Introduction

Centre for Retail Research – the third year

As I write this, the Centre for Retail Research at Lund University has just entered the initial phase of its fourth fiscal year and looking back, the previous year has been full of activities leading to an expansion as well as enrichment of all dimensions of the Centre. In 2016, two new research programs were initiated: Retail Destination and Retail Innovation. In the first of the two, Retail Destination, the growth of city retail and how retail can be integrated into future urban growth is pivotal. The overarching importance of retail is essential from a general societal perspective as new types of urban growth are forming but also has special bearing for retail business located in and around cities. We believe that our mission here is to generate and contribute knowledge on how cities can grow and develop in ways that are attractive to future citizens. In the second program, Retail Innovation, studies will be done on different aspects of innovation capacity within the retail sector, based on market intelligence trends such as increasing e-commerce and heightened pressures of change on physical stores. The ability to progress and show creativeness is highly relevant and of great strategic importance to retailers with a desire to influence and form future conditions. This is also a partly new situation as retail innovation traditionally has been viewed as subordinate, whereas in times ahead it most likely will be considered a priority. The two new research programs have been on-going for approximately one year and more detailed presentations will follow below.

The uniqueness of the Centre’s activates is the prevailing coverage of all participating disciplines in all of its current, as well as concluded, research programs meaning that interdisciplinary research and elucidation is enabled in all research that the Centre undertakes. Two illustrating examples are the research programs on E-commerce and Competent Consumers respectively that lasted 2014-2015 and for which reports are available at the Centre’s website.

The past year also brought a number of other interesting events linked to the Centre for Retail Research. Together with LUFO (Lund University Food Studies), we arranged three meetings with leading representatives from the Swedish grocery industry; Karolina Hagberg at Coop, Anders Strålmans at Axfood and Petra Albuschus at ICA. Meetings such as these, which will be a reoccurring activity at the Centre, serve as a probe for what companies in the food business feel are topical issues, what future challenges they can identify. What demands and pressures – according to their viewpoint – will be placed on their companies’ resources tomorrow? By in this way facilitating knowledge sharing we as researchers gain an improved understanding and better calibration of sentiments within the food business, and can clearer relate to and identify the problems it is facing. Furthermore, the Centre – in collaboration with the Department of Service Management at Campus Helsingborg – arranged the first-ever doctoral course in retail with admitted students coming from all over Sweden. There has been a need for such an initiative for some time and the course was essential in strengthening the links between retail researchers and practitioners within retail. Headed by Cecilia Fredriksson, the course had active participation by teachers from all research areas of the Centre and, as mentioned, a nationwide enrolment of doctoral students.

Other notable activities in 2016 worth special mentioning were the well-attended workshops arranged by the Centre. Starting up with a workshop themed Retail Innovation, a second one followed on Trends in Fashion Retail, closing up the year with a workshop titled Retail Destination. The attendance at all three was extensive – in all more than 200 attendees – with major participation from retail business representatives.

As a final note, I feel especially proud of the capacity of our researchers to successfully combine an attraction to the retail business sector, evident from engagements such as seminar presenters (see selected examples below, under Popular science presentations), with an active role in producing high quality research in the area of retail (see below, under Publications). That roughly 10 % of all accepted contributions (papers and presentations) at the Nordic Wholesale and Retail Conference (NWRC, November 2016) in Aarhus were authored by researchers at our Centre also highlights our high academic standard. In all in, we can rejoice in high relevancy in our research and important work efforts, judging by input from both academics and business practitioners.

New challenges are waiting in the next two years to come, despite the successful path we have followed so far, and further uncertainties will arise after 2018 as the funding from the Swedish Wholesale and Retail Council, which constitutes the backbone of financing of the Centre, will come to an end (stretching from 2014 to end of 2018). Intensive efforts are presently invested into finding future solutions for allowing the Centre for Retail Research to constitute a Centre also after 2018. We firmly believe – and interpret the positive response from both the retail business and colleague researchers – that the Centre fills a vital and relevant role in the present retail research landscape and look forward to future endeavours with both anticipation and confidence.

Cordially,

Ulf Johansson
Professor and director of the Centre for Retail Research at Lund University
Focus on events – a selection

FOCUS ON CHALLENGES FOR THE FOOD SECTOR
In the fall 2016, three seminars were arranged with researchers and representatives from the major food chains in Sweden meeting and discussing topical issues, with Ulf Johansson as moderator. The challenges that the food industry are presently facing, and may encounter in the future, as well as potential insights and knowledge contributions from the research community in addressing such issues, were central themes in these encounters.

