

**U.O. URBAN OUTFITTERS INC.**



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## Executive summary

Urban Outfitters is a U.S. based global fashion retailer that offers an eclectic mix of products. These products range from apparel and accessories to home décor items and gifts. The brand targets an urban-minded audience between the ages of 18 to 30. Although Urban Outfitters is operating in one of the most dynamic and competitive industries, the brand tries to maintain and further develop its competitive advantage by identifying new markets overseas.

This paper determined if The Netherlands serves as the right market for Urban Outfitters to further expand and explore. The following research question was formulated: *How can Urban Outfitters expand on the Dutch market?*

To answer the research question, both field and desk research were conducted. With these research methods, Urban Outfitter's strengths and weaknesses were assessed, the external factors influencing the company were analysed through a DESTEP analysis, the market characteristics were explained through the five forces of porter model, UO's growth strategy was explained using the Ansoff model and the Maslow's hierarchy of needs model was used to identify UO's customer's needs. In addition to these tools, a survey was also conducted among their Dutch target audience.

After processing the customer's surveys, it was evident that a majority of the Dutch customers considered the retail prices of Urban outfitters too high. Moreover, a great number of people considered UO's biggest strength in its broad product range, and almost all the correspondents expressed that sustainability is an important issue.

Furthermore, after analysing UO's strategy, it is clear that their strategy does not need to change drastically to align with the Dutch market. However, in order to create a better fit for Dutch market, the company should respond to these survey results by modifying their strategy to the conditions in The Netherlands.

Firstly, the company must maintain its diversification and value added strategy to justify their pricing strategy in the future. This can be done by continuously introducing new products and by keeping their product range eclectic.

Secondly, sustainability and ethical trading could be an important aspect of Urban Outfitters future promotion strategy. By promoting and supporting eco-friendly fashion, through eco-friendly product lines or by working with eco-friendly designers, UO could set itself apart from its competitors and attract new customers who may be interested in acquiring products from an environmentally conscious business.

Furthermore, Urban Outfitter could improve their promotion strategy by generating more brand awareness through collaborations with well-known Dutch designers and bloggers. By collaborating with these bloggers and designers, the company could create an initial buzz and consumer interest for the brand.

## Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	5
1.1 Main Goal. ....	6
1.2 Research questions.....	6
1.3 Relevance of research .....	7
<b>2. Methodology</b> .....	8
2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2 Research methods .....	8
2.3 Data processing and analysis.....	8
2.4 Utilises models.....	9-10
<b>3. Internal analysis</b> .....	11
3.1 Company description.....	11-12
3.2 The mission statement of Urban Outfitters .....	13
3.3 Organisation structure.....	14
<b>4. External analysis</b> .....	15
4.1 Market description .....	15-16
4.2 European expansion .....	17-18
4.3 Distribution analysis .....	19-20
4.4 Customer analysis.....	21-25
4.5 Competitor analysis.....	26-27
4.6 Ansoff and DESTEP model .....	28-31
<b>5. Industry analysis</b> .....	32
5.1 Introduction.....	32
5.2 Industry analysis .....	32-35
5.3 Swot analysis and confrontation matrix.....	36-39
<b>6. Strategies</b> .....	40
6.1 Short-term, medium term and long term strategies .....	40-43
6.2 Marketing mix.....	44-46
6.3 Improved marketing mix .....	47-49
<b>7. Conclusion and recommendation</b> .....	50-52
<b>8. Appendix and references</b> .....	53-59

## Introduction

Urban Outfitters Inc. is an innovative specialty retail company with a vast product catalog. The brand offers men's and women's apparel, accessories and home décor items. The brand offers an eclectic mix of merchandise that target educated and urban-minded individuals between the ages of 18 to 30. The products are offered both online and in stores, as well as through their catalog. With more than 180 stores worldwide including the United States, Canada and Europe, the company is still looking for potential markets to break into.

*( Description, 2014)*

Urban Outfitters is now preparing for its further expansion in Europe. With already one flagship store in The Netherlands, the company is still looking for more opportunities within this market. This paper has determined and analysed whether The Netherlands is the right market for business expansion. Therefore, the research question of this study is: *“How can Urban Outfitters further expand on the Dutch market”*. This main question was answered in the conclusion.

With the European retail markets still being one of the most influential and largest retail markets globally, European online retail on the rise and the European markets generating one of the highest per capita sales in apparel worldwide. The region is considered to be a very interesting region for many Americans fashion retailers.

Although expanding overseas is a very important move for retailers, expansion does not always guarantee success. Many major U.S. fashion retail chains have already tried to expand beyond their borders into European markets, without any success. Many retailers came and failed. Whereas European retailers such as Ikea and Zara have increased their customer base by operating in America, most U.S. chains have had a harder time going the other direction (Arndt, 2010).

Although it seems harder for American retailers to master European retailing, one of the few retailers that turned out surprisingly successful is Philadelphia-based Urban Outfitters. Urban outfitters is intensifying its push across the Atlantic and hopes its designed-in-Europe strategy will beat the odds (Arndt, 2010).

## 1.1 Main goal

The main goal of this paper is to analyse the importance of using the right marketing strategy not only in entering a market successfully but also in enhancing the company's competitive position. The paper has outlined the benefits of choosing the right strategy and implementing this strategy in order in order to gain competitive edge.

For this research, the following tools were used: a SWOT analysis, an Ansoff model, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the 4ps of marketing. By using these tools it was possible to research Urban Outfitters customer analysis, the market they operate in, the position of their product/service and analyse the branding, price and placement process.

## 1.2 Research questions

The main question of this report is: *'How can Urban Outfitters further expand on the Dutch market'?*

To help answer the main question, a number of sub questions have been made.

The research questions are as follows:

- How does the new market entry to The Netherlands, align with the overall strategic direction and business plan of Urban Outfitters?
- What are the characteristics and level of rivalry on the Dutch retail market?
- How can the marketing mix and distribution channel be used in the most efficient way?
- How can Urban Outfitters differentiate themselves from its competitors?
- How should Urban Outfitters design their strategic planning for this market?

### *1.3 Relevance of the research*

The global retail market is incredibly competitive, mainly because of the “fast fashion” strategies of many European fashion retailers. The European retail fashion industry has significantly evolved. The changing dynamics of this industry have forced retailers to desire low costs, flexibility in design quality, speed to market and key strategies to maintain a profitable position in the increasingly demanding market (*Bhardwaj, 2009*). It is simply offering trendy clothes, at a faster pace to meet the ever-changing trends. With “fast fashion” being one of the biggest and frequently used techniques by European retailers, Urban Outfitters must find a way to stay relevant in a retail landscape that favours a “fast fashion” mentality. This research explained how Urban Outfitters could gain its footing in the Dutch retail market without becoming jeopardized in its future existence by fast fashion brands on the Dutch market. (*Retail at a turning point, 2013*).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

This paper is being carried out to draw ideas and describe a well suited marketing/export plan for Urban Outfitters. In this part, the methodology of this paper is explained. In order to be able to answer the main question, a combination of desk and field research was required. In addition to the desk research, the field-research for this paper entailed an online survey that is included in the appendix. The survey was primarily used to outline people's perception about Urban Outfitters. A survey was necessary and helpful not only for creating a SWOT analysis, but to also give insight in the customer feedback. Furthermore, this chapter includes how the information was gathered and processed.

### 2.2 Research Methods

The methodology used for writing this dissertation mainly consisted of desk-research. The majority of the information is available online and through books, in addition, a survey was conducted to have a more complete overview of all the needed information. The online survey was set up through the website: [www.thesistools.com](http://www.thesistools.com), which provides a detailed overview of all the collected data. The link and results of the questionnaire are included in the appendix.

### 2.3 Data processing and analysis

At this stage in the dissertation process, it is important to discuss how the collected data was processed and analysed. Data analysis is the process of making meaning of the collected data. Processing the collected data from the desk research was necessary to organize and analyse the information. The field research entailed an online survey. As each individual responds to the survey questions, the responses can be analysed and compared for the relevance to the research question. It was important to look for patterns and discover what the most important findings are. However, attention should be given to the quality of the data. An individual may give irrelevant information outside the scope of my research.



## 2.4 Utilised models

To help answer the sub questions, a number of marketing tools were used. With these tools, Urban Outfitter's strengths and weaknesses were assessed, external factors influencing the company were analysed, market characteristics were explained, growth strategies were described and customer's needs were identified. In addition to these tools, a survey was also conducted amongst their Dutch target audience.

To answer the first sub question, an analysis was done on Urban Outfitters's European expansion strategy and how this strategy would align with its market entry in the Netherlands. For the second sub question the five forces of porter was used to analyse the Dutch market. In order to answer third sub question, the 4Ps of marketing were used and Urban Outfitters' distribution channel was analysed. To answer the fourth sub question a competitor analysis and customer analysis were made. To respond to the final sub question a SWOT analysis and SWOT confrontation matrix was carried out.

