminine* and how they express *femininity*. When talking to women about their understanding of femininity, a number of women said the following:

“It's not something my mom has taught me *ever*. It was better to do something out there, to help someone, to be active, instead of spending time on yourself [...] the same with nightdress... you wear a beautiful nightdress, *just* to look beautiful...”

[Johanne, 13:50]

“The most feminine women to me who are relaxed about their looks and about who they are, I think that is the best conditions for living out your femininity. And I think that... yes, I think that Danish women are feminine, maybe, especially due to the fact that they can relax in this role. But I'm sure a lot of people would disagree with me. [...] Because I think a lot of people combine femininity with something different than I do, like dressed up and wearing make-up and caring a lot about your looks... but yes, it is not what it means to me.”

[Sofie, 26:10]

In the first quote Johanne says a beautiful nightdress is *just* beautiful, and it does not have any meanings to her when it comes to femininity. Sofie, as many women interviewed, shares a similar view on *femininity*, although she shows her concern that maybe many people would not agree with her, however, women I interviewed shared very similar *femininity* understandings. Johanne points out that her mother has never taught her to look at femininity this way. The majority of women agreed that mother and childhood are important in understanding *femininity* and sleeping routines, as Eve believes “I think it's something you take and my daughter is doing it, too” [Eve,

4:58]. Being feminine and observing mothers may be related to Stoller (1986), Bohan (1993) and Baron & Kotthoff (2001) findings who found out that that girls may reflect their own sense of self in other women, because they might share the same sex, and they construct their gendered identity through the perceived image of what the role of being a woman implies. As both quotes demonstrate when it comes to the perceived image of being a woman, for Danish females interviewed being a woman does not mean to spend much time on oneself, but rather be confident in who you are inside than outside, be 'useful' for the world, do good things, as Stine says “I would rather choose to be that people would think that I was really good doctor, than I was really good looking or I was dressing well. My skills matter the most.” [Stine, 18:20] It may be assumed that Danish women are pretty confident in themselves and do not need such product as nightwear to prove their feminine side. Wilk (1997) and Landon (1974) claim that less confident people tend to consume products more to enhance some of their sides, and in this case nightwear does not serve as a means to prove femininity. By looking at themselves as *feminine* in the things they do rather than how they look Danish females build their wanted selves rather through confidence and behavior than looks (Hosany and Martin, 2012).

### **I am a Woman: I am a SuperWoman**

Looking further at trying to understand how Danish women construct their identities, it is necessary to shed some light on historical and societal contexts (Lippa, 2002). Ashmore & Jussim (1997) argue that in order to understand the process of identification 3 crucial contexts have to be taken into consideration: history, culture (gender equality) and society (social equality). Although I am not looking at history, but gender and social equality seem to be important for such understandings of the selves. One of the reasons for seeing femininity rather in behavior seems to be of a socially accepted priority matter, consider the examples below:

“I just think that Danish girls are very busy because they have to work, they have to take care of the house and kids, they have a big amount of work, and they don't have the time for themselves.”

[Tina, 26:25]

“If I compare to my friends, to my girlfriends, they all... it's the same... the husband is working very hard, they {women} are working, some of them half time, and then they take care of everything at home, mostly, I would say like 80-85 percent. [...] I also know where it the husband who cooks at home... but it's not a... that's not a lot of them. It's mostly the wife, yeah.”

[Henriette, 25:44]

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Both Tina and Henriette believe that Danish women are very busy with their everyday responsibilities and, in addition to having the most part of the household, they also work, at least part-time. During reserach I noticed that women accentuated that they must work together with their significant others, as Camilla says “Men and women are definitely equal. We both work, almost in all families, because we have to, because everything here is very expensive, so therefore both men and women have to work.” [Camilla, 1:32] Daily routines take much time of their lives, consequently, the least thing they are concerned about is how they dress up for the night. As a consequence, the lifestyle of the interviewees also influences their sleeping routines and women just go sleeping in their underwear or wearing a T-shirt. If they had to devote attention to their nightwear every evening it would probably require too much time, and as the interviewees stated before, they do not see the purpose in it. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, having habits allows a person to stop making many decisions and rather perform daily routines (for example, sleeping) with a minimum of effort and decision-making.