STUDENTS AFFILIATED TO THE CENTRE AWARDED SWEDISH RETAIL ESSAY PRIZE 2016
In hard competition, with more than 40 nominated essays in the areas of retail, consumption and logistics, the Lund University student duo Malin Ek and Amanda Karlsson Streijfert were chosen as recipients of the Swedish Retail Essay Prize in 2016, awarded by the Hakon Swensson Foundation and the Swedish Wholesale and Retail Council. In their thesis they showed how redistribution of goods in multichannel marketing can lead to increased sales and a lowering of price reductions – Jens Hultman at the Centre was one of two supervisors.

CENTRE RESEARCHER IN HIGH-PROFILE FASHION PROMOTION
Philip Warkander gave comments on his research in connection to the Åhléns marketing campaign Power Order by Clothes (Klädmaktsordningen) in which high-profile names such as author Jens Lapidus, business CEO Mia Brunell Livfors and politician Per Schlingmann were styled in gender-transcending fashion. The campaign ran in September 2016 and received extensive public attention.

GÖTEBORG BOOK FAIR
Cecilia Fredriksson and Ida de Wit Sandström’s new co-authored book was presented at the Swedish Bokmässan in Gothenburg in September. Published at Makadam Förlag this interdisciplinary work is titled ‘À LA MODE. Fashion in the borderland of art, culture and commerce’ (À LA MODE. Mode mellan konst, kultur och kommers).

RESEARCH INSIGHTS 2016 – ANNIKA OLSSON ON HOW THE ACADEMIA AND THE RETAIL BUSINESS CAN COOPERATE
As an invited speaker at the seminar series themed Research Insights, arranged yearly by the Swedish Retail and Wholesale Development Council in Stockholm, Annika Olsson at the Centre gave a talk on the theme Interdisciplinary Research and Retail Innovation. Among the issues discussed was the importance of mutual use and respect when creating successful and well-functioning mixed groups.

SCHOLAR EXCHANGE BETWEEN LUND AND OXFORD
During parts of 2016, Jens Hultman at the Centre was invited to Oxford University as a visiting scholar and spend his time there at the high-ranked prestigious Oxford Institute of Retail Management (OXIRM), known for its eminent quality research on retail. Jens received funding for the Oxford visit from Handelsbankens Forskningsstiftelser (Handelsbankens Research Foundations).

CONFERENCE AWARD TO DOCTORAL STUDENT
Karla Marie Batingan Paredes, one of several doctoral students financed by the Centre, was awarded the prize for Best doctoral student article at the 2016 Nordic Retail and Wholesale Conference (NRWC) held in Aarhus, Denmark in November. The article is part of Batingan Paredes’ doctoral thesis. At the same conference, the Retail Destination research theme was also presented under a special track, emphasizing the links between retail and destination.
Workshops

The Centre for Retail Research hosted several workshops during 2016, all attracting large audiences and providing an important forum for knowledge sharing between the academia and retailers, which is one of the main objectives of the Centre, and drawing attendance of a number of representatives working in the retail business.

WORKSHOP I – RETAIL INNOVATION
In order for retail to successfully deal with the challenges that lie ahead and to find new strategies for survival, innovation is and will be essential. Questions posed for the future are, for instance, how retail space could be used in the future and how attractive retail offers of tomorrow could be designed. On May 3, a workshop on such issues, innovation methods and design thinking within retail, was arranged with Malin Olander Roese acting as moderator. Among the invited speakers was Emma Hernell from United Minds who talked about interesting retail trends.

WORKSHOP II – À LA MODE
How do we shop, how do we live our lives and how do we think of fashion? This was the theme of the press release of the new book ‘À LA MODE. Fashion in the borderland of art, culture and commerce’ by Cecilia Fredriksson and Ida de Wit Sandström, which was combined with a social event including a seminar session arranged September 19. Roughly 100 participants came and listened to, among others, invited speakers Matteo Montecchi and Ana Roncha, both from London College of Fashion, and what they had to share on fashion trends within retail.

WORKSHOP III – RETAIL DESTINATION
On November 15 a third workshop, this time on future market places for retail, was held with both local and externally invited speakers. In the afternoon there were parallel group discussions on different themes such as the development of market places and shopping centres, and among the invited speakers were Jonathan Reynolds from Oxford Institute of Retail Management (OXIRM) at Oxford University.

