

DRESS
TO IMPRESS

© jobiety.com

Students' fashion consumption in Maastricht

University College Maastricht
UGR3002 Undergraduate Research II
Bauer, JF (i6091929)
Bussu, EA (i6086223)

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Rachel Pownall, Anouk Duivenvoorden

Executive Summary

In today's society, materialistic products like clothing and accessories are used to express our personality and signal the belonging to a certain social group. Especially individuals showing tendencies of trendsetter behaviour appear to value appearance highly. It has also been shown that people demonstrating trendsetter behaviour spend more money on clothing and other materialistic products. With the municipality's intention to stimulate the development and growth of the local fashion industry in mind, the study's first aim was to determine whether students at Maastricht University show tendencies towards a trendsetter shopping behaviour or not. The second aim is to determine to what extent students use and how they perceive the shopping opportunities presented by the city. Given that students make up 13 per cent of the Maastricht's population, it is of great use for the municipality to know whether shops should alter their strategic direction to cater to the student population. Thirdly it is our aim to find a possible interaction in regards to shopping preferences between trendsetters and trend followers. Given these goals the following research questions were developed:

Do Maastricht students exhibit a behavioural trend towards being either trendsetters or followers? What are students' shopping preferences and to what extent does the current shopping environment in Maastricht meet these? How does being a trendsetter or follower affect shopping behaviour and preferences of students?

Our research relies on a quantitative approach with an online survey which was distributed to students of Maastricht via social media (Facebook) and e-mail. In total, 209 complete observations covering all type of degrees and eight faculties and study programs were collected. We found that Maastricht University students show indeed a significant tendency towards being trendsetters. They are satisfied with the shopping opportunities Maastricht offers, yet the majority prefer to spend their money elsewhere. We did not find any differences between demographic groups, i.e. controlling for gender, faculty and nationality. Trendsetters and followers do not differ in their shopping behaviour but show different preferences regarding which characteristics they value in fashion items. These results lead to the recommendation for the municipality to not focus specifically on attracting more students as customers since they seem to be satisfied with the shopping environment. The reasons why

students do not spend their money in Maastricht must lie elsewhere and are unlikely to be controllable by policy.

1. Introduction

Maastricht is undoubtedly a city shaped by its student population. With one half of the faculties located in the inner city, students spend the most part of their time in or very close to the city centre. Apart from being a student city, Maastricht is known as a shopping destination to many. This begs the question how the students, who make up more than 13% of the town's total population, perceive and use the shopping environment (Maastricht University, n.d.; Gemeente Maastricht, 2017). It concerns the match between students' preferences and what Maastricht offers. To assess and make suggestions for this match, we have set out this project that researches what these preferences are and to what extent Maastricht currently succeeds in meeting them. Furthermore, we wish to determine what drives students' shopping behaviour in terms of whether they act more as trendsetters or followers when it comes to buying fashion items. The line of reasoning here follows Akerlof's 1997 paper on status-seeking and conformist individuals. In this context, we define fashion items to include clothing, shoes, bags, jewellery and accessories such as belts, scarves and sunglasses but to exclude beauty products, electronic gadgets (for instance mobile phones) and watches. A trendsetter is defined as an individual whose behaviour serves the aim of standing out and being different than the rest, having a designated standing in a group and being looked up to. As this behaviour is inherently dependent on how the individual is perceived by others, being a trendsetter is connected to being status-seeking. In other words, a trendsetter seeks status through her choice of clothing and to a certain extent dresses to impress. On the other hand, a follower complies more with what Akerlof (1997) calls a conformist individual. This means that a follower gains utility from being similar to others and not deviating too far in style and behaviour.

The research has three parts - first, we wish to identify any behavioural trend with respect to students being followers or trendsetters. Second, we look at their preferences and opinions about shopping in Maastricht. The final part treats possible interaction of the first two topics, i.e. whether exhibiting a certain behavioural trend influences shopping behaviour and preferences. This report will first present the relevance of our research and its aims and objectives before an overview of the theoretical literature we base our approach on will be

given. The next sections present the research questions and hypotheses as well as the methodology. The data analysis is followed by a discussion of the limitations and we close with policy recommendations that we derive from our results.

2. Relevance

In the following section the practical, social and academic relevance of this study will be presented. Students in Maastricht make up 13 per cent of the population in Maastricht (Maastricht University, n.d.; Gemeente Maastricht, 2017). Furthermore, many faculties are located close to the city centre and thus in the proximity of shops. As set out in the Made2Measure research project, knowing how students perceive and use this shopping environment is of practical relevance to the municipality for future policy decisions regarding the development of the city centre. Identifying how much of their disposable income students spend on fashion items and whether most of that money is spent in shops in Maastricht is also of practical relevance to the municipality. This will allow them to determine whether it is profitable to orient shops more toward student's preferences. Furthermore, this information is also relevant to shop owners in Maastricht. By knowing what type of products students like and are most willing to spend money on, shop owners could alter their strategic direction to cater to the student population.