Furthermore, it may be argued that Danish females do not consume almost any nightwear because there are no attractive values for them. For many women to wear sleepwear that is sweet has associations of low self-esteem:

“I think the women here are much more into taking care of themselves. So it's like we don't need the men actually. If you are more feminine, and a bit... maybe a bit weak, the man will feel stronger and they will take care of you and will do a lot of things for you and... maybe it's just these two opposites that just make it clothes here more relaxed and not so feminine. Could be a culture input.”

[Henriette, 31:08]

Henriette, as some other women, states that women in Denmark do not use nightwear much and keep things simple when it comes to sleeping. She says that women that are *feminine* in Henriette's understanding, meaning the ones that to dress for men and depend on them, may be seen a bit weak, but Danish women are strong and independent. This is further strengthened by the findings that some women did not understand why they have to do something when their significant others are not doing anything:

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

“When we go to bed, like we... we usually are just really tired, and then I think this aspect of practicality comes into the picture, that it's like the night is about getting good hours of sleep, but maybe also the fact that I definitely don't feel that I have to dress up in order to please my husband. Like I think that would feel that I would be diminishing myself, because... there is no that kind of expectations to him [...] I don't expect him to care about how he looks when he goes to bed, and therefore I also don't expect him to care how I look when I go to bed.”

[Sofie, 19:58]

Sofie says that when she does not care about her husband's look in bed, he should not care about hers either, and she perceives this dressing up for the night as a *diminishing* act to please a husband in this way. This could be explained by the gender law (Agustin, 2011) in Denmark where men and women are equal and therefore women perceive it purposeless. Lise, the expert on gender gender law policies both in EU and Denmark, further develops the idea of such *femininity* understandings and discusses not only gender, but also social equality:

Of course it can have to do with gender, but it can also have to do with class. This idea of having an equal society, not just in terms of gender, but also having like less hierarchies, there is this distance in terms of the power and all these things. And maybe it's not, it's not so... like you don't consider it necessarily as a positive value that you sort of show off, right, or if you have a lot of money and you show off.”

[Lise, 15:11]

Social equality and avoidance to stand out of the crowd was mentioned by a number of women. It may be pointed out that due to having gender and social equality women do not consider that males should expect them to dress up for the night. It could also be, as some interviewees mentioned, 'a cultural input' [Henriette, 33:44], and women in Denmark do not consume nightwear because it may not be a part of their culture.

## 4.3. New Results and Theoretical Contribution

Having discussed the findings some new light should be shed over the theory and try to make some theoretical contribution. For this study, three new models were created. The first one is related to some new product attributes which may be interesting to consider in future product development. The second model tries to show a relationship between constructing identity and nightwear. It aims to demonstrate that such an intimate product as nightwear can show some interesting findings regarding women's identity and gender. The final model was created to show the types of consumers that I believe might be at least partially used for developing new or advancing existing products in apparel business and nightwear in particular.

Although some of the findings have been already compared with the literature discussed in the conceptual framework, this section generalizes the main findings of this study, compares to the literature and theory followed by the presentation and explanation of the models for the reader.

### Product Attributes Re-evaluated

To begin with, from all product attributes *comfort* was named as the most important when it comes to deciding what a woman would or should wear for sleeping. *Comfort* as a product attribute might be seen as significant for female consumers regardless of their age and stage of life, as some other studies done with young consumers also showed that *comfort* is the most important criterion for choosing sleepwear. Interestingly, a number of interviewees disliked pyjamas or nightdresses for the same reason – *comfort*. They found wearing pyjamas to be uncomfortable, restrictive and hot. Put it different way, if pyjamas cannot not provide the essential comfort values or satisfy an individual's needs, many women do not even consider to buy one and rather sleep in an oversized T-shirt or underwear. When asked about other product attributes and pictures were showed, it was impossible to say what exactly women prefer, other than it should be more simple, however when designing a new model I kept all product attributes as they are important for the overall product evaluation.

It was found out that *comfort* as the most important product attribute named by interviewees should go far beyond it and be practical. If not practical issues, such as keeping from freezing and the possibility of staying with children wearing the same clothes, many women would not make a purchase at all. As regards *femininity* at this point these findings show that change in femininity may be seen unconnected to marital or parental status. The findings correspond to Jones et al. (2011) findings where they argue that change in *femininity* is unconnected to marital or parental



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

status, as in this case, sleeping routines and attitudes towards nightwear do not change after such life events. On the contrary, some women view nightwear rather as a luxurious item that is not worth spending money on.