HEARING ON THE FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR GROCERY RETAILERS
Departing from the question of how research on retail can become more relevance to the retail industry, and by which means the connections between researchers and business representatives can become closer, three meetings were held during the fall of 2016. In collaboration with Lund University Food Studies (LUFO), the Centre hosted these meetings with participating leading managers in the Swedish grocery sector Karolina Hagberg at Coop, Anders Strålman at Axfood and Petra Albuschus at ICA. This form of hearing was the start-up of efforts that the Centre together with the industry will invest in, finding fruitful discussions on how future challenges for retail can be addressed.
GENERAL THEMES
The Centre for Retail Research at Lund University is an interdisciplinary centre of excellence. In the year 2016, research focus was placed on two themes: Retail Destination and Retail Innovation. Both of these are strongly linked to our general focus on the flow of goods and interactions with customers – two crucial aspects of well-functioning and efficient retail.

Theme: Retail Destination

The research program ‘Retail Destination’ sheds light on the several aspects of retail and destination interrelatedness. What happens when retail ‘appears’ in a certain space and location? Do different forms of retail grow in specific, distinct milieus and if so, how do these differ from one another? Questions such as these are of interest to the researchers that work within the program and issues on establishment, store format, changing patterns of consumption, digitalization, logistics and urban planning are at the core. An increasing amount of resources are invested into creating attractive market places and in this research program we study the active agents and societal forces that drive this formation of various consumption destinations. We want to understand what takes place when regions, cities and urban centres are modelled into attractive retail destinations.

Currently, some cities seem to accept a certain degree of adaption to meeting places that provide experience-based offers, like coffee shops and restaurants, instead of putting up a fight for retail to remain in urban central locations. What counteracting efforts could retail attempt to use in regard to such changes and what consequences might this have on the overall attractiveness and economic preconditions for cities?

A common denominator for the current projects within the research program is the retail-destination relationship. As a number of different scientific perspectives are applied on areas such as jointly created attraction of urban centres and smart phones, specific logic outlay of locations such as the high street and the shopping centre, and social functions of flea markets and department stores, an interdisciplinary dynamic has already been established in the initial year of research. In our studies we have been using process-based perspectives when analysing the formation of retail destinations, and on-going projects are specifically aimed at investigating how cities view the importance of formation of various consumption destinations. We want to understand what takes place when regions, cities and urban centres are modelled into attractive retail destinations.

In this research program, the oversupply of market places and shopping centres is one area of study. In order to survive, many established retailers seem to rely on investments in reconstructions of stores, reformulation of store composition, or changes with regard to their design. Few studies, however, have looked at how this struggle for competitive strength is handled by already existing, occasionally timeworn shopping centres. Our on-going research on links between such investments and their effects of visitor behaviour, sales and customer satisfaction will provide important insights into the features of this development.

In studies performed in 2016 we looked at how different forms of digitalization and e-commerce solutions have been used in relation to retail, locations and logistics. One focus has been placed on combined challenges and potentials that systems of delivery and pick-up locations might offer, in particular when studying the relationship between humans and transportation systems from the perspective of current urban densification. In another study the transforming impact of smartphones on consumer perception and usage of store space has been investigated, and in other projects we have analysed the concept of alternative market places and how these are organized. How do these destinations exert attraction and what types of consumer practices are performed there? What knowledge generated in alternative market places can be put to use in the traditional retail sector?

In addition, the research group has analysed empirical data and experiences produced within a regional collaborative project on retail and sustainable retail strategies in southern Sweden. An anthology volume due to be published in 2017 will be the outcome from this project that has included participation from the academia, regional agencies, retailers and real property companies, and the focus of the volume is on new store formats and types of consumption in relation to the transformation and evolving future role of traditional retail.

Cecilia Fredriksson
Theme: Retail Innovation

Initiating the research program Retail innovation was a need to understand how retail can engage in tackling some of the great external obstacles it faces, for example shifting consumer patterns, digitalisation, sustainability and intensified urbanisation, to mention a few. Challenges like these pose new forms of demand on the retail industry and its ability to update and renew itself. Issues at hand are the capacity for innovating and the adaptation of processes, from idea to final product, which can generate innovations that are both attractive and give added value to the consumers.

Retail is not solely comprised of stores; rather, it is a complex system of producers, suppliers and distributors who all reciprocally have to achieve innovative consumer solutions. Whatever it takes to survive! It is thus of essential importance to study how work with innovation and the creation of cross-boundary relationships is carried out, as well as respond to demands for how to put knowledge into practise and how to generate theoretical insights. For such reasons, the research group on Retail Innovation entails a number of research disciplines, all contributing with their specific areas of competence and thereby breaking new grounds for retail research.

