

PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/139420>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2019-11-19 and may be subject to change.

The Iconic Dutch Woman

Maaïke Feitsma ArtEZ Institute of the Arts, Netherlands



Maaïke Feitsma

Maaïke Feitsma lectures in Fashion Theory at the Fashion Masters of ArtEZ Institute of the Arts (Arnhem, the Netherlands). She is currently in the last phase of her PhD research project Dutch Fashion from the Sixties till Now. The main questions she asks herself are: Is there something like Dutch fashion? And, if so, what does it look like? And how did it come into being? In short, what makes Dutch fashion 'Dutch'? This project is part of the larger research programme Dutch Fashion Identity in a Globalised World, a collaboration between ArtEZ Institute of the Arts, the Radboud University Nijmegen, the University of Amsterdam, and the Saxion University of Applied Sciences, and is funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

Abstract

In recent years the media reported on a new iconic Dutch woman: the King Louie woman. Wearing in a jersey dress with vividly coloured floral designs from the Dutch brand King Louie, combined with leggings and Birkenstock sandals, sturdy boots or Swedish Hasbeens clogs on her feet, she brings her children to school in a 'bakfiets' (a carrier tricycle).

Interestingly, the King Louie woman is not your usual celebrity 'style icon' in the sense that she is a role model that expresses the fashion zeitgeist and inspires mainstream women to dress alike, such as Jacky Kennedy Onassis or Madonna. The King Louie woman is by contrast presented as the personification of the Dutch national character; a Dutch national icon.

This is highly surprising, because whereas fashion is undisputedly the main feature of the icon of the Parisienne, the Dutch woman is traditionally characterised by her lack of fashion sense. Characterising her through fashionable jersey dresses seems like a radical break with Dutch tradition.

In this paper, however, I will state the claim that this is not the case, and that the King Louie woman is instead firmly rooted in Dutch culture. Instead of signalling a break with the past, the King Louie woman can be seen as a direct continuation of the prevalent Dutch fashion narrative and of a distinct Dutch dress tradition. This case thus shows that age-old Dutch cultural icons are preserved through a contemporary fashion phenomenon.

1. Introduction

Within North American imaginary the iconic Dutch boy is probably Hans Brinker, the main character from Mary Mapes Dodge novel. Or alternatively, the boy that saved the Netherlands from flooding by putting his finger in a leaking dike, who appears in a short-within-a-story in the same publication (1865). Surprisingly, these boys are complete strangers to the Dutch themselves as these fictional characters are part of American rather than Dutch folklore. When we look at the book covers of the many editions that have been published since 1865, however, the Dutch will recognize the girl that is usually displayed next to Hans Brinker as the iconic Dutch woman. She can be recognised by her blonde hair, blue eyes, a rosy complexion and a characteristic white cap on her head and wooden shoes on her feet. This iconic Dutch woman owes her current reputation mostly to advertising and tourism. She is for example used to promote Dutch products like cheese, tulips, liquor and fish (Image 1). Regarding tourism, a popular activity is having your picture taken donned up in a costume of the same kind (Image 2) (Eipers 2009, Rooijackers 1998).

While her outfit looks authentic to an untrained eye, often it is a very free interpretation of the traditional Volendammer dress, which is a fishing village near Amsterdam. It is important to note here that, although the Volendammer style dress has taken central stage in the cultural imagination from 1900 onwards (Grever 2004, Rooijackers 1998), the Dutch do not have one official style of national dress. On the contrary, Dutch dress culture is characterised by the country's regional diversity: every community has or had its own style of dress. This sounds like a contradiction in terms – a national dress that is not national – but ever since the eighteenth century it is this diversity that has been seen as an overriding characteristic of Dutch identity (Koolhaas, 2010). Regional dress thus plays a double role: it is a symbol of local culture, while at the same time it has become a symbol of national culture and national unity, especially during the late nineteenth century (De Jong 2001: 157 & 2007: 328). As a result, for the Dutch themselves iconic images of 'the girl from Zeeland' from the south-west of the Netherlands, or 'the woman from Friesland' from the North of the Netherlands can therefore just as easily function as a regional or a national icon (Image 5 and 6).