The results of asking students about whether Maastricht meets their shopping preferences and whether there are certain types of shops they would like to see more in the city, can be used to make shopping more attractive to them. The social relevance of this research thus lies in giving students the opportunity to voice their opinion about the shops in Maastricht. This could lead to an actual improvement of the shopping possibilities that not only make students happier but could also increase student's willingness to spend money in Maastricht.

While researching for this research we found quite a few previous studies focusing on status-seeking behaviour, trendsetter behaviour and conformist behaviour among adults. However, we noticed a lack of literature regarding trendsetter and trend follower behaviour among students. With this research, we hope to fill a gap in the literature by analysing trendsetter and trend-follower behaviour among students.

3. Aims & objectives

The goal of this study is threefold. Firstly, the objective is to determine whether students in Maastricht show tendencies of trendsetter or trend-follower shopping behaviour. The interest in analysing trendsetter behaviour stems from its close relation to status-seeking behaviour. From previous literature, we learned that when aspiring status aspiring individuals value, among others, standing out and having a designated standing in the group, which corresponds to the academic definition of trendsetters. During our research process, we also found that fashion is one of the means used by individuals to signal their status seeking intentions. Given this background it is our aim to determine whether students at Maastricht University are trendsetters and use fashion as a means of signalling status and career ambitions. Firstly, we look at the behavioural trend of the whole student body. Secondly, we compare between degree programs, genders and nationalities to see whether there are behavioural differences depending on what major one pursues.

The second aim of this study is to determine whether students are content with the shopping opportunities offered in Maastricht and how much they make use of them. Especially with the municipality's aim to support and stimulate the creative industries in Maastricht, it is of great importance knowing how students perceive and use their shopping environment given that the student population makes up 13 per cent of Maastricht's population (Maastricht University, n.d.; Gemeente Maastricht, 2017).

Lastly, our aim is to look for a possible interaction between trendsetter and trend-followers in regards to their shopping behaviour and shopping preferences.

4. Literature Review

This research aims at identifying the shopping preferences of the student population in Maastricht and whether students act more as trendsetters or trend-followers when shopping for fashion items. Previous researchers have developed models to identify status seeking behaviour as well as identifying trend-setting or conformist behaviour. Our approach bears the question why we focussed on students. As Arnett proposes in his 2000 article on a theory of development, the age group 18 - 25 can be described as emerging adulthood. Individuals belonging to this group are an important consumer segment and even seen as a challenge in the US context (Workman & Studak, 2005). Assuming that most students finish school

between the ages of 17 and 19 and study for three to seven years, depending on how many degrees they choose to obtain (i.e. bachelor, master and PhD), most students fall in this age segment. In Maastricht, students of UM form 13% of the population (Maastricht University, n.d.; Gemeente Maastricht, 2017), making them an important consumer segment to consider for retailers. The following section outlines previous research that forms the theoretical basis for this project.

Akerlof (1997) develops a model of social distance that explains why social decisions are based on individual considerations as well as the social consequences attached to those decisions. According to the author, in the rational choice analysis of social decisions the externalities involved in those decisions have to be taken into account (Akerlof, 1997). This is because social decisions have social consequences whereas economic ones do not. More precisely a network of family and friends will be affected by a member's choice of education, practices towards racial discrimination or drug abuse. They will not, however, be affected by the member's decision to consume apples over oranges. Social decisions affect how members of a social network choose their friends and how they interact with their relatives. Consequently, the primary determinants of an individual's action or decision may depend on his/her choice of friends and interaction with his/her family (Akerlof, 1997).

Akerlof distinguishes between two different types of externalities that result from social decisions. The first is status-seeking behaviour, when people try to distance themselves from their friends and relatives and wish to stand out (Akerlof, 1997). The second is conformist behaviour, when people try to move closer to their friends and relatives (Akerlof, 1997). Akerlof's line of reasoning takes the following form. A conformist person in absence of friends and family would choose a point close to the social optimum that would indicate a status seeking behaviour. In the case of education, for example, a boy of modest background offered a scholarship for college would take the opportunity without hesitating. In reality, however held back by his/her peers a person would choose a point closer to his/her origins. In the above-mentioned case of a scholarship the boy would now consider the costs and the disutility of deviating from others behaviour in one's social class. In this case loyalty towards one's social network trumps the progress towards the social optimum that would otherwise occur (Akerlof, 1997).

Akerlof emphasizes that his model does not prove that people necessarily want to conform to the social norms of their friends and relatives (Akerlof, 1997). It provides, however, a reminder that the actions sought by most people will be those that meet the

approval of friends and relatives. Akerlof so provides a broader and more accurate framework for the rational analysis of social decisions in which the influence of social interaction on individual decisions is taken into account (Akerlof, 1997).