In addition, nightwear should provide more functions than just being used for sleeping. Danish females interviewed expressed no interest in buying nightwear mainly because nightwear they find in shops does not correspond to their needs. Some kind of nightwear is understood merely as something used to hide from the public and not showing your body to unknown people. Although it is impossible for me to say what exactly those women wish for, additional research could fill in the gap not only theoretically, but also practically (for businesses). Another reason why Danish females do not buy nightwear is because nightwear on the market is not multifunctional. For nowadays woman nightwear should be more than just a piece to sleep in, it should be something she can wear all day around the house without being worried that she will look like 'just out of bed'.

Therefore, product attributes of *functional* values (style, quality, fabric, and comfort) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) might be considered for revision by adding *practical comfort* (mainly basic nightwear to stay at home) and *versatility* (can be used for more occasions and not only for sleeping) attributes, as it may be suggested that nowadays' product consumers may look for extra comfortable and multifunctional clothing items, although additional research is necessary in order to see clearly what factors cause to choose *practical* clothes or sleepwear in this case. The figure below illustrates the revised model of product attributes:



**Figure 5.** Re-created model of product attributes (original Figure 2)

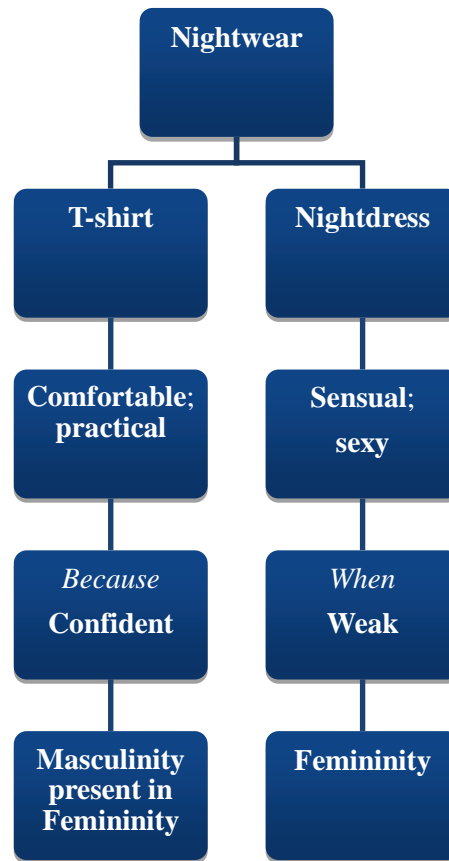
### **The Relationship between Nightwear and Femininity**

The second important issue to be addressed is trying to draw and see the relationship between nightwear and femininity. From the findings, it may be assumed that Danish women are pretty confident in themselves and do not need nightwear as such to prove their feminine side, as Wilk (1997) and Landon (1974) claim that unconfident people tend to consume products more to enhance some of their sides, and in this case nightwear does not serve as a means to prove femininity. By looking at themselves as *feminine* in the things they do rather than how they look Danish females build their wanted self rather through confidence and work they do for the outside world (Hosany and Martin, 2012). It may be therefore argued that Danish women's confidence, which is perceived as a masculine trait (Helgeson, 1994) overlaps with feminine traits, such as being helpful and considering themselves family persons (see the thematic analysis, Appendix 6), implying that some masculinity is present in their femininity understandings. This could explain why many Danish females are satisfied to sleep in an old worn-out T-shirt and do not consider it important to dress up for their significant others for the night.

The findings also suggest that nightwear found in stores lacks attractive values for them. Hogg et al. (2001) argue that rejecting products is also an important aspect of consumption, for people often reject products which possess negative or unattractive values for the individual, and my findings suggest that for many women to wear sleepwear that is sweet has associations of low self-esteem and weakness, but Danish women consider themselves rather strong and independent which again brings masculinity into their understanding of femininity (Lippa, 2002; Helgeson, 1994). The findings are strengthened by the fact that some women did not see the reasons behind dressing up for the night when their significant others are not doing anything. It may be implied that gender and social equality play a crucial role in such *femininity* understandings, as it is accepted in the Danish society that human beings are equal on all terms whether you are a male or a female. Purdie et.al (2007) argue that people behave accordingly in order to fit into the group or culture they identify themselves with. However, some women consider sensual nightdresses as a way to enhance their sensual side, they believe that having some sensual nightwear, eroticized nightwear (DeGrazia & Furlough, 1996), may bring something new to relationships and keep them stronger. One interviewee shared that sensual nightwear helped her to keep her femininity during the divorce period, thus making sensual nightwear as a tool to maintain the relations and being a help when a woman does not feel strong.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