Keywords: National Icon, National Identity, National Dress, Dutch Fashion, King Louie Woman

This being said, the woman dressed in a white cap and clogs has become the most widely known iconic Dutch woman in the Netherlands as well as abroad. Dressed in her fantasy costume she has become a standardised image of (historical) reality. Following the semiotician C.S. Peirce, she can not only be seen as an icon, i.e. a sign, which refers to what it depicts, but also a symbol, i.e. a sign that does not refer to what it depicts as it is a standardised image of something abstract, in this case Dutch national identity (Frijhoff 1998: 52, Grever 2004: 210-211).

In this paper I will focus on the iconic woman's role as an expression of national identity within the context of contemporary Dutch fashion through the phenomenon of the *King Louie woman*.

2. The King Louie woman

Recently, a new iconic woman stood up in the Dutch media: the King Louie woman. Wearing a jersey dress with vividly coloured floral designs from the Dutch brand King Louie, combined with leggings and Birkenstock sandals, Swedish Hasbeens clogs by the Swedish firm Hasbeen or sturdy boots on her feet, she brings her children to school in a 'bakfiets' (a carrier tricycle).

This phenomenon was described as a typical Dutch style by both the national newspaper *de Volkskrant* and newsmagazine *Vrij Nederland* (Willems 2011 & Leclair 2010). And although another leading newsmagazine, *HP de Tijd*, does not refer to King Louie in their feature article of August 2012 on 'the Dutch woman', its cover unmistakably displays a King Louie woman. She is portrayed on a bicycle, in a typical Dutch Polder landscape, a child's saddle on the back, tulips and a carton of milk in her saddlebags and a shopping bag of the Netherlands' biggest supermarket chain on her handlebars. This 'true' Dutch woman wears a stereotypical Dutch white cap on her head, like the ones worn by the national icon of the Volendammer girl, here not combined with the traditional dress, but with Swedish clogs, leggings, a jeans jacket and – here it is – a jersey top and skirt with a floral design (Image 3).

By the same token we see an illustration of a paper doll on the cover of *Poldermodel: the Dutch Women is Unique*, a book on the characteristics of Dutch women. And the doll's dress is without a doubt one by King Louie. (Image 4) (Kramer 2011).

The phenomenon King Louie woman, was even discussed as 'word of the day' on *taalbank.nl*, a weblog by the head editor of the Netherlands' most renowned dictionary: the *Dikke Van Dale* (Den Boon 2010).

These examples demonstrate that in contemporary Dutch media a narrative on a supposed iconic Dutch woman exists and that she is characterised through her clothing style. Also, it shows that the narrative on the iconic Dutch woman is currently being reconstructed. The expression of the Dutch national character is no longer solely reserved for the traditional Volendammer girl; nowadays she is assisted by the King Louie woman.

In this paper I will analyse the phenomenon of the King Louie woman and argue that she can be regarded as a contemporary reconstruction of the iconic Dutch woman.

First, I will expound my theoretical framework and explain how something so 'serious' as national identity can be expressed by something as 'frivolous' as fashion.

Second, I will analyse the King Louie woman and place both the ideological and aesthetic dimensions of this phenomenon in a historical context through a comparison with ideas on a typical Dutch fashion mentality and traditional Dutch dress.

3. National identity and fashion

The question of what a national identity is and how it is represented is heavily debated among scholars. A complete overview of the current discussions would carry too far within the boundaries set for this paper. Therefore, I will limit myself to a short discussion of the main theoretical concepts that underlie my analysis.

The first theoretical concept is that of banal nationalism, a concept coined by Michael Billig in 1995. The buttressing of the construct of national identity is usually associated with grand gestures, like national

holidays, national monuments and political campaigns. Banal nationalism, however, refers to a more everyday way of being reminded of nation and nationality, e.g. through images on money and stamps. These reminders are so familiar that they are processed unconsciously and unnoticed (Billig 1995: 8).

Fashion theorist Alice Goodrum observes that fashion also plays an important role in this everyday buttressing of national identity. She has applied the concept of banal nationalism to British fashion discourse and analysed how ideas on nationhood and national identity are sustained through fashion on a daily basis. It is reproduced and commodified not only through brand stories and iconographies, but also through the textual and visual rhetoric of fashion magazines (Goodrum 2005: 62). Goodrum's use of the concept of banal nationalism with regard to fashion opens up the possibility to understand the King Louie woman as an icon of Dutch national identity.