Hirschmann and Adcock (1978) develop different categories to characterise innovators and adopters with respect to fashion consumers. Their theoretical base is diffusion theory, which Everett Rogers made significant contributions to with his book that was initially published in 1962 (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). The theory treats how and why innovations spread and identifies different social groups involved in the process. Hirschmann and Adcock identify four main categories in this context: fashion innovators, fashion opinion leaders, innovative communicators and fashion followers (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). Hence, their study is highly useful for our purposes as it provides the context for our distinction. We decided to narrow the categorisation down to two groups, namely trendsetters and followers to conform to the given scope of the project (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978).

With the goal of finding a way to measure achievement motivation in individuals, Cassidy and Lynn (1989) developed an achievement motivation scale based on seven factors. Achievement motivation is defined as the personal interest of individuals to attain certain goals within their social environment. To measure achievement motivation Cassidy and Lynn (1989) look at the work ethic, acquisitiveness for money, dominance, pursuit of excellence, competitiveness, status aspiration and mastery of individuals. To measure them the authors formulated a set of questions for each one of the seven factors. For the purposes of this research the focus will be on determining the degree of status aspiration among student in Maastricht, as status-seeking is closely connected to trendsetter behaviour. The eleven questions used to what extent individuals are status seeking are partly used in the questionnaire of our research.

In the last article authors Farennikova and Prinz address the question of “What makes something fashionable?”. They identify four conditions that must be fulfilled to call a fashion item ‘fashionable’. Firstly, a look is considered fashionable only if many people are wearing it (Farennikova & Prinz, 2011). A fashion item can be considered to be fashionable only for one person. The fashion item, however, only becomes fashionable when many people copy it. Secondly, individuals regarded as experts must endorse the look. Such experts must not necessarily be fashion experts (Farennikova & Prinz, 2011). They can be models, socialites, other celebrities or anyone style-savvy in one’s social group. Farennikova and Prinz state that people regard and accept something as fashionable because people they regard as experts

declare it to be so. Thirdly, those wearing the fashion item must intend to conform to the trend. A person is not fashionable if it conforms to the current trend without the right intention. Lastly, those wearing the fashion item must regard it as having aesthetic value (Farennikova & Prinz, 2011). A street gang wearing green hats to demarcate group identity are not wearing the green hat for its aesthetic virtues and are thus not fashionable. Wearing something fashionable involves regarding the fashion item as having aesthetic value others can recognize (Farennikova & Prinz, 2011). To conclude, the authors define a fashion item as fashionable when it is a recurrent trend that many people choose to wear because individuals they admire endorsed it.

Taking these findings of previous research into consideration, the study this report is concerned with will focus on identifying trendsetter and conformist behaviour among students in Maastricht by using the models proposed Akerlof as well as Hirschmann and Adcock and the Achievement Motivation Scale designed by Cassidy and Lynn. Furthermore, Farennikova and Prinz's guidelines in determining what is considered fashionable will support the formulation and evaluation of questions to determine whether one can talk about a trendsetter or not.

In contrast to previous studies this research concentrates specifically on status-seeking and conformist behaviour among students in regards to fashion. The empirical research provides an overview of the most important factors that determine status seeking behaviour and what is considered to be fashionable. With help of our quantitative research we hope to expand these results.

5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Our research is threefold - we wish to determine whether Maastricht's students show a behavioural tendency towards being trendsetters or followers and it is our aim to determine the extent to which the town succeeds in meeting students' shopping preferences with respect to fashion items as defined before. Thirdly, we aim to find whether being a trendsetter or trend-follower influences shopping behaviour and preferences.

RQ1: Do Maastricht students exhibit a behavioural trend towards being either trendsetters or followers?

RQ2: What are students' shopping preferences and to what extent does the current shopping

environment in Maastricht meet these?

RQ3: How does being a trendsetter or follower affect shopping behaviour and preferences of students?

In terms of hypotheses, they are more difficult to establish for this research as it is specifically tailored to the city of Maastricht and to our knowledge, comparable studies have not yet been conducted in other cities. Hence, it is a problematic task to find hypotheses a priori that are not solely based on heuristics, observations of students and stereotypes. To ensure the professionalism and academic rigour of our research, we therefore decided to use null hypotheses for RQ1 and RQ3. As RQ2 asks about individuals' preferences, it is not possible at all to hypothesise about the outcome. In terms of differences between demographic groups, no research has been done on differences between students of different faculties in Maastricht. O'Cass and McEwen (2004) found no gender differences in their study, which further confirms our approach of using null hypotheses. Hence, our hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: Maastricht students do not show a behavioural trend towards being trendsetters or followers.
- H2: There is no significant difference in behavioural trends, shopping behaviour and preferences between different demographic groups.
- H3: The behavioural trends do not have a significant influence on the shopping behaviour or preferences.