In this subsection the different models that will be used are explained. For this dissertation the following models were used: 4ps of marketing, DESTEP model, Maslow hierarchy of needs, a SWOT analysis and confrontation matrix.

#### *Ansoff-model*

The Ansoff model, also known as Ansoff product market matrix, is a strategic tool in formulating growth strategies. With this model, which growth strategy Urban Outfitters used.

#### *DESTEP model*

With the DESTEP-model the paper focused on political, economic, social and technology factors in the Netherlands that might influence Urban Outfitters strategy.

#### *SWOT analysis and confrontation matrix*

The SWOT analysis is a business model that will give a summary of Urban Outfitter's strengths, faults, weaknesses and threats.

#### *The Porter Five Forces model*

With this framework, an industry analysis for the Dutch retail industry have been carried.

#### *Confrontation matrix*

The confrontation matrix gave a clear overview of Urban Outfitter's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. With the confrontation matrix the output of the swot analysis was further analysed. By doing so the most important strategic issues UO is facing, were identified.

#### *Maslow hierarchy of needs*

This marketing model uses the five stage hierarchy model which categorizes human needs. This marketing model is used to identify Urban Outfitter's customer segments and how the company tries to meet their specific needs.

#### *Abell model*

This marketing model uses three dimension to analyse the customer needs by assessing the target group, their needs and the technology used to meet their needs.

### 3. Internal analysis

#### 3.1 Company description

Urban Outfitters began as a small retail store established in 1970 near the University of Pennsylvania by college students as an entrepreneurial school project. They offered a variety of secondhand clothing, fabrics, and apartment items. The company was comprised of two separate branches consisting of the retail segment and the wholesale segment. As the store experienced more and more success in Pennsylvania, more stores were opened primarily near college campuses. Location of these retail stores is centered on their focused target market of college and younger consumers looking for trendy and inexpensive clothing and household decorations. The company has continued to grow as the number of retail locations has increased to one hundred and thirty stores across the United States, Canada, and Europe. Growth and success can be further exemplified by rising revenues and the ability to diversify their product range. Products carried by Urban Outfitters have been expanded to include a variety of different household items, books, accessories, and men and women's apparel appealing to the initial target customer at a relatively inexpensive price (Mckelvey, 2011).

The company now operates retail stores under the brands Urban Outfitters, Anthropologie, Free People, Terrain, and BHLDN. Each brand has its distinctive product range and target group.

- UO: sells women's and men's fashion clothing ( t-shirts, trousers, sweaters, jackets, leggings ,skirts, shoes, dresses, hats, watches, sunglasses, ) footwear and home décor items. Urban Outfitters mainly targets well-educated young adults between the ages of 18 to 30 (Chaereen, 2013).



- Anthropologie: Anthropologie mostly sells casual wear, accessories, and decorative items targeting women aged 28 to 45



- Free People: the Free People brand offers casual wear, footwear, accessories and gift items targeting young contemporary women.

- Terrain stores mostly provide: home and garden products and targets people who embrace the “going green lifestyle’. Their products include plants, flowers and landscape and design service solutions.
- BHLDN: the BHLDN brands offer bridal collections, shoes and accessories, cocktail dresses, and wedding decor, assorted jewellery and lingerie.



When we take a closer look at all the brands of the urban outfitters group, we see that Anthropologie and Free people are showing the most growth in contrast to Terrain and BHLDN which are showing less growth. This is partially the case, because these brands have a wider appeal than for instance Terrain or BHLDN who only target a very specific niche/target group. Both Free People and Anthropologie have had notable success creating brands that enjoy a sort of ethnic, elegant, and vintage vibe that resonates with a fashion-forward crowd. The consumer response to these brands has been very strong, indicating a good product and marketing mix for these brands (Howland, 2014).

In addition to Terrain and BHLDN, the urban outfitters stores have not been doing as well as expected. While Urban Outfitters shares some of the same bohemian chic as Free People and Anthropologie, it appeals to more a younger crowd. The Urban Outfitters stores have been struggling globally for growth due to weak consumer spending and strong competition from fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M and Forever 21. The weak consumer spending can be explained by the rising youth unemployment, which leads to younger people having less money to spend. However the Urban Outfitters brand will have to do more than just discount its merchandise. The brand has been regularly in the news this past year, due to controversies surrounding their products. From T-shirts that seem to promote eating disorders and depression to stickers that proudly display marijuana leaves, Urban Outfitters is consistently facing more and more criticism on its merchandise (staff, 2013).

### 3.2 The mission and vision statement of Urban Outfitters

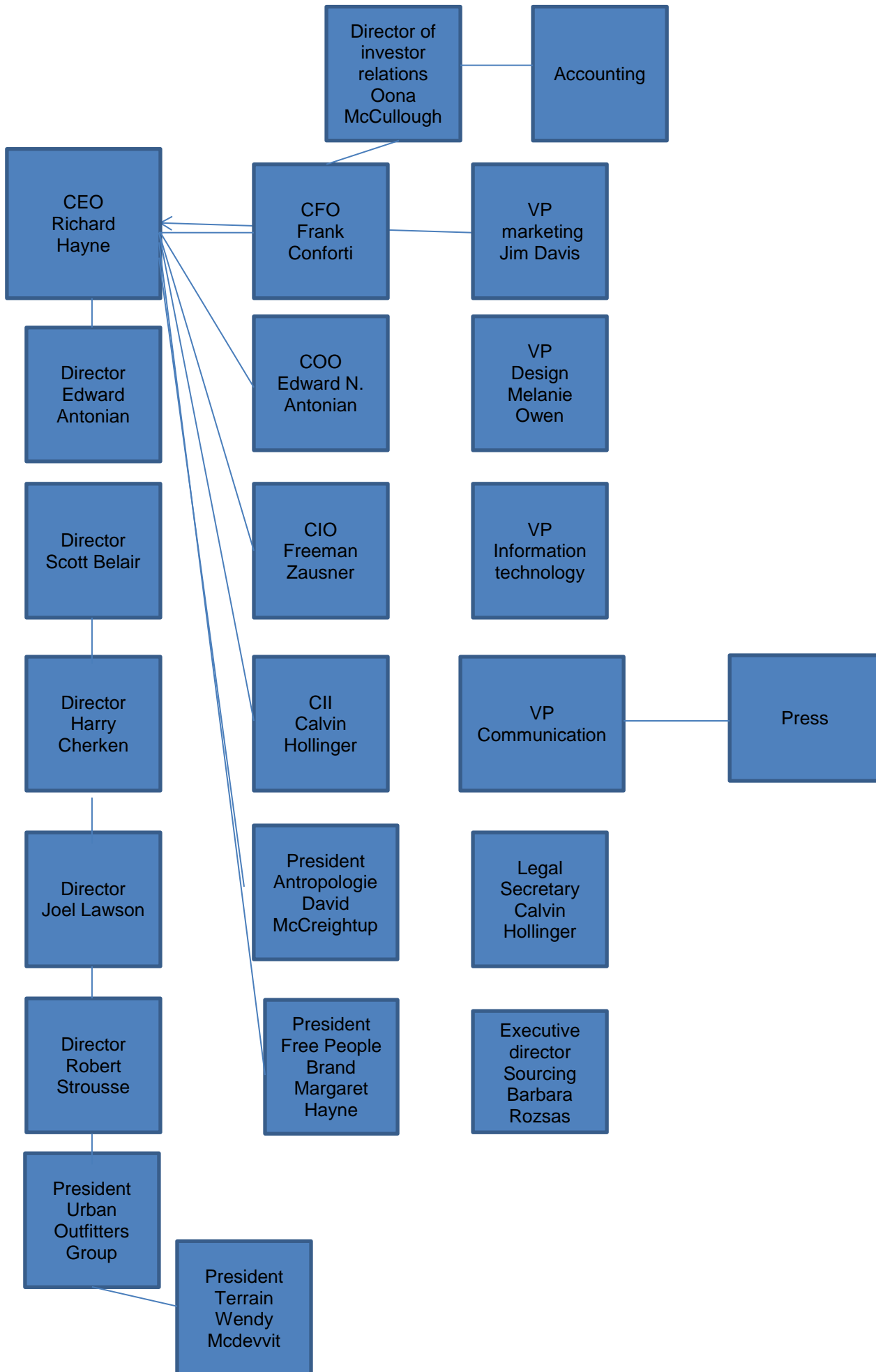
Urban Outfitters is an eclectic lifestyle retailer dedicated to inspiring their customers through a unique combination of product, creativity and cultural understanding. Their mission is to help their customers express and their individuality and connect with their interests, needs, passions and each other. They try to do this by creating experiential retail environments and curated product assortments. They embrace music, fashion, art, architecture, design and technology as integral to our business and infuse each with their individualistic, nonconformist approach to life ( *Description, 2014*).

Company objectives of Urban Outfitters:

- Creating a product range and store environment that creates an emotional attachment with its customers.
- Being the number one brand of choice for their target group.
- Creating long term maximization of shareholder value.
- Meet the needs and aspirations of their target group with the right product groups and product mix.

