



The urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perception of Denmark and Scandinavian design products

Master Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products, and further how these two can be linked. In addition, it further aims to investigate the influencing factors of their product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design in relation to furniture- and interior products. This investigation will contribute with knowledge to Danish companies, which attempt to enter the Chinese market, and the researchers, therefore, aim to present certain practical implications, in which these influencing factors are taken into account. The thesis investigates a gap, as there currently appears not to exist any literature or studies treating the urban, Chinese middle class' perception, both in regards to Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products, but also whether these two may be linked.

The theoretical framework for this thesis includes Simon Anholt's considerations of *Nation Branding*, hereunder *The Hexagon of Competitive Identity*. These are used in connection with the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perceptions of Denmark's nation image. In addition, the thesis will also include Keith Dinnie's theoretical considerations in relation to *The Country of Origin Effect*, which is used in connection with the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perceptions of Scandinavian design products. Furthermore, additional studies form the basis for other concepts, which are also used in connection with both the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

The overall research design is qualitative, due to the usage of semi-structured interviews, in which the researchers interview six persons, who fit within the definition of the social class of urban, Chinese middle class. Furthermore, the method of photo elicitation is applied, due to the utilization of two elaborated documents, of which one document illustrates two identical products with slightly different info of manufacturing country, and another document illustrating various Scandinavian design products. This method is used in the investigation of the interviewees' perceptions of Scandinavian design products. Finally, the data-analysis method of coding is employed in connection with the transcriptions of the interviews. The coding enables the researchers to divide the obtained data from the semi-structured interviews into different segments.

Results of the thesis include, that the Chinese interviewees generally both possess positive perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products in regards to multiple factors. There are indications of a link between the two above-mentioned perceptions, as some of the Chinese interviewees attribute the same values to both Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products. These values are all related to environmental factors.

Furthermore, the influencing factors of product purchase intentions of the Chinese interviewees are generally related to good quality, uniqueness, and price, if the price reflects high quality. The main factor influencing the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intentions negatively is, however, also price, as they appear to prefer cheaper prices, which may imply, that they will resort to cheaper products. In connection with this aspect, products that are cheaper, but with a similar look to the Scandinavian design products, also appear to affect the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intention negatively.

Moreover, the researchers present certain practical implications for Danish companies, that attempt to sell Scandinavian design furniture- and interior products on the Chinese market. These practical implications indicate, that Danish companies could consider introducing their products as luxury products. This will, among others, substantiate the higher prices and make products appear more unique. In addition, the practical implications also indicate, that Danish companies could associate their products with the Chinese, cultural practice of gift giving, which may minimize the risk of losing face and contribute to the maintenance of social status, which is considered important in Chinese culture. Danish companies could also consider whether the manufacturing of their products should take place in Denmark, as the urban, Chinese middle class then would consider the products more trustworthy, which will justify the higher prices.

However, further investigation within the topic with additional measurement tools is needed to create a more holistic picture of the research topic, but this present thesis contributes with knowledge and lays the ground for further research.

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1. Introduction

Globalization has intensified worldwide social relations and made it possible to maintain constant contact across nations, strengthening affiliations in terms of social relations within social political and economic activities (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 2). One economical activity, that has increased explosively within the last 70 years, is related to import- and export activities across nations (Ortiz-Ospina et al., 2018). However, while some products appeal to consumers all over the world despite their geographical location and thus may be exported to many countries in the world, some products may be prone to cultural differences and therefore may not be able to sell in certain markets. Hence, it remains crucial to not only be aware of, but also understand these cultural differences within foreign markets, in order to determine *whether* and *how* a product can succeed to be exported to this specific market, and finally *who* would purchase the specific product.

One export market, which many foreign companies have already identified as a prominent export market, is China. As China has seen an enormous, economic rise within the last 40 years, millions of Chinese have been lifted out of poverty, and many of these have joined the increasingly growing middle class (Yuan, 2018). Especially the urban, Chinese middle class has grown to now include 400 million people, and this social class has obtained larger, economic freedom than ever before (Nasdaq, 2018; Cyrill, 2019). Furthermore, as the still growing urban, Chinese middle class has obtained a larger purchasing power, which only continues to increase (Rambourg, 2014, p. xxvi-xxvii), this large group of people is by foreign companies also considered a very prominent consumer group.

Meanwhile in Denmark, one market that has experienced an increasing growth is the furniture- and interior products market. Several products within this category have undertaken a specific style, referred to as ‘Danish design’, which appears rather prominent for these brands of Danish origin. Nevertheless, as many Danish brands selling these products have experienced great success nationally, it appears evident to grapple with new, foreign markets. The large, deep-pocketed urban, Chinese middle class, whose interest for furniture- and interior design products has also been awakened lately, thus appears as a prominent consumer group to boost sales of Danish design products by Danish companies.

While comprising a large consumer group, the urban, Chinese middle class also represents a large group of people with a different, cultural background than the Danish companies’ typical target group. As cultural differences may create differences in the way

people think and act in relation to certain topics, Danish companies thus may have to ascertain how urban, Chinese middle class consumers think, in order to investigate, whether and how they could introduce their Danish design products to this Chinese consumer group. However, as previous research has shown, that a foreigner's perception of a nation also may influence his/her perception of individual products from this given nation, it appears evident to not only investigate the urban, Chinese middle class' perception of Danish design interior- and furniture products, but also investigate how they perceive Denmark as a nation. Furthermore, whether this perception of Denmark can be linked to the Danish design products in relation to certain values also appears as useful information for marketing purposes, as Danish companies then may consider, whether they are able to utilize these values in relation to their brands or products.

Throughout this investigation, the researchers will look into the urban, Chinese middle class consumers perceptions of Denmark, their perceptions of Danish design furniture- and interior products, and furthermore whether and how there exists a link between these two perceptions. By gaining insight into these perceptions and the link between these perceptions, Danish companies can benefit from the findings of this investigation, in terms of whether there may exist a market for their products in China, including which factors may influence the urban, Chinese middle class consumers in their purchase of these products.

The researchers will investigate Danish design under the frame of Scandinavian design. The underlying reason for this is due to the fact, that many Chinese appear not to distinguish between the Nordic countries but rather see them as one holistic group, namely 'Scandinavia' (Yan, 2018). Furthermore, as the essence of 'Scandinavian design' and 'Danish design' is rather similar and thus hardly differ from one another in terms of their definition, it appeared evident to investigate the Danish products as part of Scandinavian design products.

Based on the abovementioned considerations, the following problem formulation and appertaining research question have been elaborated:

Problem formulation:

What are the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products, and how can these two be linked?

Research question:

Which factors influence the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products?

2. Literature review

The purpose of the following section is to present the most significant and contributing literature and studies of the topic, that this investigation treats, including nation branding, the country of origin effect, the urban, Chinese middle class (including furniture- and interior product consumption), and Scandinavian design. In regards to the two theoretical concepts of Nation Branding and Country of Origin Effect, merely the most frequently mentioned authors of these, including their various perspectives on these theories, will be presented.

2.1 Nation Branding and the Country of Origin Effect

"Nation branding has become a popular yet contested field of research and practice, attracting interest from a broad range of disciplines" (The Place Brand Observer, 2019). The idea of Nation Branding was first captured by Simon Anholt in 1996, in which he argued *"that the reputations of countries are rather like the brand images of companies and products, and equally important"* (Anholt, 2007, p. xi). Subsequently, he altered this idea to the concept of *competitive identity*, as he increasingly initiated emphasizing national identity as well as politics and economics of competitiveness, rather than how branding usually is grasped (Anholt, 2007, p. xi). In addition to Anholt, the British brand consultant Olins is also frequently referenced in the context of nation branding, due to his speaking engagements, his general work for governments as well as his publications (Kaneva, 2011, p. 117).

The existing literature on nation branding can generally be divided into three different overall perspectives, namely the functionalist- and economic perspective, the political perspective, and the cultural-critical perspective. Studies concerning the functionalist perspective consider nation branding as a strategic tool that aims to strengthen a nation's competitive advantage on the global market (Kaneva, 2011, p. 120). The economic perspective entails studies, that emphasize the aspect of ensuring an attractive reputation with the audience that is targeted (The Place Brand Observer, 2019). This perspective is, as mentioned, perceived by Anholt, who puts an emphasis on the competitive identity of a nation. In addition, Keith Dinnie also refers to this perspective of nation branding, as he states in regards to nations brands, that it is *"the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences"* (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). Further studies build on this perspective, as the reputation not solely is beneficial for the

country, but can also be beneficial for the country's products and the export of these (The Place Brand Observer, 2019). One author, who has emphasized that aspect, is Gnoth, who presented a theoretical model illustrating how the development of a country as a tourism destination may comprise an advantage for the country's products as well as its services in export markets (Gnoth, 2002).

Moreover from the functionalist- and economic perspective, other studies have also investigated the political perspective, which generally concerns the coordination of governments, as they attempt to promote tourism, investment and foreign relations (Kaneva, 2011). This perspective is generally considered either as negative, as it may increase propaganda, or as a positive form of management of positive reputations for nations (Kaneva, 2011). The negative policy perspective was captured in a study by Gilboa, who concluded, that public diplomacy mainly entails one-sided propaganda to aid an image of a nation (Gilboa, 2001). On the contrary, studies and literature emphasizing the political perspective with positive attributes generally rely on the assertion of a decline of nation states in a globalized world (Kaneva, 2011). One author focusing on this aspect is Mark Leonard, who argues, that national policies, i.e. domestic- and international relations, can be influenced by public diplomacy, which therefore can be used as a strategic tool in this regard. This perspective on public diplomacy can also be referenced to the parallel concept of nation branding, formerly defined by Anholt (Kaneva, 2011).

Additionally, in relation to the last perspective in the context of nation branding, namely the cultural-critical perspective, the literature emphasizes its implications for various national identities, in relations of social power as well as the setting of different agendas (Kaneva, 2011). The literature focusing on this perspective furthermore criticizes, that national identity is constructed by internal- and external agents, rather than collective and individual meanings (Kaneva, 2011). A relevant author criticizing the absence of citizen participation in the context of nation branding, is Widler, who further claims, that nation branding stands as a contrast to diversity and plurality (Widler, 2007). Furthermore, the literature on this particular perspective is concerned with the influence of marketing and branding of one's social area and how this may alter people's perceptions of themselves and their appertaining national identity. This element of a discourse of nation branding further indicates a constructivist idea of nationhood in this context (Kaneva, 2011).

Along with the literature that encompasses Nation Branding, the term Country of Origin Effect frequently appears. Country of Origin Effect (from now on referred to as COO) dates more than half a century back to the time, when foreign product consumption along with globalization started to increase. The first researcher to investigate the COO and the effects thereof was Schooler (1965), who in 1965 established, that a COO effect existed, but did not go into depth about the details of the effect (Dinnie, 2004, p. 2).

Later on, various scholars have expanded the COO research through their studies, which have investigated several aspects of the effects hereof. However, it was not until 1978 that Yaprak expanded COO research and included a multi-cue design in his investigation related to general country- and product attributes as well as specific product attributes (Dinnie, 2004, pp. 3, 6). This means, that instead of only focusing on one aspect of the product, e.g. country of origin, which most previous studies had done, Yaprak gave the studied individuals several pieces of information about a product, which were found to affect the overall product evaluation of foreign products.

Within the next 10 years, the volume of multi-cue design investigations increased. Nevertheless, in 1988, Ettenson et al. expanded previous research done by Johansson et al. in 1985, and found that product cues other than COO (such as price and quality) were in some cases likely to have an even larger effect on consumers' product evaluation than the COO (Ettenson, Wagner, & Gaeth, 1988; Johansson, Douglas, & Nonaka, 1985).

In 1993, Papadopoulos and Heslop emphasized, that due to the fact that many brands use contemporary global production systems, it can be argued, that products do not have only one place- or country of origin (Dinnie, 2004, p. 3).

Since Papadopoulos and Heslop's study, the COO effect has been studied frequently across nations, cultures, and product/service categories (Dinnie, 2004; Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998). However, apart from gaining attention for his work on nation branding, Keith Dinnie has also gained much attention for his work and general overview of the COO effect. With his article "*Country-of-Origin 1965-2004: A Literature Review*" from 2004 and following his book "*Nation Branding – Concepts, Issues, Practice*" from 2008, Dinnie has become one of the most well-known contemporary authors within the field of nation branding and hereunder COO effects to give students and researchers a more holistic overview of the various research, including the contrasting findings, within the topic (Dinnie, 2008). It is thus also on the foundations of Dinnie's work, that this present investigation will advance, as this theoretical framework will be used to investigate urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark and further their perceptions of specific products originating from

this country. Based on this scope of the investigation, it thus also appears essential to present this population group and their consumption patterns.

2.2 Chinese middle class consumers, their increasing purchasing power, and the Chinese furniture market

Alongside the immense growth of the Chinese economy within the last 40 years, hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens have left poverty and instead become part of the broad category ‘the Chinese middle class’, which include individuals that have an income in between 75.000 RMB to 208.000 RMB (11.500 USD to 43.000 USD) annually (Yuan, 2018). This enormous population group now accounts for approx. 400 million people, while still growing larger every year (Nasdaq, 2018; Cyrill, 2019).

Thus, the Chinese citizens have gained access to a larger amount of money for spending on consumer goods and today possess an enormous spending power, which in 2015 accounted for 12% of the global consumption – a number which is expected to reach 22% by 2030 (Nasdaq, 2018).

The Chinese have, along with their increasing consumption patterns, also started showing great interest for the furniture market. The Chinese furniture industry was the fourth largest consumer good industry in 2012, of which the domestic market made up an increasingly large part of this industry (Castellina, 2013). Most recently, numbers illustrate that from 2015 to 2016, the sales within the market increased by 16%, and thus the Chinese furniture market’s total sales were estimated at over 35 billion US dollars. The Chinese, however, have along with their interest for furniture- and interior design also gained an interest for foreign, imported design brands, hereunder the trend of eco-friendly furniture (Li, 2014, pp. 4-6; Marketing to China, 2017).

According to Ni (2012), it is primarily the women of the household that buy furniture, since they are the ones to furnish the house. An example of this was given by Miller (2004), who argued, that when it comes to IKEA, which is a large Swedish company that sells Scandinavian design furniture- and interior products, women make up around 70% of the customers. Furthermore, the main part of the Chinese IKEA’s costumers are between 20 and 35 of age, and are in general often well-educated, high-income families with children, or double-income families with no children (Miller, 2004).

In the China Design Trends Report by the Chinese design and trend analysis company Yang Design, the typical consumer group of furniture in China are middle-class and wealthier younger consumers, often well-educated and willing to pay extra for products, which they find unique and fit their personal taste (Pablo Publishing, 2017). A large part of these middle class consumers are located in urban areas, namely the 1st tier cities Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing, which in general are considered the top target markets for high-end products in China (Cao, Hansen, Xu, & Xu, 2004).

2.3 Scandinavian design in China

Although Chinese consumers may have an understanding of what Scandinavian Design entails, interior design products are still part of an emerging market in China. However, the more familiarity and knowledge the Chinese consumers gain of the concept, the more willing they are to gain insights into the company's story and values, cf. Johansen (Johansen, 2017, p. 7).

Mette Hay, co-founder of Danish design interior brand Hay, explains, that the Chinese are changing their way of living and socializing. She points to how people in Europe often socialize with friends and family in the domestic settings e.g. through eating a meal, instead of eating take-away at restaurants, which has traditionally been a more common way of socializing in China. Instead, the Chinese are now starting to invite people to their homes, like the Europeans do, which makes it increasingly important to have an attractive home (Fairs, 2016).

Also, Mette Hay explains, that the Chinese consumers have been showing increasingly interest in this area, that IKEA has started making events, *“where people can come and get educated in how to decorate or design your home”* (Fairs, 2016).

Furthermore, Møbjerg and Hansen (2008) also argue, that one of the reasons for why various kinds of Danish design products already have had great success is rooted in the fact, that the

¹ First-tier cities are metropolises important to China's political, economic, and social activities, and have leading roles. Their leadership is reflected in the level of urban development, economic strength, international competitiveness, scientific and technological innovation, and traffic accessibility (Li et al., 2018). Tier I cities include [among others] the centrally-administered municipalities of Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, and Beijing, each of which have a population exceeding 10 million (World Population Review, 2019).

Chinese know of the author, H.C. Andersen. Hong Jiang, who is the leader of the Investment Fund for Developing Countries' office in Beijing, argues the following:

“The Chinese want to buy good quality, design and a good image. To many Chinese, Denmark is a fairy-tale land. They know H.C. Andersen from the school, so one can market the products along with the country, which makes the goods different and unique”.

The Chinese consumers, however, can not be considered as one uniform and homogeneous target group (Johansen, 2017, p. 33; Dinnie, 2008, p. 93). Notwithstanding, as the urban, Chinese middle class currently appears as the largest consumer group of these products, the researchers will carry out an investigation based on this socioeconomic group, including their perceptions of Scandinavian design products. Thus, it also appears evident to present the frame of what Scandinavian design entails.

2.4 Defining Scandinavian design

'Scandinavian design' is a term that is frequently used to describe a specific type of products within categories such as homeware, furniture, interiors, jewellery, fashion, technology, and graphics (Sommar, 2003), which express some kind of simplicity through clean lines, practicality, and/or functionality (Pike, 2011, pp. 158-160; Sommar, 2003, p. 6). However, this investigation will merely focus on furniture- and interior products, and thus when referring to 'Scandinavian design (products)', the researchers refer only to furniture- and interior products.

Important characteristics of Scandinavian design products also entail, that they express good craftsmanship and positive democratic ideals (Sommar, 2003, p. 6). The value of craftsmanship refers to the history of the Scandinavian countries, where fishermen and farmers used their skills to create furniture from the materials that were available to them, such as wood from the forests. Wood and different species of wood have especially created the frames around many of the Scandinavian design products, as the Scandinavians held very good carpentry skills. However, other natural materials such as leather and metals were also used in the making of other home interior products (Sommar, 2003, pp. 7, 79).

The democratic values are rooted in the general idea of the early Scandinavian furniture- and interior product makers, that all individuals should have access to long lasting,

high-quality furniture and interior products, and that this should not only be a luxury for the wealthiest people in the society (Nelson & Cabra 2004, pp. 19-20; Asensio, 2005, p. 9).

However, there has also naturally been an importance of comfort inside the private houses of the Scandinavians, as the cold outdoor climate of these countries laid out the grounds for indoor socializing. This created the need for comfortable, durable furniture, as well as other visually enjoyable interior styles, which could make the domestic area a pleasant place to stay (Sommar, 2003, p. 109).

The actual term 'Scandinavian Design' however, is not particular ancient. It first appeared during the 'Golden Age' of the 1950's, where many Scandinavian architects created famous, internationally recognised, pricey, upper class interior products (Nelson & Cabra, 2004, p. 15; Pike, 2011, pp. 158- 160). These were displayed at design exhibitions in London in 1951, and were in the following years used in other design exhibitions in both North America and Central Europe (Italy), where the latter also subsequently featured developments within colourful plastic furniture with atypical shapes (Pike, 2011, pp. 158- 160; Sommar 2003, p. 80). Through the design exhibitions, many Scandinavian architects gained recognition for their stylish interior products, for example the Danish architects Verner Panton and Arne Jacobsen (Pike, 2011, pp. 158- 160).

Through the Golden Age, Scandinavian design embraced values such as functionality, modesty, quality, and beauty, while allowing creativity through new technology. Examples of famous Scandinavian design furniture are the 'Ant Chair' and the 'Egg Chair' by Arne Jacobsen, the 'Y Chair' by Hans J. Wegner, and the 'Vita Panton Chair' by Verner Panton. However, other interior products than furniture, such as wood and glass designs, were also exposed to new artistic expressions through using natural materials and through these processes, they contributed to the recognition of Scandinavian design products (Nelson & Cabra, 2004, pp. 15-16).

At present, Scandinavian design products are often perceived as high-end and high-value products (Pike, 2011, pp. 158- 160), and large, national institutions in the Scandinavian countries, such as the Danish Design Centre, still have great success in their promotion of high-end, national design. Scandinavian design and the values of it still enjoy great admiration internationally (Sommar, 2003, p. 47 and p. 78), where the popularity of

Scandinavian design's modernism is seen in both private- and public sectors around the world (Nelson & Cabra, 2004, p. 16).

Nevertheless, the term these days can also refer to less expensive interior products that are produced in large quantities all over the world, of which IKEA may be the most famous brand offering a wide selection of 'Scandinavian style' interior products. And according to Johansen (2017), it is exactly IKEA, which Chinese consumers associate with Scandinavian design, and which has inspired millions of Chinese consumers to become increasingly interested in design (Johansen, 2017, p. 6).

Ingrid Sommar (Swedish design journalist), argues, that today "*Nordic giant have excelled in the majority of the most important styles that shaped twentieth-century furniture*" (Sommar, 2003, p. 79). She additionally points to the modern wood tradition, which still is a large part of Scandinavian design today, as well as the developments of modern, tubular steel constructions (like the Ant Chair), which are also still seen in today's furniture designs (Sommar, 2003, pp. 79-80).

In relation to other interior design homewares, which used to represent simple styled, elegant ceramics and porcelain, Sommar points to how the practicality, simplicity, but also the coolness, which reflects the geographical location of Scandinavia, is still present in the design today (Sommar, 2003, p. 44). However, according to Asensio (2005), these nature-influenced, cool, minimalist interiors "*combine functionality with warm and organic materials*". He also points to the "*balance between form, function, colour, texture, durability and costs*" of these simple yet functional products (Asensio, 2005, p. 8).

As mentioned in the initial part of this section, there are slightly various definitions of what Scandinavian design traditionally has been, what it is, and how it is perceived today. Nevertheless, rooted in the traditional values, some basic characteristics and values of Scandinavian design still remain, such as cleanness, simplicity, functionality and practicality, as well as democracy and craftsmanship. Materials such as wood, steel, and other natural elements are also still considered to be the main elements in the construction of these products.

As a part of the umbrella term ‘Scandinavian design’ exists Danish design. However, the values and characteristics behind Danish design highly correspond to the overall term of Scandinavian design. In this regard, values such as ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘simplicity’ are also used to describe Danish design, which is furthermore considered to represent a classic, Nordic style with clean lines and simplicity and the use of colours such as white, grey, brown, and black (Jakobsen, 2015). Thus, it may be difficult to distinguish between the two terms, as many similarities appear. Furthermore, Danish design is usually mentioned in correlation with Nordic- or Scandinavian design, and it was also along with the other Nordic countries that Danish design gained international attention during the previously mentioned ‘Golden Age’ in the 1950’s (Dybdahl, 2006, p. 9). Subsequently, the literature argues, that in regards to Scandinavia and furniture- and interior products, Finland becomes a representative of Scandinavia, despite not officially being a part of Scandinavia. Therefore, in this investigation, Finland is considered included in Scandinavia, when referring to Scandinavian design products.

In regards to the similarities of Danish- and Scandinavian design, the Danish architect and industrial designer, Thomas Dickson, even questions, whether the term ‘Danish design’ in fact still exists today, since the global interior- and furniture market has adopted most of the traditional characteristics of the Danish design style within the past 50-75 years. Also, although many people point to the fact, that there is something truly unique about Danish design, it is often difficult to point to the exact thing that makes a product or an environment ‘Danish’ (Dickson, 2006, p. 24).

Based on these abovementioned considerations, Danish design and Scandinavian design can be difficult to distinguish between, as they often represent and express the same values and characteristics. Thus, as previously mentioned in the introduction, the researchers of this investigation have chosen to advance the research utilizing the term ‘Scandinavian design’.

The abovementioned theoretical concepts, studies, and literature provide a brief presentation of the most influential steps in relation to Nation Branding, the COO Effect, the urban, Chinese middle class (including furniture- and interior product consumption), and Scandinavian design. However, the theoretical concepts of Nation Branding and the COO Effect merely represent a fraction of the literature and studies that exist within the topics: some of which will be presented thoroughly in sections 3 and 6.

At the moment, there generally appears to exist a limited amount of literature and studies concerning the Chinese' perceptions of nation branding and the COO effect in relation to other countries, hereunder their perceptions of Denmark and Danish products. However, it is not feasible to investigate all Chinese consumers as a whole, for which reason one may take their starting point in merely one socioeconomic group, namely the urban, Chinese middle class. In addition, in relation to Danish design products, which were just introduced under the frame of 'Scandinavian design products', it neither appears feasible to investigate the Chinese' perceptions of all types of Danish products, for which reason one must limit the scope hereof and resort to *one* type of product.

It has come to the attention of the researchers, that there does not appear to exist any literature or studies concerning the Chinese' perceptions of Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark, which creates a gap in the existing literature. Furthermore, the researchers have also taken notice of the fact, that there has been a national increase in the interest and popularity of Scandinavian design furniture- and interior products of Danish origin. Hence, it appears evident to investigate whether this interest of Scandinavian design products also is apparent, or could appear, in China. By investigating both the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image and subsequently their perceptions of Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark, the researchers could contribute with new knowledge of the topic by investigating this identified gap.