The second theoretical concept that forms the base for my exploration is that of a national fashion identity. Fashion theorist Jennifer Craik defines this concept as follows: "a national sense of fashion or style is the expressive encapsulation of the cultural psyche or zeitgeist of a place through its people. This occurs when three realms coalesce: aesthetics, cultural practice and cultural articulation." (Craik 2002: 460). The first dimension, aesthetics, refers to the way in which clothing styles are distinctive from one another. Craik names for example the preference for certain motifs, types of clothing, cuts and materials. Along with a distinguishing way of combining pieces of clothing, or what she calls composition. The second dimension is cultural practice and refers to the practice of dressing. Or, in other words, a certain clothing behaviour, that is typical for a specific location. The third dimension, cultural articulation, is the naturalisation of ideas concerning national identity and fashion. A specific style is then seen as the 'natural' identity of a nation: when "internal and external perceptions of the essence of national stylistic identity overlap" (Craik 2009: 414).

Following Craik's three dimensions, I will analyse the King Louie woman and argue that she can be seen as a contemporary counterpart of the iconic Dutch women. With this I mean that – just like the historical iconic Dutch women – she is not only an icon (i.e. a standardised image of reality), but also a symbol of Dutch national fashion identity (i.e. a standardised image of something abstract).

4. The King Louie woman: an expression of Dutch (fashion) identity?

4.1 Aesthetic dimension

In 1981 George Cramer and Ann Berlips started selling second hand clothing on the Noordermarkt in Amsterdam. Fed up by the mass production and brand mindedness of the era, they specialised in dresses from the 50s, mainly with flower patterns (LeClaire 2010). From 1985 onwards they started to produce their own designs under the brand name King Louie (Boonstra 2010). Especially since around 2000 they have created a furore with their jersey skirts and dresses. At first these were all in bright, but solid colours. Until around 2004, when a suitable textile printer was found and ever since vividly coloured prints have become the trademark of King Louie (Van Rossum 2010).

The brand has a very distinct and recognizable aesthetic, characterised by flower patterns in vivid colours. They produce coats, jackets, trousers, tops, knitwear, skirts and dresses. In the following I will however focus on the last two items, as these play a central role in the image of the King Louie woman.

Every collection consists of around six models, which are made in a gradually growing number of patterns. Currently there are thirty different prints, each executed in three different colours (Boonstra 2010a & b, Van Rossum 2010).

The dresses and skirts are made of stretch jersey, knee long and always have a slight retro feeling. The neckline and sleeves determine the variation. Sometimes new models are introduced or regular models are slightly updated, but over all the models remain the same for every collection. The cut and material of the King Louie dresses and skirts are then quite constant and thus recognizable.

Although the prints are renewed every season, the same can be said for them. The large number of patterns in every collection can roughly be divided into three main categories: flowers, animals and graphic patterns.

Of the thirty prints that are currently in the collection the animal and graphic patterns account for 1/3 of the designs, the remaining 2/3 are all flowers (Interview 2012) (Image 7).

Most items thus contain flower prints and therefore it is not surprising that these are seen as the archetypal King Louie prints (e.g. Couwer & Lampe 2005, Boonstra 2010a & b).

So while the patterns change seasonally, the systematic use of flowers and colours keeps the pieces recognizable. As a matter of fact, regular customers can date the models by their patterns and certain 'classics' are actively sought after in second hand (web)shops (Interview 2012).

The distinctive style of the King Louie woman is not only determined by the motifs (flowers), types of garments (dresses and skirts), cut (slightly retro inspired), materials (jersey) and colours (bright). According to the media – and my own observations – she also displays a distinguishing way of combining them, or in Craik's words: she has a certain *composition*. While the King Louie dresses or skirts forms the basis, these are to be worn in combination with specific other pieces of clothing or footwear to form 'the King Louie woman uniform'.

Essential are her shoes. During summer the favourite footwear of the King Louie woman are Swedish Hasbeens clogs or sandals by Birkenstock or Dr Scholl. During the winter months she covers her legs with leggings, her arms with a cardigan and opts for sturdy flat boots (Leclaire 2010, Van Rossum 2010). Her hairstyle is also typical: not impeccably groomed, but slightly messy, often with an artificial flower behind her ear (Kramer 2011: 25, Brandt Cortius 22 juni 2011).