### 3.3 Organisational structure

fig.1 (Urban outfitters, 2013)



## 4. External analysis

### 4.1. Market description

The Dutch retail industry has had some difficult years due to a tempered economic situation that began in 2008. The revenues for fashion retailers decreased with around 7 per cent in comparison with 2011 (Fors minder kleding en schoenen verkocht, 2012). In addition to that, the consumer's willingness to spend reached an all-time low point and this showed through the number of apparel items sold (Fors minder kleding en schoenen verkocht, 2012). The economic decline and uncertain economic environment lead to a low consumer confidence and as a result consumers started prioritizing their purchases and spend more on necessary items such as food. Moreover, many consumers started to cut their budget on apparel items, as these items were considered indispensable. In addition to that the level of youth unemployment remained high, young adults who are key consumers of fashion retail and considered the driving force behind fast fashion, cut their spending on these items as well, which lead to more negative impact on sales of the Dutch retail industry (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013).

### *Discounting a response to the economic crisis*

The economic crisis and its aftermath lead to a change in the Dutch consumers' mentality. Although extravagance was never considered as suitable, the average Dutch consumers did spend their money wisely, by buying discounted products to save up money (Angelis, 2013). Due to the economic crisis, saving up money has become an economic necessity. As a result, the Dutch are becoming less willing to pay the full price for products, which could be bought for less in an outlet stores or so-called "deal sites" on the internet. One of the biggest consequences of the discounting trend is that many apparel categories now suffer from declining unit prices. (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013).

### *Fast fashion players benefit from growing demand for value-for-money items*

The Dutch retail clothing industry is very fragmented and competitive. Although there is a strong presence of fragmentation and competition within the industry, there are several companies that still remain on top. The three leading companies for apparel in the Netherlands in 2012 were Hennes & Mauritz (H&M), C&A and the local player HEMA (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013). *These brands* offer low priced and standard-priced products, this may suggest that average Dutch consumer attaches great value to price and value for money. As the economic situation still remains uncertain, more and more consumers will try to get the best deal their disposable income will allow them to have (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013).

### *The rise of e-commerce*

Internet retailing is on the rise in The Netherlands and this process seems to continue. Internet retailing activities enjoyed healthy double-digit growth in 2012/2013 (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013). The Dutch consumers are lured by the benefits that internet shopping offers them, such as convenience, broad range of choices and good deals on products. Online retail companies such as Zalando and Wehkamp are gaining more and more customers across the country and are continuing to grow. Moreover other companies, traditional store based brands and department stores are also catching on to this trend and are shifting their activities online (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013).

### *Decline in apparel sales*

As Dutch consumers are expected to continue to limit their spending on apparel and prefer economy brands. The value of apparel sales are expected to decline further over the forecast period. Apparel sales declined with 9% in the first quarter of 2013 compared with 2012 (*Omzet kledingbranche daalt*) and a more and more retailers are stating, that the financial crisis has driven down their prices and profit margins (*Modebranche krimpt verder in 2014, 2013*). Consumers will consider price as an essential criterion in their purchase. As a result, low cost fast fashion and promotional offers are likely to be the strategies for most players to balance the underperforming Dutch apparel landscape. (Apparel in the Netherlands, 2013).



## 4.2 European expansion

Urban Outfitters is preparing for its further expansion in Europe. The American group, which opened its first store in London in 1998, has announced its ambitions for the rest of the continent. (www.uk.fashionmag.com, 2011). UO's move for expansion is explained by several international retailers increasing their local presence, such as H&M, Zara and online retailers such as Net-A-Porter, ASOS and Topshop (which sell online and in stores). The International markets offer UO new opportunities to expand the business and increase sale. The European markets are worth exploring and offer great opportunities for UO, considering Gap (American fashion retailer) once had 193 stores in the European region (TeamTrefis, 2014).

These days, the brand runs about 22 stores across the continent as well as two other stores in London dedicated to Anthropologie. In the upcoming years UO plans to develop the markets in France, Germany and hopes to build a network of 15 stores in Germany and to have entered the French, Spanish and Italian market successfully (www.uk.fashionmag.com, 2011).

Moreover, Urban Outfitters focuses on its diversity of product assortment. It is important for the brand to be diverse; consumer preferences for clothing within a particular market can differ greatly, therefore offering a broad product range and variety of brands are crucial components of UO's international expansion strategy.

To make sure their expansion strategy is in line with their overall strategy, UO has set up a few objectives for their expansion strategy.

Objectives:

- Increasing the penetration of their brands outside North-America.
- Expanding their retail square footage by continuing to open new doors in North America and Europe.
- Grow the direct-to-consumer channel.
- Expanding their product and category offerings.

(URBAN OUTFITTER INC, Third quarter, 2013)

### **Online expansion**

To meet the rapid development of the online market, in particular shopping via smart phones and tablets, UO outfitters continuous to invest in mobile technology. The easily navigated digital store is fully mobile-adapted and very popular amongst their customers. Moreover, their online shop online is available in US, European, Asian and African markets and in addition to the online shop, they also set up an app, to send sales and new collection notifications to their customers.

Urban Outfitters tries to offer merchandising strategy which is as flexible as possible and gain a significant domestic and international presence, by opening new stores, with the use of rapidly expanding e-commerce activities and adding new brands and optimizing inventory levels (Zack.com, 2012).

### 4.3 Distribution analysis

Urban Outfitters plans to expand its customer base in North America and Europe through additional locations and direct-to-consumer offerings. In preparation for this growth, it needed a warehouse management solution that could grow with it. It has moved the call-centre activities of its direct and wholesale channels to one facility in Trenton, S.C., and implemented the Manhattan Associates' Warehouse Management solution, which entails solutions for optimal collaboration and communication with an extensive network of suppliers and partners (by determining the best picking profile for a distribution centre, enabling timely, intelligent decisions as ordering trends change). This solution was also implemented in its London retail distribution centre to support its European retail operations (Urban Outfitters optimizes its supply chain using Manhattan's Chain Process Platform).

With aim of being more efficient the Multi-channel retailer tries to transform their supply chains toward a channel convergence model. This entails fulfilling any store, catalogue, or online order from a single inventory pool and supplier network. With this model UO tries to retool their supply chains to drive greater profitability, particularly during the crucial holiday peak season (Harrington, 2007).

They use three channels: retail, direct-to-consumer, and wholesale. UO sells women's and men's clothing, accessories and home furnishings through nearly 500 stores/ web shops worldwide and the wholesale division makes, sells, and distributes clothing.

The company manages six distribution centres across the U.S. and Europe. In the U.S the two of the distribution centres focus on retail and the other two focus on Internet activities. The company also owns two distribution centres in the United Kingdom to make sure they can supply their European stores with the latest collections. (Davidson)

In order to organize their retail store operations as effective as possible they organized the stores into geographic areas or districts, each with a district manager. District managers are responsible for several stores and monitor and supervise individual store managers. Each store manager is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of one of the stores. In addition to a store manager, the staff of a typical Urban Outfitters includes a visual manager, several department managers and a full/ part-time sales and visual staff. The staff of a store

may also include a customer care manager who helps tailor the shopping experience to the needs of the targeted customers. (Urban Outfitters inc, 2012)

### *European distribution*

The company sells its products around the world through multiple channels: specialty retail stores, websites and catalogues. Besides global retail and direct-to-consumer channels, Urban Outfitters has a wholesale division (Urban Outfitters optimizes its supply chain using Manhattan's supply).

UO plans to expand its customer base in North America and Europe through additional locations and direct-to-consumer offerings. To meet all of its future goals, the group is currently restructuring its teams at the heart of its European headquarters. URBN, which up to now had been working with partners for the distribution of its products in Europe, is going to open a second distribution centre in England this Summer, with two buildings in the town of Rushden, Northamptonshire (Urban Outfitters expects to triple its European presence by 2015, 2011).

Richard A. Hayne, CEO of Urban Outfitters stated, "We have increased our product assortments, and we've seen a lot of success in increasing product assortment. " The company is learning that its consumers are responding positively to both direct and omni-channel efforts. Urban Outfitters is working to respond to consumer needs across its many product categories, and the expansion of these offerings will create direct opportunities for its retail stores" (Lynn, 2013).

### Distribution chain

The brand is distributed globally via direct channels, including the website site, mobile apps as well as in top department stores, and the brand's retail locations in the U.S., Canada and Europe. UO's distribution channels therefore include: retail, wholesale and e-commerce.

## 4.4 Customer analysis

In the following paragraphs UO's customer segment was described and identified.

### *Urban Outfitters customer analysis*

Urban Outfitters product assortment is designed for well-educated, urban-minded young adults, who are sociable and fashion-conscious. Their main goal is to acquire the brand loyalty and brand preference of these young men and women. UO tries to achieve this by creating a one of kind shopping experience for each store location and creating certain emotional connection with its customers.