6. *Methodological design*

Our research relies on a quantitative approach with an online survey that was distributed to students of Maastricht University via social media (Facebook) and e-mail. Our desired sample consists of students from all faculties of Maastricht University. The sample size as well as the sampling procedure were characterised by convenience since we had to rely on students' willingness to participate in the survey. There was no feasible way to use random sampling to render our results sounder and allow better generalisation to the entire student population of Maastricht University. Thus, our sample is not directly representative of all Maastricht University students as some faculties are relatively overrepresented. This and other issues as well as their implications are discussed in greater detail in the section on limitations of the research. For the data collection, we decided to utilise an online questionnaire as this is the

easiest way to reach many students and it is quick to fill in for the respondents. Facebook was used to collect the data as almost all students are active in Facebook groups that are specifically created for each faculty or study programme. Again, this means that sampling is not completely random as this method relies on the goodwill of respondents. Furthermore, several course coordinators were willing to send out emails to students in their courses. This also means that many respondents come from a specific academic background, however we hypothesised before that the academic discipline is unrelated to shopping behaviour, meaning that this limitation will not produce a significant bias in the results. For the data analysis, the programme Stata was utilised. After partly recoding the data, we relied on one- and two-sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA and linear regression for our analysis. Data collected on students' preferences are analysed using descriptive statistics since it is not feasible to test the collected data without hypotheses about what the preferences might be. As mentioned above, this research is the first of its kind conducted among Maastricht students, hence there is a lack of information to build hypotheses on.

The questions on the behavioural trend were partly taken from Cassidy and Lynn's (1997) achievement motivation scale as being a trendsetter is conceptually similar to being a status-seeking individual. However, not all questions were applicable to our research as it is specifically with regard to fashion. Hence, we added statements with respect to this. Most questions were based on a Likert scale apart from those that required "either-or" options. Furthermore, respondents were asked to provide demographic details as well as their monthly disposable income (excluding rent, bills, tuition fees and phone plan), the proportion of their monthly income spent on fashion items and whether they work next to their studies. The full questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

7. Data Analysis

There were 209 complete observations covering all types of degrees and eight faculties and study programmes. Furthermore, we collected some partial responses. Three quarters of the respondents were female and the age range goes from 17 to 57. The respondent aged 57 indicated to be a PhD candidate. Although this seems a rather unusual age for a student, we decided to still take the observation into account as it considers the fact that some students may indeed be older as they return to university for further studies after having worked for a considerable period of time. Additionally, the older respondents did not report markedly

higher incomes that could skew the results. Most respondents (59%) were from the School of Business and Economics as well as the University College. Due to sampling difficulties, it was not possible to obtain an equal number of respondents from each faculty. The table below summarises the key statistics of our sample.

	Age	Monthly Income	% spent on fashion	Working?
Mean	20.9	EUR 438.60	19.5	71% No

Table 1: Sample key statistics

A two-sample t-test revealed no significant differences in monthly disposable income or the proportion of the income spent on fashion items between those respondents who work next to their studies and those who do not. Therefore, we treated both groups as equivalent and did not split the sample.

The first part of the analysis aims to find whether students at Maastricht University are trendsetters or followers. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agree with a certain statement on a five-item Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For the analysis, the word responses were recoded to numerical responses with 5 corresponding to strongly agree and 1 corresponding to strongly disagree for statements relating to being a trendsetter. This was reversed for statements concerning being a follower. Thus, the higher the sum of all responses for an individual, the more she tends to be a trendsetter. The threshold was set at 39 points as this would be the number of points attained by an individual that neither identifies as a trendsetter nor as a follower and would hence respond “neither agree nor disagree” to all statements. A histogram of the distribution of the behavioural trend variable is displayed below. The mode is above the 39-points threshold and it shows some skewness to the left. Values range from 31 to 57, with most values lying above the threshold. This gives rise to the assumption that Maastricht students may be trendsetters.

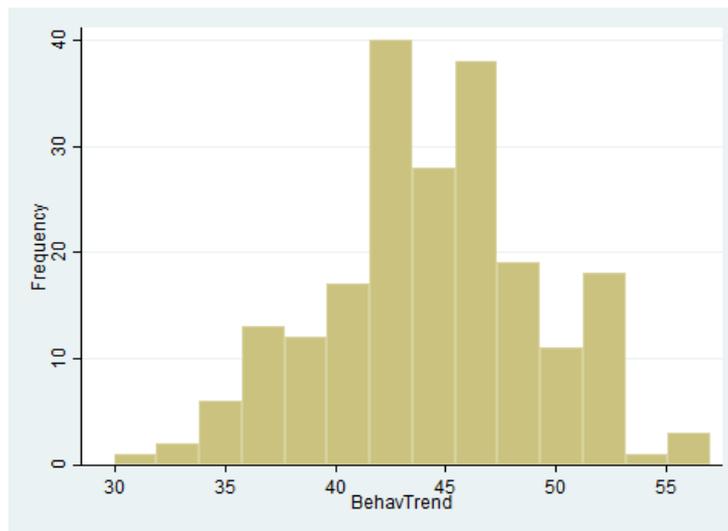


Figure 1: Distribution of the behavioural trend variable

	Mean	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval
Behavioural Trend	44.4	0.35	(43.72, 45.1)

Table 2: Mean of the behavioural trend variable

In total, there were 209 observations in this category, with a mean of 44.4 and a standard deviation of 5.2 points. A two-sided t-test was used to determine whether the mean number of points is different from 39 using the following hypotheses:

$$H_0: \mu = 39 \quad H_a: \mu \neq 39$$

At a significance level of one percent, the mean is significantly different from 39 and a one-sided test confirms that the mean is indeed larger than 39.