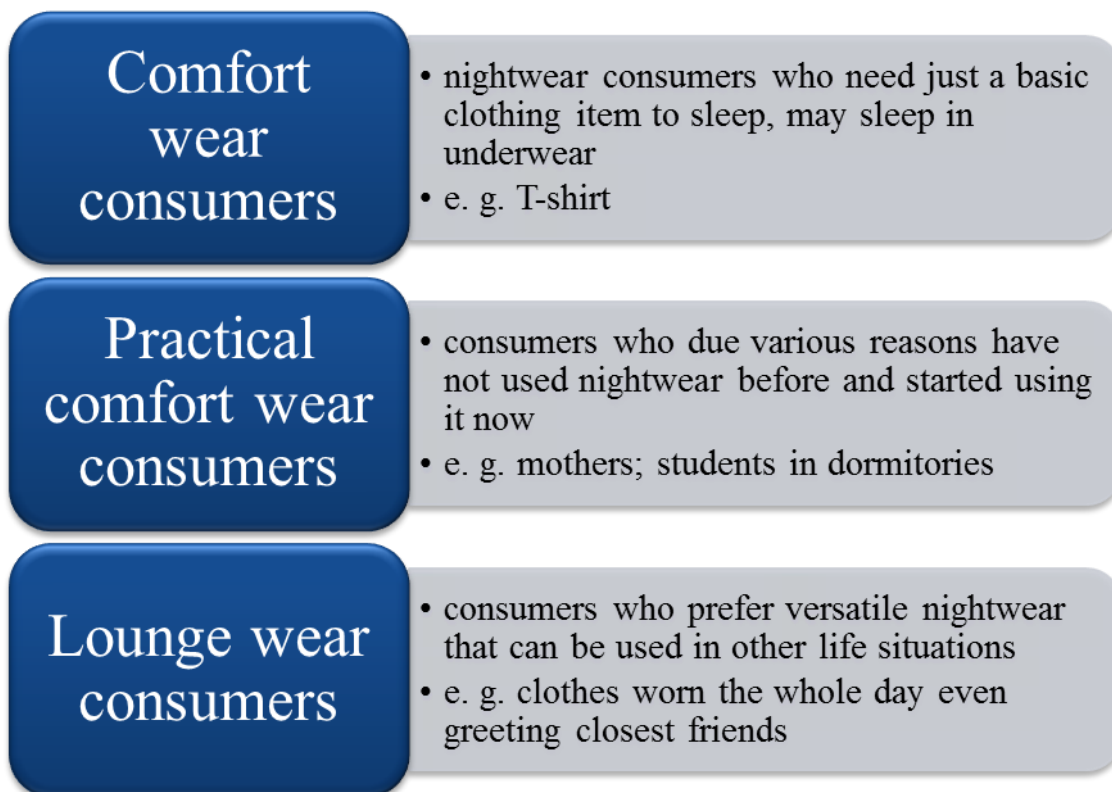
It may therefore be stated that the majority Danish females interviewed seem to have some *masculinity* in their *femininity* understandings, they are confident and do not consider nightwear as a means to express their femininity and they do not feel the need to wear. On the other hand, for some interviewees nightwear may be a means to enhance their sensuality in hard life situations or when they wish to show more sensuality for their partners, although the majority of women considered dressing up as a diminishing act. Thus the model constructed below tries to show the ties between nightwear and femininity/masculinity:



**Figure 6.** Self-created model on the relationship between nightwear and femininity based on empirical data

## Types of Consumers

Finally, before assessing the research, the distinguished types of consumers should be discussed. Rahman et.al (2008) findings show mainly three types of consumers based on their nightwear purchasing behavior: nightwear bought as a replacement item, but not on a regular basis; value conscious consumers that buy nightwear on sale, and consumers that buy nightwear due to style, colours, etc. However, the majority of my interviewees did not shop for nightwear, therefore, I decided to look at interviewees from another perspective and distinguished 3 types of consumers based on the product values discussed and females' nightwear choosing behavior, which, as argued, may be used in advancing and creating products in nightwear and apparel business. Furthermore, it seems relevant to distinguish consumers according to this variable, as the study looked at choosing nightwear behavior and constructions of the identities. The model is shown below:



**Figure 7.** Self-created model of nightwear consumers based on empirical data

## 5. Assessing Qualitative Data and Limitations

Having carried the research, the study should be evaluated the same way as other studies (Ambert et.al, 1995). According to many scholars such as Hirschman (1986), Guba et.al (1987), Amber et.al (1995), Clisett (2008) qualitative researcher should be evaluated using the following criteria: confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability in order to ensure trustworthiness. Therefore, the findings and the interpretations of the findings are going to be evaluated using the criteria mentioned above.

The first evaluating criterion is confirmability which stresses that the researcher is assumed not to be emotionally neutral, but to be involved in the topic of the study (Hirschman, 1986). Thus, as a constructivist, I am subjective and involved personally in the interpretations of meanings. Clisett (2008) argues that confirmability can be ensured by if the linkage between the data and findings can be identified, thus, I used direct quotations in the analysis and all recordings are enclosed (ibid). To ensure that the interpretations of the findings and conclusions were logical and were drawn from the data collected Hirschman (1986) suggests that some external researchers acquainted with the phenomena should evaluate every step of the research. Due to the time span I was unable to have my study evaluated by other researchers, however, the supervisor has read all parts and given valuable comments.

In order to ensure credibility, as Hirschman (1986) suggests, I have to make sure that the findings in this thesis correspond to personal constructions of interviewees, they are the most competent people that may evaluate them. Although due to time restrictions and busy lifestyles of interviewees I was unable to ask them to assess the findings, as a constructivist I believe that people are who they appear to be, and the participants were honest while talking to me (Hirschman, 1986). I believe that my interviewees were honest and open, as they were found through the network, which, as discussed in the methodology section, enhanced the chance to gain more trust of interviewees. Some rather open details shared with me and mentioned in the thesis also show that participants trusted me. Nevertheless, some parts of communication between me and an interviewee could have been elaborated further, for example, the influence of work on constructing identity through nightwear, and that would have provided me with a fuller view on the matter (Hirschman, 1986).

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

The following criterion of transerability may be met if the specifics of both contexts, in which the interpretations were made and wished to be applied in, are known (Hirschman, 1986). In this thesis, I do not claim that the results apply to other situations; however the findings are applicable for the group of women interviewed and some ideas and constructions might be transferred to other contexts. Other women might construct their feminine identity in similar ways when consuming 'feminine' things; nevertheless another researcher should determine whether this research is relevant for his/her specific situation. In order to give the best possibility to judge whether findings can be transferred to other situations, detailed descriptions of the subject, theory, methods, etc. are given earlier in the thesis (Guba et.al, 1987).

Dependability is difficult to achieve in qualitative research, as the findings interpretations of the study are the results of the unique interactions between the researcher and the phenomenon under investigation (Hirschman, 1986). In other words, various contexts and different human experiences make it rather impossible to replicate the data collection or interpretations. To ensure dependability, according to Hirschman (1986), I could have other researchers to construct interpretations of my findings, but as researchers have different experiences, so constructions could have differed from mine. Instead, I included all recordings and tried my best to justify decisions made regarding this thesis. As I wrote this thesis myself, only I can know the whole process of this thesis. However, the biggest part of the thesis has been read by my supervisor who helped to detect any flaws in the research.

## 6. Conclusions

In the last part of the Master's thesis, conclusions are drawn on the basis of the research undertaken. This study aimed to further explore and really understand existing differences in Danish female consumers' preferences for nightwear. By using qualitative approach the thesis tested to what extent women's perceptions of the selves influence the decision to choose particular sleepwear. The research question and sub questions to be answered were the following:

How do women construct their identities through nightwear?

The sub-questions were:

1. What are Danish females' attitudes towards nightwear?
2. How Danish females perceive *femininity* and *feminine* identity?