### *Customer profile*

The average UO customer:

- 18-30 year old male/ female.
- Independent, affluent and lives in big cities and suburban areas.
- Has a funky and unique sense of style.
- Can be described as a "metropolitan hipster".
- Creative and tech savvy.
- Seems to be directed towards a higher class consumer in society.
- Socially-aware.

Demographically, Urban Outfitters targets single men and women between the ages of 18 and 30. However, Urban Outfitters does appeal to other age ranges such as young teens. They target young adults who are interested in the mainstream, trendy, metropolitan-hipster/individualistic style that Urban Outfitters offers. The brand tries to offer a wide variety of styles and fashion, respectively allowing its customers to create a style of their own (Taylor J. , 2007).

Due to the variety of the products sold by Urban Outfitters, the buying behaviour of the consumer varies; the customer may buy the products online or in stores. With their online web shop, they offer their global customers, who do not have a UO store location nearby, the opportunity to still buy the products online ( Jordan Taylor,2007).

Furthermore UO's target group characteristics include being high educated, tech savvy, liberal and socially conscious of the needs and problems of the society they live in. Hence the reason, why Urban Outfitters geographically targets university students. This group mostly embodies the above description. UO targets these people by locating stores near colleges, universities, and friendly neighbourhoods. In addition, they also target young adults who live in semi-urban and urban settings.

### *Target group and sustainability*

Sustainability and ethics in business are becoming more important for consumers, forcing companies to take steps towards a more sustainable business model. With sustainability on the rise in The Netherlands, Urban Outfitters needs to find a way to connect to its Dutch target market by using sustainability in its strategy. There are currently approximately 2-million Dutch consumers (approximately 15% of the population) who actively strive for a sustainable lifestyle. In combination with the 12% who subscribe to the values of sustainability but not yet put it into practice in everyday life, there is a potential segment of 25-30% of the Dutch population that takes an active interest in sustainability when evaluating a purchase (*Netherlands at glance*). With sustainability becoming more important, this customer segment could be interesting for Urban Outfitters.

However, Urban Outfitters is not known for their ethical and responsible way of doing business. While targeting socially conscious and liberal young adults, the company has been regularly in the news this past year, due to controversies. Richard Hayne, the CEO of the company, has for instance, been accused of funding anti-gay civil rights campaigns while targeting sales to liberal and socially conscious young adults (Judkis, 2012). Moreover, both Urban Outfitters and Anthropologie are repeatedly accused of stealing designs of independent artists and in addition, the brand has been regularly in the news this past year, due to controversies surrounding their products. From T-shirts that seem to promote eating disorders and depression to stickers that proudly display marijuana leaves, Urban Outfitters is consistently facing more and more criticism on its merchandise (staff, 2013).

Furthermore, the brand also received the lowest ranking on the ethical retailing list in 2009, published by the ethical-consumer.org website. The list revealed Urban Outfitters failing

policies in terms of ethical standards (19 companies score worse than Primark in new ethical trading of clothes shops, 2009).

All the controversies surrounding could be damaging to their brand. Due to all the criticism, some of their target audience actively avoids the retail store and some celebrities have spoken out against the brand. Moreover, UO has been criticized by anti-drug and gay rights groups and even an anti-Urban Outfitters campaign has been launched.

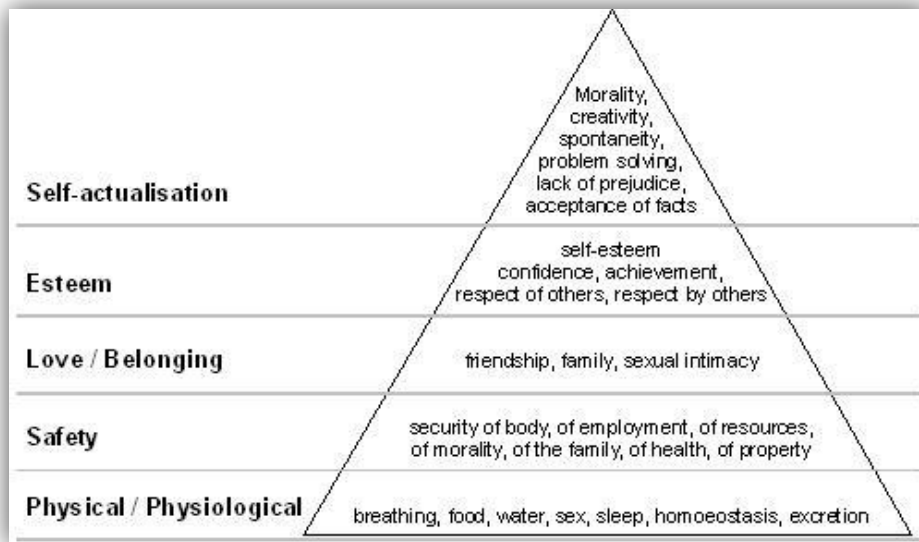
All these factors are not beneficial to the brand's reputation. The controversies and criticism could lead to difficulties with their value added strategy and influence their customer relationships; the negative criticism could lead to devaluation of their products and difficulties connecting with its target group.

#### Secondary Target Market

Moreover, UO may also appeal to other age groups apart from their primary target group. More and more teenagers ( 13- 17 years olds) are buying UO items. Although this group might not have a lot of money to spend, they are still sensitive and aware of various fashion trends (*Jordan Taylor,2007*).

## Maslow model

The Maslow pyramid of needs model is classification system for motives. When analysing the UO target group, it is important to see how UO tries to meet their needs. To make this more clear a Maslow pyramids of needs was used.



The two levels that Urban outfitters taps on the most is : love and belonging and self-actualization.

The third level of the pyramid, explains the motivational factors for a consumer to purchase a particular product. The third level includes the, the concept of decision making, the self-concept theory, and lifestyle profiling, also known as psychographic segmentation oriented, with apparel, accessories, and cosmetics leading the way (*Identification and Analysis, 2004*).



In this stage the consumer purchases retail are not merely for protection and serviceability but mostly for attracting attention and feeling a sense of belonging to a particular social stratum (*Identification and Analysis, 2004*). The brand tries to reinforce the image of the Urban outfitters community by having a big presence on social media and blogs where they can share and interact with the brand and one other. Fans of the UO can for instance share photos of themselves wearing Urban Outfitters clothes on various social media sites including Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram. In addition to that online shoppers that visit the "Show Us Your OU" section of Urban Outfitters' website can view dozens of images supplied by fans of the brand and can shop the photo by simply hovering over the image and clicking the "Shop It" button (*Denman, 2014*).

The second level UO slightly taps on, is probably the fifth level: The Need for Self-Actualization. UO targets young cultured metropolitan young adults with an individualistic taste in clothing, who acquire self-fulfilment through art, traveling and are interested by unique items. Retailers have the power to shape and mould perceptions. UO group understands the importance of feeling part of a social group, while still being in tune with your personal identity. It does so by offering their target group, a product range that fits their overall lifestyle as well as their personal ideals.

#### Abell model

By using Abell business model we could gain more insight in the customer's needs.

Customers: men and women between the ages of 18 to 30 years and teenagers.

Customer's needs: diverse, trend, affordable and quality product assortment.

Technology used: social media, website, mobile apps etc.

## 4.5 Competitor analysis

### *Zara*

Zara is brand carried out by the Spanish parent company Inditex group. Inditex group is a large fashion distribution company that features brands like: Pull&Bear, Zara Home, Massimo Dutti and Bershka. Zara is now one of the most successful brands of Inditex and one of the most successful retailers in fast fashion. They try to offer high quality apparel for reasonable prices. Zara's prices are similar to UO. However, Zara is more of a global fashion retailer and is well-represented across the world with 2000 stores (Qureshi, 2012). The brand's has built its strategy around consumer trends, embracing the fast-changing tastes of its customers. Fresh inventory is a key to Zara's sale strategy 'stocking very little and updating collection often', with stores getting stocked with new designs twice a week. Zara has developed a highly responsive supply chain that enables delivery of new collections as soon as a trend emerges.

They have become one of the largest and most successful fashion companies in the world and they run over 20 stores in the Netherlands, in contrast to UO who only has one store (Zara). This could give the brand an advantage over UO, making it easier for their customers to visit one of their many stores. Customers will be more reluctant to travel a long time simply to for instance to buy or exchange a product they have bought at UO. Nowadays, Zara has a web shop where everybody can purchase their products online. In addition, they also provide an app for the Smartphones to purchase products from the store and have it delivered either at home or at the nearest store.

Hennes and Mauritz, also known as H&M was established in 1947 in Sweden (History). The global fashion retailer has 3200 stores in 54 different markets and is the second largest fashion retailer in the world and is still planning to further expand (Facts about H&M). The company has more than 118 stores located across the Netherlands, and in addition to Zara, H&M is considered on the most important players in the Dutch fashion retail market. H&M main concept is to offer the best quality-price ratio for fashion forward apparel. The brand tries to incorporate the latest fashion, from good quality materials and low costs. H&M also provides affordable fashion lines similar to its competitors, but with a 'fast turnaround' from design to production to sales. The direct distribution strategy is used by the company to maintain low costs and fast time to market.