3. Theoretical considerations

The following section aims to present the theoretical considerations of Nation Branding, including The Theory of Competitive Identity elaborated by Simon Anholt, as well as the concept of Country of Origin Effect by Keith Dinnie. Additionally, supporting studies of the two theoretical concepts will be presented, and finally a summarizing theoretical framework elaborated by the researchers of this investigation will be posed in order to illustrate how the two theoretical frameworks may affect the urban, Chinese middle class people's product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products. Thus, the purpose of this section is to form a theoretical basis for the coming analysis.

3.1 Nation Branding

The concept of Nation Branding was first presented by Simon Anholt in 1996, in which it he stated, that the reputations of countries were similar to how companies and products brand themselves and acted equally important, as mentioned in the literature review above (Anholt, 2007, p. xi). Eventually, Anholt altered the concept and named it *The Theory of Competitive Identity*, which today is a concept referring to the management of a country's overall reputation (Anholt, 2007, p. 265).

Generally, Anholt argues, that due to globalization, people and companies do not possess the time to investigate several places, hence people are more affected by clichés and stereotypes, that are either positive or negative, which affect their behaviour towards other places and their people and products. He argues, that it is considered difficult for countries to convince people to go beyond simple clichés and stereotypes and obtain a more complex and in-depth understanding of these (Anholt, 2007, p. 1). This also counts for cities and regions, given that a place with positive associations may find it easier to commence something on the international stage. Subsequently, this signifies, that places with bad reputations will experience several more difficulties in regards to reaching achievements on the international stage (Anholt, 2007, p. 2).

In correlation with the abovementioned, professor Keith Dinnie argues in his book "Nation Branding", that it is essential to acknowledge that marketers initiate the process of branding, referred to as *input*, while the consumers establish a mental vision of the particular brand,

referred to as *output*. This becomes applicable in the context of nation branding, due to the pre-existing national stereotypes that potentially are too ingrained in the minds of the consumers, and thus become difficult to change (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15).

Moreover, due to an increasing global competition, the concept of Nation Branding appears more crucial for nations, as they attempt to refine their country branding in the need to fulfil three overall objectives: attraction of tourists, a stimulation of inward investment, and to boost exports (Dinnie, 2008, p. 17). Furthermore, it also aims to attract talents, (re-)establish international credibility, enhance international political influence etc. (Dinnie, 2008, p. 17).

In addition to the abovementioned considerations in regards to the concept of Nation Branding, the concept of Nation Brand also appears essential in this particular context. While nation branding entailed the actual management of a country's reputation, a nation brand can be referred to as *"the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences"* (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). It therefore entails how a country is perceived from its audience, and how it differentiates itself from other countries and still remains its relevancy. The abovementioned definition is supported by Anholt's definition that argues: *"The nation brand is the sum of people's perceptions of a country and its people across six areas of national assets, characteristics and competence. Together, these six areas make the Nation Brand Hexagon"* (Anholt, 2006, p. 263). In correlation with Nation Branding, Anholt also argues in the context of a Nation Brand, that it appears to be of great importance that countries comprehend how they are perceived by others in relation to their accomplishments, defeats, products etc., and how these aspects are reflected in the country's brand image. A country therefore possesses a significant competitive advantage, if a country's brand image is considered positive and influential (Anholt, 2006, p. 263).

The Hexagon of Competitive Identity

One manner in which a Nation Brand can be captured is by the utilization of Anholt's hexagon, which is founded on the Theory of Competitive Identity. The hexagon consists of six different channels, in which a country's brand will derive from. Anholt argues, that the majority of the countries in the world intentionally or unconsciously generate their reputations through the channels of *tourism, brands, policy, investment, culture, and people* respectively (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Tourism generally concerns the promotion of tourism, as well as people's first impression, when they are visiting the country, either as tourists or in business situations. This channel is frequently considered the most dominant one in regards to branding of nations (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Brands refers to the export of brands, that act as influential ambassadors of the country's image abroad. This is solely the case, when the origin of the products is explicitly visible. If the origin of the products is not explicitly visible, it is not capable of affecting the consumer's feelings towards the products deriving from the particular country (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Policy concerns the decisions of the country's government, either in regards to foreign policy, that affects other populations, or domestic policy, that other populations become aware of through the utilization of media (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Investment refers to the manner in which a country attracts inward investment, the recruitment of foreign talent and students, and the overall development of the country due to foreign companies (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Culture is concerned with the exchange and export of cultural activities, in which it builds a positive- or negative reputation of a nation. For instance, famous musicians and works of poets or authors can contribute to the overall reputation of a nation (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

People refers to the people of the specific country, that once again contribute positively or negatively to the overall reputation. It generally concerns leaders, stars portrayed in the media, but also the general population itself, when they act either as tourists or when they treat foreign visitors in their own countries (Anholt, 2007, p. 25).

Cf. Anholt, the various channels should be coordinated in the attempt to obtain a competitive national identity. On the contrary, if the channels are not coordinated, the overall image of a country might be less clear and appear more contradictory and complex. The channels should therefore not act independently from one another, but should rather be seen as a possibility to contribute to the country's overall reputation (Anholt, 2007, p. 27). Anholt argues, if a country is capable of managing and coordinating the various channels to a common national

strategy, the country is able to eliminate the existing stereotypes, that do not contribute positively to the country's nation image (Anholt, 2007, p. 27). If a given place is perceived in the same way for the majority of the people, who are aware of the place, the place appears to possess a strong reputation. On the contrary, if a given place appears insignificant for the majority of the people, who are aware of the place, or if people's opinions and perceptions differ in regards to the given place, the place possesses a weak reputation. Therefore, the reputation of a place has an impact on how foreign people generally perceive a place, how they act towards it, and how they react towards anything that is generated or conducted in that particular place (Anholt, 2007, p. 8).

Supporting one of the abovementioned channels, Dinnie also argues that the channel of *people* is an essential channel to obtain a country's overall reputation or image. He further emphasizes the importance of the *people* channel, since people often relate to other people, and the people themselves and their appertaining narratives can affect a country's brand (Dinnie, 2008, p. 29). Similar to the channel of *people*, Dinnie argues that certain people can act as Nation Brand Ambassadors, in which those people represent the country and either affect the country's image positively or negatively (Dinnie, 2008, p. 228). As with the channel of *people*, potential nation brand ambassadors are sport- and cultural figures, who might act as unintended nation brand ambassadors (Dinnie, 2008, p. 228), wherefore the representation of these appear significant in regards to how a nation's image is perceived.

As mentioned above, nation brand ambassadors can affect the country's image positively or negatively, and thus they appear to be crucial in the context of nation branding. One study emphasizing that aspect is "Danish Culture – a way of branding Denmark in China" elaborated by Maria Blok Jakobsen (Jakobsen, 2015). The study generally investigates, how the Danish government uses the culture of Denmark to brand Denmark in China. In the preparation of the study, the researchers mentioned certain activities happening in China in the attempt to promote Denmark. These activities were divided into three categories: The knowledge service, the content based, and the manufacture and wholesale trade. Within the category of content based activities, the researcher emphasized the former Danish author H.C Andersen as a reason for why Denmark is well known in China. The author appears as a part of the syllabus in Chinese middle schools, and his work has been exhibited in various cities in China (Jakobsen, 2015). In this study, H.C Andersen appears crucial for the Chinese, and can

thereby be utilized as a nation brand ambassador in the attempt to promote Denmark with positive associations.

In regards to the current investigation, one of the aims is to investigate the relation between the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their overall purchase intention towards Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark. The abovementioned study argues, that nation brand ambassadors function as an important parameter in regards to how the general nation image is perceived, however, it does not entail whether there exists a correlation between the general nation image and a possible purchase intention. It therefore contributes to the present investigation, since one of the aims is to investigate, whether a positive nation image may be linked to a general positive attitude towards the country's products.

3.2 The Country of Origin Effect

The Country of Origin effect (the COO effect) is by Dinnie (2008) referred to as "*the effect that a product or service's origin has on consumer attitudes and behaviour towards that product or service*", and is closely associated with the concept of nation branding.

The COO effect often manifests itself within specific product categories, where specific countries have achieved reputations as differentiators that are valued by consumers. Examples of these products are French perfume, Swiss chocolate, Italian wine etc.. However, although these examples of product categories have positive associations connected to them, the COO effect can also refer to product categories that have negative associations between the product and its country of origin (Dinnie, 2008, p. 84).

Among the factors that may influence the COO effect is the **demographic aspect**. According to Dinnie, the COO of a product may be rather relevant to some consumers, while other consumers find the origin of the product irrelevant. Dinnie additionally refers to the existing incongruence of findings related to COO and demographics, where higher educational levels and being female may or may not lead to higher levels of preference for foreign products. However, due to incongruent findings of previous research, Dinnie additionally stresses the importance of brands to make their own contextualized, brand-specific research in order to gain insight into how target markets are influenced by the COO effect in relation to demographics (Dinnie, 2008, p. 90).

Another factor that may play a role in relation to a product's or a brand's COO is *ethnocentrism*. While being defined as "*the home-country bias portion of the COO effect*" (Dinnie, 2008, p. 91), ethnocentrism refers to when a consumer favours products or brands from his or her own home country rather than products originating from foreign countries. Various demographic factors may affect individual ethnocentrism, and thus individual brands or products may benefit from being familiar with the existing consumer ethnocentrism levels within different markets, in order to subsequently carry out successful marketing strategies (Dinnie, 2008, p. 91).

While the COO effect may have positive or negative outcomes for domestic brands, another matter is related to whether the consumer's perception of the brand's COO corresponds to where the brand in reality is from. The term *brand origin* refers to this situation. Dinnie suggests, that some consumers may occupy a misperception regarding where a brand is originally from, due to either ignorance or due to market activities by the brand, which aim to attribute more positive ideas through linking it with values or clues that refer to those of another, specific country (Dinnie, 2008, p. 86). However, Dinnie does not further elaborate on the effects of brand origin misperceptions, and whether or not these may contribute positively or negatively to a country's nation image.

The COO of a product has in much previous research showed to have an effect on consumers' quality perceptions and purchase intentions of the product (Sun & Paswan, 2011).

Schooler found in his study of Guatemalan consumers back in 1965, that products from less developed countries were considered as being of a lower quality by the consumers, than those from more developed countries (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998, pp. 150-151).

If the Chinese consumers in this present investigation indicate the same bias for or against products based on how developed the COO of the product is, it would imply that they would consider the Scandinavian design products of high quality, as these originate from well-developed countries in the world: namely the Scandinavian countries.

Another study, that supports the claim that the COO of a product may affect the purchase intentions of the consumer, was found by Piron in 2000. This study, which was carried out in a capital city of an East Asian country, looked into the degree to which the COO affected publicly- and privately consumed luxury products and necessity products respectively. Findings demonstrated, that the influence of the COO was greater within publicly consumed

luxury products compared to publicly consumed necessity products. The same was the case in private, where the COO was of greater influence within privately consumed luxury products in comparison with privately consumed necessity products. However, the COO of the luxury products was also shown to have a greater influence, when these products were consumed in public versus in private. Nevertheless, when it came to publicly consumed necessity products, the influence of the COO was not greater compared to privately consumed necessity products (Piron, 2000).

These findings indicate that the COO has a greater effect, when the product may be exposed publicly, and when the product is within the category of ‘luxury products’, and additionally implied that positive COO perceptions lead to positive purchase intentions. However, the findings did not investigate *why* the individuals had either positive or negative perceptions towards a specific country, and how this was linked to the positive intentions of purchasing products from this specific country. The understanding of why an individual has a positive- or negative attitude towards a specific country, and the link between this attitude and the purchase intentions may, however, provide additional understanding of individuals’ consumption of foreign products, which in this present investigation acts as a reason for including this aspect.

Research within the topic of COO effect on product attitudes and purchase intentions in general often seems to be based on individuals with one specific nationality, and it may be difficult to find studies that cover the specific nation, that one aims to investigate. Nevertheless, related to Chinese consumers, some research does exist, among others, the study by Zhang from 1996, which investigated the relation between COO effect and purchase intentions.

Zhang investigated how purchase intentions of Chinese consumers were affected by foreign country image and found, that country image affected the purchase intentions differently depending on the product category (e.g. food, fashion, electronics etc.) (Zhang, 1996). The study concerned Chinese consumers’ nation images of USA, Japan, and South Korea and products from these nations respectively, which means that findings may be geographically specific to these nations, and thus can not be generalized to how Chinese consumers’ purchase intentions are affected by the nations images of other countries. This fact acts as an additional reason for why the country image of Denmark and the specific

product category of Scandinavian design furniture- and interior products should be studied in order to contribute with new knowledge within the field.

As mentioned earlier, demographic variables are argued to influence the COO effect, but previous research has provided highly opposing findings.

While Dinnie (2008) points to studies suggesting, that consumers with higher education levels, female consumers, and younger consumers are among the consumers that evaluate foreign products the highest, other studies presented by Al-Sulaiti and Baker (1998) suggest, that there are no differences between female and male evaluations of foreign products, and that older consumers tend to evaluate foreign products more favourable than younger consumers. Additionally, in terms of education levels, Al-Sulaiti and Baker also refer to studies that found ethnocentrism to be higher among older consumers, which leads to a favouring of domestic products over foreign products. Partially related to education level, income level as a demographic variable has also proven to lead to a preference of foreign products in some cases, while in other cases it has indicated a preference for domestic products (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998, pp. 168-169). Finally, demographics have also, within developing countries, proven to negatively affect ethnocentrism and hereunder the favouring of domestic products (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998, p. 152).

Another study that also involves Chinese consumers and the influence of demographics, is the study by Li et al. (2010), who studied Chinese consumers from four large, Chinese cities. They found, that these consumers perceived general product quality based on country image factors differently. These differences were based on the degree to which various cognitive-, emotional-, and normative factors played a role in their perceptions of country image of the specific country, which subsequently affected their perceptions of product quality based on it's COO (Li et al., 2010).

Based on the existing research of the COO effects on consumer purchase intentions, demographics is a factor, which leads to largely various perceptions and attitudes towards foreign products and brands. The various different findings indirectly suggest, that demographic variables may not be generalizable, and that brands need to understand, how the specific demographics of their market segment(s) may affect their purchase intentions, in order to successfully carry out marketing activities of a product and brand. The fact that country image and the appertaining evaluation of foreign products and brands may be largely

context specific, provides the researchers with yet another reason for investigating the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image, and subsequently how these perceptions may be linked to their perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

The existing literature related to the COO of a product and ethnocentrism is also rather contradicting. While Al-Sulaiti and Baker (1998) argue, that most research within the field suggest a favouring of products from one's home country, and Dinnie additionally argues that Chinese consumers have a preference for Chinese shoes (Dinnie, 2008, p. 87), Wong et al. (2008) found in their study of young, Chinese consumers, that ethnocentrism and favouring of home-country products did in general not have a direct effect or influence on perceived product quality, neither on purchase intentions (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998, p. 173).

Furthermore, it is believed by some researchers, that gender is an influencing factor, however, Kala and Chaubey (2016) point to the fact, that while some studies found females to be more positive towards foreign products and males being more biased towards them, other researchers have found no such relationship between gender and ethnocentrism (Kala & Chaubey, 2016, pp. 49-59).

The same incongruence of findings is present in research linking education level to ethnocentrism. While some studies find, that higher educated consumers are more positive towards imported (non-domestic) products, other studies find no such correlation or difference between education levels in relation to ethnocentrism as mentioned above. The same tendency is the case when income level is linked to ethnocentrism.

Given that ethnocentrism in previous research has provided various and contradicting findings, one may argue that ethnocentrism also can be a rather context- and demographically specific factor, which in most cases can not be generalized to entire groups within different societies and nations. This means, that in relation to this present investigation, there also emerges a reason for investigating, whether ethnocentrism may play a role in the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of products and subsequently product purchase intentions in relation to Scandinavian design products, and additionally how this may be linked to their nation image of Denmark.

3.3 Critical reflections of Nation Branding and the Country of Origin Effect

In relation to the abovementioned theoretical concept of nation branding, a relevant critical aspect can be presented. Professor Nadia Kaneva argues in "Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research", that critical studies generally disregard the cross of national identities within a nation with other forms of collectivity and identification (Kaneva, 2011). This signifies, that critical studies are not capable of considering national communities consisting of more than one homogeneous group, which implies that certain consequences may occur for sub-national and transnational identities, as these are not included or considered part of the overall nation (Kaneva, 2011).

This is also supported by Dinnie (2008) who argues in the context of COO, that "within-country diversity" is a neglected aspect in COO research, and argues, on the basis of another study, that nationality should be utilized more cautiously, if certain ethnic or religious affiliations appear more influential. Dinnie further supported this argument in another study, in which it was noticed, that there should be put an emphasis on recognizing the different subcultures present in any society, in the attempt to avoid generalizations without substantiation (Dinnie, 2008).

These critical considerations have been taken into account in this investigation, as the researchers decided merely to focus on one particular Chinese demographic group, as China and the perceptions of the Chinese can not be investigated as a whole.

Furthermore, while the COO effect may play a role in relation to how a consumer values various types of products, it may be difficult to determine which factor is the *influencing* factor and which is the *influenced* factor. As Dinnie (2008) argues; does Sony enhance the nation-brand image of Japan, or does the high credibility of Japan as a source country for high technology products enhance the Sony brand? (Dinnie, 2008, p. 84). This will also be applicable, when the researchers of this investigation will study two different perceptions that may affect each other, in which it may be difficult to determine, which perception influences the other, and which perception is influenced by the other.

Another issue within the research field of COO and the effects hereof is related to the methodological complications of research designs. Both Dinnie (2008) and Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) point to the issue of the many single-cue investigation designs, where only one piece of information, namely the COO of the product, is given to the studied subject, who

subsequently has to evaluate the product. Verlegh and Steenkamp argue, that if the studied subject has to be able to fairly conclude the product's qualities, he/she needs to know more details of the products and thus they suggest, that researchers should use a multi-cue design in their investigation. Verlegh and Steenkamp even investigated this aspect themselves and found, that the COO effect was smaller in multi-cue studies compared to single-cue studies (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999, pp. 532, 537).

Dinnie (2008) also supports the effects of multi-cue designs, where the subject is informed about product price, brand name, design etc.. He additionally stresses the need for the use of tangible products in these investigations, instead of the use of imaginary products merely made up by verbal descriptions (Dinnie, 2008, p. 85).

Considering this past critique of how single-cue designs in COO research may not present a holistic view of the COO effect, the researchers of this investigation have chosen to design their study using a multi-cue design.

In relation to the methodological issues of single- vs. multi-cue designs, Vann's (2005) study of Russian and Vietnamese consumers can also be argued to be a critique of the single-cue investigation design. She found, that among Vietnamese consumers, the manufacturing country played a large role in product evaluation. To the Vietnamese, even famous, prestigious Western brands were evaluated as offering low quality products, if they had been manufactured locally i.e. within Vietnam. However, if the same foreign brand products had been manufactured in their country of origin, for example if Nike shoes had been manufactured in the U.S., they would be evaluated completely different by the Vietnamese, who in that case would consider the products being of high quality (Vann, 2005, pp. 474-479).

Vann's findings suggest, that while the COO of a product may be positive, negative associations may persist in regards to the geographical site of production, which in most research of COO effect is not considered, due to the single-cue design of the investigations, which only include information of the COO of the brand. This aspect will, among other things, be studied in this present study, in order to investigate, whether the manufacturing country of Scandinavian design products appears to be of significance to the urban, Chinese middle class people.

Moreover, in regards to country of origin, another critical aspect can be presented. As aforementioned in the theoretical section, the term *brand origin* appears significant in relation

to, how brands should be aware of the impact that brand origin has. As formerly mentioned, a misperception might emerge in regards to a brand's origin, and this misperception was investigated by N. Meltem Cakici and Paurav Shukla in "Country of Origin Misclassification awareness and Consumers' behavioural intentions". Cakici and Shukla argued, that research demonstrate, that several consumers frequently attribute brands with incorrect countries. These studies indicate, that nearly half of the consumers show inclinations of misclassification of COO, and this number even reaches up to 88 percent for overseas brands (Cakici & Shukla, 2017). Bearing this aspect in mind, several companies that originate from weak country images may seek to conceal their genuine brand origin, or even intentionally seek to utilize countries possessing strong images in order to brand themselves more efficiently on the international stage (Cakici & Shukla, 2017).

Cakici and Shukla's study further investigated the consumers' behavioural intentions before and after they became aware of a misclassification. One of the results were, that consumers with high affinity level in regards to the misclassified COO decreased their purchase intentions, while consumers with a lower affinity level decreased their purchase intentions to a lesser extent (Cakici and Shukla, 2017). By taking this aspect into consideration, it appears crucial for companies to (re)consider, whether their brands are explicitly associated with their true brand origin, as the behavioural responses from the consumers may be affected by their affinity with the products' or brands' COO. Furthermore, if consumers become aware of the misclassification of COO, this could appear destructive on their purchase intentions and their overall assessment of a brand (Cakici and Shukla, 2017). However, Cakici and Shukla do not take into consideration, whether misclassifications of brand origins may have positive effects on the consumer's product purchase intention for brands with weak country images.

Thus, in regards to this investigation, it is essential to look into how the urban, Chinese middle class people perceive Scandinavian design, in order to determine whether there exists a misclassification based on their perceptions of these products and which effect this may have on their product purchase intentions. By investigation this aspect, the findings can aid Danish brands and companies within the design sphere with useful information for when they attempt to enter the Chinese market.

Based on the already-existing research on both Nation Branding and the COO Effect, and considering the critical aspects of these, the researchers will now present a summarizing theoretical framework, which will be utilized as a structured measurement tool in this

particular investigation. The framework aids to link various factors related to the consumer and the product, in the attempt to deduce product purchase intentions.

3.4 Summarizing theoretical framework

This section illustrates the analytical tools, that build on the aforementioned theoretical concepts, which will be utilized operationally as elements in the upcoming analysis. Furthermore, these concepts form the basis of the structure of the analysis. Thus, the model below illustrates the elements of the analysis and how these influence one another. However, the model is merely a simplified version, which does not illustrate all of the affecting under-elements that lie within each element. These under-elements derive from previously presented literature and theoretical concepts in sections 2 and 3, and all act as contributing elements, which the researchers investigate in order to answer the problem formulation and the appertaining research question. To see a complete, detailed version of the model, see appendix 1, which includes all details of each element, excluding data-driven elements, that may appear from the data analysis method, which will be presented later on.

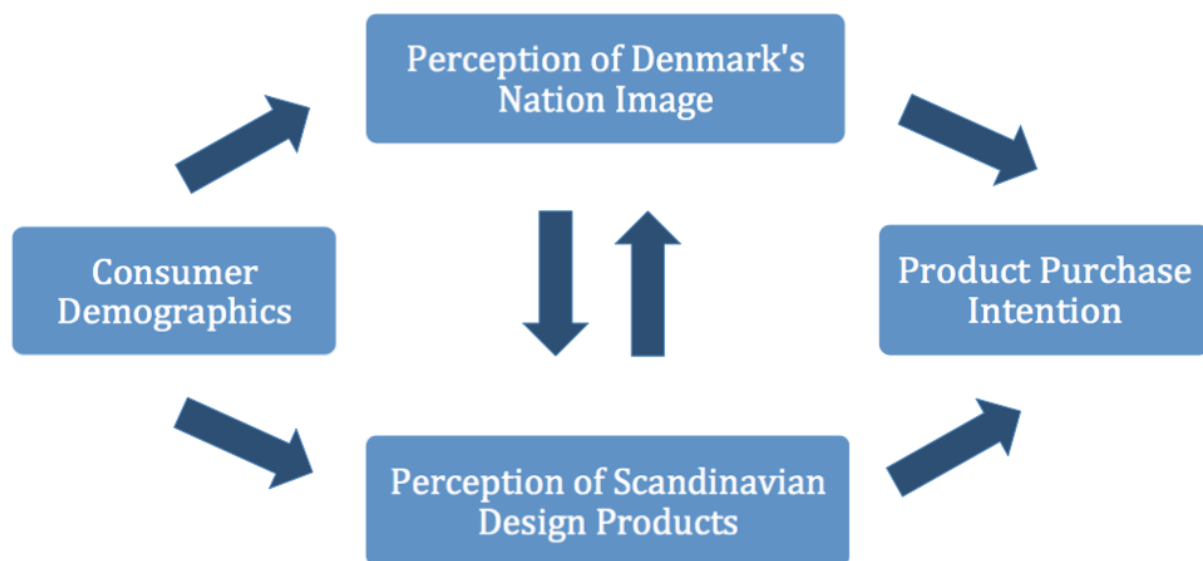


Figure 1
Self-elaborated model
by Lise Johansen and Marlene H. Jensen

Consumer Demographics

The first element refers to the individual consumer. In this investigation, the researchers merely study one consumer group, which possesses the same overall demographics (see section 4.4). However, although there exists smaller demographic variations within the

sampled group, the researchers do not focus on investigating these variations, as these differences between the individuals are considered insignificant in a holistic sense.