The distinct and clearly recognizable aesthetic of the King Louie women becomes clear by the photo *Déjeuner sur L'Herbe* (2010). This image is part of the Exactitudes series by photographers Arie Versluis and Ellie Uyttenbroek. Inspired by the dress codes of social groups, they have been systematically documenting these groups since 1994. They approach people from a certain social group on the street and ask them to come to their studio at a later moment, but in the exact same clothes they are wearing at the time of the invitation. They portrayed their models against a white backdrop, in similar poses. Through placing these photos next to each other in a raster like composition, the tension between individuality and uniformity becomes clear. (<http://www.exactitudes.com/index.php?/series/detail/126>).

Although these women are wearing different models and prints and we do not know whether they are actually by King Louie or similar dresses or skirts by other brands. The dresses overrule the diversity in designs and physical characteristics such as hair, eye and skin colour, and an archetypal type of woman comes to the fore.

The photo collage also shows us that, while this phenomenon is often referred to as "the King Louie woman", in reality the actual brand of her dress is not key. It is not surprising then that at another Dutch brand, *Sissy Boy*, flowered jersey dresses are also the bestsellers (Van Rossum 2010).

4.2 Cultural practice

In the above I have shown that the King Louie woman has a distinct aesthetic dimension. This dimension is characterised by a certain use of materials, cut and colours in combination with a typical *composition*. Thus, this is Craik's first dimension of a national fashion identity. In this paragraph I will argue that the King Louie woman phenomenon also displays the second dimension: *cultural practice*. This refers to a certain clothing behaviour, which is regarded typical for a specific location.

In the media the clothing behaviour of this iconic woman is seen as typical for the Netherlands and more specific for the Randstad (the urban agglomeration of Western Holland) (Le Claire 2010, VanRossum 2010 & 2011, Kramer 2011: 25, Slütter 2012).

In an article in the magazine of the Dutch cycling association the main character of the Dutch movie *Richting West* (Going West) (2010) is described as 'a Dutch woman pur sang'. This statement is accompanied with a film still of the main character cycling: a grocery bag on her handlebars, her son in a child's saddle on the back of her bike and dressed in a jersey dress with a flower print (Slütter 2012). While this article does not use the term King Louie woman, the national newspaper NRC does apply this title to the

main character in their review of the movie (Linssen 2010): a ‘Dutch woman pur sang’ is thus put on a par with the King Louie woman.

Milou van Rossum, a renowned Dutch fashion journalist, sees the King Louie as a ‘typical Dutch style’, which is popular all over the country. Particularly, among 30-something year old mothers from Amsterdam (Van Rossum 2010 & 2011).

Annemiek LeClaire describes the original King Louie woman as “urban, highly-educated and progressive”. And like Van Rossum, she states that the King Louie woman is mainly found in the Randstad, but that the style is also popular in the bigger provincial towns (LeClaire 2010).

For her book *Poldermodels: the Dutch Woman is Unique – a book on the characteristics of Dutch women* (2011), Santje Kramer interviewed foreigners living in the Netherlands on their view on Dutch women. Several of the interviewees name the women in flowered jersey dresses and one gives quite a specific description: “The Randstad woman preferably clothes herself in a flowered dress by King Louie. She wants to be a woman, but still rather a girl. She is proud on her long, somewhat messy hair which hardly ever sees a comb.” (Kramer 2011: 25).

These articles show how the clothing behaviour is seen as something that is typical for the Netherlands and especially the Randstad. The King Louie woman phenomenon then cannot only be ascribed an *aesthetic dimension*, but also a distinct *cultural practice*.

The King Louie woman is thus not necessarily found all over the Netherlands, and therefore could be understood as solely a regional icon. Nonetheless, she is also regarded as a national icon. Just like the historical iconic Dutch woman she expresses both regional and national identity. In my view this duality is made possible by the unique double role regional dress plays in the Netherlands.

4.3 Cultural articulation

In the above I have argued that the King Louie woman has a distinct aesthetic and is also seen as a type of clothing behaviour that is typical for the Netherlands. The phenomenon thus meets the demands for the first two dimensions of Craik’s national fashion identity. In this paragraph I will zoom in on the third dimension: *cultural articulation*.

While a recognizable aesthetic and a connection to a certain location (nation) are essential for a national fashion identity, these ideas also have to be naturalised. According to Craik this is the case when “internal and external perceptions of the essence of national stylistic identity overlap”. Or in other words, the style has to be understood and described as an expression of the national character.