Just like Urban Outfitters and Zara, H&M is investing more and more in technology and marketing activities. They try to sell more products through their website and even created an app for smartphones users. With this app, customers can view products and collections online and purchase these products. With these investments H&M aims to strengthen its market position for the long-term and secure its future expansions. While these investments are leading to an increasing of the cost, the company remains financially stable (Milne, 2013).

#### *Secondary competitors*

UO's secondary competitors which offer the same/ similar products in terms of appliances and furniture, as part of their wide product offering, include: Ikea and Dutch furniture store Leen Bakker.

#### *Market positioning*

Urban Outfitters Inc. is profiling itself as "lifestyle merchandising company" who offers a high end apparel and furniture manufacturer in the highly fragmented apparel industry. Urban Outfitters has gained a competitive advantage over its competitors by implementing a strategy focused on product differentiation, brand prestige, and customer loyalty. They also created a competitive advantage by offering eclectic merchandise and a unique retail experience. The firm is known for its unique store environment, which seeks to create an emotional bond with the consumer. Its two main competitors are H&M and Zara. (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007)

## 4.6 Ansoff model and DESTEP analysis

The Ansoff model is a marketing tool which helps companies, when entering a new market or introducing a new product in a current market. This marketing model gave me the opportunity to analyse, which strategies UO combines to help grow the organisation.

### 7. Ansoff Matrix



#### *Diversification*

One of the main reasons why Urban outfitters is successful, is because of its broad product range and its ability to introduce diversification in its markets. The brand has been able to attract its customers by introducing an eclectic mix of full price clothing and also introduce home goods in most of its stores. Product diversification is one of the main factors driving Urban Outfitter's success and the company maintains its success by keeping their products very eclectic and introducing new product lines.

#### *New development*

To grow sales UO has launched an expansion plan targeting Europe and Asia. Urban Outfitters has managed to make big profits by going global. It has managed to open new stores in different countries and also introduce new products to sale. It now runs 180 stores worldwide across the United States, Canada and Europe.

## 4.7 DESTEP analysis

In the text below, the important factors influencing the organization in terms of demographics, economy, sociocultural and technology will be discussed.

### *Demographics*

According to recent researches from the TNO, CBS and the ministry of health in the Netherlands, the country will face certain demographic developments in the future. Firstly, the population will grow less compared to the last two decades. Furthermore, the country will face a rapidly growing elderly population. As a result, the labour force will decline and the government might increase the spending on healthcare and pensions. Moreover, the number of young people from 0-19 years in 2025 will decrease from 25% to 21% of the total Dutch population (Bevolkingen: zijn er in Nederland verschillen naar regio?, 2014)

This is negative news, considering the UN targets young adults. In addition to these changes, there are growing regional differences within the country. The population in the Randstad will, for instance, have the largest growth, while shrinking of the population will probably occur in lightly populated regions (Bevolkingen: zijn er in Nederland verschillen naar regio?, 2014).

### *Economic factors*

The Netherlands is known for its stable business climate, which creates opportunities for potential foreign companies and investors. In addition to its known stability, the Dutch economy has a strong international focus, as the Netherlands is one of the EU's most dynamic centres of trade and industry. With the country being located near the North Sea, it plays a key role as a main port and distribution centre for companies operating worldwide. All the above-mentioned reasons contribute to their favourable economic climate (Berends).

On the other hand, the economic recession hit the Netherlands hard. Because of its open economy and many distribution activities, the country is more vulnerable to economic downturn compared with other EU countries. Since the economic crisis, retail spending is under pressure since 2010, since then the Dutch economy fell in and out of recession. Important reasons for this are the declining export growth, the bad housing market and people have less to spend. When taking a closer look at retail, we see that 70% of all the retail spending went to clothing. Most of this turnover came from women's apparel with (38

percent of the spending). The way people buy their clothes has also taken a major shift. With the introduction of foreign online companies such as Zalando on the Dutch market. Online shopping is on the rise. With online sales growing each year (online sales in clothing grew in 2012 with 15.8%), as a result, most stores are forced to keep up with this trend, to not lose customers (Kledingzaken).

### *Social-cultural factors*

The Netherlands is a modernizing international society and has high quality of living for people. Holland has a long and colourful history. In addition to that the Netherlands has high quality labour force. Moreover young people in the Netherlands are becoming more and more highly educated. The number of young people with a higher education diploma is high in comparison with the rest of the world and in addition to that, The Netherlands has the highest percentage of young people with a higher education diploma in Europe (education inspectorate, 2010-2011). This presents a good opportunity for UO, these high educated Dutch young adults, fit perfectly into the Urban outfitters customer profile, which mostly targets high educated youths.

Furthermore, when looking at the Dutch fashion mentality we see that the Dutch tend to put the emphasis on functionality and quality and do not really see themselves as fashion forward. The fashion forward part is a bit negative, however, this fashion mentality might be beneficial to Urban outfitters. Urban Outfitters puts the emphasis on the quality of their clothing as well as the broad product range they offer. Which might be seen as functional; you can for instance, walk in an UO store and purchase not only clothing, but also home décor items, accessories, gifts, footwear etc. These factors might appeal to the Dutch consumer.

### *Technological factors*

Internet retailing is on the rise in the Netherlands. The ever increasing popularity of the internet and online purchase, lead to the fact that many retailers need to make their products available for online purchase in order to gain a slice of the pie. This can be explained by the customer convenience it provides and the number of good deals offered to the customers when buying products online. Online retailers such as Wehkamp and Zalando are nowadays the biggest online retail shops within the Dutch online market. In addition to online retailing, mobile technology is also on the rise. Many fashion retailers on the Dutch market provide

their customers with apps, that will for instance notify their customers when new collections have arrived, offer special deals etc.

### *Political factors*

The Netherlands is noted for its political and economic stable environment. In order for Urban Outfitters to be successful in the Dutch market, it must comply with the country's legislation and policies.

Import duty: the duty rates applied to imports into the Netherlands typically range between 0% (for example books) and 17% (for apparel). Some products, such as Laptops, Mobile Phones, Digital cameras and Video Game consoles, are duty free. Certain goods may be subject to additional duties depending on the country of manufacture. (Duty calculator country guide).

Labelling: UO's products are imported from the US to the Netherlands, therefore the company needs to ensure that all their clothing products meet the Dutch requirements regarding labelling.

### Taxation

When look at the Dutch fiscal system we see that, the country has a well-operated taxation system. The Dutch fiscal environment and relative low tax rate compared to other European countries creates favourable and attractive conditions for multinationals' such as Urban Outfitters.

## 5. Industry analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter UO strengths and weaknesses are analysed along with their threats and opportunities. In addition, the characteristics of the Dutch retail industry are assessed.

### 5.2 Industry analysis

The five forces model is the framework for determining the degree of competition and profitability within the industry. Since UO will be operating in the Dutch retail industry, this particular industry alongside its potential influences on the company was analysed.

#### *Threat of New Entrants*

The threat of new entrants will ultimately increase competition amongst existing firms by becoming more price conscious. Economies of scale describe a production process in which an increase in the number of units produced causes a decrease in the average cost of each unit. In an industry where economies of scale possibly exist, new entrants must compete at a disadvantage with large, more established firms that have lowered production costs. The Dutch retail sector has many mature firms, which have achieved moderate economies of scale from their status resulting in greater operating leverage for price competition. This will ultimately disadvantage smaller retail firms. Because of this inequality it is more difficult for new small entrants to enter this field. (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

This is beneficial for multinational Urban Outfitters, in addition, Urban Outfitters already made a name for itself through their online web shop, before opening the flagship store in the Netherlands. This made it easier to enter the Dutch market, considering that their Dutch target customers are already familiar with their products.