Perception of Denmark's Nation Image

The second element refers to the overall perception the individual consumer has of a given nation. This perception can be affected by a range of variables, including the channels of Anholt's hexagon, as well as nation brand ambassadors and clichés and stereotypes (see section 3.1). The researchers will define these clichés and stereotypes by determining whether one only has a common or superficial knowledge of the topics, or whether they can provide the researcher with a more in-depth knowledge of the topics.

The aforementioned hexagon is usually employed in the context of governments, and how they should coordinate the various channels in order to come up with the clearest idea of a country's reputation (Anholt, 2007, p. 26). However, in this context, the utilization of the hexagon will be from the perspective of the urban, Chinese middle class people, as the investigation aims to study the effect of the *output* of the hexagon channels (see section 3.1). Furthermore, merely the channels that possess the most relevance in regards to the investigation will be utilized, for which reason the *investment* channel will be excluded.

The manner in which the researchers will 'measure' the individual Chinese interviewee's perception of Denmark's nation image will be by interpreting their discourse. This will be done by interpreting whether they express themselves with positive or negative associations in relation to the topic, and furthermore the *degree* of the overall positivity and negativity in their discourse. Additionally, the amount of knowledge each individual Chinese has, including their associations related to this knowledge, will also be used as a measurement tool of their perceptions of Denmark. This interpretation of discourses will also be reflected in section 4.1.2, which present the methodological considerations in terms of the philosophy of science, namely in regards to the epistemological position.

Perception of Scandinavian design products

Constituting the third element is the perception of Scandinavian design products in terms of various factors related to COO. Firstly, the degree of ethnocentrism of the individual consumer may affect the perception of products from other countries, and thus can lead to either a decrease or an increase in product purchase intention.

Likewise, misperceptions of a product's brand origin may also have either negative or positive impacts on the individual's perception of products from a given country. Other

factors, that may affect a consumer in terms of one's perception of Scandinavian design products, are cognitive-, emotional- and normative factors. These refer to how an individual *thinks* rationally about a product, how the individual *feels* about a product, and ultimately how the individual *considers* the norms related to a given product. These factors have in previous studies been utilized to investigate individuals' perceptions of nations' images. However, as the researchers of this investigation intend to contribute with new knowledge of the topic, the focus will be on how these three factors influence the product purchase intention of a specific type of product, namely Scandinavian design furniture- and interior products. In relation to this, the researchers will thus investigate, whether the interviewees may possess specific cognitive-, emotional-, and normative point of views, that could affect their purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products, including which factor(s) plays the largest role in this aspect.

Lastly, the knowledge the individual consumer possesses of a product in terms of subjective- and objective knowledge may affect the consumer's perception of Scandinavian design products. Subjective knowledge refers to the degree of confidence a consumer possesses of his/her knowledge. On the contrary, objective knowledge concerns the factual knowledge the consumer possesses of a particular product (Brucks, 1985). Additionally, experience-based knowledge can also add a dimension to the product knowledge, as it may affect a consumer's evaluation of a product, if a consumer has owned or has any other type of experience with Scandinavian design products (Javed & Hasnu, 2013, p. 33).

Nevertheless, as the researchers are not capable of judging, whether a statement is subjective- or objective knowledge, these two will act together in the upcoming analysis and will be referred to as *objective- and subjective knowledge*. This also corresponds with the overall qualitative research, which will be elaborated on in the methodological section, as the researchers investigate, through the epistemology and ontology, the construct of the Chinese' social world. Thus, the subjective knowledge is considered just as valid as the objective knowledge, despite the fact that subjective knowledge objectively could be incorrect. The *objective- and subjective knowledge* will along with the *experience-based knowledge* constitute the analysis section called 'Product Knowledge of Scandinavian design products'.

As in the case of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image, their perceptions of Scandinavian design products will likewise be measured by looking at the individuals' knowledge and discourses in relation to the topic and their degree of their overall negativity and positivity.

Product Purchase Intention

The aforementioned two elements (Perception of Denmark's nation image and Perception of Scandinavian design products) both lead to the final element of the model, namely product purchase intention. As can be seen from the model, the two arrows leading away from Consumer Demographics illustrate, that Perception of Denmark's Nation Image and Perception of Scandinavian Design Products both depend on the individual consumer.

Furthermore, the arrows between Perception of Denmark's Nation Image and Perception of Scandinavian Design Products illustrate, that both elements are believed to influence one another. This is due to the fact that, cf. Keith Dinnie (see section 3.2), possessing a certain perception of Denmark may influence an individual's perception of certain products originating from this country. Conversely, the perception an individual possesses of a specific product from Denmark may influence or contribute either positively or negatively to the individual's overall perception of Denmark.

Finally, the outcome of the two abovementioned elements ultimately leads to Product Purchase Intention. In this regard, it is worth mentioning, that both the element of Consumer Demographics, as well as the Product Purchase Intention are not elements, that will be investigated individually, but are merely the starting- and ending point of this present investigation.

However, in relation to how both the urban Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products are measured by looking at knowledge and discourse, including the positivity and negativity of these discourses, the researchers are aware, that this is merely one manner of measuring an individual's perception. Notwithstanding, other additional measurement tools could also be applied in order to strengthen and ensure the validity of the findings, including providing a more holistic image of the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions. These measurement tools could be applied both through additional qualitative research methods, but also in a mix methods approach, where a quantitative research design also is applied. However, as the researchers aimed to contribute with more qualitative research to the overall topic, and since it appears more evident to apply a qualitative research design upon investigating an individual's perception through his/her construction of their social worlds, a quantitative method was deselected.

4. Methodological considerations

The following section aims to present the methodological considerations relevant to the present investigation. Firstly, considerations regarding philosophy of science, hereunder ontological- and epistemological positions, will be presented followed by the selection of research approach- and design. Subsequently, selections of sampling, data-collection method, and data-analysis method will be elucidated followed by delimitations, quality criteria, ethical issues as well as limitations relevant to the overall investigation.

4.1 Philosophy of science

4.1.1 Ontological position

In regards to the ontological considerations, this present investigation takes an ontological position of *constructivism*. Generally, constructivism encompasses that the social world is constituted in and through interaction, and thus it remains a constant revision. This involves, that various realities as well as meanings exist, which entails an exclusion of one universal truth. Hence, the social world appears dynamic, due to the allocation of several perceptions (Bryman, 2016, pp. 29-30; Gibbs, 2007, pp. 7-8).

In the context of this particular investigation, the ontological position of constructivism appears essential in regards to the qualitative data-collection method; semi-structured interviews. The interviews allow the Chinese interviewees to present various perceptions and meanings related to the overall investigation, that all will contribute to a reality of the social world, due to the exclusion of one universal truth. Therefore, the selected interviewees might not possess the same perceptions and meanings in regards to their overall perceptions of Denmark's nation image, as well as their perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

4.1.2 Epistemological position

In correspondence with the ontological position, this investigation takes an epistemological position of *interpretivism*. Interpretivism generally encompasses an understanding and an interpretation of the individual's meaning (Bryman, 2016, p. 26; Willis et al., 2007, p. 122), that once again leaves out one universal truth or generalization. Interpretivism is mostly concerned with qualitative research methods (Willis et al., 2007, p. 108), for which reason it once again becomes applicable in this context, as it makes the researchers more capable of

understanding and interpreting the meanings of the interviewees. Additionally, interpretivism entails, that people possess various perceptions and meanings, due to different cultural backgrounds, different circumstances as well as different times, and thereby generate different social realities (Saunders, 2009, p. 140). Moreover, the position also implies a generation of more in-depth understandings and interpretations (Saunders, 2009, p. 140), as it once again becomes applicable in this context, since the aim is to reach an in-depth understanding of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions towards Denmark as a nation brand as well as their perceptions of Scandinavian design products. This is also apparent, when the researchers interpret the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products, in terms of their discourse of these topics. This interpretation is noticeable through the investigation of the degree of positivity and/or negativity of their discourses of the topics, as well as their pre-existing knowledge of these topics.

4.2 Research approach

The current investigation both entails elements of a deductive- as well as an inductive research approach (Gibbs, 2007, p. 5), for which reason the overall approach to this investigation becomes *iterative* (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). The deductive elements are prominent within the concept-driven codes, as the researchers composed questions relevant to the concepts deriving from the theoretical considerations. The inductive elements are prominent in the obtained data, which derive from the semi-structured interviews carried out by the researchers, in which the researchers subsequently utilized the remaining obtained data, that did not fit into any already existing concept-driven codes, to compose data-driven codes. Thus, the investigation becomes iterative, due to the presence of both deductive- and inductive elements, as well as the constant shift between the obtained data and the existing theoretical considerations comprising an on-going process (Bryman, 2016, p. 581).

4.3 Research design

The overall research design of this investigation is *qualitative*, since it aims to emphasize words rather than a quantification of the collection and analysis of data (Brannen, 2004, p. 3; Bryman, 2016, p. 374). It therefore concerns the dynamics of a single person's subjective meaning or perspective, as it generally is consistent with the epistemological consideration of interpretivism that is current for this particular investigation. Additionally, the qualitative research design makes the researchers capable of obtaining more rich and detailed

information (Bryman, 2016, p. 401; Gibbs, 2007, p. 5), that is essential for this investigation, since it aims to investigate the underlying perceptions in regards to the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image and further their perceptions of Scandinavian design products. The researchers do not merely aim to understand *which* attitudes exist, but also *why* certain attitudes there exist in this context.

The qualitative research design becomes applicable in the context of the semi-structured interviews. Generally, qualitative interviews put an emphasis on the interviewee's own viewpoint, and the interviewee's perspective appear to be of greater interest (Creswell, 2014, pp. 234-235). The qualitative interviews encourage interviewees to speak freely and expand on their perceptions, as it provides the researchers with data of the topic that the interviewee considers appropriate and relevant (Bryman, 2016, pp. 466-467). The selection of semi-structured interviews was in this context made due to its greater flexibility, which allows the researchers to deviate from the original interview guide and thereby obtain more varied data. In addition, the researchers expected to obtain more data-driven codes due to the choice of semi-structured interviews, as the interviewees were interviewed individually and thereby provided the researchers with perspectives that were not affected by others, for which reason the deselection of focus groups was made. The aim of obtaining more data-driven codes was, that it was expected to contribute positively with more knowledge and aspects to the overall problem field.

In regards to the overall research design, a critical aspect of the chosen theories can be presented. The theories are traditionally utilized with a quantitative research design, that limits the amount of rich data as well as the limitation of investigating certain aspects with a *why*-approach rather than a *what*-approach. Therefore, the concepts deriving from the theoretical frameworks were utilized with a qualitative research design in this investigation, as the aim was to study the underlying motives of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions and opinions, and thereby obtain more rich data.

4.4 Sampling

When realizing a qualitative investigation, it is important to consider which sampling method is the most adequate, in order to answer the problem formulation and the research question in the best possible way (Bryman 2016, pp. 407-408). Additionally, in this process, the

researchers also need to keep feasibility in mind, as the researchers may have access to some population groups, while no access to other population groups.

In this present investigation, and as argued earlier in section 2.3, the Chinese consumers of Scandinavian design products can not be considered as one uniform and homogeneous group. Nevertheless, the researchers have considered the characteristics of the most typical consumer group of interior- and furniture products in China based on the existing literature (see section 2.2), which has ultimately constituted the criteria for the sampled group in this investigation. Furthermore, as the interviews were to be carried out in English, as this was the only language that the interviewers and the interviewees both spoke, the interviewees had to be comfortable speaking this language.

Thus, the researchers set up the following criteria for all of the sampled individuals, that they should:

- Be of Chinese ethnicity
- Be female
- Be between 20-35 years old
- Be well-educated (have a bachelor or master's degree from a university or similar)
- Be comfortable speaking English

Furthermore, the researchers decided to sample both Chinese people currently living in China and Chinese currently living in Denmark. Anholt argues, that upon investigating, e.g. by visiting, a country, one gains more in-depth understanding of the country and thus may change their behaviour towards this specific place. The reason for sampling a group of Chinese currently living in Denmark was thus to investigate, whether they are affected by their surroundings and/or context in terms of their knowledge and perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products throughout a short period of time.

The time period of living in Denmark was set to six to 12 months, as they had to be able to have developed an understanding and knowledge of Denmark and various Danish products, but not be too familiar with these as they still had to represent a Chinese consumer group. However, as the researchers considered, that the most significant sample comprised Chinese currently living in China, as they represent the largest actual consumer group in China, and therefore could act as the target group for Danish companies entering the Chinese

market, their perceptions and opinions of the investigated topics were also considered of great importance.

As mentioned above, one may gain more knowledge or change one's perception of a country after visiting it. The researchers considered, that most urban, Chinese middle class people possibly have never been to Denmark, and thus the researchers decided, that the group of Chinese currently living in China should comply with the criterion of never have been to Denmark before, and therefore most likely would have the same, limited amount of knowledge of Scandinavian design products from Denmark.

Therefore, the researchers made two sampling groups, of which the criteria were, that they should:

Group A:

- Have lived in a 1st tier city in China before for a minimum period of 12 months
- Be living in Denmark now, and have been living there for a period between six and 12 months

Group B:

- Currently be living in a 1st tier city in China for a minimum of 12 months
- Never have been to Denmark before

The researchers were aware, that when the interviewees constituting Group B during the interview would disclose their perceptions and opinions in relation to a range of questions about Denmark and Danish people, these statements would not be based on their own experiences. However, these participants would instead express themselves based on the knowledge and perceptions they had from somewhere else, e.g. friends, family, and the media.

In regards to both sample groups, and the criterion of having lived in a 1st tier city before for at least 12 months, this criterion was set in order to ensure, that the participants possessed some general knowledge of foreign branded furniture- and interior products, including knowledge of specific brands and types of products. Most physical furniture- and interior product stores are located in the urban areas and concentrate around the larger, Chinese cities, and most foreign, e.g. Danish, brands which have stores or products sold in stores in China,

are also located in the larger, Chinese cities, as the largest consumer groups are found here (Johansen, 2017). Thus, the criterion of having lived in a 1st tier city was set.

When sampling interviewees by setting up specific criteria, the sampling method is called a purposive sampling (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 144). The purposive sampling method is also what has constituted the nature of the sampling of this present investigation, due to all the specific criteria the researchers set up in relation to demographic variables of the interviewees.

The sampling of the interviewees worked as a snowball sampling (Johnnie, 2012, p. 27; Bryman, 2016, p. 415), as the researchers used their network in both Denmark and China to find and contact possible interview persons, who subsequently found and contacted more people, who could be sampled. These networks consisted of former Chinese teachers and colleagues, who were able to identify people in their network, who fit the sample criteria of the investigation.

In order to present the details and demographics of the sampled interview persons, the researchers elaborated the following table. The researchers chose to interview six persons, as they, after carrying out the sixth interview, found, that they had reached data saturation in terms of both the concept- and data-driven codes appearing from the interviews. Furthermore, it is worth noticing, that the names of the interviewees that appear in the table below, are all pseudonyms provided by the researchers, in order to respect the anonymity of the participants.

Name	Age	City and country currently living in	Time lived in Denmark	1st tier city lived in	Occupation
Lily	24	Aalborg, Denmark	6 months	Beijing	Student
Daisy	25	Aalborg, Denmark	7 months	Beijing	Student
Jane	25	Aalborg, Denmark	6 months	Shanghai and Beijing	Student

Maggie	27	Shanghai, China	-	Shanghai	Student
Hope	30	Shanghai, China	-	Shanghai	Administrative worker
Rue	25	Beijing, China	-	Beijing	Student

Table 1

Although the age criterion for the sampled participants was 20-35 years, none of the sampled interviewees were younger than 24 or older than 30, but this was merely a coincidence. The researchers, however, were aware that among the six sampled participants, there were not any individuals representing the lower- and the higher age group of the typical Chinese consumer group of Scandinavian design products.

The researchers aimed to sample interviewees that were part of the urban, Chinese middle class based on income (see section 2.2), in order to represent the most typical consumer group of Scandinavian design products in China and to sample individuals with similar characteristics. The researchers were aware, as previously mentioned, that the Chinese can not be considered as one uniform group and is comprised of many different social classes, which explains why it was important to both limit and be aware of which group was investigated. In the end, the researchers were able to sample five individuals, who were part of the urban, Chinese middle class, with the exception of one (Rue), who currently belongs to a lower social class based on income level.

4.5 Data-collection method

4.5.1 Semi structured interviews

In order to create a comfortable interview environment through considering the ethics of the interview situation, the interviewees were given a briefing (see appendix 2) before initiating the interviews. During the briefing, the researchers first introduced themselves and told the interviewees about the aims of the investigation, as well as the expected duration of the interview. The interviewees were hereafter informed, that they were free to withdraw any statement at any time if they wished, and if they felt uncomfortable answering any of the

questions, the researchers would move on to the next question with no objections. Also, the interview treated a topic that could be rather sensitive to the Chinese interviewees, as the researchers are from Denmark and the interviewees were asked questions about their thoughts about Denmark and products from this country. Thus, the interviewees were informed, that they still were free to be honest and express whatever opinions they had, and that the researchers would not be offended in any way, even if the interviewees expressed a negative discourse in relation to the topic. The interviewees were also informed about the possibilities of remaining anonymous, e.g. by using a pseudonym instead of their real name in the investigation. Lastly, the researchers asked for permission to record the interviews solely for their own usage (for transcription purposes), and then the interviewees were asked, whether they had any questions before the interview started (Kvale, 2007, p. 55).

After the interviews had finished, the interviewees also received a debriefing (see appendix 3). They were first thanked for participating, and then asked if they had any other things to add. They were also told, that in case they did not have other things to add at the moment, they were able to contact the researchers later, if they felt the urge to. Also, they were once again reminded of the possibility to withdraw statements and the opportunity to remain anonymous. Finally, the interviewees were offered to gain insights into the final research findings and to read the final project (Kvale, 2007, p. 56).

For two of the interviewees of group A, i.e. the Chinese who were living in Denmark, the interviews took place in a classroom at the researchers' university. This was done due to feasibility as well as due to the fact, that the two interviewees had their daily work routine in this environment. Thus, the researchers evaluated, that they would feel comfortable in this setting. The last interviewee of group A was interviewed at another university campus, namely the campus where she worked.

As for group B, i.e. the Chinese who were living in China, the interviews were executed through video-chat through the social media app, WeChat. These interviews required more preparation and consideration before execution, as the researchers could not simply hand over the two documents with pictures of Scandinavian design products of Danish origin, which the researchers wanted the participants to comment on during the interviews. Thus, before the interview, the participants were asked to provide the researchers with their e-mail addresses, so that the researchers could send the two documents to them immediately before the interviews. Also, the interviewees were asked to not look at the documents before the

interviews, but to wait until they were asked to open the documents on a computer in front of them during the interviews.

4.5.2 Interview guide

In order to ease and better structure the execution of the semi-structured interviews, the researchers made two individual interview guides for using during the interviews: one for sample group A and one with slightly different questions for sample group B (see appendix 4 and 5). In order to create the interview guides, the researchers thematized the investigation and identified the research aims hereof. After this process, they were able to design the interview questions in a way that would generate answers, which could answer the problem formulation and the research question (Kvale, 2007; Bryman, 2016, p. 476).

The researchers also aimed to make the questions for the interviewees as comprehensible as possible in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere during the interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 471). Thus, the interview questions were designed without using academic language and “insider terms”. Instead, questions were posed in an every-day language that the interviewees would understand and not be confused by.

Before initiating the interview sessions, the researchers made a pilot interview to test the interview guide. During the interviews, the researchers were able to check, whether the interview questions appeared comprehensible to the interviewees. By conducting a pilot interview, the researchers also gained additional experience in their role as interviewers (Bryman, 2016, p. 472).

In connection with the pilot interview, the researchers noticed a practical and functional strategy for the upcoming interviews, which entailed, that solely one of the researchers was to execute the concerned interview, whereas the other researcher would observe and ask follow-up questions. The interviewees were also during the debriefing informed about, which researcher would be the main interviewer. Hence, the interviewees were able to solely focus on one of the interviewers and thereby reduce confusion. This signified, that each researcher was in charge of three interviews and subsequently acted as an assisting interviewer in the remaining three. In connection with this, the researchers also noticed an improvement in regards to follow-up questions, the more interviews they executed, as the researchers were increasingly capable of identifying statements, that required further elaboration, which ultimately contributed with more data-driven codes.

Both of the interview guides were divided into three sections. The first section featured questions about Denmark, which could generate data in relation to the interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image. The second section contained questions related to Scandinavian design products, which provided data of, among others, the interviewees' knowledge and perceptions of these products. In continuation of the second section, the interviewees were shown a document illustrating two completely identical pictures of a bowl, where the only difference between the details of the products below the pictures was, that they were manufactured in Denmark and China respectively (see appendix 6). The bowl was of the Danish brand 'Royal Copenhagen' and was chosen, as it represents a typical example of a Danish design product. Furthermore, as the researchers are aware, that the product is manufactured in China, they intended to investigate whether the manufacturing country played a significant role for the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intentions.

After commenting on the document with the two identical pictures, the interviewees were asked to comment on another document featuring nine pictures of different Danish branded furniture- and interior design products, as well as their name, brand, price and their brand origin (see appendix 7). This last part of the interview required a more in-depth elaboration and preparation, as the researchers in this part of the interview utilized an additional, new method, which will be described in more detail below along with the criteria of these pictures.

4.5.3 Photo elicitation method

As mentioned above, the researchers in the last part of the interview guide employed a technique, where the interviewees were shown some specific pictures and asked questions about these. This method is called the *photo elicitation method* and corresponds well with the overall qualitative research design of the present study.

Generally, photo elicitation implies a display of pictures in an interview, which may trigger more profound elements of human consciousness, than words are capable of doing. If the interview merely consists of words, the interviewee's brain capacity is utilized less, whereas if a combination of both words and images is used, a research interview might elicit more information from the interviewee, and can additionally evoke other kinds of information (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Furthermore, photo elicitation can also contribute to more in-depth interviews, as well as make the interviewees to go beyond ordinary and exhausting interviews (Harper, 2002, p. 13).

In this present investigation, the photo elicitation method was applied in the context of the semi-structured interviews, as the researchers assembled and displayed two different documents with pictures. One document contained two identical pictures of the same Scandinavian design product of Danish origin with slightly different information of the product below the pictures (see appendix 6), whereas the other document constituted a picture collage consisting of specific Scandinavian design products of Danish origin (see appendix 7).

The aim with the picture collage was to give the interviewees tangible products with appertaining text, that they were able to comment on, as well as the opportunity of comparing various products. However, it also aimed to trigger information and perceptions, that would not have emerged by solely the utilization of words, for which reason it could provide the researchers with more data-driven codes. Moreover, the applied photo elicitation method also corresponds with the aforementioned critique of former research of the COO effect, in which it was emphasized, that these researches required more than verbal descriptions, but also tangible products that the interviewees could relate to. Furthermore, many of these previous studies have been criticized for only utilizing a single-cue design, for which reason a multi-cue design was applied in this study through the disclose of multiple product information in the two abovementioned documents.

In correlation with the abovementioned photo elicitation method, certain criteria were applied, when the researchers were to assemble the picture collage. In order to select a range of suitable pictures for the collage, the researchers first brainstormed and reflected on which pictures should be selected. They considered which Danish brands they knew of, and then investigated their websites and their selection of products, in order to determine which ones would fit within the following criteria.

Firstly, the chosen products had to be interior- and furniture products exclusively, as these comprise the scope of this present investigation. Moreover, the selected products all had to fit within the presented definition of Scandinavian design products (see section 2.4), for which reason solely products possessing the characteristics of simplicity, cleanliness, and specific materials were included in the picture collage. This criterion was, to a certain extent, apparent in all of the presented products.

Additionally, the chosen products were all known to the researchers, as they intended to include products that were of well-known Danish brands, hence the Chinese, who are currently living in Denmark, would have a greater chance of having been exposed to them.

Moreover, as formerly mentioned in section 2.4, Danish design also entails a characteristic in regards to the usage of colours, including white, grey, brown, and black, for which reason this characteristic was applied, when the researchers selected the products for the picture collage. However, the presented Model 7 Chair by Arne Jacobsen (see picture 1) did not fit within that characteristic, as the researchers intended to include a product that differentiated itself from the remaining, in the attempt to obtain perceptions and opinions about a Scandinavian design product, that is not commonly viewed as a Scandinavian design product.



Picture 1

Finally, the presented products were solely of Danish origin, as the researchers aimed to investigate Danish design products, but within the frame of Scandinavian design products, as Danish products often are presented within the frame of Scandinavian design products in a Chinese context, as formerly mentioned in section 2.4. Thus, it could be expected, that the Chinese would have difficulties differentiating Danish products from others Scandinavian design products. As formerly mentioned, IKEA is a common brand among the Chinese in the context of Scandinavian design products (see section 2.4), hence it would have been evident to include products representing IKEA. However, as the scope of the investigation concerns Danish design products, this brand was excluded from the picture collage.