This study revealed that the majority of Danish females interviewed did not use sleepwear as a medium to express themselves. The majority of Danish women interviewed considered nightwear to be a basic T-shirt which should have done both be comfortable and practical. *Comfort* as a functional product attribute was named as the most important criterion for female consumers to choose sleepwear regardless of their age and stage of life. A number of interviewees have found nightwear to be hot and restrictive and disliked it for being uncomfortable, thus, they rather chose sleeping having only underwear on. In addition, nightwear should provide *practical comfort*. Practical nightwear, most often a T-shirt, should have kept a woman from freezing and been comfortable enough to stay with children. The only reason when women may have used some kind of nightwear was when they are in public settings with unknown people, otherwise, some interviewees stated they would have rather spent money on publicly rather than privately consumed products, as the latter could not have been seen or noticed by others as much as other apparel products. The *functional* values of nightwear were, therefore, more important than *symbolic* ones.

Looking at the reasons for avoiding nightwear, Danish females interviewed found nightwear in stores as not corresponding to their needs. According to some females sleepwear they have found looks either childish or for elderly ladies. Women have showed high interest in versatile pieces of clothing, the so-called *lounge wear*, that could have done both be used for sleeping and do many things in and around the house, and not be confined to private settings at home.

Moving to femininity and nightwear, Danish females interviewed did not think that nightwear

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

was essential or important for expressing one's femininity. Females may have used a boyfriend's T-shirt to enhance their feminine sides when there have been with their partners. Most females were not interested to wear any sensual nightwear found in stores, because they simply did not find the reason behind doing it. The majority of interviewees did not consider nightwear as a means to express their femininity, enhance their sexuality, and they have not felt the need to wear it in order to keep their femininity alive. However, according to some interviewees sensual nightwear may have been used as means to help recovering while going through difficult life situations, such as divorce, or might have been used as a tool to keep the relationships strong.

Femininity by Danish women interviewed is rather expressed in their behavior. The discussion of the findings suggests that when it comes to the perceived image of being a woman, Danish females perceive *femininity* as being confident in who one is inside rather than outside, doing meaningful things to the world rather than spending much time on oneself. Danish females construct their wanted selves rather through confidence, which has been perceived as a masculine trait, implying that some masculinity may have been seen present in their femininity understandings. This could have explained why many Danish females have been satisfied to sleep in an old worn-out T-shirt and have not considered it important to dress up for their significant others for the night. The majority of women agreed that mother and childhood have been important in understanding femininity and sleeping routines.

The discussion of the findings also suggested that looking at femininity in behavior and present masculinity in Danish women's *femininity* understandings could have been partially explained by some social and cultural factors present in the Danish society. One of the reasons for seeing femininity rather in behaviors seemed to be a socially accepted priority matter, for daily routines have taken much time of women's lives and left concerns about sleeping the last on the 'to-do' list. As a consequence, lifestyles of interviewees have influenced their sleeping routines and women have gone sleeping in their underwear or wearing a T-shirt. For many women wearing sensual sleepwear or dressing up for a man may have had some unattractive values, for example, low self-esteem, weakness and humiliation. Danish women have considered themselves being strong and independent which has brought masculinity into their understandings of femininity. For such understandings of themselves cultural and societal issues may have played a crucial role.

For this particular study, on the basis of empirical data 3 models were self-designed in order to bring some theoretical contribution to the existing literature on females' identity, constructions of



the selves and consumption of the inner wear product, such as nightwear. The findings suggested that consumers' attitudes towards a product and their perceptions of the selves may be seen as complex phenomena which could affect such industries as fashion and apparel business. Before developing their products and businesses in Denmark and possibly in other Scandinavian countries, fashion practitioners should take into consideration that females' perceptions of *femininity* may vary and have an impact towards their preferences for nightwear and most probably for clothes.

### **7. Recommendations for Further Research**

To close off this Thesis, I will briefly discuss some reflections about further research. This project was exploratory and aimed at trying to make a contribution to the knowledge on attitudes towards nightwear and the construction of the self through nightwear. I focused on Danish females as Northern consumers of nightwear and tried to explain the results by social and political factors. However, more research needs to be carried out in order to exhaust the subject to the fullest. This research was qualitative, but some quantitative studies would benefit this study well. Though I tried to achieve an ideal sample of interviewees above the age of 26, I interviewed women that I was able to reach due to the time span given. It would be interesting to include young females until the age of 26 and see if any differences occur. Such aspects as financial situation were not taken into account in this study and it would be fruitful to see if these factors affect females' attitudes towards nightwear and accordingly their perceptions of the selves, as, for example, divorced Danish females would perhaps show a higher degree of masculinity present in their femininity understandings than the married ones, and their attitudes could towards nightwear would differ. Additionally, it would be fruitful to consider the study's implications for current nightwear and lingerie production companies. More studies are needed to be carried out in order to find successful solutions to approach Danish and possibly other Scandinavian countries' female consumers.