#### *Threat of Substitute Products*

The Dutch industry is competitively divided on either price or differentiation. If a business sells you something you can't get elsewhere, at least not easily, then that business has high customer switching costs. In more simple words; it is harder for a consumer to switch suppliers. Firms that have lower consumer switching costs will compete more on price and



less on differentiation. The H&M and Zara for instance, sell apparel that is almost homogenous in some regards which indicates that consumers will likely buy based on price. As a result, this increases their buying power amongst these competitors and these firms mostly face threat of substitute products from department stores and factory outlets. Firms that have higher switching costs, such as UO will compete more on differentiation and quality than price. Urban Outfitters for instance can afford to sell a plaid flannel shirt for a much higher price than its competitors since they have achieved product differentiation and variety. Therefore, for firms with high degrees of differentiation, substitution really is not a relevant factor (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

### *Bargaining Power of Buyers*

Buyers in any industry would love to be able to buy a particular product at a low cost. The harder that it is to accomplish this goal, the less advantage they have against the industry. This industry consists more of specialty stores with a unique set of products. Buyers are less sensitive to prices when the product is differentiated. For instance, if a particular product was the same as another product, except that it was made by a different company and had a higher price; customers would be more likely to choose the product that was the cheapest. On the other hand, if the product was different in some way and had certain features that other products did not then customers might be more inclined to accept the higher priced product (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

Urban Outfitters tries to produce unique products that separates itself from a competitive market. Also, the company focuses on a wide range of customers, from ages 18-30. When you focus on a wider range of customers rather than one particular age group you will have more buyers in the industry creating more demand for the products. The switching costs in the Dutch industry are both high and low. Low switching cost in the Dutch retail industry can be caused by an undifferentiated product. If for instance UO raises their price on jeans but H&M has a sale on them, then buyers might be more inclined to shop at H&M. On the other hand, this Dutch retail industry can also have high switching costs due to differentiated products. The retail industry is based upon tastes and preferences. Given that firms do not offer identical apparel lines for the sole purpose of attracting their targeted consumer basis, identifies the abovementioned high consumer switching costs. Urban

Outfitters tries to sell unique items, which cannot be found at any other apparel store. In conclusion, buyers have moderate bargaining power due to high switching cost, high number of buyers, and a differentiated industry. (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

#### Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Suppliers bargaining power is the analysis of the number of suppliers to the number of firms in the industry. The analysis of suppliers is a mirror image of buyers. A dream industry for suppliers would be an industry that contained few companies and few substitutes available to their customers. This would give suppliers an advantage over companies and they could raise the price on retailers. If a company can purchase their retail items for a cheaper cost through one supplier versus another they will do so. This causes suppliers to compete in the industry (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

Urban Outfitters on the other hand, is a store that is divided into two sections; one section is retail and the other is wholesale of goods. They have labelled their wholesale goods with the term "Free People". Urban Outfitters sales their wholesale line in many different stores throughout the world, and because of this they have an advantage at selling certain goods cheaper than their competitors. Most of the industry imports all of their retail from various foreign suppliers. In most of these countries labour cost is cheap as opposed to domestic suppliers.

Due to a high number of suppliers, low switching cost, and cheap foreign labour cost, bargaining power of suppliers is low in this industry (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

#### *Competitive rivalry within the industry*

The retail apparel industry has continuously become more and more competitive due to the number of competitors within this industry. Retail is one of the biggest industries in The Netherlands. Many competitors in this industry try to differentiate themselves through store environment, brand recognition, and customer service. To be profitable in the high end retail industry, a firm must maintain a strong brand image and offer unique and distinct products. These two objectives can be accomplished through a strategy based on differentiation. By providing superior product quality, product variety, and exceptional customer service, a firm can distinguish itself from its competitors and develop a loyal customer base (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

Urban Outfitters heavily relies on product differentiation and has established a separate subsidiary that solely maintains and manages future and existing brands and defends against infringement. This is synonymous with UO competitors since their sales are based upon product differentiation, name recognition and reputation. With so much competition present in the Dutch industry, Urban Outfitters needs to be creative and utilize innovative approaches to how they market their merchandise to customers and create brand awareness (Contents Urban Outfitters spring 2007, 2007).

Five Forces Conclusion

Overall, URBN operates in a highly competitive industry that includes a high threat of entry from potential players. This industry is highly fragmented since apparel is based more upon tastes and preferences given the ongoing fashion trends that mould this sporadic industry. Since more firms fall under the product differentiated category, customers have relatively low bargaining power. Given the possibilities of manufacturing abroad, suppliers have relatively low power as well since competition is primarily derived from low costs.

Threat of New Entrants	low-moderate
Customer Power	moderate
Supplier power	Relatively low
Competitive rivalry	High

### 5.3 SWOT analysis and confrontation matrix

#### Internal Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>UO offers a broad product range for all things urban. The merchandise ranges from clothing to home décor.</b>	The target customer group excludes other target groups that have higher disposable incomes.
<b>Those outside of major cities can purchase the items online.</b>	Focused on small subculture, little opportunity for mass marketing
<b>They target customers between the ages of 18-30. As a result UO has the opportunity to serve their target group for up to 12 years.</b>	Not as many stores as other companies.
<b>The brand's emotional connection with the customer is very strong.</b>	The customer age group is becoming more conscious about goods produced overseas and the working conditions of the employees and UO is not known for their ethical trading.
<b>Carries a number of other brands; attracting wider variety of customers</b>	Not as many stores as their competitors (Zara, H&M etc.)

(Chaareen, 2013).

## External Analysis

Opportunities	Threats
<b>Has the ability to grow product range to maintain its appeal to its customers.</b>	Complaints about high prices; young target customers aren't known for its high disposable incomes.
<b>Tap further into the growing menswear market.</b>	Controversies may occur any given time in the future; products have been under fire for graphic shirts that promoted alcohol and vulgar language.
<b>Opportunity to expand into international markets.</b>	Economic recession leading to less stable economic conditions for people.
<b>Investing in sustainable and ethical retailing.</b>	Socially conscious target group might be discouraged to buy products due to all the controversies surrounding Urban Outfitter's products.
<b>Developing mobile technology.</b>	Target group does not grow rapidly (ageing population).
<b>Online through viral marketing.</b>	Competitors such as H&M are responding to the growing consumer demand for designer collaborations by expanding their brand assortment. This may pose a threat to UO sales.

## Confrontation matrix

Figuur 5 SWOT analysis	Intern	Extern
<b>Positives</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>S1. UO offers an eclectic mix of products. The merchandise ranges from clothing to home décor.</p> <p>S2. Those outside of major cities can purchase online.</p> <p>S3. They target customers between the ages of 18-30. As a result UO has the opportunity to serve their target group for up to 12 years.</p> <p>S4. The customer is less likely to have a family; therefore having more money to spend on apparel.</p> <p>S5. The brand's emotional connection with the customer is very strong.</p> <p>S.6. Carries a number of other brands; attracting wider variety of customers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>O1. Has the ability to grow product range and maintain its appeal to its customers.</p> <p>O2. Opportunity to expand into international markets.</p> <p>O3. Investing in sustainable and ethical retailing.</p> <p>O4. Can connect with customers through text messaging and social networking sites.</p> <p>O.5. Tap further into the growing menswear market.</p> <p>O.6. Using online viral marketing.</p> <p>O.7. Create even more rapidly changing store environments each Season.</p> <p>O.8. More flexible production channels closer to the home market.</p> <p>O.9. Cooperation with designers.</p> <p>O.10. Cooperation with competitors.</p> <p>O.11. Improving its pricing strategy.</p> <p>O.12. Personal shopper stylist</p>
<b>Negatives</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weakness</b></p> <p>W1. The target customer group excludes other target</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <p>T1. complaints about high prices from young target</p>

	<p>groups that have higher disposable incomes.</p> <p>W2. Stores are located mostly in urban areas, limiting their reach.</p> <p>W3. Focused on small subculture, little opportunity for mass marketing,</p> <p>W.4 Other brands may develop their image/ position; this could influence how UO will be perceived.</p>	<p>customers.</p> <p>T2. Controversies: can present itself anytime in the future; products have been under fire for graphic shirts that promoted alcohol and vulgar language.</p> <p>T3. Target group does not grow rapidly (ageing population).</p> <p>T4. Socially conscious target group might be discouraged to buy products due to all the controversies surrounding Urban Outfitter's products.</p> <p>T.5. Economic situation</p> <p>T.6. Scarcity of natural resources (such as cotton and other raw materials)</p> <p>T.7. Fierce competition</p> <p>T.8 Fast fashion mentality within the market.</p>
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## 6. Strategies

### ***Short term strategy***

S1- O7- T7

Because competition within the retail market can be cutthroat, fashion retailers need to be creative and innovative to remain on top. Urban Outfitters biggest strengths is, that the retailer functions as a one stop shop for not only, apparel but also home items, gifts, foot ware etc. A broad product range, distinguishes UO from their competitors.

In addition, to the diverse products, Urban Outfitters keeps distinguishing itself by creating changing store displays every season. To reinforce their diverse product range, they could design more store displays per season that could complement their product range and product presence. Creating more attractive store displays could attract more attention, can draw the customer in the store and potentially land more sales. These are one of UO's possibilities to face the fierce competition of fashion retail and distinguish itself in this market.

S1 UO offers an eclectic mix of products - O7 Create even more rapidly changing store environments each season - T7 Fierce competition.