4.6 Data analysis method

One applicable method to analyse the obtained data is by the utilization of *coding*. Generally, coding concerns a way of indexing or categorizing a text to be capable of establishing a general framework of thematic conceptions (Gibbs, 2007). The parts of the text that refers to the same ideas, issues or experiences will be assigned with the same code (Tashakkori et al.,

1998, p. 414), which aids the researchers to divide the obtained texts into different segments and create a more structured overview of the data. Specific acts or behaviours, events, activities, meanings etc. are merely a selection of potential aspects that can be coded (Gibbs, 2007), wherefore their relevance became visible in this context, since the aim was to interpret the meanings and perspectives of the Chinese interviewees in regards to their overall perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products. The codes utilized in this investigation were a mix of both concept-driven- as well as data-driven codes (Gibbs, 2007). Whereas the concept-driven codes derived from the theoretical concepts relevant to the overall investigation, the data-driven codes emerged, as the researchers analysed the transcriptions made from the semi-structured interviews. Both appeared applicable in this context, as the concept-driven codes, which derived from the theoretical concepts, provided the researchers with a basis for the elaboration of the questions for the semi-structured interviews. However, to be capable of obtaining knowledge that is beyond what the already existing concepts could generate, data-driven codes appeared essential, which also corresponds with the former selection of semi-structured interviews that enabled the researchers to deviate from the interview guides.

After the execution of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the interviews and subsequently identified codes deriving from the theoretical concepts described in section 3. Below in tables 2 and 3, the theoretical concepts along with the appertaining concept-driven codes are presented of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

Concept-driven codes related to Denmark's nation image		
Concepts	Codes	Example of code
Tourism (First impressions of Denmark)	Good environment, happy people, hygge, the little mermaid, fairy tales, welfare, high quality, architecture, appearance of the country, appearance of the people, peaceful, simple, geography, tourism, high-tech products, dairy products	<i>".. Andersen.. the fairy tales or something like.. the little mermaid of course. And the blue sea. Quite good environment and kindly people of course."</i>

Brands (Knowledge of Danish brands)	LEGO, Pandora, Only, Vero Moda, cookies, Hay, ECCO, B&O, Royal Copenhagen, Normann	<p><i>".. and also Vero Moda, Only... just, I can see it in China."</i></p> <p><i>"Yeah, LEGO. It's very typical Danish product."</i></p>
Policy (Awareness of Danish policies)	Democracy, welfare	<i>"I think, maybe from the political perspective, Denmark is a democratic country, and you have very good social welfare.."</i>
Culture (People, who exchange and export Danish culture)	H.C. Andersen, Kim Larsen, Viktor Axelsen, Jørn Utzon	<i>"And about Utzon, actually before I came here I knew that he was a famous architect, who designed the Sidney Opera House. But I came to Utzon centre and I know that his story is connected to China. I know [now] that there are so many Chinese aspects of his life story, so that impressed me a lot."</i>
People (Perceptions of general population and public people)	<p>Enjoying, relaxed, not stressed, cold, indifferent, warm, friendly, distant, respectful, equal, kind, tall, blonde, shy, nice, polite, healthy, independent, have freedom of speech, white, beautiful, introvert, quiet, European life style</p> <p>Queen Margrethe, Viktor Axelsen</p>	<p><i>"I think Danish people must be quite tall. Maybe blond hair, most of people."</i></p> <p><i>"I think Danish people are very shy. Hmm, they are very polite. And nice."</i></p>
Nation brand ambassadors (People, who represent Denmark)	H. C. Andersen, general population, Jørn Utzon, Kingdom bodyguard	<i>"Before I come here, I know the Andersen story. But maybe in a broad side. But I come to Denmark and I see, that the story are not full of bright sides. Some are dark sides, some deeper meanings of their story."</i>

Stereotypes and clichés (Common associations to Denmark)	Fairy tale country, the little mermaid, cookies, viking/pirate, environmentally friendly, perception of Danes, LEGO, hygge	<i>“It is a country with a lot of ”hygge”. I heard it from a documentary and it said a lot of people can just enjoy their lives and they’re very relaxed compared to the Chinese society”</i>
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Table 2

Concept-driven codes related to Scandinavian design products		
Concepts	Codes	Example of code
Ethnocentrism (Preference/hostility of products from home country)	Preference of buying small necessities and fake substitutes in home country, preference of buying electronics in Denmark, hostile of environmental factor and trustworthiness of home country	<i>“But some small things. Small necessities, I think it’s better to buy it in China, because the price is much cheaper.”</i>
Brand origin (Misperceptions of products’ COO)	Thinks JBL, La Mer, and IKEA are Danish, thinks Arne Jacobsen chair is designed by a Japanese designer	<i>“And I also know the brand of. Lamer (...) No, it’s a brand of Denmark, as far as I know..”</i>
Cognitive-, emotional- and normative factors (Affecting perceptions of products)	<p><u>Cognitive</u>: size vs. price, tax influencing price, space saving, selection of choice, cheap price, quality matching price, physics of comfort, convenience, safety, product’s service life</p> <p><u>Emotional</u>: should match surroundings, should have a positive atmosphere</p> <p><u>Normative</u>: Chinese preferring simple, popularity in China, reputation, usage limitation, young IKEA consumers, high status</p>	<p><i>“They must be good quality, lasts longer. Quite useful and (...) maybe I can use it for five to ten years.”</i></p> <p><i>“.. and because all the colours and even the wood material the furniture, they make me feel like I am close to nature, and make me comfortable.”</i></p> <p><i>“And this kind of product is very popular in China.”</i></p>

Product knowledge	<u>Objective- and subjective knowledge:</u> Colours, products, brands, characteristics <u>Experience-based knowledge:</u> IKEA kitchen ware, bedding, lamp and furniture, Royal Copenhagen plate	<i>“They are very recognisable, they use simple colours.”</i> <i>“Uhm, I have a Royal Copenhagen plate. I bought it in a second hand market.”</i>
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Table 3

Apart from the concept-driven codes, certain data-driven codes also emerged throughout the coding of the transcribed interviews. The data-driven codes with the appertaining sub-codes related to both the Chinese interviewees’ perceptions of Denmark’s nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products are presented in tables 4 and 5.

Data-driven codes related to Denmark’s nation image		
Codes	Sub-codes	Example of code
Cultural differences (between Denmark and China)	Behaviour, humour, technology	<i>“.. because we have different cultural backgrounds, and sometimes I can not get the point why they are laughing of something.”</i>
Environmental factors of Denmark	Clean and beautiful, climate meetings	<i>“...every year or every fourth year is held there, so they pay attention to this climate change. ”</i>
Price (of products in Denmark)	Expensive, higher price	<i>“The price is not very.. it’s a little expensive some things.”</i>

Table 4

Data-driven codes related to Scandinavian design products		
Codes	Sub-codes	Example of code
Cultural differences (between Denmark and China)	Price standard, cultural understanding, quality standard, product usage, selection of products, labour price	<i>".. I think products from China are a lot more cheaper, because we have much cheaper labour price."</i>
Environmental factors of Denmark	Favouring environmentally friendly products	<i>"(...) some of the products in China, I have to say are not very environmentally friendly, so whenever I see those kind of declaring, I will feel "Wow, that is really cool", so they can make them very beautiful with good quality, and you can also protect the environment."</i>
Price (of Scandinavian design products)	Price standard, quality, price matches quality, hindrance, prices match material	<i>"Yeah practical, it looks very good quality and good design, and even the price is very expensive.."</i>
Characteristics (of Scandinavian design products)	<p><u>Appearances</u>: neutral and simple colours, simplicity, small, wood, comfort, cuteness, IKEA-style, beautiful patterns, recognisable</p> <p><u>Quality</u>: functionality, long product service life, comfortable, solid</p> <p><u>Uniqueness</u>: material, seldomness, not normal, atmosphere, environmentally friendly, export goods, IKEA products</p>	<p><i>"Always the colour is blue or pink or black or white. Very simple, and it's very comfortable colour."</i></p> <p><i>"When I use it, it makes me comfortable, and I can use them for long time. I think they can not broke down or something.. very easily."</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe if it material is something that you can not get in China, maybe it's a special for me."</i></p>
Personal taste/preferences (of Scandinavian design products)	Simplicity, comfort, simple colours, elegance, beautiful, cozy, IKEA, candles, matching of colours, high quality, classic,	<i>"Oh, I like the neutral colours, like white, blue.. yeah, or natural colours."</i>

	warm colours, Spanish appearance, Mediterranean, flexible, rare, Nordic style, wood, functional, beneficial, convenient	<i>“And I like to buy the things in IKEA, because first, it’s quite cheap. Second, it’s not so many colours, actually.”</i>
Brand Production Authenticity (Country of Origin preference)	Reliable brand, mistrust in China and Indonesia, design origin preference	<i>“I prefer buying some products in China. But some products, I think, if the price is the same, between China and Denmark, then I will buy it in Denmark.”</i>

Table 5

In the elaboration of the abovementioned codes, certain codes or subjects appeared more than once and also will be mentioned multiple times in the analysis, as they either overlap one another or act in several contexts. The researchers found this aspect challenging, as the same code represented different topics or acted in different contexts, for which reason the presented tables containing the various codes were utilized, as it provided the researchers with an overview and generated various connections between the different codes.

4.7 Quality criteria

Generally, quality criteria are considered important when assessing the quality of quantitative researches, however, it is also relevant in connection with qualitative researches (Bryman, 2016, p. 383).

One aspect of quality criteria, that appears applicable in this investigation, is the concept of *internal reliability*. Generally, internal reliability concerns, that if there is more than one observer of the research, these observers should agree on the findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). For this particular investigation, there are two observers of the findings, and the researchers have therefore compared their codes, when analyzing the transcriptions, in the attempt to reach consistency as well as observing, whether the interpretations of the findings were similar. Furthermore, as the researchers have attempted to maintain the authenticity of the origin statements of the interviewees, the quotes that appear throughout the analysis have not been altered but instead been presented exactly as they were expressed by the interviewees, despite grammatical errors.

Additionally, another relevant quality criterion for this investigation is the concept of *internal validity*. This concept refers to the correspondence between the researchers' findings and the theoretical ideas the researchers develop, based on these findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). Internal validity is considered important in the context of qualitative research, as the participation with a selected group allows the researchers to develop accordance between the theoretical concepts and findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). In this investigation, the researchers chose to carry out semi-structured interviews, which provided them with the opportunity of obtaining data-driven codes, which in the end contributed to the existing theoretical ideas.

Furthermore, in connection with qualitative researches, the concept of *external validity* also appears significant, as qualitative researches generally entail the issue of lacking the opportunity of generalizing across social settings (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). However, it is worth noticing, that the findings of this particular investigation can be generalized within the sample, but not to other social settings. This signifies, that the perceptions of the Chinese interviewees in relation to their nation image of Denmark and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products can not be generalized to all Chinese, but rather demonstrate that certain perceptions exist and therefore could potentially exist in other social settings.

Moreover, in terms of trustworthiness, aspects of credibility as well as conformability have been taken into consideration. When considering the *credibility* of the investigation, the researchers have kept this aspect in mind, as they have attempted to carry out the research with good practise (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). This entails, that the researchers kept interviewing people, until data saturation had been reached, and additionally that they used mechanical recording devices throughout the interviews, which enabled them to review the data after leaving the interview settings (McGinn, 2010).

The researchers considered the *confirmability* of the investigation, as they during the entire research attempted to not let personal values or other subjective stances affect the conducts and subsequently the findings of the investigation (Bryman, 2016, p. 392). The researchers were, however, aware, that remaining completely objective or neutral is not natural in qualitative research, and furthermore that some subjectivity is required throughout some qualitative research processes, e.g. the coding of the data. Nevertheless, the researchers considered their own subjectivity, in terms of their own existing knowledge of Scandinavian design products, and how this knowledge could affect the research. In relation to this issue,

the researchers reflected on the idea, that they themselves may possess more knowledge of the topic than many of the interview persons would, and how this fact may have affected their elaboration of the interview guide and subsequently the interviewees' ability to correctly understand and grasp the questions posed in this interview guide. Thus, the researchers carried out a pilot interview with a Chinese, who fit all the criteria but one, in order to test the interview guide and the interviewee's understanding and answers to the questions in it.

Throughout the investigation, the researchers also considered the authenticity in terms of *fairness* (Bryman, 2016, p. 386). As the nature of this research was qualitative, and the emphasis was on interpreting and understanding the social world of the individual interviewees, the researchers have throughout the analysis of the collected data from the interviews put great emphasis on the individual interviewees' different social constructs of the investigated topics.

4.8 Ethical issues

In regards to the semi-structured interviews, the Chinese interviewees were asked to both elaborate on general and specific Scandinavian design products of Danish origin. However, considering that the researchers' ethnicity is of Danish origin, and the Chinese interviewees were asked to express opinions and statements regarding products from Scandinavia, this situation can be considered ethically challenging, as the Chinese interviewees may not wish to insult or upset the researchers and thereby lose face. In Chinese society, losing face refers to when a person is embarrassed, dishonoured or feels uncomfortable, based on the way another person has spoken to or treated this person. However, causing somebody else to lose face is considered just as unfortunate as losing face oneself (Monfret, 2011; Blackman, 1998, pp. 19-22). These notions of not causing the interviewers to lose face thus might have affected the Chinese interviewees' responses, in which their statements to some extent could have deviated from their sincere opinions and perceptions.

Furthermore, the researchers made certain considerations in regards to the semi-structured interviews, and therefore prepared a briefing as well as a debriefing, that i.a. allowed the interviewees to withdraw their statements and act anonymously, in the attempt to avoid potential ethical issues.

Moreover, the selected interviewees gave consent to carry out the interviews in English and were therefore aware of this criterion before participating in the interviews. However, as it was not their mother tongue, it might have affected the interviewees

negatively and made them feel uncomfortable, as well as have limited their opportunity of expressing themselves in the most proper way.

Lastly, one of the criteria for the sampling entailed, that the interviewees, who were currently living in China, had to be part of the urban, Chinese middle class (cf. section 2.2) based on their monthly income. Likewise, the Chinese, who were currently living in Denmark, had to have a monthly income equivalent to the income of the urban, Chinese middle class. In order to determine whether the interviewees were a part of this social group, the researchers had to ask a rather personal question related to their economy, which may have caused an ethical issue.

4.9 Limitations

Throughout the research process, the researchers identified a number of general limitations as well as some specific limitations in relation to the methodological approach. Firstly, during the research process of the typical Chinese consumer group of furniture- and interior design products in various parts of the Chinese societies, the researchers struggled to find relevant and trustworthy information about this topic. In the end, the information that the researchers could identify ended up constituting the definition of a typical Chinese consumer group of Scandinavian design products, as the researchers were compelled to create some kind of limitation in regards to this consumer group. Although the researchers are aware, that more than one type of consumer group may exist, the researchers decided to only focus on one consumer group, since this investigation has a qualitative research approach and aimed to go into depth with one group by obtaining more rich data of fewer individuals.

In regards to this typical consumer group, the researchers also previously mentioned, that they were aware that their sample did not represent the younger- and the older part of this group, which can also be considered a limitation.

In relation to the semi-structured interviews, the researchers showed two documents with pictures of various Scandinavian design products of Danish origin to the interviewees. This might have affected the perceptions or knowledge the Chinese interviewees possessed of Scandinavian design products, which potentially could have affected the final results, if these pictures caused a different reaction than their immediate perceptions and knowledge of these products would have caused.

Another limitation related to the interviews, the researchers identified a limitation related to the interviews executed through the social media app, WeChat. Through this type of interview, there is a risk that the researchers can not obtain the same proximity, intimacy, and sense of connectedness with the interviewees, as when sitting opposite of an interviewee. This risk may entail a smaller generation of data-driven codes than face-to-face interviews, as online interviews are carried out in a more artificial setting, as described above.

However, in this present investigation, the interviewers considered the experience with the utilization of the abovementioned social media app, WeChat, as particularly useful, due to the geographically dispersed sample (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). Despite the fact, that WeChat and similar online communication platforms are not considered capable of providing an intimate atmosphere between the interviewers and the interviewees, it still generated a holistic experience, as the interviewers still were capable of reacting to the interviewees' expressions, silence, and body language, due to the real-time video- and audio recording. One minor issue the interviewers experienced with the utilization of WeChat, was the Wi-Fi connection, that a few times disturbed the interviews, but the interviewers did not consider that as an overall issue. Cf. Bryman, video chatting programmes such as Skype or similar can be criticized, due to the interviewees' lack of presence or poor Wi-Fi connection, which influences the flow of the interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). However, the interviewers neither experienced the minor disturbance of poor Wi-Fi connection to influence the flow of the interviews, nor did they experience a lack of presence among the Chinese, when carrying out the interviews. Thus, the researchers did consider the experience of utilizing WeChat as a method of interviewing as positive and useful in general.

In relation to the Chinese, who were interviewed through WeChat, these were all urban, Chinese middle class people, who had never been to Denmark before. As mentioned earlier, the researchers were aware, that these interviewees' statements regarding Denmark and Danish people etc. during the interviews all were based on knowledge they had from other sources than themselves or had generated through second hand sources e.g. through media exposure. As these participants were not able to use themselves as sources, they may have had limited knowledge of the topic, which may not have reflected the reality, and this may be considered a limitation in terms of data quality. However, this qualitative study focused on the individual interviewee's perception and how they construct their own social world, rather than what is actually objectively true. Thus, the interviewee's social constructions and

perceptions of the world were considered more important than the extent, to which their knowledge reflected the objective truth.

Furthermore, a linguistic barrier emerged in regards to the interviews, as the Chinese interviewees might have possessed more knowledge or different perceptions, than what they were able to express to the researchers, in regards to both the concepts of people and brands. The Chinese interviewees in some cases expressed, that they might have been familiar with a given Danish person or brand in another language, namely Chinese, for which reason the interviewees were not capable of passing on this information to the interviewers. This could potentially have affected the results of the interviewees' knowledge of brands and people, that ultimately could have affected the final result in the end.

A limitation that may emerge throughout various types of interview situations is the risk of participant bias in the form of a social desirability effect. This happens, when the interviewee responds to the interviewer's questions in the way, that the interviewee thinks that he/she is *expected* to answer based on what they considered socially acceptable or desirable in the situation (Bryman, 2016, p. 234). As mentioned earlier in relation to the ethical issues, the interviewers are Danish and represent Denmark, and the interviewees have to answer questions related to Denmark and Danish products. The researcher throughout the interviews noted, that the participants overall remained rather positive when answering questions related to the topics of the investigation. In terms of the social desirability effect, this could mean that they considered it more acceptable to remain positive and not criticise Denmark and the products from this country, since it would be inappropriate in an interview situation with two Danish interviewees sitting in front of them. However, in order to minimize the social desirability effect, the researchers, as mentioned in the briefing, informed the interviewees, that they could talk freely and did not have to worry about insulting the interviewees by speaking their mind, although their perceptions and opinions might have had a negative discourse.

As a general limitation of this investigation, the researchers have used a research design that is solely qualitative and not a mixed method research design, e.g. through triangulation, which could have provided greater validity of findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 641). However, as the researchers in the initial settlement phase read the already existing literature and studies related to the topic (see sections 2 and 3), they quickly arrived at the conclusion, that the

majority of these were carried out using quantitative research methods. Thus, the researchers intended to contribute to the limited existing qualitative research on the topic related to Chinese consumers' perceptions of foreign countries and their products. Furthermore, as the researchers have an educational background within humanities, they also had a natural desire to uncover and reveal the *why* instead of the *what* through a qualitative investigation.

5. Analysis

The following analysis is generally divided into two parts, which aim to answer the first part of the problem formulation. The first part of the analysis thus concerns the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image, and which values they attribute to Denmark, and the second part concerns their general perceptions of Scandinavian design products, as well as their perceptions of a series of specific Scandinavian design products of Danish origin.

Each part of the analysis first treats the concepts deriving from the theoretical framework, followed by the data-driven codes that emerged from the interviews. Some of the concept-driven codes solely appear in relation to Denmark's nation image, while others appear solely in relation to Scandinavian design products. However, in relation to the data-driven codes, some codes appear both in relation to Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products, while others solely appear in relation to Scandinavian design products. As mentioned earlier in the methodological section, some codes will overlap throughout the analysis, and thus the analysis is divided into two overall sections, in order to present the codes in each their individual context.

5.1 Perceptions of Denmark's nation image

This section comprises the first part of the analysis, and aims to investigate the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Denmark's nation image.

5.1.1 Concept-driven codes

Tourism

Related to the first channel from the nation brand hexagon, namely the '*Tourism*' channel, the researchers looked into the individual interviewees' first impressions of Denmark and considered their discourse and associations related to these first impressions.

Almost all of the interviewees spoke about the Danish author H.C. Andersen and his fairy tales, when asked about their first thoughts about Denmark. Lily, for example, explains, "*The first word that comes into my mind is Andersen. A famous person and his fairy-tales. And something very dreamful and magic*". Rue also explains, that she and the people around her have read his stories since they were at a young age, and furthermore explains, that they

thus, based on these stories, think of Denmark as a place full of love and happiness. It appears from the interviewees' statements, that the Chinese are taught H.C. Andersen's fairy tales at Chinese schools at a young age, and that these stories have left a strong impression on them. Thus, many of the remaining interviewees, just like Lily and Rue, associate Denmark with something dreamful and magical, and as a place full of love and happiness.

Apart from H.C. Andersen, many of them also mention the environment, either in terms of the geographical aspects and characteristics, but also in terms of the climate and the weather. In general, positive things such as the fresh air, nature, cleanliness, and the beauty of the country are mentioned. Lastly, the famous, Danish expression of '*hygge*' and the lifestyle and personality of the local, Danish people are mentioned.

What appears from their statements is, that they all have an overall positive discourse, when they talk about Denmark and their first impression of the country. However, Daisy, Jane, and Lily, who have been living in Denmark for at least six months, seem to have developed a slightly more nuanced picture of the local people, compared to Hope, Maggie, and Rue, who have never been to Denmark before. Out of the three Chinese, who are currently living in Denmark, two of them, namely Jane and Lily, expand on their view of the Danish people, based on their experiences with these in Denmark. While most of the first impressions of Denmark were positive, Jane and Lily add a negative discourse regarding the local people, as they find it difficult to communicate and develop a close relationship with these.

Although some of the interviewees first impressions may build on some classic, static ideas about Denmark, these seems to benefit Denmark in this case, as most of their first impressions, in general, are positive. Furthermore, as Anholt argues, that the tourism channel is the most dominant channel, this overall positive discourse, especially among the Chinese currently living in China, could benefit Denmark in terms of the country's nation image.

Brands

In order to determine which Danish brands may affect the interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image, Chinese interviewees were asked about specific products and brands. Therefore, the researchers looked into their concrete knowledge and subsequently their perceptions of Danish brands and/or products.

In relation to concrete knowledge, some interviewees are only able to identify one or two products or brands of Danish origin, while others are capable of identifying up to six different brand names. In general, the Danish-based Chinese are able to identify more brands than the Chinese currently living in China. The most frequently mentioned brands are LEGO, B&O, and Pandora, but also Danish butter cookies and their popularity in China are mentioned by half of the Chinese interviewees. Although the interviewees do not mention a specific brand of the butter cookies, they still know that these are of Danish origin, and thus this product is also, along with the other Danish brands mentioned, considered an influential ambassador of Denmark's nation image in China, cf. the *brands* channel.

Upon mentioning the various Danish brands, the discourse is in general either neutral or rather positive. In some cases, the interviewees will merely mention the brands that they know, without commenting further on what they think of them or even tell the interviewers, that they do not possess further knowledge of these products. However, in other cases, when the interviewees elaborate on their perceptions of the brands, they will point to the specific positive characteristics of the products from the brand, e.g. the good quality or the nice design. This is the case with Jane, who state: “... *and another product I like very much is the B&O, the headphone. And I like its design. It's very beautiful and very concise*”. The fact that the Chinese interviewees have knowledge of and in general have a neutral or positive attitude towards Danish brands and products can possibly benefit Denmark's nation image. However, the Chinese currently living in China are the interviewees with the most limited knowledge of brands including opinions on these, which could signify, that potential benefits of these brands as influential ambassadors for Denmark may be limited.

Policy

Related to the policy channel, only one interviewee mentions something related to what Anholt's hexagon channel includes, namely in regards to Denmark's government and the country's domestic policies. Rue explains, in relation to this channel:

“... from the political perspective, Denmark is a democratic country, and you have very good social welfare (...) I even read some news about Denmark welfare that said, you don't need to work very hard, but you can get very good pension, when you get retired. That is the good thing”

Rue seems to be well informed and have an idea of the political situation of Denmark including some specific domestic policies. She appears very positive towards this specific information she possesses, which may contribute to a general positive view of Denmark's nation image to her. Democracy is also, cf. section 2.4, a basic value of Scandinavian design, however, Rue is not able to make this connection between the Danish democracy and these products herself.