Interestingly, the brand King Louie itself does not brand itself as ‘typically Dutch’ via advertising or by other means. As a matter of fact, they do not advertise at all. Owner George Cramer explains their marketing philosophy as follows: “We do not advertise as a matter of principle. We want others to tell that our products are desirable, we do not do this ourselves.” (Boonstra 2010a).

The ‘Dutchness’ of the King Louie woman is thus not a product of marketing. Hence, the reproduction and commodification of Dutch national identity does not take place through brand stories and iconographies.

The King Louie dresses and skirts thus gain their ‘national’ meaning through the textual and visual rhetoric of (fashion) magazines, newspapers, movies and websites.

The clothing is frequently lent to stylist for commercials, TV-series and photo-shoots. Cramer and Berlips explicitly endorse this as they see it as ‘free advertising’ (Boonstra 2010b).

For this paper I was lucky enough to be able to conduct an interview with the store manager of *Exota*, one of the two shops owned by Cramer and Berlips¹ and study their collected press cuttings. Leafing through the brand’s newspaper and magazine clippings file from the period 2000 – 2012, several characteristics are

¹ Cramer and Berlips own two stores in Amsterdam where they sell King Louie, Petit Louie and other brands. Most of the dresses are sold via wholesale in boutiques throughout the Netherlands (and abroad). Since 2010, Cramer and Berlips also run an online store.

mentioned repeatedly. Renowned Dutch women's magazines like *Margriet*, *Libelle*, *Flair*, *Viva Baby* and *Kek Mama* often depict the models wearing King Louie dresses as young mothers. Another reoccurring element is an emphasis on the functionality and practicability of the clothing, for example for yoga (Living, februari 2005) and for conquering the Dutch autumn weather, when travelling by bicycle (Viva Baby, 2005).

This emphasis on the functional and practical properties of jersey dresses is a central element in the discussions on the King Louie woman (e.g. Willems 2011, Leclaire 2010, Kramer 2011). In the newsmagazine *Vrij Nederland* we read for example:

[A King Louie dress] is easy to wash, it does not need ironing, has a comfortable fit, is suitable to wear while cycling, the skirt length is appropriate for 'work and pleasure', the soft fabric is forgiving for a mother's body and it is affordable. (Leclaire 2010: 84)

This preference for practical clothing is also recognized by Santje Kramer and her interviewees (i.e. expats living in the Netherlands). They see it as a common characteristic of Dutch women and relate it to the popularity of jeans, but also of jersey dresses. One of the interviewees for example puts it as follows:

(...) Jersey dresses, with a little too tight fit around the belly, are a favourite with many [Dutch women] But considering that everyone cycles, such a dress beats formal clothing which make it difficult to move (Kramers 2011:25)

Kramer whole-heartedly agrees with this idea, as she herself finds nothing as bothersome as "cycling with dresses blown up by the wind and pencil skirts, which have to be hiked up to your belly button to be able to reach the pedals" (Kramers 2011: 25).

Functionality and practicality are thus considered key characteristics for the popularity of these dresses on the Dutch market. For my line of reasoning, it is important to note here that these characteristics fit seamlessly into Dutch fashion discourse. Through their textual and visual rhetoric, Dutch fashion and women's magazines (re)construct a narrative on Dutch fashion mentality. As I have shown elsewhere, this mentality is characterised by a negative attitude towards ostentation, while validating the characteristics of soberness, functionality and rationality (Feitsma 2012a).

A dress that is as versatile (for work and spare time), functional (for cycling), affordable and easy in maintenance as the King Louie dress indeed adheres to the Dutch fashion mentality. Although the King Louie dresses and the King Louie woman are 21st century phenomena, the media's focus on functionality roots them in age-old ideas on a Dutch fashion mentality. This explains how a recent fashion trend can be regarded as an expression of Dutch identity and the King Louie woman as a Dutch icon.

5. Dutch fashion aesthetic

The above quotes show how the King Louie woman is not only seen as a distinct style, related to a certain location, but also as the expression of the Dutch national character. And thus it meets all three dimensions of national fashion identity.

Interestingly enough, while the functionality is in line with the prevalent fashion narrative, the vivid colours of King Louie dresses clash with this view. For it sees itself as characterised by sober hues, black and white (Feitsma, 2012b).

In my view however, the King Louie woman cannot only be considered as typically Dutch because of her fashion mentality. Also the aesthetic of the clothing can be connected to Dutch dress tradition.