Within the theme Retail Innovation, there will be research contributions on the understanding and progress of innovation capacity and processes in retail, also with regard to the included system agents. Presently, a number of on-going studies in the program are focused on the development of retail business models, chains of innovation and capability for handling change. Our researchers have started measuring innovation ability in the industry as such and also in comparison to other business sectors. Furthermore do we study both the application of mobile use on customer behaviour and the necessary changes needed in the industry in response to digitalisation, for example with regard to new innovative payment solutions. Interview sessions with leading retail representatives are currently performed in order to generate a comprehensive view of strategic innovation and transformation efforts in the industry, but also with the intent of establishing how innovation and change are dealt with in specific areas such as CSR and sustainability. Premises for the program as well as preliminary results were presented during 2016 at different conferences, both academic and trade specific ones. Overall, there is great interest in this area, not least resulting from an increased awareness of the vital significance of innovation as a targeted activity warranted in itself, and not only as an activity that hopefully ‘arises’ whenever and wherever needed in retail business.

Researchers involved in some of the projects mentioned above partly work closely with the companies under study. This participating method is explicitly chosen as a means of creating not only theoretical insights and deeper understanding of how innovation in these organisations take place but also as a potential to actively partake in the practical restructuring and development of innovative processes. In general, a desire for such an active approach to hands-on academic participation has been expressed by participating organisations, likely in part prompted by a revival of innovation focus and interest within the retail business. There is hence an apparent need for more than usual input and support from the research environment.

Together with the retail industry, our objective is to provide suggestions on new business models and new working processes for innovation, as well as enhanced innovation capability. Research workshops with themes inspired by, for example, design thinking, purposed to create new business models and processes that can propel innovation ability, will be arranged for the retail organisations that have a desire to actively partake in this type of research activities.

Annika Olsson och Ulf Johansson
During fall 2016, the Centre for Retail Research at Lund University held a doctoral course on the theme Retail Research Fundamentals, with nation-wide round of application. Courses for doctoral students are a given part of the research training that all Swedish universities must offer but so far the selection of such courses with a focus on retail and retail challenges have been very limited. One of the main objectives of the Centre is to act as a forum for researchers as well as practitioners with an interest for retail research but it is equally important for the Centre to bolster and stimulate Swedish national retail research. Thus, to offer doctoral students an opportunity to partake in a retail-themed course with participants from all over Sweden provided an excellent occasion for networking and contributed to students making connections early on in their training with both other students and established researchers active at a number of universities. Nine doctoral students with different academic affiliations attended the course, which was given excellent evaluation by students and teachers alike. Several meetings in different locations - Malmö, Lund and Helsingborg - were held during fall 2016 and many of the researchers at the Centre for Retail Research at Lund University participated as course teachers.

“I want to thank you for a very good course that has helped me develop both methodological skills and factual knowledge that relate to retail research.”

Lars Hedegård  
Doctoral student at The Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås

“It has been a very exciting mission to put together a completely new doctoral course on retail research”, says professor Cecilia Fredriksson who is member of the Centre’s management group and has been responsible for development of the new course. “It has been our ambition to provide in-depth knowledge on various theoretical perspectives and methods within retail research. We look forward to arranging the course again in the future.”

A seminar on innovation was arranged in Lund November 14 and one of the invited speakers was professor Jonathan Reynolds at Oxford University who at that occasion also offered to meet the doctoral students to discuss, among other things, the innovative capacity of the retail industry. The day after, November 15, the students also attended a workshop on Retail Destination in Malmö, and there met both researchers and industry representatives with broad experience in retail. The course ended with a seminar at Campus Helsingborg at which point the participating doctoral students had finalised their individual course contributions and gave interesting presentations.
Since September 2016 Axel Welinder is working as doctoral student at the Centre but retail research was not one of his early career choices:
– My initial plan was to become a sailor so I began training to become a master mariner but after some time I realised it was not really my thing so I quit. At that point I instead wanted to take up training in economic sciences, he says.

Ever since he was very young, he has had an interest in societal issues and that is also why he chose to study economy.
– Once you start to learn more about how society works, you understand that often it all basically comes down to economic issues of one form or another.
The fact that his mother teaches economy at upper secondary school level has most likely also nourished such an interest throughout his upbringing, he concludes...

It is in particular marketing that has been his focus of interest, both at undergraduate and master level, and especially in relation to how companies manage and communicate sustainability issues.
– Today, this is a subject that cannot be ignored by any business organisation. It is of outmost importance to both them and to society in general that work on sustainability is deliberate – and communicated in the correct way.

If the ‘good’ companies are successful in disseminating how they work on such issues, it will probably not only benefit themselves – through a strengthening of their brand – but also spread like ripples, as long as they are good role models.
– These issues relate to so much more than just retail itself. They have bearing for the collective future for each and every one of us, says Axel Welinder.