Apart from Rue, Hope also briefly mentions 'welfare' without elaborating on this aspect. Nevertheless, what is noteworthy is, that it is two Chinese, who have not yet been to Denmark, who mention policy related characteristics of Denmark. Whether this is due to the fact, that the Chinese, who are currently living in Denmark, may consider the Danish policies such an integrated part of their lives in Denmark, that they do not mention this during the interviews, is difficult to determine. However, both Rue and Hope speak of welfare in Denmark with positive associations, which may contribute positively to their perceptions of Denmark's nation image. If other urban, Chinese middle class people have the same knowledge and positive associations of Danish welfare, this could benefit Denmark's nation image to a larger extent in general.

Culture

As mentioned in section 3.1, the *culture* channel of the hexagon refers to the exchange and export of cultural activities, which can either contribute positively or negatively to a country's nation image. Once again, H.C. Andersen can be mentioned in this context, as all of the Chinese interviewees speak about him to a certain degree, and as his fairy tales are famous stories, which, cf. Anholt's culture channel, can be considered 'exchanged' or 'exported' to China. These fairy tales have left a significant and positive impression through this exchange/export of a Danish cultural activity, namely fairy tale storytelling, which possibly yet again contributes to an overall positive reputation of Denmark among the Chinese interviewees.

One of the Chinese currently living in Denmark, namely Daisy, also mentions the Dane, Viktor Axelsen, who, in the Chinese sports world, is a famous, well known badminton player. She explains, that *"He has a close relation to China, so I can see him in television..."*. Daisy talks enthusiastically about him and his relation to China, as he additionally has made himself noticeable in China, as he has accomplished to reach very high Chinese language skills. Viktor Axelsen, in this case, also acts as a famous, Danish person, who takes part in a cultural exchange, while also demonstrating a certain cultural understanding of China and

Chinese culture, as he has managed to master the official Chinese language to a high degree. This signifies, that Viktor Axelsen, along with H.C. Andersen, also may contribute to a positive reputation and thus a positive overall nation image of Denmark for Daisy and possibly other Chinese people who know of him.

People

When asked about the last channel of the hexagon – the *people* of the given country – the Chinese interviewees expressed their thoughts in terms of the physical- and the psychological aspects of Danes.

In terms of the physical aspects, Hazel and Maggie describe the Danish people with words such as tall, blond, white, having beautiful eyes, and in general as good looking. Maggie even states, that *“They look like they come out of the fairy tale story book”*. Jane also considers Danes as very healthy and believes, that they eat healthily and exercise regularly.

In terms of the psychological aspects, the interviewees seem to have two rather contrasting viewpoints of these. Nevertheless, two of the interviewees currently living in China have never met anybody from Denmark, and thus their statements only build on what they have seen or heard about Danes through other sources than themselves.

As for the first general perception of the Danes, all of the interviewees, apart from one, think that Danes are shy, difficult to talk to and in general keep a distance to other people, while some think, that it is difficult to develop a close relationship with them. While expressing their thoughts, many of them compare Danes to people from other cultures/countries, and often blame the differences on cultural aspects. Maggie even suggests, that Danes possibly are less extrovert and outgoing, because they want to be respectful to others and respect if other people do not want to talk to them. She explains:

“Maybe they want to give you respect. Maybe you talk first, and I’ll answer. If they want something they ask me, they will be more open to me. If I ask you, they okay, and you don’t want to answer, I respect you”.

Maggie thus attempts to attribute this distance of the Danes to a possible respectful behaviour. Another interviewee, namely Rue, mentions, that she thinks Danes are more distant, because they do not like to debate.

In relation to the other general perception of the Danes, the majority of the Chinese interviewees mention how friendly, polite, nice, and warm Danish people are. Although this may sound contrasting to the general perception of Danes being shy and distant, these two general perceptions were often linked. The Chinese, who possessed a slightly more nuanced idea of the Danes, are the Chinese currently living in Denmark, namely Daisy and Lily. They both experienced the Danes as shy and distant at first, when they did not know them very well, but as their relationships with them evolve, they will consider them as more open and friendly towards them. Daisy even mentions, that she thinks it is understandable and relatable, that the Danes are distant at first, as she believes, that it is natural, that people need time to get to know others. Only Jane, as the only one of the Chinese currently living in Denmark, experiences on-going difficulties in socializing and developing relationships with Danes despite, what she considers, a more superficial kindness from their side. She blames this on language issues, as she is the only non-Danish speaker at her work, as well as the general problem of not knowing which topics to talk to them about. This lack of developing close relations with the local Danes may influence her perception of the general population negatively, which could contribute to a negative view of Denmark's nation image.

Daisy and Lily also mention equality and respect as characteristics of the Danes. Lily mentions this aspect in terms of the absence of a hierarchy between elderly and younger people, while emphasizing the equality when speaking to elder people, as if they are friends. Daisy also mentions the aspect of equality and respect, however, this is in terms of how Danes seem to possess many, various beauty standards, which makes her feel more comfortable and confident about her own physical appearance in Denmark.

Another aspect that is mentioned by Daisy and Lily, is the fact that Danish people are less stressful about life, e.g. in terms of their job. Both Daisy and Lily sense that Danes are more aware of enjoying life and not stressing about work. In relation to this, Lily argues:

“Because I work here, I can say that there is a difference between how the Danish and the Chinese people think of their work and their life. Danish people attach more importance to life instead of work.. separate work and life so clearly.. don't bring the work back to home”

Apart from a greater focus on one's private life and joy, Lily also mentions, that Danes are more independent and have more clear life expectancies. She refers to some elderly Danes she met, who told her, that when they retire, they will go travelling and enjoy life while focusing on themselves, opposite of staying with the family and taking care of their children and grandchildren. Lily is very impressed by their plans and seems to admire these elderly Danes for carrying out this lifestyle. Thus, this meeting, and subsequently the conversation with these elderly people, may possibly have contributed positively to Lily's perception of the local Danes, and possibly contributing to a positive perception of Denmark's nation image.

To briefly sum up, the Chinese mention a range of characteristics of the Danes, which may contribute either positively or negatively to Denmark's nation image. The perceived immediate shyness and distance of the Danish people, which to Jane is so severe that she can not develop close relationships with Danes, may contribute negatively to her perception of Denmark's nation image. However, the perceived friendliness and warmth, the equality and respect, and the relaxed lifestyle and way of thinking are all characteristics of the Danes, which are mentioned as positive qualities of the Danes, which in turn may contribute to a positive nation image of the country for the interviewees. Also, as it seems that many of the Chinese interviewees admire the physical appearance of the Danes, this may also create an overall positive nation image of the country, if Denmark is considered a country with a beautiful population.

Apart from the local people, including the experiences with these, Daisy also mentions some more 'public' people in the Danish society. She mentions the Danish queen, Margrethe, however, she only briefly mentions her without expanding on her thoughts of her, which implies, that the queen may not have left a significant impression on her. The same counts for when she mentions the Danish singer, Kim Larsen, who recently died. Daisy explains, that she mainly knows of him, due to the public attention she was exposed to when he recently died. However, she explains that she is fond of his music, which possibly could have a positive impact on how she perceives other Danish people in general.

As mentioned above, Daisy also mentions Viktor Axelsen, and as she speaks of him in a very positive manner, this could possibly, to a larger degree than the Danish queen and Kim Larsen, create a positive reputation and thus a positive nation image of Denmark.

In conclusion of the public people related to the *people* channel, only Daisy mentions these kinds of people, which implies, that she is the only interviewee, whom these public

people appear to have left an impression on. Notwithstanding, these public people appear not to play as an important role as the local people around her, and she additionally even confirms this herself.

Nation brand ambassadors

Throughout the interviews, the Chinese interviewees identified various people, who had left an impression on them and thus can be considered ‘nation brand ambassadors’ to them. Cf. Dinnie, certain people may affect a country’s image positively or negatively based on how these are perceived by the individual foreigner.

As previously mentioned, H.C. Andersen is throughout the interviews the most frequently identified Dane, who, because of his beloved fairy tales, has left a strong, positive impression on most of the interviewees. Viktor Axelsen, whom Daisy mentions, is also referred to with positive associations, because of his relation to China. Daisy also mentions the Danish architect, Jørn Utzon, from Aalborg, whom has also made a strong impression on her. She explains:

“... actually, before I came here, I knew that he was a famous architect, who designed the Sydney Opera House. But I came to Utzon Center, and I know that his story is connected to China. I now know, that there are so many Chinese aspects of his life story, so that impressed me a lot.”

With this statement, Daisy refers to the Utzon Center, which is a visitor centre located in Aalborg, Denmark, where she is currently living. As in the case of Viktor Axelsen, Jørn Utzon and his connection to China has left a strong and positive impression on Daisy. Utzon, along with H.C. Andersen and Viktor Axelsen, thus act as powerful nation brand ambassadors representing Denmark and the country’s image in a positive direction to the Chinese interviewees.

Besides the more official, well-known identified Danes, Maggie also identifies a group of people in a more general sense, namely the Royal Life Guards of Denmark. She explains, that she has seen these on TV, and that they are very recognizable because of their nice clothes. She also knows, that they “*protect the famous people*”, by which it is assumed, that she means the Danish royal family. Although she mentions the Royal Life Guards briefly, she speaks of them with positive associations.

Daisy also mentions some other Danish people in a more general sense, when asked about whether the famous, Danish people she knows of contribute to her overall understanding of Denmark. She explains, that she does not believe, that the famous people can contribute to this aspect, but rather that it is the people around her, whom can affect her view of Denmark. These people around her, assumedly colleagues, friends, and other Danish acquaintances, thus function as nation brand ambassadors to her as well.

Nevertheless, another interviewee, namely Maggie, who is currently living in China, mentions the Royal life guards, whom the researchers identify as nation brand ambassadors to her. Furthermore, H.C. Andersen is mentioned by almost all of the interviewees, which in conclusion does not demonstrate a large difference between which public figures the two interview groups know of. Notwithstanding, all the nation-brand ambassadors have in common, that they all are spoken of with positive associations by the Chinese interviewees and thus all represent and affect the Danish nation image in a positive way, even the unintended ambassadors.

Stereotypes and clichés

Moreover from the abovementioned, further perspectives of nation images, apart from Anholt's hexagon, can be analysed. Cf. Anholt, the concepts of stereotypes and clichés may affect one's behaviour towards a nation, and thus contribute to one's overall perception of a given country's nation image.

Among the interviewees, there exists a general discourse, in which rather typical internationally recognized people, words, brands etc. are mentioned in the context of their perceptions of Denmark. One predominant stereotype or cliché that all the interviewees mention is *fairy tales* or *baby stories*. This both count for the Chinese who are living in China, but also the Chinese who are living in Denmark at the very moment. In that aspect, Rue argues the following: "*Yeah yeah, we have read those stories since we were very young, and we think that it is a place full of love, full of happiness*". From this statement, the stereotype or cliché of fairy tales appear to play a significant role for Rue, as she associates the mentioned fairy tales to Denmark, and thereby describes Denmark as a place full of love and happiness. Therefore, the stereotype or cliché of fairy tales contribute positively to Denmark's nation image.

A similar statement is stated by Lily, who also refers to the fairy tales with words, such as "*magic*" and "*dreamful*". An interesting aspect in this context is, that Rue is currently living in China, contrary to Lily who is currently living in Denmark, but they both

share the same perception of Denmark, despite Lily has been living in Denmark for more than half a year. This once again contributes positively to the argument of the importance of the stereotype or cliché in relation to Denmark's nation image. Cf. Anholt, it is considered difficult for countries to convince people to go beyond the simplified clichés and stereotypes, which is also current for this, however, in this context, the simplification of Denmark merely plays a positive role. Anholt further states, that people do not have the time to investigate several places, due to globalization, hence they are affected by stereotypes and clichés. However, the stereotype or cliché of fairy tales still affects the interviewees living in Denmark to some extent, despite they possessed the time to investigate Denmark. This signifies, that people do not necessarily have to obtain a more in-depth understanding or knowledge of a country in order to have a positive discourse, and thus static stereotypes or clichés may also contribute positively to a country's nation image, in this case Denmark.

Moreover, from the most predominant stereotype/cliché mentioned above, it appears rather coincidental what the Chinese interviewees present, including Danish cookies, vikings, and the living style of 'hygge'. However, as with the abovementioned cliché or stereotype of 'fairy tales', the interviewees appear to carry positive associations, for which reason these clichés or stereotypes once again appears to contribute positively to the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark. However, one stereotype or cliché that tends to vary depending on the context is environmentally- or eco-friendly products. Both Lily and Jane, who are currently living in Denmark, mention these, and for that reason, the context may have had an impact on them. Once again, the associations related to these clichés or stereotypes are considered rather positive and thereby contributes positively to Denmark's nation image. However, one interviewee, who is not in the context of Denmark, is Rue, who also mentions the environment, and this stereotype or cliché might therefore also have a positive impact in a different context, namely upon living in China.

5.1.2 Data-driven codes

Cultural differences

As the researchers coded the interviews, it was apparent that a code existed in relation to the cultural differences between Denmark and China.

When explaining and substantiating their opinions and viewpoints related to the questions posed throughout the interviews, the Chinese interviewees often, either directly or indirectly, point to various existing cultural differences between the Danish- and the Chinese

culture. What appears interesting is, that it is solely the Chinese who are currently living in Denmark, namely Jane, Daisy, and Lily, whose statements constitute this data-driven code of cultural differences.

The topics that appear under this code are mainly related to the mind-set and behaviour of the Danes, e.g. in terms of interpersonal aspects. In terms of how the behaviour of the Danes was mentioned, Jane explains, “... *But somehow I don't know how to develop a close relationship to Danish people, because we have different cultural backgrounds, and sometimes I can not get the point why they are laughing or something*” As mentioned earlier and as seen in her statement, Jane in general experiences problems with developing close relationships with Danes, which she in turn may not experience in China, and she directly blames the cultural differences for this issue.

Lily also comments on the cultural differences in relation to personal relationships and explains, “... *I will say that Danish people will keep a certain distance from others, maybe strangers, but that's totally different from China (...) it belongs to a cultural aspect*”. In this statement, Lily also argues that the differences in behaviour between Danes and Chinese are due to cultural differences. She believes, that Danish people keep a distance from strangers, while Chinese people do not. However, she later on mentions how her Danish students and colleagues always are very nice and caring around her. Daisy possesses similar thoughts of how Danes at first may be distant or seem quite shy, while attributing this behaviour to a cultural aspect, as mentioned in relation to the *people* channel. However, she later explains, that she believes it is quite natural and acceptable to keep a distance at first, when you do not know the other person.

The mind-set of the Danes is also commented on by Lily and Daisy. As mentioned earlier, Lily comments on how Danes separate their personal life and work, which Chinese people do not. Also, she appears both impressed and surprised of the elderly Danes she met, who told her, that they would spend time travelling and not take care of their families and children/grandchildren, when they retire. Besides this aspect, Lily and Daisy also both mention the respect and equality, both in terms of the absence of a hierarchy between the elderly and the younger generations, but also in terms of respecting each other's physical appearances. In relation to this, Daisy states:

“... because in China, Chinese people care about the figure, or if you’re slim or if you’re not. And some male will comment on a female’s figure, like that. But here, nobody cares about it. So I think that is why, I feel very good, because my shape in China is.. people say: “You’re strong, you should lose weight”. All girls talk this to me. But here, nobody care, they: “Oh, you’re quite normal, you just keep what you are”, they just like your original one. So I think.. that’s why I think I feel so happy in this country. Nobody care about you. You don’t have to change so much. You are just you. So I like this kind of culture”

In this statement, Daisy expresses, that due to cultural differences, her body and her looks are more widely accepted in Denmark. She also adds, that she feels respected and treated on equal terms with anybody else, and that this may be due to the various existing beauty standards in Denmark, which are opposite to the *one* beauty standard for women, she believes is the norm among the people she is usually around. In this case, the cultural difference has a positive influence on her, as she feels more accepted in Denmark, which generally may lead to a more positive perception of Denmark’s nation image.

To sum up, the cultural differences in most of the cases are either neutral or positive. It is solely Jane, who considers the cultural difference of the Danes’ behaviour as a problem, which may have a negative effect on her perception of Denmark and Danish culture. Nevertheless, Daisy and Lily attribute either neutral or positive factors to the behaviour and the mind-set of the Danes. The cultural differences, which the Chinese living in Denmark experience, thus overall may contribute positively to their perceptions of Denmark and thus lead to a more overall positive nation image of the country.

Environment

As mentioned in relation to the tourism channel of Anholt’s hexagon, the environment was repeatedly also commented on as one of the first things that came into the interviewees' mind when thinking about Denmark. However, what appeared from the coding was, that the environment was mentioned quite frequently and in various aspects and relations, wherefore the researchers considered this as an individual, data-driven code.

Related to the environment, a few interviewees mention factors such as the cold climate, the sea surroundings, the flat terrains, and the geographical position of Denmark. Besides this, the interviewees also comment on how good the environment is in terms of cleanliness, beauty, and the quality of the air, water, and the food. Jane states in that

connection: *“I think the environment is very clear, and the air is very fresh. It’s quite different from China, you know. We have a lot of air pollution. So I love the environment here”*. From Jane’s statement, it is clear that she is fond of and appreciates the Danish environment, especially due to the air quality. Daisy additionally comments on the water and the food with the following statement:

“... some of the food here and water here is very clean and safe. Because in China, we still have some problems in the food, so we think that it is a little bit unsafe food. But when I come here, I think I’ll be secure to choose whatever food I want, because.. it is high quality sometimes and it can be good for your health..”

Daisy believes, that the water and the food are of better quality than in China, which she believes may affect her health positively. Also, in relation to the environment, Rue comments on how Copenhagen repeatedly has acted as the meeting point for international climate change conferences, and that she considers this as a good initiative. Thus, she also demonstrates positivity towards the country’s political engagement and interest in the environment.

Based on Rue’s comment on the climate change meetings, Jane’s and Daisy’s statements about air-, water- and food quality, and the general comments on the environment, the interviewees appear to have an overall positive perception of Denmark in relation to the environmental factors. Thus, this positive perception may act beneficially for Denmark’s nation image on a more general level, as almost all of the interviewees are positive towards this aspect of the country.

Price

Another factor, which was frequently mentioned in the first part of the interview, was related to the price of products in Denmark. As this factor appeared frequently throughout the interviews, the researchers during the coding process identified ‘price’ as an emerging data-driven code.

Maggie, as the only Chinese living in China, who comments on the general price of Danish products, states, *“it’s very expensive and good quality. And also very simple and good design,”* as her first comment, when asked about what she associates Danish products with.

She does not directly state, that it is a negative characteristic, that the products are more expensive, and she also continues describing the products with positive associations.

Daisy agrees with Maggie, when she states, *“it is quite expensive and also, it represents some high quality, I think”* about Danish products. Subsequently, she elaborates: *“... because when it comes to some products in Denmark, I think everyone is “Oh it is from Denmark and it is good and you can spend more money to buy these products””*. As in the case of Maggie, Daisy also appears to be accepting towards the fact, that Danish products are more expensive, since the buyer in turn will get a high quality product.

Lily also links the high quality of Danish products with a higher price, and explains that many Chinese people also are willing to pay a higher price for these types of products. From her point of view, this is a norm and a common way of thinking, and this possibly may also apply to the same social class that she belongs to, namely the urban, Chinese middle class. However, she concludes that *“... in China, with a very little money, you can buy a lot of things...”* and she subsequently admits to be missing the variety of both product types and price ranges, i.e. being able to buy some cheaper products and having a larger range of product to choose from, which was possible in China.

Opposite from Maggie and Daisy, Jane solely mentions the fact, that some Danish products are expensive but does not comment on quality and how this aspect may make up for the high prices. She further comments, that upon arriving in Denmark, she found that the price of the living goods were much more expensive than in China.

The prices of the Danish products are, by the interviewees, in general considered high. But as their statements indicate various perceptions, both positive and negative, in relation to this aspect, it is difficult to determine, whether the high prices of Danish products in the end contribute to a positive or a negative nation image of Denmark. It is possible, that it contributes to a positive nation image of Denmark among a part of the Chinese interviewees, while it contributes to a negative nation image among other Chinese interviewees.

5.2 Perceptions of Scandinavian design products

This section comprises the second part of the analysis, and aims to investigate the urban, Chinese middle class people's perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

5.2.1 Concept-driven codes

Ethnocentrism

When a consumer favours products or brands from their home country, rather than foreign brands, it may indicate a certain degree of ethnocentrism. The researchers looked into this aspect, both in terms whether ethnocentrism appeared among the interviewees, but also whether a favouring of foreign products appeared.

In relation to the theoretical concept of ethnocentrism, the interviewees vary and do not demonstrate an unequivocal perception towards products, and whether these should derive from a foreign country or their own country, in this particular case China. Daisy demonstrates inclinations of ethnocentrism in relation to small necessities, *“But some small things. Small necessities, I think it’s better to buy in China, because the price is much cheaper”*. With this statement, Daisy argues that she prefers to buy small necessities in China, however, it is rather uncertain in this context, whether it is solely based on the price, or if she in fact prefers the small necessities due to the fact that they are from China. On the contrary, Daisy further argues, that she prefers to buy certain other products from Denmark, namely electronic products. The level of ethnocentrism is therefore rather inconclusive, as it appears to depend on the specific products, rather than on the country itself.

Another interviewee, to whom the concept of ethnocentrism is also significant, but solely in regards to certain products, is Hope. She argues the following in relation to porcelain, *“The traditional china, then of course I would choose the one made here [in China], but if it’s a Danish brand and the patterns are quite Western, I would choose the Danish made”*. In Hope’s case, it depends on the products, and whether the products “fit” with their COO. As in the case of Daisy, Hope demonstrates inclinations of the concept of ethnocentrism, but solely in regards to certain products. This aspect also counts for Lily and Maggie, in which Lily states the following: *“Yeah, we have time or have the condition, I prefer to buy the original country product”*. When Lily subsequently is asked, whether she still prefer to buy the Royal Copenhagen bowl manufactured in Denmark if it had a higher price, she would choose the bowl manufactured in China (see appendix 6). As in the case of Daisy, Lily and Maggie also appear to be affected by the price, for which reason the level of ethnocentrism increases, but not due to a preference of the home-country itself.

Additionally, Jane demonstrates a rather low level of ethnocentrism, as she prefers to buy the bowl manufactured in Denmark, despite the higher price. This is due to a lack of

trustworthiness in terms of quality of products manufactured in China, and this aspect could also be reflected in her opinion about other design products.

Another interviewee, who also demonstrates a low level of ethnocentrism, is Rue, as she does not consider the products manufactured in China as environmentally friendly, which appears to be a significant value for her. She states the following: *“Some of the products in China, I have to say, are not very environmentally friendly”*. Her point of view, in this statement, is also noticeable in her selection of the two bowls, in which she would choose to buy the bowl manufactured in Denmark, as she considers some of the products manufactured in China as less reliable. Both Jane and Rue therefore appear to demonstrate a low level of ethnocentrism, due to the lack of trust in products manufactured in China, which potentially could affect their general view of Scandinavian design products. Thus, the level of ethnocentrism among the interviewees appear rather inconclusive, as it appears to have an effect in relation to the price and certain products, but is not due to an overall preference of products from the home-country itself.

Brand Origin

Additionally, the theoretical concept of ‘brand origin’ will be investigated, as the researchers looked into the interviewees’ knowledge of Danish brands. In that aspect, certain issues with ‘brand origin’ seemed to appear through the interviews, as some interviewees misperceived the COO of a range of brands and products.

Firstly, one interviewee, namely Lily, claims that she owns a JBL-speaker and that this brand is Danish, however, the brand is in fact not Danish. A similar case emerges for Jane, who in her conviction believes, that the brand ‘La Mer’ derives from Denmark, but as in the case of Lily, she is of a wrong conviction. Apart from from the two above-mentioned, another interviewee, who also carries a misperception towards where a brand originally is from, is Hope. When asked to elaborate on whether she had seen or bought any products in China, that are of Danish origin, Hope argues:

“Hmm, I don’t know if I have any other things, but maybe some spoons or some products. Like something like IKEA. We, local people, usually go to IKEA for the products at home. Like towels, like bowls, like forks, knives or spoons. Or something like that”

With this statement, it appears rather apparent, that Hope occupies a misperception in terms of where the brand IKEA originates from. However, despite the abovementioned

interviewees occupy misperceptions in relation to where the brands originally derive from, it appears that these misperceptions could carry positive impacts on the interviewees. Thus, as the interviewees associate these products to Denmark, and since there do not exist negative associations towards these products, the misperceptions may contribute positively to the interviewees' perceptions of Scandinavian design products.