### ***Mid-term strategy***

T.7- O.5- O4- -09

Fierce competition within the fashion retail market means that every brand should grasp the available opportunities ahead of their competitors. One of retail's biggest opportunities nowadays is the growing men's market. Big opportunities remain for retailers mid markets, given that there are far fewer men's wear rivals on the compared to women's wear. Urban Outfitters should therefore up its game before competition intensifies. To tap further into this growing market, Urban Outfitters should find out how to connect with these customers and which channels are the most effective to reach them. Staying in the know when it comes to new technology developments will be helpful. Another way to no stay ahead is to recognize trends in the market. Collaborating with fashion designers is one of the biggest trends in fashion retail nowadays. Competitors such as H&M and C&A already jumped in on



his trend. Apart from improving a brand's image and spreading consumer awareness with a further reach, brand collaboration strategies could help UO to navigate through a less familiar market by joining forces with a brand that understands a given demographic. Urban Outfitters could therefore collaborate with a brand which is very popular in the Netherlands, in order to further expand their brand awareness.

T7 Fierce competition. - O4 Can connect with customers through text messaging and social networking sites. - O5 Tap further into the growing menswear market - O9 Cooperation with designers.

### **T1.- O11- O12**

One of the most heard complaints about UO is their pricing strategy. The Urban Outfitters brand represents nearly 50% of the corporation's sales (URB, 2011), and with the target consumer being of student age, income levels are much less than they might be for a retailer targeting more older and affluent target groups (Gibbs, 2012). Although their prices are slightly higher than their competitors, UO tries to offer their customers an unique and eclectic range of products to offer their customers value for their money. To offer their customers a broader service UO could, for instance, offer a personal shopper stylist to their customers. Who will offer them complimentary style advice and guide them through the collections. With this UO could expand its service and add more value to its UO brand.

T1 complaints about high prices from their target customers. - O11 Improving its pricing strategy. - O12 Personal shopper stylist.

## **Long term strategy**

T2-03-010

Growing concerns about sustainability are more and more influencing consumer choices. With fast fashion becoming increasingly more important, ethical and sustainability are being pushed into the back ground. This type of apparel is adding to the “throwaway fashion attitude” and has increased the speed of the fashion cycle. With Urban Outfitters being one of the world biggest retailers and with all the controversies that sparked up around UO’s ethical and sustainable retailing, the brand needs to regroup. UO needs to prioritize their sustainable and ethical retailing. UO needs to get more aware of the (economic) opportunities that sustainability and ethical trading offers and have to learn how to translate and use this concept commercially. They could for instance, offer their customers reusable shopping bags( reducing costs of plastics bags), create ethical and sustainable product lines and even ask their shoppers to recycle bags of unwanted clothing, from any UO brand, to then re-sell what it can to the second-hand or vintage markets and in return offer those customers discounts on new purchases. Another opportunity that might arise is an enhanced cooperation among retailers. For instance, these competitors could share facilities, centres and vehicle etc. Sharing such (scarce) resources amongst retailers may be the way forward for retailers. Either way UO cannot ignore all these new developments and therefore has to act on these new challenges. Some aspects will require investment by the company. However, investing in sustainability may benefit the company both directly in terms of cost and indirectly through customer recognition of their activities.

**T2.** Controversies can present itself anytime in the future - **O3** Investing in sustainable and ethical retailing - **O10** Cooperation with competitors.

**T6- O8- 010**

With fashion retailers making use of raw materials to manufacture their products, they need to be well prepared for the time that natural resources will become scarce and increase in price. This scarcity, on the other hand can also offer (marketing) opportunities in the retail sector. For instance, due to the increased prices of cotton and environmental challenges in cotton production, apparel manufactures could use cheaper and more sustainable alternatives as. Furthermore, scarcity of resources can offer other opportunities. Scarcity

might result in higher price and it will probably encourage the search for more flexible production channels closer to the home market. In addition to that UO could cooperate with its competitors to tackle the issue of scarcity.

**T6** Scarcity of natural resources - **O8** More flexible production channels closer to the home market - **O10** Cooperation with competitors.

## 6.1 Marketing mix

### 6.1 Current marketing mix

#### *Products*

UO is known for its highly flexible product range and its mix of own label and third party branded assortment. The stores sell products ranging from: apparel, accessories and shoe wear to furniture and gift items.

The 4 main brands of the Urban outfitter group:

- UO: Ladies and men's fashion, accessories, home décor and gift items.
- Anthrologies: high end and casual product from women's garments to home goods.
- Free People: casual women's wear that enhances their individualistic style.
- Terrain : they offer home and garden assortment, and emphasize the "going green culture".
- BHLDN : They offer a bridal collections, jewellery, shoes, accessories and decorations.

To summarize the text above, Urban outfitters Inc. operates under four retail stores, with each store having its own distinctive style and target group. The brand tries to add value to all four brands by offering the right product mix to tight target group.

#### *Price*

Price is an important aspect of the marketing mix, having a set price equals a lucrative profit and good sells. The UO prices range from nine euros till 200 euros. Although the price of Urban Outfitters products is much higher than competitors such as Primark or H&M, Urban Outfitters always uses their product uniqueness and quality to support their pricing strategy. They use an off- pricing strategy which enables them to sell high value products from major-label brand such as Vivian Westwood and See By Chloe at a significant lower price.

Although UO use prices that are seemingly higher than some competitors. However, if compared with competitors such as Zara and Topshop, the pricing of Urban Outfitters shares a quite similar level. However Urban Outfitter tries to differentiate itself by charging affordable prices for good and 'unique 'quality products. In addition to that they have set up certain objectives for their strategy; to make sure it fits well with their target audience's need and expectations.

Objectives price strategy:

- To continue offering a wide range of prices between €9 to €200 (depending on the type of product).
- To continue offering an average price of an item between €30 and €40.
- To continue to offer prices that maximizes profit margins.
- To continue to use promotional discount pricing such as the “2 for” and “3 for” in casual ware.
- To continue to offer seasonal discount pricing.
- To continue value-based pricing with exclusive lines such as Urban Renewal and luxury boutique items (Taylor J. , 2007).

## **Place**

UO has about 180 stores worldwide. The company aims at locating their stores in busy areas such as big malls and cities. For their flagship store in the Netherlands, they have chosen the shopping district de Kalverstraat in Amsterdam. This shopping area is located at the heart of Amsterdam and it attracts thousands of people every day. The Kalverstraat is strictly pedestrianized so it is a very pleasant and popular shopping district and the majority of the national and international retailers are located in this street. Therefore the UO fits right in at city centre.

## **The stores**

The Urban Outfitters stores are often located in unconventional retail spaces, including a former movie theatre, bank and stock exchange. A majority of the Urban Outfitters stores that opened in fiscal 2008 were located in specialty retail centres, upscale street locations and enclosed shopping malls. (Store environment, 2009)

To make sure that the place aspect of their strategy fits well and enhances their overall strategy, the UO has set up certain objectives.

Objectives place:

- To continue offering stores in semi-urban and urban areas
- To continue opening stores in major metropolitan areas

across the world

- To continue offering stores in select university communities
- To continue offering stores that offer large floor space as well as multiple floors/levels continent.

(Taylor J. , 2007).

## **Promotion**

UO tries to promote their products through their catalogues and websites. In addition to online activities, the company also has a reputation for trying to attract attention through: their visible store locations, creative store design, broad merchandise selection and visual presentation. These are key factors for customers to enter and explore the UO stores and buy merchandise.

Marketing activities for each of the retail store concepts include special event promotions and a variety of public relations activities designed to create community awareness for their stores and products. Each store offers an eclectic range of products, from clothing to home décor items.

These items merchandised in the store, in combination with a creative and young ambiance in the store, to make it look like your first apartment. This technique is used to connect with the customers on a more personal level.

In addition to the websites, catalogues and store design, UO has a very strong presence on social media. The brand owns a Facebook, Twitter and Instagram account to keep their followers updated on the latest news. Furthermore, the brand also developed a new app system which sends notification about sales and new collection arrivals to its customers.

## 6.2 Improved marketing mix

When looking at UO's strategy we see that their strategy does not need to change drastically to align with the Dutch market.

### *Product*

UO is known for its quality products and diverse product range, although a diverse product assortment has its advantages it also has its downsides. Introducing new products may be successful in one market but a flop in the other. For instance, an UO product promoting gun culture might be popular in the US, but a flop in The Netherlands. Therefore different products might have a different outcome depending on the market they are introduced.

In addition to assessing different market reactions, UO need to respond to changes in customers' needs (such as changing trends and attitudes) and monitor these needs and make sure their diverse product offer is still well aligned with the customer's needs.

### *Price*

Alongside their diverse product range, the prices at UO also range in price. One of the complaints regarding their price strategy is that prices are too high. According to the survey 57% of the customers responded that UO could improve their pricing. Although their prices are slightly higher than its competitors, UO uses a value based price strategy, in which they try to offer unique and quality items to their customers. However, to respond to this complaint, Urban Outfitters should maintain the diverse product assortment and unique items in order to provide value for money for its customers. In addition to that, they could also use promotional tools offering promotional discount pricing and keep offering an eclectic and unique product range so,

### *Place*

UO first store in the Netherlands is situated in the city centre of Amsterdam. The company aims at locating their stores in busy areas such as big malls and cities. To stay aligned with its place strategy when opening a new store in the Netherlands, UO should mostly focus on the area in and around the Randstad. This area in the Netherlands is known to have a great range

of big cities, a huge student population and is known for having the highest income rates in the country (Gemiddeld inkomen per provincie, 2008). Therefore when it comes to, opening a new store, the Randstad area, is the area offering the best opportunities. Moreover, the results of the survey have shown, that a majority of the correspondents have suggested The Hague to be the best choice for the next store location. The Hague is known for its dynamic and international character as well as being one of the biggest cities of the Netherlands. All the above mentioned factors fit into Urban Outfitters' place strategy and qualify The Hague as next location for a store opening.