Communicating how you work on such issues is nevertheless not always that easy:
– The retailers cannot themselves be the carriers of this information, of how they contribute to positive efforts that benefit the environment and society broadly speaking, not without difficulties. If they wish to be absolutely credible it is very hard for them to communicate such messages on their own.

He also believes that the industry has to understand that there is need for much more ‘acting’ and a lot less ‘talking’.
– Making sure that what you do is safely and firmly anchored internally, within your company, is one way to work with dissemination of sustainability issues, to establish a culture that embraces all co-workers in a natural way. To have co-workers that are happy and take pride in working for you as an employer is an amazing ‘channel of communication’. I believe the importance that internal communication have on external communication is widely understated.

How the details of sustainability communication eventually will pan out is something that he is less willing to elaborate on at this point – simply because that is exactly what he will be investigating in his research.
– My understanding is that companies wish to attain a ‘moral legitimation’, and I will try to discern how that can be achieved. What does it take and how do you go about it?
The fact that he will be looking at how such issues are handled within retail specifically is just an advantage, according to him.
– That is very stimulating, partly because retail is a sector in constant change, but partly also due to its unique role; positioned as it is in-between production and consumption. Retail agents have the power to carry consumer demands onwards to producers, and they can exert impact reaching far back in the value chain.

At the Centre for Retail Research he has a lot of support through his involvement in a project on sustainability headed by his two supervisors, Ulf Elg and Jens Hultman.
– I am still in an initial phase of research and a large part of my time is devoted to reviewing earlier research done on this subject. At the same time, I do already have practical work assigned to me, like planning, performing, transcribing and analysing interviews that are part of the project. An ‘ordinary’ working week is vary varied, and that is very stimulating!

His first time at the Centre is described as “almost being welcomed into a family”.
– There are not that many doctoral students here, and that surely is a contributing factor to everyone taking so well care of us. You get a sense of security here, and at the same time everyone is set on chipping in and on cooperating on all levels and over across borders.
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Men

Professors
Senior/PhD
Doctoral students
Total

0 5 10 15 20 25 30

From the left: Annika Olsson, Cecilia Fredriksson, Ulf Johansson, Jens Hultman.

From the left: Annika Olsson, Cecilia Fredriksson, Ulf Johansson, Jens Hultman.
Establishment grant from The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council
External funding from affiliated projects*

*) Funding from (among others) Hakon Swenson Foundation, Handelsbanken Research Foundations, Ragnar Söderberg Foundation, Vinnova (Sweden’s Innovation Agency), City of Helsingborg and Helsingborg Retailers’ Association.
# Popular science publications and visibility in the media – a selection

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<td>retail research and create collaborative options with practitioners</td>
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<td>This is how the sourdough-daddy can save your brand: Culture-</td>
<td>Ideon researcher breakfasts, Lund</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Marcus Klasson</td>
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<td>generating communication in a digital era</td>
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<td>Workshop on Mobile Shopping</td>
<td>Retail Destination workshop, Malmö</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Christian Fuentes</td>
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<td>Does packaging make any difference in retail?</td>
<td>Retail House, Stockholm</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Annika Olsson</td>
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<td>À la mode. Fashion in the borderland of art, culture and commerce</td>
<td>Campus Open, Campus Helsingborg, Helsingborg</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ida de Wit Sandstrom</td>
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<td>Cooperation with the retail industry</td>
<td>Lund University Industry Council, Lund</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>Mal(t)sculinty – men who cook and brew beer! How come?</td>
<td>‘Nordic Nights’-festival, Helsingborg</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>Future retail business models</td>
<td>PostNords logistiknätverk</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ulf Johansson</td>
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<td>Open lecture on Sustainable consumption and the physical store</td>
<td>Centre for Environment and Sustainability (GMV), University of Gothenburg</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Christian Fuentes</td>
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<td>Future business models for the grocery sector – logistic challenges</td>
<td>Logistics and Transport, Svenska Mässan, Gothenburg</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ulf Johansson</td>
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<td>Which salt you buy tells us who you are</td>
<td>Sydsvenskan (Swedish newspaper)</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>Interview on Christmas present of the year</td>
<td>Sydsvenskan (Swedish newspaper)</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Jens Hultman</td>
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Anselmsson, J (2016) Effects of shopping centre re-investments and improvements on sales and visit growth. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 32, 139-150


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de Wit Sandström, I, Fredriksson, C (red.) (2016) À la mode. Mode mellan konst, kultur och kommers. Makadam förlag, Göteborg

BOOK CHAPTERS