The 95% confidence interval shows that we can be 95% sure that the true value of the mean lies between 43.24 and 44.61, meaning that Maastricht students tend to be trendsetters rather than followers. Yet, the value is not at the upper end of the scale, which indicates that while students lean towards being trendsetters and care about fashion and how it influences their appearance and perception by others, this happens on a more moderate basis. Based on one-way ANOVA tests, we did not find significant differences between either different faculties, nationalities or genders.

The second part of the analysis concerns students' preferences and shopping behaviour as well as their opinion on whether Maastricht meets their preferences. Generally, students shop

mostly for clothing, followed by shoes and accessories, whilst bags and jewellery are the less favoured items. When choosing a new product, the focus is on quality before practicality and price, popularity (i.e. is the item considered to be ‘in’), the conditions of production and whether it is a brand item are less important criteria. The data show that the last three characteristics are very clearly secondary concerns to students, they were on average listed on places 4 or 5 of the ranking, whilst the first three took place 2 on average. Just over 50% of respondents state that they like to change their wardrobe more often and over 65% prefer to buy more expensive higher-quality items, only 19.5% agree that they prefer purchasing more items that are of a lesser quality but also less expensive. This confirms that quality takes precedence over price. The clear majority of students surveyed does not use the Koopavond on Thursday evenings on a regular basis, but “sometimes” (45.5%) or “never” (36%). With regard to the day on which they go shopping, 55% have no preference and 28% prefer Saturday. Nearly 60% both go shopping in a planned manner but also coincidentally at times, meaning they may spot an item that they like and proceed to buy it.

The responses concerning whether Maastricht meets the students’ preferences draw a two-fold picture. On the one hand, the majority states that the current shopping environment corresponds to their taste (63%), that there is sufficient diversity in shops (59%) and that Maastricht offers something for every budget (62%). Furthermore, 51% of the respondents think that Maastricht is a shopping city for students. Yet, only 30% agree that they mostly purchase fashion items in Maastricht, a majority of 53% of respondents prefers to buy them elsewhere and 24% state that they are indifferent. This could be due to many students not living in Maastricht and hence not regarding it as the primary place to spend free time, however this theory is not supported by the data.

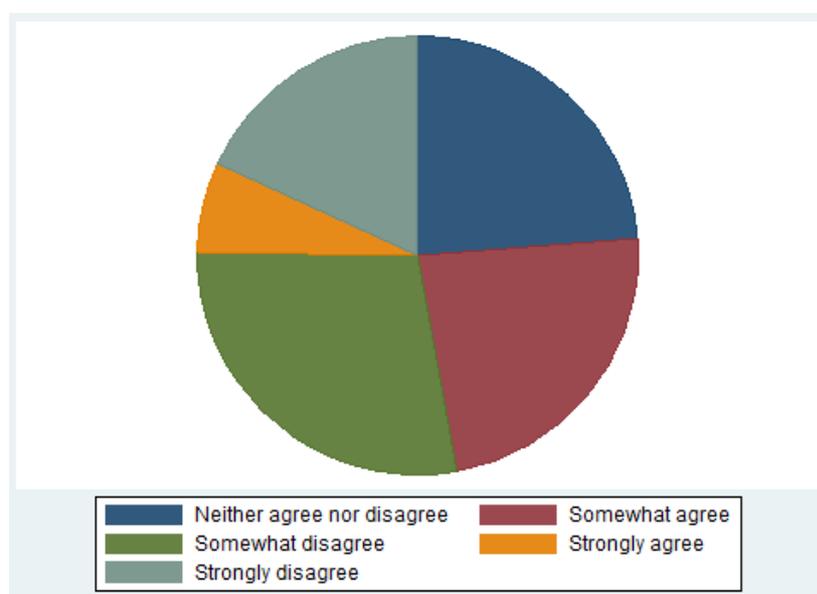


Figure 2: Responses to “I mostly buy fashion items in Maastricht.”

We asked respondents whether they find what they looking for when going shopping in Maastricht, a statement to which 43% agreed. While this may be an indication as to why 53% prefer to buy fashion items elsewhere, it conflicts with the findings that most students think Maastricht caters to their needs rather well with respect to taste, budget and diversity. Neither can it be explained by a preference for online shopping as over 82% wish to buy in-store rather than online. However, 44% would like to see more secondhand stores and over 58% of students would like to see more shops dedicated to fashion items that are produced under fair and sustainable conditions. Again, we see a contradiction as it was determined before that the production process is not a main concern for most students.