### *Promotion*

Although UO has a well-designed promotion strategy, they could improve some aspects of their promotion strategy. One of those is mobile technology. The global fashion retail market has become more and more technology-conscious. Although Urban Outfitters just recently put out an app, the company could capitalize more on this fast developing trend. It could do so by further developing its mobile website and personalize their mobile website pages through tailored landing pages, offers, and recommendations. Therefore adopting new technology to not only attract and retain customers, but also grow will be important. (Retail Trends and Predictions 2014)

Another aspect Urban outfitter could improve is collaborating more with top designers. UO's competitors (H&M) are already actively taken advantage of this trend. Attaching a big designer to your brand will attract a lot of interest and attention of customers. This might come in handy, when the company wants to establish itself in new markets. Urban Outfitter could for instance, collaborate with a well-known and popular designer that fits their style (such as Super trash from Olcay Gulsen). To create a buzz around its products and gain the attention of the Dutch customer. In addition to designers, UO could also collaborate with bloggers. Survey results shown that 96% of the correspondents use blogs to keep up with the latest trends. Considering fashion blogs are increasing in popularity among young adults and its important position in fashion. UO could collaborate with Dutch fashion bloggers such as Sabrina Meijer from AFTRDR or Negin Mirsaleh from Neginmirsalehi.com to promote their products.



Furthermore, sustainability and ethical trading could be one of the most important aspects of UO future promotion strategy. Consumer concerns regarding environmental issues are growing and this shows through the survey carried out. A majority of the correspondents (95%) claimed to find sustainability important.

Promoting and supporting eco-friendly fashion, through eco-friendly product lines, or working with eco-friendly designers could attract new customers. Promoting environmentally friendly methods can set UO apart from its competitors and attract new customers who want to buy products and services from an environmentally friendly business. Sustainability and ethical trading could be important part of UO's competitive positioning.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendation

Urban Outfitters is an American based fashion retailer that offers an eclectic mix of products, ranging from apparel and accessories to home décor items and gifts. The brand targets an urban-minded audience between the ages of 18 to 30.

The company is now preparing for its further expansion in Europe by breaking into and further exploring, European retail markets. One of the European retail markets they have shown interest for is the Netherlands. The company already opened a Flagship store in Amsterdam. To analyse if the Netherlands is the right European market for them to further explore and expand, the following research question was formulated: *“How can Urban Outfitters further expand on the Dutch market”*

Both field and desk research were conducted in the quest of finding the answer of the research question. This paper analysed Urban Outfitters’ strengths and weaknesses, its growth strategy through the Ansoff model and the external factors influencing the company through a DESTEP analysis. In addition to these tools, a survey was also conducted among their Dutch target audience, in order to get a deeper understanding of their perceptions about Urban Outfitters.

After analysing all the findings it can be concluded that UO’s strategy does not need to change drastically to align with the Dutch market. However, in order to create a perfect fit for the Dutch market, the UO marketing mix does require some adjustments.

One of the things that stood out, after processing the customer surveys, was that a big part of customers found the prices of Urban outfitters too high (57%). A great number of people (75% of the correspondents) expressed that broad product range is one of their biggest strengths and 95% of the correspondents considered sustainability as an important issue.

To incorporate all these factors in UO's strategy for the Dutch market, the company needs to maintain its diversification and value added strategy and in addition, develop their CSR and promotion strategy.

Firstly, maintaining the company's diversification and value added strategy is key. Although the UO prices are slightly higher than their competitors, they try to provide the customers value for their money by offering an eclectic and unique product range. UO could use this strategy to justify their pricing strategy in the future.

Secondly, apart from maintaining its diversification and value added strategy, Urban Outfitters should also improve their promotion strategy. Urban Outfitter could for instance, create more brand awareness by collaborating with well-known Dutch designers. By collaborating with popular and well-known designers (such as Olcay Gulsen), the company could create an initial buzz and consumer interest around their products. In addition to the designer collaborations, UO could also collaborate with well-known bloggers (such as Sabrina Meijer and Negin Mirsaleh). Considering fashion blogs are increasing in popularity among young adults and its important position in fashion, UO could use these bloggers to create brand awareness and exposure to their target audience.


Moreover, it is recommendable that Urban Outfitters should invest more in their corporate social responsibility strategy as part of their promotion strategy. After analysing the survey, the results showed that 95% of the correspondents found that sustainability is an important issue. As the company has been under fire due to controversies surrounding their products, there is also an growing concern among their own target group about environmental and ethical issues. The company is not investing as much in sustainable and ethical retailing compared to their competitors. Sustainability and ethical trading could be an important part of UO's competitive positioning. By promoting and supporting "eco-friendly fashion", through eco-friendly product lines, or working with eco-friendly designers, urban Outfitters could set itself apart from its competitors.

With its diverse and broad product range, a promotion strategy which includes collaborations with top designers and bloggers and a well-designed CSR strategy, UO has a chance to set itself apart from its competitors and the chance to further expand in The Netherlands.




# Survey results

Link: <http://www.thesistools.com/web/?id=417091>




## Gender

A: Male		33 (30.84 %)
B: Female		74 (69.16 %)
		n = 107 # 107

## Age Group

A: <18		11 (10.28 %)
B: 18-25		59 (55.14 %)
C: 25-30		37 (34.58 %)
		n = 107 # 107

## Monthly Personal Income

A: <1500		28 (26.17 %)
B: 1500-2500		55 (51.4 %)
C: >2500		24 (22.43 %)
		n = 107 # 107






## Occupation

A: Student		40 (37.38 %)
B: Career in the private field		17 (15.89 %)
C: Career in the public field		34 (31.78 %)
D: Other		16 (14.95 %)
		n = 107 # 107

## What will influence you most in choosing your outfits?

A: personal preferences		72 (67.29 %)
B: Fashion trends		39 (36.45 %)
C: Uniqueness		56 (52.34 %)
D: Friend's recommendation		10 (9.35 %)
		n = 107 # 177

## Why do you choose Urban Outfitters?

A: Quality		64 (59.81 %)
B: service		3 (2.8 %)
C: Prices		0 (0 %)
D: Uniqueness of garments		40 (37.38 %)
E: Other (please specify below)		0 (0 %)
		n = 107 # 107

**Is Urban Outfitters your primary choice when shopping?**

A: Yes		38 (37.62 %)
B: No		30 (29.7 %)
C: It depends (please specify below)		33 (32.67 %)

n = 101  
# 101

**Why did you shop at Urban outfitters in the recently?**

A: Attracted by adds		4 (3.74 %)
B: Seasonal discount		16 (14.95 %)
C: Store display		15 (14.02 %)
D: Seasonal trends		105 (98.13 %)
E: other (please specify below)		0 (0 %)

n = 107  
# 140

**When speaking of Urban Outfitters, what first comes out of your mind?**

A: Broad product range		75 (70.75 %)
B: Individualistic style		41 (38.68 %)
C: Quality products		21 (19.81 %)
D: Reasonable price		1 (0.94 %)
D: Brand image		0 (0 %)

n = 106  
# 138

**When making future purchases, will you choose Urban Outfitters?**

A: Definitely		38 (36.19 %)
B: Maybe		65 (61.9 %)
C: No (please specify below)		2 (1.9 %)

n = 105  
# 105

**What do you think Urban Outfitters should improve?**

A: Price		57 (54.81 %)
B: Quality		5 (4.81 %)
C: design		52 (50 %)
D: Other (please specify below)		1 (0.96 %)




n = 104  
# 115

**Do you think that the Urban Outfitters flagship store in Amsterdam lived up?**




A: Yes		105 (100 %)
B: No (please specify below)		1 (0.95 %)

n = 105




**If UO was to open a new store in the Netherlands in what city would it be?**

A: Rotterdam		46 (43.4 %)
B: The Hague		59 (55.66 %)
C: Utrecht		15 (14.15 %)
		n = 106 # 120

**Q15 Do you believe in sustainability?**

A: yes		101 (95.28 %)
B: no		2 (1.89 %)
C: no opinion		3 (2.83 %)
		n = 106 # 106

**How do you keep up with the latest trends?**

A: Fashion blogs		102 (96.23 %)
B: Magazines		39 (36.79 %)
C: Other		1 (0.94 %)
		n = 106 # 142

**Legenda:**

n = aantal respondenten dat de vraag heeft gezien  
# = aantal ontvangen antwoorden

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