As I have shown in my paper *Colour me Drab? Colours in Dutch Regional Wear and Fashion*, there is an alternative narrative that links Dutch fashion identity to vivid colours and multi-coloured flower patterns and sees them as the ultimate expression of Dutch fashion identity (Feitsma 2012b).

The stereotypical image of a 'colourless' Dutch fashion finds its origins in the clothing of the Dutch regents, who wore conservative black clothes in combination with crisp white-linen trimmings. This is an image that has been made famous by Dutch paintings by the likes of Rembrandt van Rijn, Frans Hals and Ferdinand Bol.

Yet, when we look back not to the dress of the Dutch elite, but to that of the working class (i.e. the farmers, fishermen and craftsmen), we see a completely different image. Traditional Dutch dress is namely characterized by an inclination for bold colours and flower patterns, especially Indian chintz. Since the seventeenth century Indian chintz was imported by the Dutch East India Company from India and soon became highly fashionable, first with the elite and soon after with farmers, fishermen and craftsmen

It was favoured a result of its lightness and pliability and because it was relatively cheap, colourfast and dirt-repellent. Its colourfulness and the patterns, however, were also important reasons for its popularity. After 1770 chintz went out of fashion, but remained a standard element of Dutch traditional dress (Arts 2010: 50-53). While originally an exotic textile, it was soon adapted, and is nowadays seen as an icon of Dutch identity, much like the white and blue Delft earthenware, which is based on Chinese porcelain.

Colourful clothing does not only continue a Dutch dress tradition, but are also strongly related to ideas about Dutch identity. Around 1800, Dutch folk culture was thought to express the highest level of Dutchness. As the Dutch cultural-historian Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld demonstrated (2010), this view was based on the ideological belief that Dutch folk culture showed an unbroken continuity with the culture of the Batavians, the ancient tribe from which the Dutch supposedly descend. Within this myth, the Batavians were considered to have a preference for colourful clothing; a preference that was thought to be still alive within Dutch regional codes of dressing from around 1800.

As a result of the gradual replacement of the Batavian myth with the myth about the Dutch Golden age (the seventeenth century), Dutch national fashion identity became associated with the sober black and white clothing worn by the Dutch regents. At the same time, a gradual turn towards a more subdued colour palette in traditional dress after 1880, as well as vogue for black in international fashion and a more and more negative view on Dutch folk culture – this narrative was forgotten and as a result nowadays bright clothing in multi-coloured flower patterns are no longer seen as typically Dutch.

In spite of the fact that contemporary brands like King Louie have brought a vivid palette and flowered patterns back into Dutch fashion, the prevalent narrative of a Dutch 'colourless' fashion style did not change. As a result Dutch brands that are characterised by the use of bright colours are thought to be exceptional. However, when we place the clothing of the King Louie women in a historical perspective her aesthetics fit into Dutch dress tradition as well as into a historical narrative on Dutch national identity.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the King Louie woman can be regarded as an iconic Dutch woman, much like historical icon of the blonde haired, blue eyed and rosy-cheeked woman wearing a white cap and clogs, because she is also seen as the expression of Dutch national identity.

By analysing the phenomenon following Craik's three dimensions of a national fashion identity, I have shown that in the King Louie woman these dimensions come together.

Firstly, she has a distinct and recognizable aesthetic, characterised specific motifs (flowers), types of clothing (dresses and skirts), cut (knee long), materials (jersey) and colours (bright). Along with a distinct way of combining them with clogs, sandals or sturdy boots, leggings, cardigans and a slightly messy hairstyle.

Secondly, I demonstrated that the media describes the dress behaviour of the King Louie woman as 'typically Dutch'. Thus locating it in the Netherlands. Although, it is also seen as a clothing behaviour that is characteristic for a certain region of the Netherlands (the Randstad), the traditional double role of regional costume allows the King Louie dress to express national identity as well as regional identity. Thus, a case of 'pars pro toto'.

Lastly, I have shown that the media's focus on the functional and practical features of the King Louie style, roots it in an age-old narrative on a distinct Dutch attitude towards fashion. Or in other words, the King Louie woman is seen as an expression of the Dutch national character. Although, the bright colours of the dresses clash with this prevalent narrative, because it sees itself as characterised by sober colours, black and white, I have argued that this is not necessarily a reason to see this as 'unDutch'. For, the vivid flower