In addition to the abovementioned interviewees, whose misperceptions appear to contribute positively, one interviewee's misperception may carry a contrary impact. When the interviewees are asked to elaborate on the various Scandinavian design products presented in the picture collage, Rue argues the following, *"Yeah, this chair... Hmm, I think I have seen this chair. Is it designed by a Japanese designer?"* (see appendix 7, picture no. 4) and further responds after being disconfirmed about the chair's designer, which is in fact Danish, *"Yeah, I know this brand is from Danish, but I mean the design. I don't know. I just have seen it before, because I have very strong impression on it"*. In this context, the misperception that Rue occupies may lead to a negative impact, as she carries a strong impression of it, but this strong impression is not associated to Danish designers.

Therefore, the concept of 'brand origin' does not necessarily lead to a negative impact, but is capable of making positive impacts on the Chinese interviewees. This is the case with JBL, La Mer, and IKEA, while Rue's misperception of the chair designer may have a negative impact, as she occupies a strong and positive impression of the chair, but does not associate it with being made of a Danish designer.

Cognitive-, emotional- and normative factors

The cognitive-, emotional-, and normative factors all refer to how a consumer evaluates a product based on rationality, feelings, and norms (see section 3.4). These three factors, including which factors appear to be the most dominating ones, will be analysed throughout the following section.

Cognitive factors

In relation to the interviews, the Chinese interviewees utilize various factors when elaborating on different aspects of Scandinavian design products. Generally, a predominant factor dominating the arguments and statements from the interviewees is the cognitive factor. The cognitive factor is primarily prominent when the interviewees refer to certain brands and their appertaining products, and how they cognitively notice a clash between the product and its price, the quality of the product, and how it is not reflected in the product etc., for which

reason they utilize a rational mentality or argumentation. This cognitive factor is apparent in the following statement, in which Daisy argues: *“Because it’s just a small vase... I think this one (points at a larger product) should be more expensive than this one (points at the vase)”* (see appendix 7, picture no. 2). With this statement, it appears that Daisy utilizes her cognitive mentality to rationally review the presented products, and thereby also demonstrates the importance of the fact, that there must be a correlation between the actual product, its size, and its price, which from Daisy’s perspective is not the case in this context.

Another interviewee, who also puts an emphasis on the cognitive factor, is Maggie, who argues: *“The block table is flexible and is moveable”* (see appendix 7, picture no. 1). When she describes the block table, she utilizes the words “flexible” and “moveable”, which can be considered rational in terms of practicality, for which reason the cognitive factor once again plays a significant role when describing or preferring specific products. Therefore, the cognitive factors appear to be significant regardless of where the individual currently lives.

Emotional factors

Moreover, the interviewees also refer to some emotional factors, when they comment on the presented Scandinavian design products. Some of the interviewees refer to their own surroundings and the atmosphere, when they argue for their choice of products from the presented picture collage, or what they value, when they are to buy furniture- and interior products.

One interviewee, who argues by utilizing emotional factors, is Lily, who states, *“Yeah, it is more like atmosphere and because all the colours and even the wood material, the furniture they make me feel like I am close to nature, and make me comfortable... yeah, and peaceful”*. When Lily is arguing, she refers to “atmosphere” as an important factor to her, for which reason this could influence Lily’s potential purchase intention, if the product fits the atmosphere that she values. Another interviewee, who supports Lily’s statement, is Rue, who also argues in regards to the importance of atmosphere, *“I think firstly it should comply with the whole atmosphere of my home”*. Rue mentions this in regards to what she values, when she is to buy furniture- and interior products, where the first aspect she points out is the atmosphere. Once again, this supports the importance of the emotional factor in the case of Rue, however, it appears to be subjective in terms of what products and style that fit with an individual, for which reason the emotional factor is not capable of making general conclusions in terms of what affects the Chinese interviewees emotionally. However, as this

investigation is qualitative, the focus is on the individual interviewee's perceptions and opinions, by which this focus acts in opposition of making generalized conclusions.

Normative factors

In addition to the cognitive- and emotional factors, the normative factor also appears to have a great influence, when the Chinese interviewees evaluate the Scandinavian design products. When the interviewees argue for their choices, they frequently refer to the norms in China. However, it is important to note, that these norms are not necessarily the norms of the entire Chinese population, but instead norms according to the individual interviewee, and thus may only apply to the urban, Chinese middle class, as the interviewees are part of this social class. One of the interviewees, who argues on the basis of the normative factor, is Daisy:

““Oh, this is a Danish brand”, so if somebody is like “Oh, this is made in China”, and everybody say “Why you buy that... a Danish brand thing that’s made in China”, because everybody can get this in China. So, if it’s made in Denmark, at least people will say “Oh, this has some memorial meaning or some meaning behind it”. So I will choose this one that is made in Denmark”

With this statement, Daisy points to a norm in China as the reasons for why she would choose the Royal Copenhagen bowl manufactured in Denmark (see appendix 6). She possibly refers to the discourse among the urban, Chinese middle class people in China, in which it is considered significant whether the product, in this case the bowl, is manufactured in the country it originates from. This discourse appears to affect Daisy's preferences of products, and her product purchase intention therefore becomes rather unequivocal in this case. If the products that Daisy is to buy are manufactured in the country they originate from, her product purchase intention increases. On the contrary, if the products are not manufactured in the country they originate from, her product purchase intention decreases.

In addition to Daisy, the other interviewees also appear to utilize the normative factor, when they argue for their choices. Maggie argues in relation to her comparison between price and quality: *“In China, most of us think if something is very expensive, they can consider is as very good quality, very high standard. And everybody wants to get it. The price explains almost everything”*. The correlation between the price and the quality is a norm among urban, Chinese middle class people in China, cf. Maggie, and she utilizes this norm to argue, why she herself is of that conviction. This norm therefore has, as in the case of Daisy,

also an effect on Maggie in relation to her view on Scandinavian design products and their appertaining quality and price. Thus, her product purchase intention increases, if the product reflects a high quality, thereby meaning a high price. Maggie continues referring to the norms in China, when she argues for her preferences of products. She states as following:

“Because this plate looks like in a very high-level. You can only see this kind of plate in some good restaurant, foreign restaurant. Yeah, foreign restaurant in China, they will charge you a lot. It looks very expensive. If I can get this plate, I would like to cook the Italian noodles in this plate. Most of us will cook the Chinese food, they use very colourful plates or just white plates”.

With this statement, Maggie argues, that the plate (see appendix 7, picture no. 3) is mostly utilized, or can be mostly utilized, in certain contexts, including foreign restaurants or if the food is Italian and thereby not Chinese. There appears to be a consensus, that this type of plate can solely be utilized in certain contexts. The product purchase intention of Maggie may therefore decrease to some extent, which may also be applicable for other urban, Chinese middle class people, if they also consider the plate to carry utilization limitations.

Furthermore, one of the other interviewees utilizes the normative factor in a different manner. Rue states the following in relation to which of the presented Royal Copenhagen bowls she would choose, *“And also I think there is, to be honest, a psychological thinking, because people say “Oh, I bought this from Denmark”, which means it’s export goods, right? So I think it is something to show off”*. With this statement, Rue insinuates that export goods entail high status and that there exists a general consensus among her social class, that exports goods are considered higher in value, and people can utilize these export goods to boast. This general consensus affects Rue in this case and could therefore also affect other urban, Chinese middle class people in general, for which reason the normative factor once again plays an important role, hence their product purchase intentions could increase. Rue further states with the utilization of a normative factor that *“Especially for some young people, when they decorate their rooms, they will buy some IKEA products”*. Prior to this statement, Rue states that she is fond of the IKEA-style, and then subsequently utilizes the normative factor as an argument. With this, it appears rather clear that the normative factor has an influence on Rue, thus it could possibly also influence other members of her social class (the urban, Chinese middle class), for which reason her product purchase intention once again increases.

A similar statement is presented by Hope, who argues, “*Most of the young people here in China nowadays prefer the simple life and simple shape of the products, and this kind of lifestyle...*”. Prior to this statement, Hope also complements some products and subsequently utilizes the normative factor as a justification for her preferences and choices of simple products.

The remaining interviewees, including Lily and Jane, do not utilize the normative factor to a large extent as the others. It is therefore noteworthy in this context, that both Lily and Jane are currently living in DK, thus the context can be considered essential, as the Chinese who are currently living in China all possess a tendency to frequently argue for their choices of products and preferences on the basis of the norms, that exist among their social class, namely the urban, Chinese middle class people in China.

The abovementioned factors are all represented in the interviews, however, it appears that the most distinctive factors that affect the interviewees when they argue for their perceptions are the cognitive- and the normative factors. There also appears to be a presence of the emotional factor, but it is not utilized to as large an extent as the other factors. However, as formerly mentioned, the normative factor is mainly apparent among the Chinese who are currently living in China, which may indicate, that the Chinese interviewees currently living in Denmark, do not rely on these normative factors to the same extent, as the Chinese interviewees in China who are surrounded by them.

Product knowledge of Scandinavian design products

In relation to the product knowledge of Scandinavian design products, there appeared to be a common discourse among the Chinese interviewees, when they elaborate on their knowledge.

When the interviewees are to describe what they associate Scandinavian design products with, all of the interviewees mention the utilization of “simple colours” (such as white, black, grey, blue etc.). This both counts for the Chinese currently living in Denmark as well as the Chinese living in China. The simplicity of the products and the simple utilization of colours are therefore the most distinctive objective- and subjective knowledge (see section 3.4) the interviewees possess. In that aspect, in accordance with the formerly presented definition of Scandinavian design (see section 2.4), the interviewees generally appear to possess a high level of objective- and subjective knowledge, and the products that have come to their attention, both for the interviewees in China and in Denmark, therefore appear to

correspond with what the essence of Scandinavian design products should represent, cf. the definition of these.

One of the interviewees, however, tends to describe the Scandinavian design products ever so slightly different from the other interviewees. Hope, who is currently living in China, during the interview, shows her check-patterned slippers to the interviewers, which she states to associate Scandinavian design products with. Followed by the presented pattern, she, as the remaining interviewees, associates the products with simple colours. Her objective- and subjective knowledge therefore differentiates from the remaining interviewees, which signifies a different perception of the products. However, since Rue herself owns a product with the mentioned check pattern, her knowledge of the products appear to have a positive influence on her, as she is capable of looking beyond the common characteristics of Scandinavian design products and is able to associate the products with a larger variation in terms of physical appearance.

Moreover, when the interviewees are to present their knowledge about certain brands, there once again appears to be a common discourse among them. One of the brands that is mentioned several times among the interviewees is IKEA. This brand appears to play a significant role in relation to the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Scandinavian design products. In that aspect, the interviewees tend to utilize the same words or characteristics, when they present their associations of Scandinavian design products. The characteristics, in addition to the former mentioned characteristic of simplicity, are also presented as functional, comfortable etc., in which the general perceptions or associations to Scandinavian design products can be considered positive. These perceptions of the products are also reflected, when the interviewees are to describe the products presented in the picture collage (see appendix 7), thus the rather positive perception appears to be ingrained to some extent. Therefore, the perceptions of the Scandinavian design products do not appear to differentiate to a large extent among the Chinese interviewees.

In addition to the objective- and subjective knowledge, the researchers also investigated the experience-based knowledge, which treats, whether an individual has experienced or owns any Scandinavian design products.

This knowledge also appears to be rather equal among the Chinese interviewees, with the exception of Maggie, who does not appear to have any experienced based knowledge in regards to Scandinavian design products. The majority of the Chinese interviewees have experience with products from IKEA, which in this context appears rather significant, as the

experience based knowledge seems to influence the objective- and subjective knowledge. The products, which the Chinese interviewees have had experience with, are also presented when they are to elaborate on their objective- and subjective knowledge. In this regard, it is rather noticeable, that the products the Chinese interviewees own are of a low price, and the price therefore, as previously mentioned, once again appears to be of great significance to the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intentions. One of the interviewees, namely Daisy, owns a Royal Copenhagen plate, which at first tends to stick out from the cheap products from IKEA, however, when explaining why she owns the product, the price once again seems to play an important role, *"Uhm, I have a Royal Copenhagen plate. I bought it in a second hand market. I think in general the price is quite high, but I bought it with a very small, ehh, little price, it's only 50 kroner"*. As demonstrated in Daisy's statement, the price appears crucial, for which reason it may also be reflected in the Chinese interviewees' experience with Scandinavian design products.

5.2.2 Data-driven codes

Cultural differences

The data-driven code of cultural differences did not merely emerge in relation to nation image, but also in regards to Scandinavian design products. There generally appeared to exist a discourse among the interviewees, in which they often argued by elaborating on cultural differences between Denmark and China from the perspective of the urban, Chinese middle class.

One aspect, that is also formerly mentioned in the context of normative factors, is the product utilization. In that context, Maggie argues for the cultural differences between Western- and Chinese food, for which reason the plate (see appendix 7, picture no. 3) carries certain product usage limitations from the perspective of Maggie, as she does not believe, that the plate can be used to serve Chinese food. This signifies, that by comparing different food cultures with one another, Maggie's perception of the Scandinavian design product is considered negative, which ultimately could be reflected in her perception of other Scandinavian design products, if she carries the same perception.

Additionally, the interviewees appear to carry strong perceptions of the differences of quality in Denmark and in China, as well as the selection of products in Denmark contrary to China. All of the interviewees are of the conviction, that the products from Denmark are of better quality than the products from China. This is solely with the exception of Hope, who

does not directly argue, that the quality of the products from Denmark are better than the ones from China, however, she often refers to the products originating from Denmark as being of good quality. Jane argues the following in connection with her perception of quality:

“Because this brand is famous in Denmark, so... you know, we have a lot of factories in China to produce those fake products or other famous brands. I have the worry of this quality (pointing at the bowl manufactured in China)”. (See appendix 6)

There appears to be a consensus among the Chinese interviewees, in which China often manufactures fake products, and for that reason, the quality of the products is considered lower. This general perception could potentially affect the product purchase intention of other Scandinavian design products manufactured in Denmark positively, as the products made in Denmark often are referred to as being of a higher quality.

Furthermore, the cultural difference also emerges in regards to different price standards. One of the interviewees, namely Lily, explains that she would still buy the Royal Copenhagen bowl manufactured in Denmark, if the price was higher than the one manufactured in China. However, she further explains, that she possibly does not have the same perception as many other Chinese people, as she claims, *“Yeah, Chinese people prefer cheaper”*. This consensus also appears to exist among the remaining interviewees, and is often utilized as an argument for why or why not an interviewee would choose to buy a certain product. In this context, the constant comparison between the prices of the products in Denmark and China affects the product purchase intention negatively, as the argument may be utilized when reviewing and considering purchases of other Scandinavian design products.

On the contrary, the different price standards between Denmark and China are also capable of carrying positive implications, as some of the interviewees often consider the relation between price and quality a positive indicator. In that aspect, the general higher price of the products originating from Denmark can affect the product purchase intention positively, if the individual is of that conviction, that the quality of these types of products in fact are higher. One interviewee, who is of that conviction, is Maggie, who refers to the normative factor, that among the urban, Chinese middle class people in China, there appears to exist a consensus of a correlation between high price and high quality. In that aspect, the product purchase intention increases, if the individual prefers to buy high quality products and considers a positive correlation between quality and price. Thus, the different price

standards between Denmark and China could carry positive implications. Another interviewee, who argues differently, in which the context, namely Denmark, plays a significant role, is Daisy, who is currently living in Denmark. She states as following:

“Because I think the average price here is this one. For example, if I want to buy bed sheets, maybe in a supermarket it’s 200, yes that’s the average price. But in China I think it’s only 50. Even 40. So that’s why I think it’s much higher than... the average price. So I think “Oh I can use it for a long time””.

Prior to this statement, Daisy mentions a few products that she has purchased in Denmark, but she still considers the general price standard being rather high. However, as it is argued in the abovementioned statement, the context appears significant to Daisy, as she generally considers the prices in Denmark as being higher than the ones in China. However, due to the fact, that she is currently living in another context, namely Denmark, she implicitly appears to accept the different price standard. This could, however, signify, that her product purchase intention of pricey Danish products would be lower in China, as Daisy does not consider the price standard of the products in China being the same, for which reason it could lead to negative implications.

Additionally, the cultural difference also emerges in the context of labour prices, in which some of the interviewees consider, that the labour prices in China are much lower. Therefore they demonstrate an understanding for why foreign brands and companies would choose to have their products manufactured in a developing country like China, rather than in a developed country. Both Jane and Rue are of that conviction, and Rue states the following in that correlation:

“I think it depends if they want save some resources. Or save some costs. Because in the developing countries like China, it’s still... you know, the labour resources are cheaper than those in developed countries. But if they can also consider the quality of those products, I think that will be better”.

With this statement, the product purchase intention and the potential implications it could carry are equivocal. This could potentially lead to negative implications and a low product purchase intention, if other people from the urban, Chinese middle class are of that

conviction, that there is a correlation between quality and price. This would be applicable, if they believe, that if the products are manufactured in China, and thus are cheaper, the quality must be thereof (i.e. of low quality), which could lead to negative implications. On the contrary, if people from the urban, Chinese middle class rely on the perception, that carries an understanding of the reason for why companies or brands choose to manufacture their products in a developing country, in this case China, the product purchase intention may increase.

Environment

Apart from mentioning environmental factors related to Denmark in general, the data driven code of environment also appears in relation to Scandinavian design products.

One of the interviewees, namely Rue, mentions environmentally friendliness in relation to Scandinavian design products. She explains, that she owns a cup from IKEA, which is environmentally friendly, since it is made from recycled resources. When she is asked about whether she considers the environmental aspect when buying products, she answers:

“Yeah yeah, I consider that, because some of the products in China, I have to say, are not very environmentally friendly. So whenever I see those kind of declaring, I will feel ”Wow, that is really cool”, so they can make them very beautiful with good quality, and you can also protect the environment”.

Rue explains, that if a product is environmentally friendly *and* aesthetically beautiful, while also of good quality, she is more impressed by this product than a conventional product, since it gives her the opportunity to protect the environment through her purchase. In her statement, she indicates, that she is not fond of how the production in China takes place, as this production sometimes is not very environmentally friendly. Since Rue’s eco-friendly cup is from the Scandinavian homeware store, IKEA, she may think of IKEA as a general supplier of environmentally friendly interior products. If this is the case, she may also link the environmentally friendliness to other Scandinavian design products, which possibly could lead to an increase in her product purchase intention of these types of products, but possibly also for other urban, Chinese middle class people.

Price

In addition to the differences of price standards in relation to Danish and Chinese products, the price itself appeared to be a significant and decisive factor, when the interviewees were to describe the various Scandinavian design products.

One of the interviewees, for whom the price is a decisive factor, is Maggie, who argues as following, *“I was supposed to want to buy a candle, it was made in Finland, but it’s quite expensive. But I get a similar one in that Japanese shop”*. In this context, Maggie ultimately chose not to purchase a Scandinavian design product, as she considered the product too expensive. This could potentially affect her general product purchase intention negatively, as she may occupy the same perception towards other Scandinavian design products as well, especially if there is a cheaper alternative available.

Another interviewee, who shares the same perception as Maggie, is Jane. Her income is merely 9000 Danish kroner every month, which can not be considered a high salary in Denmark, for which reason she has to carefully consider, how she spends her money. This could potentially affect her product purchase intention negatively, if she does not have much money for spending on other things than fixed expenses, and thus she may occupy the same perception towards other Scandinavian design products as well.

Additionally, the price also appears to be significant, when the interviewees consider, whether the material of the product and the price of the products match. In that context, Lily argues, *“Yes, because it’s made from wood, I can see that, so I think that it is a value...”*. With this statement, she refers to the monkey, presented in the picture collage (see appendix 7, picture no. 8). Prior to this statement, she considers the price of the monkey too expensive, but she justifies the price due to the product’s material. As wood is a general characteristic of Scandinavian design, and she considers wood as being of high quality, this aspect could signify an increase of her overall product purchase intention of other Scandinavian design products as well.

In addition to the abovementioned interviewees, the price also appears to have a significant impact on the remaining interviewees, namely Rue, Hope, and Daisy. When the interviewees are asked to comment on the various products presented in the picture collage, they all comment on the high price. Rue solely comments on the price when she was asked to do it, but she still occupies the same perception as the remaining others, for which reason the interviewees' perceptions on the products are considered negative due to the higher price. This could ultimately affect their product purchase intentions negatively, as the interviewees

may in general review Scandinavian design products on the basis of price, among other factors.

Characteristics

During the coding process it was clear to the researchers, that a data-driven code appeared related to the characteristics of Scandinavian Design products i.e. how the Chinese described these products. Furthermore, as this code was present to a large extent throughout the interviews, the codes were further divided into three sub-codes, namely appearances, quality, and uniqueness.

Appearances

From the interviews, it appeared that there existed a general discourse related to how Scandinavian design products look according to the Chinese interviewees. This general discourse was also relatively consistent with the definition found in section 2.4 about Scandinavian design products.

During the interviews, the Chinese interviewees are asked about their associations of Scandinavian design products, and in that regard, one of the most frequent characteristics is in relation to the colours of the products. These are frequently referred to as ‘simple colours’ and out of the specific colours they mention, almost all interviewees mention the colour ‘white’, but colours like blue, pink, black, green, grey and ‘light colours’ and ‘colours close to nature’ are also mentioned by the interviewees.

Also, the majority comment on the fact, that the products frequently do not carry many colours, perhaps only one, however, Hope continuously contradicts herself about this aspect. At first, she claims that Scandinavian design products have “*many colours*” and “*beautiful patterns*” and shows the researchers her check-patterned slippers. However, later she states, “*maybe, I think, the simple colour. Yeah, just one colour of the product*”, which does not correspond well with her previous statement. Later on, she goes back to describing one specific Scandinavian design brand as offering products that are “*more colourful*”. Thus, Hope seems to be a little inconclusive in relation to the colours of Scandinavian design products. However, as Scandinavian design products also may have many colours and Hope indeed also associates this characteristic with the products, her more complex perception of Scandinavian design products may have a positive effect, as she is able to attribute less common characteristics in terms of colour design to the Scandinavian style. This could

additionally increase her product purchase intention of vivid-coloured Scandinavian design products.

Other characteristics, that are mentioned among the interviewees, are, that the products look very comfortable, are beautiful, have simple designs, have various or creative designs, may be made out of wood or porcelain, are small or do not take up much space, or that some specific products look “cool” or “cute”. However, as the interviewees are shown the picture collage and asked, whether they see anything that does not correspond to their idea of Scandinavian design products, half of the interviewees point at the red Model 7 chair (see appendix 7, picture no. 4). Jane states, that the chair is a little different to her, while Rue states, that it is out of her surprise, and that she had never seen a red chair in e.g. IKEA before. Daisy is also confused and explains:

“ Yeah, at the very beginning I was just seeing this one. I was like “Uhh, this is not a Scandinavian style, it’s red! Like, why is that?” I think this one, this one, the style of this is kinda Scandinavian style, but when it comes to red, I think it’s Chinese style, I think it’s, “Do you wanna celebrate the Chinese new year?””

Daisy is very surprised to see the red chair, as she considers this a characteristic of Chinese furniture style and thus not being consistent with her perception of the characteristics of Scandinavian design furniture. Thus she may, as in the cases of Jane and Rue, have a more static view of what Scandinavian entails in terms of the colours they may possess.

Quality

In relation to the quality of Scandinavian design products, the Chinese interviewees all consider Scandinavian design products as being of good quality and able to last for a long period of time without breaking. The majority points to this aspect due to the good designs, the materials used which offer solidness, and the comfort and functionality of these products. Furthermore, words such as useful, convenient, suitable, beneficial, flexible are also used, and Rue even states, that IKEA products “*never goes out of fashion*”. Four out of the six interviewees also link the good quality to the high price and compare it to the Chinese market, which they are familiar with, where products often are of low price and subsequently also of low quality. In relation to this, Daisy states:

“And for sometimes, in some products in China, it’s only use a small.. a few times yes, not so long. But in here, it’s just like.. I want to treasure the things I own here, because the thing is.. I buy it in a not so cheap price, it’s higher than what I bought in China. And second thing is, that I think it is.. just like high quality and I want to keep it longer, so that’s why I think I want to treasure the thing I own”.

From Daisy’s and the other interviewees’ explanations, it seems that the Chinese interviewees accept, that some Scandinavian design products may have a relatively high price compared to similar products that can be bought in China, although the products from Denmark are of good quality. Nevertheless, some of the Chinese interviewees do comment on how much they are fond of IKEA, due to the low price of the products from this store, and most of the interviewees also explain to the researchers, that they own at least one product from IKEA. However, among the Chinese interviewees, there exist both positive- and negative associations in terms of the quality of IKEA products, as some consider these products of being of very good quality, while others consider the products as being of very poor quality. This indicates, that the Chinese interviewees, in theory, may not mind the high price of some Scandinavian design products, but in practise actually only engage in purchasing relatively cheap Scandinavian design products (e.g. IKEA), which means that an attitude-behaviour gap may be present in terms of their purchases.

Uniqueness

As the interviewees described the characteristics of the Scandinavian design products, it also appeared, that a more tangible description related to the uniqueness of the products was present among three of the Chinese interviewees.