Lastly, I must conclude the topic of women and nightwear is by no means simple. This thesis demonstrates that such intimate inner wear clothing item as nightwear may serve as a platform for *feminine* identity constructions, revealing many interesting aspects of nowadays' women perceptions of the selves, and could be used as an inspiration for further studies.

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## **9. Appendices**

### **APPENDIX 1**

#### **Questions for Manager Lotte, Randers**

Name, age, occupation (how many years in business), shop name

1. Who is the range of your customers mostly?
2. What do you look for when you order new nightwear? Which attributes are important to you when ordering nightwear? (country-of-origin, brand, quality, style, fabric, comfort and price)
3. What kind of nightwear your customers look for the most? Which colours, styles, anything in particular?
4. Do your customers buy nightwear for themselves or as presents more?
5. When they buy for themselves – what kind of nightwear do they like?
6. When buying for someone – what kind of nightwear do they buy? To whom?
7. Could you choose and show a few of the best nightwear examples your customers would choose?

Subsequent questions arose during interviewing. The questions are based on literature review and 9th semester project found on CD.

### **APPENDIX 2**

#### **Questions to Associate Professor Lise, Aalborg University**

1. What are gender roles in Denmark?
2. What does gender law actually mean?
3. How have gender roles changed the Danish society?
4. How did it affect women and men (femininity/masculinity understanding)? What is your opinion on this matter?
5. Why, do you think, it is necessary to have established gender equality in a country?
6. Could there be any relation between gender law and divorce rate in Denmark? As nearly half-

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

marriages end in divorce.

Subsequent questions arose during interviewing. The questions are based on literature review and the question on divorce is based on the very first interviews with women.'

### APPENDIX 3

#### **Interview questions:**

Name, age, occupation, marital status

Gender:

- (1) What are gender roles in your culture? How do you see men and women in your culture? Do you feel they are equal or someone is superior?
- (2) What is the role of a woman in a family? Why? How do you feel about that?
- (3) How would you describe yourself as a woman?

Nightwear:

- (1) What do you wear for sleeping? Why?
- (2) Why do you like or dislike nightwear?
- (3) What do you associate "wearing nightwear" with?
- (4) What would be a typical nightwear for you? Why? When do you usually change for nightwear clothes?
- (5) Why do you need to purchase a new pair of nightwear?
- (6) Which attributes are important for you when buying nightwear? (country-of-origin, brand, quality, style, fabric, comfort and price)
- (7) How many pairs of nightwear do you currently own?
- (8) How often do you shop for nightwear?
- (9) Where do you shop for nightwear? Why?
- (10) What amount of money would you be willing to pay for a new piece of nightwear? Nightgown or pyjamas?
- (11) Do you have any favorite brands to shop for nightwear? Why these?

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

(12) Have you received any nightwear as a present? What was it, if not a secret? From whom? For what occasion?

(13) What memories with nightwear do you have from your childhood? How do you remember your mother in the evenings and at night?

(14) Have you changed your behavior, views, attitudes towards nightwear over time?

Femininity:

(15) How do you spend your free - time?

(16) If you can choose to spend a day in SPA with your significant other or watch a football game, which one do you choose?

(17) Do you think it is important to have beautiful nightwear? Why/why not? When especially is it important to have beautiful nightwear in your opinion?

(18) Would you associate nightwear with femininity? What kind of nightwear do you consider feminine? Why? What do you think are the reasons for that?

(19) Do you think family ties, having a family, affects the way a woman chooses nightwear? Why/why not? How?

(20) To what extent culture, the law on gender equality, or any other factors influence the way women in Denmark choose nightwear?

Show images : which one do you like more? Why? What you like and don't like? Why?

## Appendix 4

**Survey with Kostas Tsamados, the managing director and main shareholder of Vamp! S.A.**

**How would you describe the current global nightwear market?**

The global nightwear market is a very competitive field. Especially now, the competition is more fierce, as the manufacturers of pyjamas and nightwear need not only to differentiate their products from the competition but also from rival uses, like daywear.