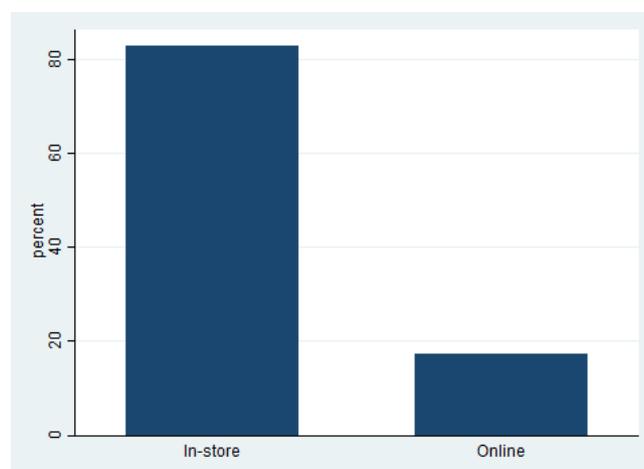


Figure 3: Preferred shopping method

The third part concerns a possible association of shopping behaviour and being a trendsetter or follower. Regressing the proportion of income spent on fashion items per month on the behavioural trend variable yields no significant result. We find that male and female students neither spend a significantly different proportion of their monthly disposable income on fashion items nor have significantly different incomes. It is possible that trendsetters and followers show differences in how they go shopping, yet controlling for this variable does not confirm this. We find that trendsetters use the Koopavond more often, however there are no other differences in shopping behaviour.

Yet, there are some differences between trendsetters and followers with regard to how they perceive Maastricht's shopping environment. Approximately half of all followers, i.e. individuals who scored 39 points or below on the behavioural trend variable, agree that they mostly find a desired item in Maastricht, while only 42% of trendsetters would agree with

this. Yet, a larger proportion of trendsetters than followers think that the shops in the town correspond to their fashion taste. With exception of the ability to find a desired item, the agreement rates of followers are usually around ten percentage points higher than those of the followers, indicating that the trendsetters surveyed see their preferences met to a higher extent than the followers surveyed. Despite the seemingly higher satisfaction of trendsetters, a higher proportion of followers spend their money in Maastricht.

It is interesting to see that the wish for more second-hand stores and shops dedicated to fair and sustainable clothing is expressed to an equal extent in both groups. Hence, we conclude that there are indicators that the behavioural trend does indeed influence individuals' preferences to a certain extent, the exact mechanism behind this phenomenon however is subject for further research.

	Trendsetters	Followers
I mostly buy fashion items in Maastricht.	28.09	40.63
When looking for a certain item, I mostly find it in Maastricht.	42.13	50.01
The shops in Maastricht correspond to my fashion taste.	64.6	56.26
I think there is sufficient diversity in shops in Maastricht.	60.67	50.01
I think Maastricht offers something for every budget.	64.05	53.13
Maastricht is a great city to go shopping for students.	52.25	43.76
Maastricht should have more secondhand stores.	44.38	43.75
I would like to see more shops dedicated to fair and sustainable clothing	57.87	59.38

Table 3: Agreement rates of followers and trendsetters to statements relating to their satisfaction with Maastricht's shopping environment

Trendsetters and followers also prove to think differently with regard to which characteristics they value in a fashion item. The tables below show the original ranking by all students and how trendsetters' and followers' opinions differ.

	All Students	Trendsetters	Followers
1	Quality	Quality	Practicality
2	Practicality	Price	Quality
3	Price	Practicality	Price
4	Popularity	Popularity	Production
5	Production	Brand item	Popularity
6	Brand item	Production	Brand item

Table 4: How students rank characteristics of fashion items with respect to their importance when making the decision to purchase an item

While the data has shown that trendsetters and followers prefer to buy the same items in Maastricht, they do not look for the same characteristics when making the purchasing decision. The differences between the ranking of practicality, production conditions and whether the item is from a specific brand are found to be significant at the ten, five and one-percent level respectively. This means that trendsetters and followers do indeed have significantly different preferences. Looking back at the wish for more fair and sustainable clothing expressed by both groups, we notice a contradiction again as production conditions belong to the least important characteristics for trendsetters and followers. This result begs the question whether students would like to see these stores and do not regard production conditions as an important characteristic at the moment because most stores do not sell this type of items, so there is no way of taking it into account. Another possibility is that students only agreed to the statement because awareness of environmental issues and the working conditions of those manufacturing our clothes is seen as vital by society, so that students felt they had to give a specific answer although it may not correspond to their true opinion. This means that the results must be seen with caution and further research is necessary to shed light on the origin of this contradiction.