Jane and Maggie point to the exclusiveness of some products, which means, that if they can purchase or in some way gain access to a product in China or anywhere else in the world, it is not as special and/or unique to them. Jane, for example, explains, that Chinese people do not use candles, and that she is fond of candles, since they are a different type of product to her. Thus, she gave a candle as a gift to one of her Chinese friends. Lily, on the other hand, points to the atmosphere and the feeling of Scandinavian style furniture- and interior design products. She expresses:

“Yeah, it is more like atmosphere and because all the colours and even the wood material, the furniture, they make me feel like I am close to nature, and make me comfortable... yeah, and peaceful (...) The colour of the wood is different from the Danish colour. So the whole atmosphere is quite different”.

With this statement, Lily also experiences something special and unique related to Scandinavian design products, as they are able to create another feeling and a different atmosphere around her, which she values, as it makes her feel comfortable. Lily, Jane, and Maggie thus all demonstrate an interest in the uniqueness of products. This signifies, that for Scandinavian design products to be attractive, they must express or demonstrate a particular atmosphere, which the Chinese interviewees can not purchase or gain access to effortlessly.

In short conclusion, the characteristics (hereunder appearances, quality, and uniqueness) of the Scandinavian design products, which are part of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions, overall have positive associations of the products. This overall positive perception thus may have a positive effect in terms of their product purchase intentions of Scandinavian Design products. However, some of the Chinese interviewees possess a rather static view of the characteristics of the Scandinavian design products, which may create a barrier, if they do not make the link between their general positive associations of Scandinavian Design products and individual products from Danish companies, which attempt to sell products in China within the category of Scandinavian design.

Furthermore, although the Chinese interviewees appear to be rather accepting towards the higher prices of the Scandinavian design products, none of them appear to actually have purchased or own any other products than the cheaper IKEA products (with the exception of Daisy, who owns a Royal Copenhagen plate, which she purchased cheaply at a flea market). This signifies, that a static view and a possible attitude-behaviour gap could affect the final product purchase intention of the Chinese interviewees negatively.

Personal taste and preference

It was formerly analysed, that the price was a significant factor, when the interviewees are to review the products. In addition to that aspect, the interviewees' personal taste and preferences of products also appeared to emerge.

When the interviewees are to describe the various Scandinavian design products on the picture collage, they often mention characteristics that are consistent with the

characteristics of the Scandinavian style. The monkey, the block table, the shelf, as well as the sofa (see appendix 7, pictures no. 8, 1, 5, and 6) are often referred to with positive associations, as the interviewees' own personal taste is reflected in these products. The monkey is often commented on as the first product and is frequently complimented for its material, high quality, functionality, and for its "cute" appearance. The block table is referred to as functional and practical, for which reason the interviewees compliment it. They considered, that the shelf and the sofa illustrate simplicity, that once again appeal to the interviewees' personal taste or preferences.

The personal taste or preferences of the interviewees generally match the characteristics of Scandinavian design products, for which reason their product purchase intentions could increase, if the given products represent the personal taste and preferences of the interviewees. This could potentially also affect the interviewees' perceptions towards other Scandinavian design products, for which reason this could carry positive implications.

However, certain statements from the interviewees also illustrate, that some of the interviewees' personal taste or preferences affect their product purchase intentions negatively. One of the interviewees, whose preference of products does not appear to be consistent with a presented product, is Jane, who argues in relation to the presented red chair:

"Well... I don't know if I want a chair like this in my room. How can I keep a balance of the own colours of the... the colours of the own room. Maybe it's too bright and it's too red, yeah". (See appendix 7, picture no. 4)

Jane wants to maintain a balance in her room, and that requires more neutral colours, wherefore she is not fond of the red chair. In this particular case, Jane's personal style hinders her from choosing this product, and this could lead to a low product purchase intention in general, if the products are not consistent with her own personal taste or preference. However, the discourse in regards to the red chair appears rather equivocal, as another interviewee, Hazel, states that, *"Yes, of course I like the red colour"*. Contrary to the abovementioned, Hazel is fond of the colour of the chair, for which reason her product purchase intention increases and could potentially be reflected in other Scandinavian design products possessing the same characteristics.

In addition to Jane, who is not fond of the red colour, two other interviewees, namely Rue and Hope, also demonstrate inclinations of a discourse in relation to personal taste and preferences, which can be considered negative in regards to Scandinavian design products.

Rue argues, that she is not fond of the dresser (see appendix 7, picture no. 7), as she considers it too simple for her taste. When Hope argues for her own personal taste, she mentions that she prefers the “classic” look, including brown colours with a touch of gold. Rue’s and Hope’s personal tastes and preferences towards products are not consistent with the characteristics of some Scandinavian design products, for which reason it could have a general negative influence on their evaluations of other Scandinavian design products, and their product purchase intentions could, therefore, decrease.

However, as the Chinese interviewees’ personal taste or preferences of products differ, the overall product purchase intention in regards to personal taste and preferences can not be considered unequivocal, thus it can both lead to negative- as well as positive implications.

Brand production authenticity

Moreover, from the abovementioned, another aspect, that emerged in relation to Scandinavian design products, was in relation to a favouring of products manufactured in the country, where the brand originally is from, which is a phenomenon the researchers chose to refer to as brand production authenticity.

One of the interviewees, who illustrates this brand production authenticity, is Daisy, who states the following in relation to the two presented Royal Copenhagen bowls (see appendix 6), *“Because it’s the Danish brand. I think I just want to buy products that’s the real Denmark...”*. Another interviewee, who shares the same perception is Lily, who argues, *“Yeah, if we the have time or have the condition, I prefer to buy the original country product”*, which was also presented in the context of ethnocentrism. These two interviewees are of the same conviction, in which the COO effect is considered high in this context.

Another interviewee, namely Hope, formerly illustrated a subjective- and objective knowledge of Scandinavian design products, in which she showed her check patterned slippers to the interviewers during the interview through video-chat. In that aspect, she continues arguing, that since she associates the pattern with Scandinavian design products, the product should also be manufactured in a Scandinavian country, wherefore she also demonstrates a high level of ‘brand production authenticity’. Additionally, one of the other interviewees, who is not as explicit in her ‘brand production authenticity’, is Jane. She states:

“Sometimes I think whether those products were made in other places, because the labour price here is very high, maybe the brand is Denmark or some place... but those products were made in Indonesia or China or some... all those places with lower labour price. Maybe it will influence the quality of those products”.

Jane in this statement argues, that if the products are manufactured in countries with lower labour costs, it could potentially affect the quality of the products. One might therefore argue, that if the Scandinavian design products are manufactured in countries with higher labour costs, she will consider the quality higher, for which reason her level of COO preference in regards to Scandinavia may increase. However, this may not be due to an overall preference of products manufactured in their COO, but rather due to a preference of higher quality, which she believes that countries with higher labour costs may be able to provide. Her product purchase intention therefore increases, if the products are manufactured in countries with higher labour costs, that by chance could be the country, in which the product originates from.

Another interviewee, who also demonstrates a ‘brand production authenticity’ to some extent, is Rue. She is of that conviction, that if she does not know, or implicitly trust, the brand or the company, she instead favours products manufactured in the original country, as she doubts the quality of the products, if they are manufactured in China. She thereby demonstrates negative associations to China as a production country. However, if she does know the brand or the company, she does not consider the manufacturing country an obstacle for high quality. Thus, as the discourse illustrates an overall preference towards products manufactured in the original country, and in this case Scandinavian design products manufactured in Denmark, the interviewees’ product purchase intentions would potentially increase.

6. Discussion

In order to answer the last part of the problem formulation presented in section 1, the link between the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products will be discussed. This discussion will both entail, whether there exist a general positive or negative link between the two perceptions among the individual interviewees, as well as whether the same values or associations appear within the two perceptions.

Subsequently, the differences of perceptions of Denmark between the Chinese living in Denmark versus the Chinese living in China in terms of their perceptions of Denmark's nation image will be discussed in order to compare this present investigation's findings to the existing theoretical frameworks, which were used throughout the study. Additionally, as the researchers found it noteworthy, that various perceptions of quality existed among the interviewees, this aspect will also be discussed.

Moreover, the present findings of this investigation will furthermore be discussed in relation to the previously presented studies and their appertaining findings. In continuation of this, the researchers throughout the investigation have reached a new understanding of certain aspects related to the urban, Chinese middle class as consumers, for which reason these aspects will also be discussed.

Finally, the discussion will also aim to answer the research question and thus identify the influencing factors of the urban, Chinese middle class people's product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products. The researchers thus will shed light on this aspect in the abovementioned new understanding on the urban, Chinese middle class consumers, as well as through the last part of the discussion. This section discusses the practical implications targeted at Danish companies, that attempt entering the Chinese market.

6.1 The link between the interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products

As the problem formulation states, the researchers also aim to investigate, whether the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products can be linked to one another. In the aforementioned analysis, the various interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions on Scandinavian design products were analysed and now form the basis, in which the researchers

are capable of investigating the link between these two. In the attempt to identify a link between the two overall perceptions, each interviewee will be discussed in regards to whether their perceptions are considered generally positive or negative and to what extent, and also whether they attribute the same values to Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products.

The first interviewee, Lily, generally possesses a very positive perception in regards to her perception of Denmark's nation image. This is prominent, when she associates the country with being dreamy, magical, eco-friendly, as well as being close to nature. However, when she refers to the Danish people, she is of that conviction, that they keep a distance towards other people, which affects her perception of Denmark's nation image slightly negatively.

In regards to her perception of Scandinavian design products, she also generally possesses a very positive perception, and solely attributes the product with negative associations, as she considers the products too expensive. She attributes the products with good quality, functionality, a beautiful appearance, and positive atmosphere, and she thinks they generate a close-to-nature feeling.

The two abovementioned perceptions generally demonstrate that there are indications of a link, as Lily associates Scandinavian design products with the same attributes, as she associates Denmark's nation image with. She associates Denmark's nation image with being close to nature, which she also mentions in the context of Scandinavian design products, for which reason the link between the two becomes more apparent. The link increases, as both of the perceptions are considered equally positive, hence it can be argued, that having a positive perception of a nation image, in this case of Denmark, may affect her perception of Scandinavian design products. Thus, her product purchase intention is considered relatively high in this context.

Moreover, in regards to Denmark's nation image, the second interviewee, namely Daisy, also generally possesses a positive perception. This positive perception is, among others, apparent when she describes, what she associates Denmark with. However, her perception appears more equivocal in relation to her perception of Danish people, as she upon moving to Denmark first perceived them as cold and distant, but after a short period of time, she perceived them as warm, friendly, and relaxed.

In connection with her perception of Scandinavian design products, her general perception is once again considered positive. This is visible, when she describes her

associations to Scandinavian design products, in which she refers to the products of being practical, possessing a good quality and further states, that she is fond of the simplicity, the design with the simple flowers, and the sofa from the picture collage, as it appears comfortable to her. However, she also demonstrates negative associations towards the products, as she considers them too expensive.

With reference to the two abovementioned perceptions, there once again appears to be indications of a link between the two. Daisy's general perception of Denmark's nation image and her perception of Scandinavian design products can be considered equally positive, as she generally possesses a positive perception of Denmark's nation image, which also appears to be evident in her perception of Scandinavian design products. However, she also perceives both Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products with negative associations, for which reason she ultimately demonstrates a relatively high product purchase intention in the end. However, it can in this case be argued, that the link can not be considered unambiguous, as her perception of Denmark's nation image is not necessarily reflected in her perception of Scandinavian design products, as she does not attribute these same values, when she presents her perceptions.

In addition, the third interviewee, namely Jane, also generally possesses a positive perception of Denmark's nation image. She associates the country with a very clear environment, fresh air, and nice people, but in continuation of the description of the people, she further mentions, as similar argued from the above mentioned interviewees, that it is considered difficult to develop close relationships with Danish people.

With reference to her perception of Scandinavian design products, she possesses a slightly more negative perception. This is, among others, apparent in her perception of the quality of the products, in which she both questions the quality of IKEA products, as well as the place of manufacturing of the products, depending on where this manufacturing takes place. However, she also refers to some of the presented products with positive associations, which is the case with the sofa from the picture collage, which she refers to as being clean and clear. Therefore, in regards to Scandinavian design products, Jane positions herself with a rather positive perception of these.

As a contrast to the aforementioned two interviewees, there does not appear to exist a general unambiguous correlation between Jane's rather positive perception of Denmark's nation image and her slightly more negative perception of Scandinavian design products. Thus, it can in this case be argued, that having a general positive perception of a country, in

this case Denmark, does not necessarily lead to a positive perception of Scandinavian design products. However, there does appear to be indications of a link, as in the case of Lily, as Jane attributes the same values to Denmark, as the values she attributes to the sofa, which she appears to be fond of. She states, that she associates Denmark with clear environment, which appears to be reflected in her perception of the sofa. Both are referred to with positive associations, for which reason it can be argued, that a link between the interviewee's perception of Denmark's nation image and the perception of Scandinavian design products appears to exist in this context. However, as her perception of Scandinavian design products is considered slightly more negative, it can be argued that her product purchase intention is considered rather low.

The fourth interviewee, Maggie, also possesses a very positive perception towards Denmark's nation image. She associates Denmark with words such as *hygge*, peacefulness, and simple life, and generally describes Denmark positively, as in the case with the other interviewees. She further continues by stating, that Danish people are good looking, kind, and friendly, but are not as talkative as people from other countries, but this aspect is not described in a negative sense. Thus, her overall perception of Denmark's nation image is considered very positive.

In regards to Maggie's perception of Scandinavian design products, it appears that she generally perceives them as being of good quality and simple. However, despite being fond of the simplicity, certain products can also be considered too simple, from her point of view. Moreover, she also refers to the brand called 'Muji', which to her appears to be a copy of IKEA design, and in regards to that, Maggie states that she is fond of that brand, due to, among others, its simplicity. Thus, she generally possesses a positive perception of Scandinavian design products, but also possesses a positive perception towards replicas, that resemble the characteristics of Scandinavian design.

As the two abovementioned perceptions generally are considered positive, Maggie's overall perception becomes positive, for which reason her product purchase intention is considered high. Once again, one might argue, that there are indications of a link between the two abovementioned perceptions, as Maggie's perception of Denmark's nation image is referred to, among others, as simple, which also appears to be apparent in her perception of Scandinavian design products. Furthermore, due to the fact, that Maggie never has been in Denmark, but generally carries a strong positive perception towards Scandinavian design products, it can be argued, that having a strong positive perception towards Scandinavian

design products also might affect the perception of a nation image, in this case Denmark, for which reason the link between the two increases. Thus, in the end, her product purchase intention can be argued to be considered rather high.

Additionally, the fifth interviewee, namely Hope, also demonstrates a very positive perception towards Denmark's nation image, as she associates Denmark with, among others, high welfare, being vivid, and colourful. She does not refer to Denmark with any negative associations, which could be due to the fact, that she has not yet visited Denmark, hence she is solely left with knowledge and perceptions founded on other sources than her own.

With reference to her perception of Scandinavian design products, she mentions beautiful patterns, simple colours, and good quality, but her general associations to Scandinavian design products appear limited. However, despite being limited, the matters she does mention and gives evidence of are considered positive, thus her general perception of Scandinavian design products is positive, but limited.

In regards to the connection between the two abovementioned perceptions, it appears that the general link between Hope's perception of Denmark's nation image and her perception of Scandinavian design products is rather limited. This is due to the fact, that her perception of Denmark appears contradictory to her perception of Scandinavian design products, as she generally refers to Denmark with associations of being colourful and vivid, contrary her perception of Scandinavian design products, in which she describes the products with simplicity. Hence, in this regard, her perception of Scandinavian design products does not appear to affect her perception of Denmark's nation image. However, it can be argued, that due to the fact, that she almost solely refers to the Scandinavian design products with positive associations, and generally is limited in her associations to Scandinavian design products, it does appear, that her positive perception of Denmark's nation image influences her perception of Scandinavian design products to a certain extent. Hence, the link appears more complex than the abovementioned interviewees, but the product purchase intention is considered high, as her general perception of Scandinavian design products is positive.

The final interviewee, namely Rue, also possesses a very positive perception towards Denmark's nation image. As in the case of Hope, she solely refers to Denmark with positive associations, which appears apparent in the utilization of the words and values of good social welfare, clean and beautiful environment, and peaceful Danish people. She solely states, that Danish people do not like debates, however, she does not refer to that aspect with negative

associations, but rather as an ascertainment. Thus, her general perception towards Denmark's nation image is considered very positive.

Rue's perception of Scandinavian design products appears to be rather complex, as she generally is fond of the presented products, but further states, that they are too expensive or too plain. However, her general associations to Scandinavian design products are rather positive, as she mentions words such as simplicity and good quality with positive associations, as well as her reference to her cup, that is environmentally friendly, which is also a quality that she in general appears to be fond of. Hence, her overall perception of Scandinavian design products is considered relatively positive.

From the abovementioned two perceptions, it appears, that her general very positive perception of Denmark's nation image is not reflected in her less positive perception of Scandinavian design products, for which reason a general link between these can not be made in that context. However, a link appears to emerge in the context of the interviewee's values, as Rue refers to Denmark with association to a clean and beautiful environment and being environmentally friendly, which is also apparent in her association to her cup from IKEA. It can therefore be argued, that Rue's perception of Scandinavian design products can be reflected in her perception of Denmark's nation image, which is also supported by the fact, that she has never visited Denmark before. Her product purchase intention is therefore in the end considered relatively high, as Rue both associates the products negatively and positively.

Concluding remarks can be presented in regards to the abovementioned link between the interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products respectively. In terms of their general link between their perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products, the result appears equivocal. The general link between the two perceptions appears to be consistent in the cases of Lily, Daisy, and Maggie, but is not applicable in the cases of Jane, Hope, and Rue. One might therefore argue, that there appears to exist an increased opportunity of linking Denmark's nation image to their appertaining products, if an individual has experienced the country. This becomes apparent, as both Lily and Daisy are currently living in Denmark, whereas Hope and Rue are currently living in China, and have not yet visited Denmark. However, this is not unequivocal, as both Maggie and Jane deviate from that.

Moreover, it appears that four out of the six interviewees at some point mention the same values, they have towards Denmark's nation image and towards Scandinavian design products. These values all relate to the overall topic of environmental factors. It is in this

context noticeable, that both the interviewees living in Denmark and the ones living in China attribute the same values, for which reason it can be argued, that both the perception of Denmark's nation image can affect one's perception of Scandinavian design products and vice versa. Thus, the link between the two perceptions increases.

However, even though the abovementioned indicates that there may exist a link between the two perceptions, this indication appears limited, as the researchers are not capable of proving, whether the Chinese perceptions of Denmark's nation image and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products affect one another, or whether this link exists merely as a coincidence. In order to obtain a better understanding of whether there in fact exists a link between the two, this may require additional measurement tools, which possibly could be executed through a quantitative investigation. Notwithstanding, this present investigation has shown indications hereof, which still contributes to research within the area, while also laying the groundwork for further investigation.

6.2 Reflections of critical aspects of the utilization of Anholt's theoretical framework and other practical limitations

Throughout the analysis, a range of theoretical issues appeared related to how the theoretical framework of Anholt's Nation Branding was used to analyse the interviewees' perceptions of Denmark and Scandinavian design products. This section will thus discuss these issues and reflect on the thoughts, which the researchers made in relation to these.

When the researchers applied the 'people' channel from Anholt's hexagon, it appeared during the interviews, that upon speaking freely about Danish people, the Chinese interviewees did not merely describe the Danes' by personality, but also commented on their physical appearances. As the values they attributed to the Danes' physical appearances were considered rather positive, the researchers also considered the physical appearances of the local people of a nation a rather influencing factor, although this aspect is not explicitly included in the 'people' channel.

Also related to Anholt's hexagon, the nation brand ambassadors did, from the analysis of the interviews, appear to not only include sports- and cultural figures. On the contrary, in the case of one interviewee, namely Daisy, who explicitly stated, that she considered the people around her to contribute more to her overall perception of Denmark, compared to other well-known, public Danish figures, which she did not think could affect her at all. This

implies, that despite having knowledge of local, public figures, these may not (according to the individual itself) affect his/her perception of a given country.

The last issue that emerged throughout the analysis was related to the interviewees' knowledge of specific brands, products, and people. In various channels of Anholt's hexagon such as *brands*, *people*, and *nation-brand ambassadors*, the knowledge the individual had of these was considered to give an idea of their perceptions of these parts of the country. However, as the interviews advanced, it appeared to the researchers, that a linguistic barrier existed between the Chinese and the researchers. As many foreign brands, products, and public people in China are given Chinese names, which are commonly used instead of the original names or common English names, the Chinese were often only able to identify various brands, products, and people by their Chinese names. As the researchers do not possess an advanced level of the Chinese language, they were not able to identify the names that the interviewees communicated to them in Chinese. This signifies, that the interviewees may have possessed a far greater knowledge of these brands, products, and people than what the researchers were capable of understanding. Furthermore, future research may benefit from taking this aspect into consideration and use other measurement tools, in order to determine the extent of the individual consumer's knowledge, including how many brands, products, or people the interviewee actually knows of.

In addition, in some cases, the interviewees knew neither the Danish, English, nor the Chinese names of the brands, products, or people. Nevertheless, they could still recognize some of these, which the interviewers either spoke about or visually showed them during the interviews. This also signifies, like in the aforementioned case, that the interviewees may possess more knowledge of the topics, than they were able to explicitly communicate to the interviewers. The hexagon does not as such delimit the extent, to which foreigners have to know about the specific brand, products, or person in order to be affected either positively or negatively by these and thus be influenced in terms of one's perception of the country's nation image. Hence, it can be argued, that it may be difficult to determine the 'amount of knowledge' the individual has to possess in relation to the various channels in order to be affected by it.

6.3 Differences of perceptions of Denmark's nation image between the Chinese living in China and the Chinese living in Denmark

As mentioned in section 4.4, three of the interviewees were Chinese currently living in China, while three of the interviewees were Chinese currently living in Denmark. The decision of sampling from these two groups was made, in order to investigate whether there existed a difference in how complex an understanding of Denmark these two groups possessed, and whether they were affected by their surroundings and/or context in terms of their knowledge and perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products throughout a short period of time.

Throughout the analysis, it was clear that in relation to the *people* channel from Anholt's hexagon, the Chinese who had lived in Denmark for six to seven months had a slightly more nuanced image of these compared to the Chinese, who had never been to Denmark. However, in relation to the remaining concept-driven codes, there did not appear to be any significant difference between the two groups.

Furthermore, although the Chinese, who were currently living in Denmark, had also been living in the context of Denmark for six to seven months and thus had gained real life experience and knowledge of Denmark as a country, they did not appear to possess a more positive perception of Denmark as a whole. This implies, that the Chinese who have never been to Denmark may possess perceptions of Denmark that may be just as positive in their overall perceptions of Denmark and the nation's image. In this investigation, it thus did not appear, that possessing real life experience and more knowledge of Denmark would lead to a more positive perception of Denmark's nation image.

Thus, although many urban, Chinese middle class people possibly never have been to Denmark, this may not be considered a disadvantage, as their perceptions of Denmark's nation image still may remain positive. Cf. the COO effect (see section 3.2), a positive perception of a nation's image can lead to a positive attitude towards products from this country. This implies, that Denmark may be well qualified for selling Scandinavian design products to the urban, Chinese middle class people, if the COO of these products have positive associations from the perspective of these consumers, as was indeed the case in this investigation.

6.4 Perceptions of quality of Scandinavian design products

During the transcription of the analysis, the data-driven code *quality* emerged, as all the Chinese interviewees commented on the quality of Scandinavian design products. Nevertheless, although some aspects overlapped, there did not seem to be a large consensus among the interviewees related to the topic, as they all mentioned various factors as indicators of what high quality was and only a few of these overlapped. These comments were related to factors, such as whether a product had a long service life, what material it was made of, how it could be used, how fashionable it was, or how high the price was.

Regarding the last factor, namely the price, the majority of the Chinese interviewees linked high price to high quality, which one of the Chinese interviewees also indicated through a normative factor. On the other hand, however, another interviewee mentioned IKEA as having high quality products, although the brand offers lower priced goods. Based on all the existing and widely varying perceptions of what high quality entails, it thus appears to the researchers, that the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of quality is a rather complex phenomenon, to which there does not exist one unambiguous answer to. Thus, it may be hard for Danish companies entering the Chinese market to incorporate the quality aspect in a certain way, upon introducing Scandinavian design products to this consumer group of urban, Chinese middle class people.

6.5 Comparison and attributions of this investigation's findings in relation to previous findings of Nation Image and The COO Effect

This section will discuss the findings of this present investigation in relation to previously presented studies and their findings. However, as one of the previously presented studies had a particular relevance in relation to this investigation's findings, that particular study will be presented in the next section (practical implications).