**Do you have or follow the news about the global nightwear industry? If yes, could you share some information:**

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

Yes, especially from newspapers and fashion magazines. In addition, it is undoubted that the Internet can play a vital role in our field as we can find there a plethora of news, statistics and information.

### **How the 2008 European crisis has affected the nightwear industry?**

It is undeniable that the European economic crisis during those 5 years has affected the majority of European industries. However, our field is not affected as much as the others (outwear) , mainly in Central Europe where the market is steady with a slight upward growth.

### **What do you think, is the future of nightwear business in Europe?**

It will be affected definitely, as all the other industries around the world, but the fluctuations will not have significant ups and downs.

### **In which markets have you tried to expand in the past few years?**

United Kingdom, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium, Germany and Austria.

### **Why Denmark was chosen as a starting point in Scandinavian countries?**

Denmark has a good geographical location (very close to Europe) with easy access to other Scandinavian countries, the Baltic States and Germany.

We can say that Denmark is the European part of Scandinavia. That's why we start from Denmark.

### **After some market research in Denmark, how would you describe the Danish nightwear market? To what extent is it similar or different from the nightwear production you offer? How would you compare the Danish nightwear market to other new markets you are currently expanding in?**

Although it is next to European countries with a majority of textile industries and fashion, the Danish market has proved as a difficult one. It is not so open to the new fashion trends. Furthermore, we saw that our colorful collections with our Mediterranean style weren't so attractive for the women. Most of them prefer more simple patterns, with pastels colors and a more minimal aesthetics.

### **To what extent fashion trends are important in production of nightwear, in your opinion?**

The nightwear industry is not affected so much by the fashion trends. The color palettes, the qualities and the patterns are approximately the same. The people inside house prefer to be relaxed, easy and comfort dressed than fashion.

Generally, our sector is more limited in new ideas and in new trends. The important in each season collection is the fluctuations of colors.

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

### **What in your opinion, customers associate with nightwear?**

In general, people wear pyjamas and nightwear not only for sleeping but also for their comfort as homewear. Our company's philosophy is to give them the sense of coziness and elegance, while at the same time they feel "colorful" in their home.

### **Why do you think, there are people who do not like buying nightwear and sleep in what they found at home?**

This is related to the culture and habits. People who like sitting at home, they want to wear pyjamas or homewear. In addition, there are many people who like to host friends at their homes and they feel more comfortable wearing homewear. It's all about personal philosophy and comfort leaving in house.

### **What kind of woman would you think goes to a lingerie boutique to buy beautiful nightwear?**

We believe that it is more common for women who are up to 30 years old that have family. And that's why for our company this is the target group. These women spend most of their time in home, housekeeping and not having a lot of time to care about their beauty. However, the easier way for them to be beautiful is just to wear something comfortable and nice.

### **What kind of woman, in your opinion does not care much about what she sleeps in?**

Usually young women who want to be sexy and they don't need to wear something more serious. They feel comfort wearing lingerie, her boyfriend's T-shirt, or an old shirt.

## APPENDIX 5

<b><u>TURNOVER IN % PER COUNTRY - 2012</u></b>	
GREECE	48,1
CZECH REPUBLIC	25,6
POLAND	7,1
SERBIA	6,2
ROMANIA	5,6

## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH NIGHTWEAR

HUNGARY	4,2
BULGARIA	2,5
CYPRUS	0,3
HOLLAND	0,3
SLOVENIA	0,1
<b><u>TURNOVER IN % PER COUNTRY - 2013</u></b>	
GREECE	49,1
CZECH REPUBLIC	28,2
SERBIA	5,1
ROMANIA	5,1
HUNGARY	4,6
POLAND	4,6
BULGARIA	1,8
CYPRUS	0,7
LEBANON	0,3
SWITZERLAND	0,3
BELGIUM	0,1
DENMARK	0,03
GREAT BRITAIN	0,02

Official numbers of new countries Vamp S.A. enters currently:

Season	13-2	14-1	14-2
Country	Number of pieces ordered		
DENMARK	30	108	296
SWITZERLAND	412	289	548
UK	20	391	76
BELGIUM	182	394	287
GERMANY		181	615