In summary, we rejected the first hypothesis as a clear behavioural trend among students towards being trendsetter has been found. The second hypothesis could not be rejected since there were no differences found between different genders, faculties or nationalities. The third hypothesis concerning a possible interaction of being trendsetter or follower and the shopping behaviour and preferences was partly rejected. Both groups shop in the same ways, yet their preferences differ. Additionally, trendsetters seem to be more satisfied with the shopping opportunities in Maastricht, however fewer trendsetters than followers spend their money in the local shops.

8. Limitations

As mentioned before, our research is subject to certain limitations, mostly as a result of the sampling procedure. First, the representativeness is compromised due to a lack of random sampling and the small sample size of 209 full responses. This means that our results may not be directly applicable to the wider student population of Maastricht University. The focus on online sampling may mean that respondents possess characteristics making them prone to

being active on social media. If these characteristics are correlated with being a status-seeking individual who tends to be a trendsetter, this could lead to a bias in favour of the trendsetter theory. This limitation is however restricted to a certain extent as much is organised via Facebook at Maastricht University. This means that a very broad majority of students can be assumed to use the network as it can be seen as a necessity to stay up to date, regardless of personal characteristics. Furthermore, there is an overrepresentation of SBE and UCM students, meaning that the other faculties and study programmes may not exhibit the same characteristics and the results are not applicable to these students. Additionally, nearly 75% of respondents are female, meaning that the results are likely to apply to the female student population more than to the male population. Nonetheless, we could not find gender differences in the behavioural trend variable, which means that the results could be applied to male students, yet with caution. The results concerning the preferences however would benefit from more male responses to arrive at a more varied and sound conclusion. A similar argument applies to the relatively low number of followers in the sample. On the one hand, this is likely to be an accurate representation of the distribution within the student population, a larger sample however would also include more responses from followers, which would also facilitate drawing conclusions about their behaviour as the influence of potential confounding variables would be restricted in a larger sample. An inherent limitation to any research that utilises surveys is the reliance on the respondents' honesty and hence the accuracy of the data. Although anonymity encourages honesty, it cannot be ruled out that some responses are wrong, especially regarding income since some respondents may be hesitant to disclose this information. Hence, the limitations concern first and foremost the sample. However, it was under the given circumstances not possible to circumvent these, rendering the research as it is the most corroborated.

9. Policy Recommendations

We have seen that Maastricht students tend to be trendsetters in the sense that they see fashion as a means to stand out in a group and be recognised. Fashion hence becomes a way to express status. Yet, this result has more academic relevance than it bears implications for policy making. To make policy recommendations, data collected on students' shopping preferences is crucial. We have seen that students generally approve of the shopping environment, but also that Maastricht is not their primary shopping destination. In the light of

these findings, it seems that policies changing the composition of stores in Maastricht will not lead to more student customers as they are already rather satisfied with the shopping environment, but do not make use of it. Hence, we recommend to not gear policies towards students specifically, as this is unlikely to generate a substantially greater customer base. The reason why most students do not shop in Maastricht does not seem to originate from a mismatch between demand and supply but has other sources, which are yet to be researched in more detail. A large number of students is interested in seeing more shops selling fairly and sustainably produced clothing as well as second-hand stores, this is hence an area where the municipality could take action. However, as mentioned during the data analysis, it has remained unclear to what extent this expressed interest actually reflects students' preferences.

10. Discussion and Conclusion

This project aimed to determine how students of Maastricht University can be categorised in terms of their behavioural trends with respect to fashion consumption. In a second step, it was determined to what extent the current shopping environment corresponds to students' preferences. Finally, a possible interaction of the first two topics was examined.

We found that Maastricht University students are trendsetters rather than followers, a result that is significant at the one-percent level. We hence reject our first hypothesis and find that there is indeed a behavioural trend, which tends towards being a trendsetter. With respect to preferences and behaviour, we find that students do not show stark preferences concerning how they shop, except for a preference for in-store purchasing as opposed to online shopping. Generally, students state that they are rather satisfied with the shopping environment, yet only a minority buy most of their fashion items in Maastricht. This points to an issue that lies outside the realm of interaction between supply and demand, which is a starting point for further research. One possible hypothesis to explore would be that students may not have the time to go shopping due to the high workload at the university and thus only purchase fashion items during holiday times when they are back home. Controlling for trendsetters and followers yields the same result, although trendsetters tend to show higher agreement rates for statements concerning their satisfaction with Maastricht's current shopping environment. We find that trendsetters and followers have different preferences concerning what they look for in a fashion item. Hence, we partly reject the second hypothesis. Why this may be the case should be determined by further research. With respect to differences between demographic

groups, we could not determine any significant differences with respect to the behavioural trend or what proportion of their money different groups spend on fashion. Thus, we fail to reject our second hypothesis. All findings are subject to limitations to their general applicability, which is a result of the sampling process. To sum up, the research has shown that Maastricht University students are trendsetters and overall happy with what the city offers. While not many students regard Maastricht to be their primary shopping area, this is unlikely to stem from a mismatch of demand and supply, but has other reasons that need to be examined by further research. Hence, we recommend that the municipality does not focus on even improving the selection for students as these efforts may be compromised by other variables that are not controllable through public policy.