As mentioned in the theory section (see section 3.1), a study by Jakobsen (2015) investigated, how the Danish government used, among others, H.C. Andersen as a part of Danish culture to brand Denmark in China. Jakobsen points to H.C. Andersen and the presence of his fairy tales in the Chinese middle schools as one of the reasons, why Denmark is well known in China. In this present investigation, the same finding was concluded, as most of the Chinese interviewees on their own initiative mentioned him when speaking generally of Denmark.

Furthermore, the interviewees indicated that they are taught his fairy tales in Chinese schools at a young age, for which reason the researchers assume, that other people from the urban, Chinese middle class may also know of him and his fairy tales through school. For this reason, it was argued, that H.C. Andersen works as a strong nation brand ambassador of Denmark to the urban, Chinese middle class.

Apart from associating Scandinavian design products with IKEA, the Chinese interviewees also shared their viewpoints of what ‘good quality products’ entail, of which many thought that Scandinavian design products possessed this specific characteristic. In correlation to Schooler’s study from 1965, this present investigation also found, that some consumers considered products from more developed countries being of higher quality than those from less developed countries. This signifies, that some the Chinese considered Scandinavian design products from Denmark as being of higher quality, since Denmark is a developed country, compared to if the products had been from a developing country, e.g. from China.

In terms of Piron’s (2000) study, which compared the COO effect based on publicly- and privately consumed necessity- and luxury products, the researchers considered it difficult to compare their present findings to Piron’s findings, as various categories within Scandinavian design products were investigated. While furniture- and interior products can both act as necessity- and luxury products, they can be argued to function as privately consumed products in most cases, as these products are used in an individual’s private home. However, one exception exists, which was also mentioned by one of the interviewees in the investigation. One Chinese interviewee mentioned, that she perhaps would pay a slightly increased amount of money for a Scandinavian design product (the Royal Copenhagen bowl) if it was a gift for a friend. In this case, the bowl would appear as a publicly consumed luxury good, as not only one person would be exposed to it, and as it according to its price could be considered a ‘luxury product’ for the urban, Chinese middle class. This signifies, that the Chinese interviewee would pay more for a product that was not only for herself, and if she also considers the Danish COO of the product as attributing positively to the product, this could lead to an increased willingness to pay more for Scandinavian design products of Danish origin, if they were to be utilized as a gift.

A general finding of this present study indicated, that the Chinese interviewees possessed general positive perceptions of Scandinavian design products. However, upon mentioning other products of Danish origin within different product categories, which the interviewees either knew of or had some kind of experience with, it appeared that a general

positive discourse existed of Danish products. This contradicts the findings of Zhang's (1996) and Su's (2010) studies, which found that country image affected the Chinese' purchase intentions differently depending on the product category. However, as all of the Danish products the Chinese interviewees identified were mentioned with positive associations, and since all of the interviewees had an overall positive perception of Denmark's nation image, it is difficult to determine, which factor is the influencing factor and which factor is the influenced factor. As mentioned in section 3.3 Dinnie (2008) also points to this issue and gives the example of Sony as a brand and Japan as a country, while stressing the uncertainty of which one affects the other one. The same phenomenon could potentially be used in the case of Denmark: do some of the Chinese interviewees like Danish products (and hereunder Scandinavian design products) because they like Denmark, or do they like Denmark because of the country's products, hereunder Scandinavian design products, which is of a style that has become widely available and commercially marketed in large parts of the world?

6.6 Understanding of the urban, Chinese middle class as consumers of Scandinavian design products from Denmark

As presented in the methodological section, the sampling comprised urban, Chinese middle class people. In relation to this, various aspects can be discussed in regards to which understanding the researchers have gained from their present investigation of Chinese people, who are part of the urban, Chinese middle class in relation to their perceptions and product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products.

In regards to the sampling representing the urban, Chinese middle class, it appears significant to discuss the wide gap that appears among the lower part of the urban, Chinese middle class and the higher urban, Chinese middle class, as the income level between these vary to a large extent (Yuan, 2018). The majority of the interviewees were students, thus it can be argued, that the sample merely represents the lower part of the urban, Chinese middle class. This aspect appears essential, as all of the interviewees mention the price of the Scandinavian design products as being a factor influencing their product purchase intentions negatively. However, it can be argued that people representing the urban, Chinese middle class, who have a higher income, may be willing to spend a larger amount of money on more expensive Scandinavian design products, as they may possess a larger financial freedom.

In correspondence with this, the increasing Chinese purchasing power may also affect the urban, Chinese middle class' willingness to purchase more and more expensive gifts, which ultimately could lead to positive implications for Danish companies. This is also supported by the fact, that China in general is perceived as a gift-giving nation, which also was supported by two of the interviewees. However, while one interviewee was limited due to a high price, another interviewee was willing to pay more for it, if the product was to be used as a gift. Therefore, if the urban, Chinese middle class' purchasing power continues to increase, their product purchase intentions could also increase in the end, and thereby act beneficially for Danish companies.

Moreover from the increasing urban, Chinese middle class' purchasing power, that potentially could affect Danish companies positively, the aforementioned different perceptions of quality (including price, service life etc.) that derived from the interviewees, may also count for other Chinese in the urban, Chinese middle class. In that aspect, the various perceptions of quality can not be generalized to all Chinese in the urban, Chinese middle class, but since they were apparent in the perceptions of the interviewees, it may also be applicable for others. If this is the case, Danish companies could take that aspect into consideration, when they attempt entering the Chinese market.

Additionally, it may also be discussed which group of Chinese (the group currently living in Denmark or the group currently living in China), including their perceptions of both Denmark and Scandinavian design products, would function as the largest influencer in terms of the Scandinavian design products and brands hereof. The Chinese, who are currently living in China and have never been to Denmark, most likely constitute the largest potential consumer group for Scandinavian design products of Danish origin, that Danish companies want to introduce to the Chinese market, due to the increasing purchasing power of the urban, Chinese middle class. Nevertheless, the other group of Chinese currently living in Denmark may still be able to influence the perceptions of the Chinese living in China, but to a much smaller extent. This influence can either happen by sharing knowledge and transferring opinions etc. while being in Denmark (e.g. by video-chatting) or upon returning back to China, depending on the individual person. However, the degree to which the Chinese, who have lived or are living in Denmark, affect the Chinese who are living in China may be rather low in the larger picture.

6.7 Practical implications for Danish companies entering the Chinese market

As formerly mentioned, one of the aims of this investigation is to generate some practical implications, that could be considered beneficial for Danish companies entering the Chinese market, with the aim of selling Scandinavian design products in China. Thus, certain aspects in regards to this will be discussed below.

6.7.1 The price aspect

From the interviews, there appears to be a general consensus among the interviewees, which implies, that the prices in China should be kept on a low level. Daisy and Jane both accept the higher prices in Denmark, as they know, that the prices in general are higher than the ones in China. Another interviewee, namely Rue, is also willing to pay a higher price, but solely if the aim is to purchase gifts for others and not herself. In this context, one can draw a parallel to Piron's study (2000), in which it was argued, among others, that the COO of luxury products was of greater significance, when the products were consumed publicly than privately, as mentioned above in section 3.2. This means, that by giving a gift, the product would be considered 'consumed publicly', and the COO thus would be of higher significance to Rue.

In regards to Maggie and Hope, it depends on the individual price of the product, but they are solely willing to pay a bit extra, if the products are of Danish origin. For that reason, it can be argued, that the perceptions of price in regards to certain products depends on the context the individual positions oneself in. Due to different price standards and norms in China, the interviewees are all of that conviction, that the prices of products should be kept on a lower level in China. This is also consistent with the interviewees' perceptions of normative factors, which was frequently used to justify certain viewpoints. Furthermore, cognitive factors in terms of rationality were also rather prominent, as the interviewees both attempted to justify the price based on the physical size of the products, while they also considered valuable functions of the product, e.g. if the product was practical.

6.7.2 Scandinavian design products of Danish origin as luxury goods

However, not all companies can benefit from the abovementioned price standards and norms. Other strategic approaches have proven to be just as sustainable in China, hereunder among large, international luxury brands. Rambourg (2014) argues, that while the Chinese middle class continues to grow, so does China's consumption of luxury products. From 2015 to 2025,

Rambourg claims that there will be twice as many Chinese luxury consumers, leading to a tripling in overall luxury product consumption (Rambourg, 2014, p. xxvi-xxvii).

Thus, if Danish companies instead would be able to promote the Scandinavian design products as ‘luxury products’, they would be able to sell the products at a higher price. In general, the Chinese interviewees perceive products originating from Denmark as being of higher quality, and some of them associate this higher quality with a higher price. Furthermore, in relation to the data-driven code *uniqueness*, the majority of the Chinese considered the Scandinavian design products rather special due to the materials used, the seldomness, the atmosphere, and the higher status of these products as export goods. In relation to status through luxury product consumption, Liang et al. (2017) argue, that Chinese luxury product consumers do not only emphasize the need to “show off”, but also attach importance to saving one’s face and gaining respect within one’s own social group through this luxury consumption. Liang et al. further argue, that it is crucial for foreign brands and companies, that wish to enter the Chinese market, to take the cultural aspect of saving face into consideration during strategy planning (Liang et al., 2017, p. 258-259).

Moreover, as was previously mentioned in the discussion, some of the Chinese interviewees were willing to spend more money on Scandinavian design products of Danish origin, if they were to buy the product as a gift for somebody else. This indicates that conspicuous consumption may play a significant role for the urban, Chinese middle class consumers, in relation to gift giving. This is consistent with Walley and Li’s study from 2015, in which they argue, that luxury gift giving is essential in China, and maintaining one’s social status also acts as a motivational factor for the gift giver in this case (Walley & Li, 2015, p. 255). If luxury gift giving and hereunder maintaining one’s social status through this act also is applicable to the urban, Chinese middle class consumers, this may act as yet another argument for why the Danish companies may benefit from selling their products as luxury products.

In continuation of the argument of attributing Scandinavian design products from Denmark a luxury status, it may be beneficial if Danish companies attempt to differentiate their products from other Scandinavian countries’ brands and products.

It was seen from the interviews, that the Chinese interviewees generally attributed positive values to Scandinavian design products. The Chinese interviewees would often refer to IKEA at some point when speaking of Scandinavian design products, and many would also explicitly refer to IKEA as the first thing upon initiating the conversation of the topic. This

finding was consistent with Johansen's (2017) statement, that it is IKEA, which the Chinese consumers associate with Scandinavian design. However, as IKEA is a lower priced brand, this could be a negatively influencing factor, if the urban, Chinese middle class consumers also consider, that Danish branded furniture- and interior products should be of low price. This characteristic does not comply with the overall idea of luxury products, for which reason Danish companies should attempt to elevate their products by demonstrating and attributing additional values to their furniture- and interior products, if they wish to sell these as luxury products on the Chinese market. A way to execute this could be by attributing their products some of the positive values, which the Chinese interviewees attribute to Denmark as a country. From the interviews, these values appear to be related to 'hygge', fairy tales, and the environment. Especially the environment appeared to be of importance in their perceptions of Denmark and also appeared as the overall topic within the links, that were found between Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image and Scandinavian design products. By utilizing some of these values and characteristics of Denmark, Danish companies might be able to differentiate their products from other Scandinavian countries' products and thus create an additional, new discourse, that Scandinavian design products of Danish origin also can be associated with luxury products.

As aforementioned, it appeared that the positive discourse about H.C. Andersen and his fairy tales played a significant role for the Chinese interviewees. The aspect of *tale* could also be taken into consideration and contribute positively to Danish companies, as they could incorporate a tale in regards to their products or/and brands. This aspect is also supported by Johansen (2017), who argues, that Chinese people often request and are rather interested in the tales and values behind companies, brands, and their products. Thus, if Danish companies are capable of developing a tale that encompasses their brands or products, the Chinese consumers could be more willing to acquaint themselves with the particular company, which ultimately could lead to a purchase. One aspect, which the Chinese interviewees frequently mentioned, both in regards to Denmark but also in regards to Scandinavian design products, was related to environmental factors. Thus, Danish companies could look into whether this aspect could be used in their storytelling of their products, since the Chinese interviewees already associate environmental factors with Denmark. However, it is worth mentioning, that this aspect may not apply to all Danish companies, but merely could be taken into consideration, when they attempt entering the Chinese market.

6.7.3 Considerations of manufacturing country

In relation to the interviewees' opinions in regards to manufacturing country, all of the interviewees possessed a preference towards the Royal Copenhagen bowl that was manufactured in Denmark, due to their assumed perceptions of this product being of a higher quality. This could potentially have a negative effect for Danish companies manufacturing their products in China, as the urban, Chinese middle class may question the quality of the products, as some of the interviewees often see a connection between quality and price. This could ultimately lower the product purchase intentions of the Chinese in general, as the interviewees generally favour products that possess high quality. However, on the contrary, they also possess a preference towards products with lower prices, founded on the general norm in China cf. the interviewees. These two contradictory aspects related to the interviewees' perceptions of Scandinavian design products generate a paradox, which could problematize an unequivocal strategy or solution for Danish companies entering the Chinese market.

In continuation of this, Jane formerly argued, that despite there is a consensus in China, which entails, that products with higher prices should be of higher quality, she continued arguing, that when certain products are considered trendy in China, the price of that particular product would increase, but the quality may not match the price of the product. It can therefore be argued, that due to the fact, that the perceptions of the interviewees are considered rather equivocal, the overall issue of targeting the urban, Chinese middle class can be considered rather complex, as the interviewees' preferences of products are contradictory in some aspects.

However, if Danish companies, as mentioned above, could introduce Scandinavian design products as luxury products, and the individual urban, Chinese middle class consumer has faith in, that these products actually *are* of high quality in contrast to local, conventional Chinese products, this could possibly reduce the practical difficulties of this paradox. This, however, would require, that the Scandinavian design products were actually also manufactured in Denmark, in order for this issue to be diminished.

In continuation of the complexity of the selection of manufacturing country, Jane demonstrated inclinations of being uncertain, whether some Danish products were manufactured in other countries with a lower labour price, which she argued could potentially influence the quality of the product. As the general consensus among the interviewees entails, that Scandinavian design products made in a developed country are of a higher quality, there is a risk, that the Chinese may be 'deceived' in regards to the manufacturing of the

Scandinavian design products, if the products are not actually made in Denmark. It can be argued, that an individual is not necessarily capable of knowing, where the manufacturing of a given product has taken place. Papadopoulos and Heslop point to this aspect, which was also mentioned in section 2.1, that in today's contemporary global production systems, it can be difficult to determine which is the country of manufacturing, as parts of the products may be produced and/or collected in various countries (Dinnie, 2004, p. 3). This could lead to negative implications, if the Chinese consumers, like Jane, question the manufacturing country and thereby also the quality of the products, if they are uncertain of, where the manufacturing took place. Questioning the quality of the Scandinavian design products could be an issue for Danish companies, if their products were aimed to be perceived as luxury products, as low quality contradicts the essence of 'luxury'. Thus, in order to minimize this risk of Chinese consumers questioning the quality of the products, Danish companies may, if possible, consider manufacturing their products in Denmark and subsequently explicitly indicate, that Denmark is the manufacturing country of these products.

In connection to manufacturing country, one can draw a parallel to the former mentioned study by Vann (2005), in which it was noticed, that Vietnamese citizens considered the quality of foreign products manufactured in Vietnam of lower quality, but also considered them local (i.e. as being Vietnamese), despite being products of foreign brands. In that case, the manufacturing country played a large role for the Vietnamese, when they were to evaluate products, as the Vietnamese would consider the quality being higher, if the products of foreign brands were manufactured in their country of origin. This aspect could potentially also be the case for the interviewees in this present investigation, as they also were of the general conviction, that the quality of products would be lower, if the products were manufactured in China, which was also emphasized earlier. This aspect should be taken into consideration by Danish companies, as the interviewees' perceptions of this may be applicable for other urban, Chinese middle class consumers as well. Thus, if Danish companies choose to manufacture their products in China and this information appears explicitly on the products, or if the consumers in some other way become aware of this, it could potentially carry negative implications, which ultimately could affect their product purchase intentions negatively. This once again acts as another argument for why Danish companies should take their selection of manufacturing country carefully into consideration.

Additionally, it was formerly stated, that the interviewees preferred the Royal Copenhagen bowl manufactured in Denmark, if the price was considered reasonable for the individual, in which they did not agree on a common perception in regards to the price of the bowl. However, that aspect also appears contradictory, as some of the interviewees are fond of the Scandinavian design style, but think that the products do not necessarily have to originate from Scandinavia, but merely have to possess the look and some of the characteristics of Scandinavian design. This once again adds to the general argument, in which the overall perceptions and opinions of Scandinavian design products are considered rather complex, which once again leads to an equivocal result, which can generate an obstacle, if Danish companies do not take this into consideration.

Related to the COO and manufacturing country, the Chinese interviewees had positive perceptions of Danish products in general. The analysis of the ‘brand origin’ concept, however, indicated, that there is a risk of Chinese consumers attributing positive associations to Danish products, while not knowing that these are actually of Danish origin, as in the case of the red Model 7 chair. Thus, this acts as another argument for why it may be beneficial for Danish companies to explicitly indicate the COO on their products, in order to actually receive the credit for being Danish, since the Chinese in general have positive associations to Danish products. Furthermore, if they can differentiate their products from other Scandinavian design products from other Scandinavian countries, e.g. by using storytelling, this furthermore may strengthen the discourse of these products and thus may generate an increase of the urban, Chinese middle class people’s overall product purchase intention.

6.7.4 The impacts of ethnocentrism

In continuation of the abovementioned, it appears that the theoretical concept of ethnocentrism played a significant role in the evaluation of a product’s price, which also is connected to the former mentioned argument of price standards. It appears, that when the interviewees show inclinations of ‘ethnocentrism’, it is often due to the lower price, but is not necessarily due to an overall preference of products from the home country. This aspect is, among others, noticeable when Daisy states, that she prefers to buy small necessities from China, due to the lower price, which builds on the abovementioned argument. This preference of lower price, however, would not be influence Danish companies introducing Scandinavian design products negatively, if they choose to introduce these products as luxury products, by which they would perceive these as part of a completely different category of products. In this

case, the “*small necessity products*” which Daisy mentioned, would be perceived as part of the category ‘conventional products’, while the Scandinavian design products from Denmark would be part of the ‘luxury products’ category, due to their price, quality, and uniqueness. In Piron’s study from 2000, it was also found that the COO of privately consumed necessity products played a less significant role compared to privately consumed luxury products. This finding supports the argument, that Scandinavian design products could not only be suitable for boasting purposes, but are also suitable to be sold as privately consumed luxury goods, which additionally appear valuable due to the preference of Danish COO products.

6.8 Sub-conclusion

Summing up the discussion topics, quality appeared to be a significantly important factor in regards to Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark. The researchers further discussed, that based on the importance of gift giving in the Chinese culture, these products may have the potential to be used for this specific aim. Furthermore, if Danish companies additionally can sell Scandinavian design products as luxury goods, they may benefit from the Chinese gift giving ritual. This argument was backed up by the Chinese cultural norms of “not losing face” and maintaining one’s status, which Danish companies should take into consideration when developing a market entry strategy.

In addition, it was noted that Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark both could be sold as publicly- and privately consumed luxury goods, however, possibly with a larger share of publicly consumed luxury goods. The common consensus of the Chinese interviewees demonstrated a favouring of Scandinavian design products of Danish origin as manufactured in Denmark, as it ensures high quality from their perspective. Since labour costs are higher in Denmark compared to some developing countries, the outcome hereof leads to higher product prices. These higher prices together with the Chinese’ perceptions of higher quality again back up the argument of selling Scandinavian design products from Denmark as luxury goods.

Notwithstanding this argument, there also appeared to be a discourse among the Chinese interviewees, that if the product merely possessed a Scandinavian look and furthermore was cheaper, this could lead to a higher product purchase intention of products with similar characteristics of Scandinavian design products. This favouring of products similar to Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark could have a negative impact for Danish companies, if they attempt to sell their products as pricey luxury products.

The researchers made considerations in regards to that the data, which this investigation builds on, possibly constitutes the part of the urban, Chinese middle class consumers, which comprise the lower part of this social economic class. As there is a large gap between the lower and the higher part of the Chinese middle class group, this signifies that this investigation's findings merely represent the perceptions of the part of the urban, Chinese middle class, that has less economic freedom and thus is more restricted in their consumption. However, as the Chinese middle class and subsequently their purchasing power continue to grow, more and more individuals are expected to purchase luxury goods, which ultimately could comprise a positive impact for Danish companies selling Scandinavian design products as luxury goods in China.

7. Conclusion

The following section aims to conclude the findings of the research and thereby answer both the problem formulation and the appertaining research question.

Throughout the analysis and the discussion, the researchers have answered the overall problem formulation: *“What are the urban, Chinese middle class consumers’ perceptions of Denmark’s nation image and Scandinavian design products, and how can these two be linked?”*. The first part of the problem formulation related to the perceptions was answered throughout the analysis section, while the last part related to the link was answered in the discussion section.

As for the Chinese interviewees’ perceptions of Denmark’s nation image, they generally possessed an overall positive discourse of Denmark, which indicates that they may have a positive perception towards Denmark’s nation image. The most predominant factors affecting this positive perception were related to the fairy tales by H.C. Andersen, as well as the environmental factors related to Denmark in terms of climate, weather etc.. The few factors, that could contribute to a more negative view of Denmark’s nation image, were related to cultural differences and Danish people, but the positive perceptions seemed to play a larger role in total, wherefore the Chinese interviewees’ perceptions of Denmark’s nation image was considered overall positive, despite being rather static at times. This indicates, that it may not be necessary to obtain a more complex, in-depth understanding of a country in order to possess a positive perception of it.

When looking at the Chinese interviewees’ perceptions of Scandinavian design products, the perceptions of these generally seemed to be positive. Furthermore, the interviewees appeared to have a good basic knowledge of what Scandinavian design entailed in terms of what characterises Scandinavian design. Trustworthiness in Danish-manufactured products in terms of quality and environmentally friendliness seemed to play a positive role in this aspect. Also, positive associations to other brands, that the interviewees though were of Danish origin, were also argued to positively influence Scandinavian design products. Cognitive- and normative factors, as well as the uniqueness of the products also seemed to affect how the Chinese interviewees perceived a Scandinavian design product. The only negative associations related to these products were in relation to utilization methods and price

standards, however, these two factors appeared to play a less significant role in the larger picture and the final perceptions of these products.

From the perceptions of Denmark's nation image and the perceptions of Scandinavian design products, there appeared to be indications of an existing link between these two. This signifies, that when one of the Chinese interviewees' perceptions of Denmark's nation image appeared positive, this individual would also appear to possess a positive perception of Scandinavian design products. Among four out of the six interviewees, specific values related to environmental factors were both present in regards to their perceptions of Denmark and their perceptions of Scandinavian design products, for which reason this aspect could be emphasized more in future research. However, whether the appearance of the environmental factors maintains a coincidence or not is difficult to determine, for which reason it would require more research, possibly with the utilization of other measurement tools, in order to better determine, whether a link truly exists between the perceptions, and how this link manifests itself. The researchers of this investigation, nevertheless, have provided groundwork for further research.

In order to be able to answer the research question of the present investigation, namely *"Which factors influence the urban, Chinese middle class consumers' product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products?"*, the researchers addressed this question throughout the discussion.

In terms of the factors influencing the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intentions of Scandinavian design products, their perceptions of quality, price, and the uniqueness of the products appeared to be the most significantly influencing factors in regards to Scandinavian design products originating from Denmark. Due to this, the researchers considered, that these products were suitable for being marketed and sold as luxury products in China, which furthermore could be used in the Chinese cultural tradition of gift giving, as these luxury products would help the Chinese maintaining status and diminishing their risk of losing face. However, the Scandinavian design products were also considered suitable for being sold as privately consumed products, since these products do not necessarily have to be purchased for gift-giving purposes, but also can be purchased for one self.

There also appeared to be a common consensus among the Chinese interviewees, that Scandinavian design products by Danish brands should also be manufactured in Denmark, as

this would lead to higher product quality and higher trustworthiness. This incentive would result in higher labour prices (compared to other countries with cheaper manufacturing prices) and accordingly higher product prices, which again contributes to the argument for why the products should be sold as luxury products.

In general, despite also being an influencing factor, the high price of Scandinavian design products also appeared to act as an obstacle, in terms of the relation between price and physical size, which the interviewees did not see a rational correlation between. However, the researchers argued, that the high price of these products could be justified, if Danish companies attempted to sell these products to the Chinese market as luxury products instead of as conventional products.

Another factor influencing the Chinese interviewees' product purchase intentions of luxury Scandinavian design products negatively was linked to products, which possessed a Scandinavian design look and were cheaper. This would affect Danish companies selling these products as luxury products negatively, if the urban, Chinese middle class would rather buy the cheaper versions of the products instead.

However, this investigation has merely shed light on the lower part of the social economic class, namely the urban, Chinese middle class, which possibly has less economic freedom than other members of this social class. Nevertheless, as this social class continues to grow and their purchasing power continues to increase, the demand for luxury products may increase as well, which could benefit Danish companies, if they wish to sell Scandinavian design products as luxury goods in China.

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