11. References

- Akerlof, G. A. (1997). Social distance and social decisions. *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*, 1005-1027.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American psychologist*, 55(5), 469. Available at http://jeffreymarrett.com/ARNETT_Emerging_Adulthood_theory.pdf
- Cassidy, T., & Lynn, R. (1989). A multifactorial approach to achievement motivation: The development of a comprehensive measure. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*.
- Farennikova, A., & Prinz, J. (2011). What makes something fashionable?. *Fashion: Thinking with Style*, 15-30.
- Gemeente Maastricht (2017). Welcome to Maastricht. Retrieved on 10/01/2017 from <http://www.maastrichtportal.nl/home.html?lang=2>
- Hirschman, E. C., & Adcock, W. O. (1978). An examination of innovative communicators, opinion leaders and innovators for men's fashion apparel. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 05.
- Maastricht University (n.d). About UM. Retrieved on 10/01/2017 from <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um>.
- O'Cass, A., & McEwen, H. (2004). Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of consumer behaviour*, 4(1), 25-39.
- Workman, J. E., & Studak, C. M. (2006). Fashion consumers and fashion problem recognition style. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(1), 75-84. doi: 10.1111/j.1470-6431.2005.00451.x

12. *Appendix: Questionnaire*

Q1 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I want to be a leading person in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to be admired for my appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike being the centre of attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to have people come to me for advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find satisfaction in having influence over others because of my position in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to be the decision-maker in a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of fashion trends and want to be one of the first to try them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am influenced by what my friends wear in my choice of clothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I dislike being the lead person in a group	<input type="radio"/>				
I would rather be recognised for being different than fitting in	<input type="radio"/>				
It is important for me that other people appreciate my sense for fashion	<input type="radio"/>				
I dress to impress	<input type="radio"/>				
My fashion selections are influenced by clothing worn by people I admire	<input type="radio"/>				

Q25 The following questions ask about your shopping preferences with regard to fashion items. We define fashion items to INCLUDE clothing, shoes, bags, jewellery and accessories like belts, scarves and sunglasses. The term EXCLUDES beauty products, electronic gadgets (mobile phones etc) and watches.

Q3 What is your preferred method of shopping:

- Online
- In-store

Q4 How do you shop

- planned activity
- coincidental (e.g. you walk through town and spontaneously spot an item that you like)
- or both

Q5 I like to change my wardrobe more often

- Definitely true
- Probably true
- Neither true nor false
- Probably false
- Definitely false

Q6 I prefer buying fewer high-quality items that are more expensive

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q26 I prefer buying a lot of items of lesser quality which are less expensive

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q22 On what day are you most likely to go shopping?

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday
- No preference

Q7 Please rank which items you shop for most in Maastricht

- _____ Clothing
- _____ Shoes
- _____ Bags
- _____ Accessories (belts, scarves, sunglasses)
- _____ Jewellery

Q8 Please rank the following characteristics of fashion items according to how important they are to you when making the decision to buy

- _____ Overall quality (material etc)
- _____ Price
- _____ Practicality/need
- _____ Popularity (it's "in")
- _____ Produced fairly and sustainably
- _____ Brand items

Q20 It is important to me that:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My products have visible designer logos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My clothes are produced under fair conditions (for workers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My clothes are produced sustainably (material and production process)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 How often do you shop in second hand stores?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Sometimes
- Never

Q23 I make use of the 'Koopavond' (shops open until 21 hrs on Thursdays) in Maastricht?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Sometimes
- Never

Q9 Please answer the following questions that ask about the extent to which you feel that Maastricht meets your shopping preferences.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I mostly buy fashion items in Maastricht	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I mostly buy fashion items in other cities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When looking for a certain item, I mostly find it in Maastricht	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The shops in Maastricht correspond to my fashion taste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think there is sufficient diversity in shops in Maastricht	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't think Maastricht caters to different styles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think Maastricht offers something for every budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maastricht is a great city go shopping for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maastricht should have more second-hand stores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

to see more shops dedicated to fair and sustainable clothing					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Q10 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- I prefer not to specify

Q11 What is your age?

Q12 Which faculty do you study at?

- SBE
- Law
- FASOS
- UCM
- DKE
- MSP
- ICIS
- MGSoG
- FPN
- FHML
- other

Q13 What type of degree are you pursuing?

- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

Q14 Monthly disposable income: excl. tuition fees, insurance, rent, GWE and phone plan

Q15 What proportion(%) of your monthly income do you spend on fashion items?

Q16 Are you working next to your studies?

- Yes
- No

Q17 What is your nationality?

Q18 What is your place of residence?