

Price-wise or bargain hunters?

On the 6th of May, the notorious Ikea retail shop opened his doors in the heart of Paris. The Swedish company has levelled up to French standards by offering small bakery sponges cakes, *madeleines*. I couldn't resist to take a look for myself. Astonishingly, I came back two days after, haven't it been for the fact that I was attracted by their lunch boxes for a decent price of six euros. A good buy is a cheap buy, isn't it?

I've got the impression that this bargain hunting-mentality is more linked to a Dutch than to a French individual. Shamelessly, the Dutch will ask a cashier why the discount hasn't come through on the receipt. If it is not for a birthday present, it will be for an 1+1 for free- deal on our favourite shampoo.

"Kijken, kijken, niet kopen" even made his way to the South East-Asia, where sellers notice the Dutch instantly: we will make a hassle about the price of a product, but eventually not buy it.

Where does this mentality come from? Indeed, the Dutch citizens were known to be international traders and negotiators next to the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors. We are known not to spoil ourselves as well as the French does it, because of our calvinistic background. But there has to be more to this picture. Recklessly bargaining is a skill, without any doubt, that is still used among the Dutch population. The fact is indeed that 36% of the Dutch population decide to purchase a product because of its discount. The Dutch citizens are the most satisfied about the way how they spend their money, which is preferably saving over spending, according to an ING research 2018 among 13 countries. Apparently, 46% of the population prefers their own sandwich for lunch than picking a restaurant on the way. Not only a price-wise way of thinking, also time-saving.

The other side of the coin shows the French. Their satisfaction is obtained by instant gratification, so preferably spending over saving. The behavior gap between the two countries in the research was enormous. The attentive behaviour of the Dutch population towards money, makes them more sensible to deals in supermarkets, in restaurants or to groups offers. Even I benefit from my spending behavior when I'm back in Amsterdam, since I know that saving points at a coffee shop is a rare thing to do in Paris. For France in general, quality of service is priority and the price is secondary.

Now when the British are trying to leave Europe, it is the crucial moment for France and the Netherlands to interact more, and acknowledge each other's cultural interests. Take the Dutch retail shop Hema for instance, the low-price walhalla for savvy shoppers. The Dutch pride has shops in more than 10 countries, including 71 shops in France: an ultimate exchange and win-win for both countries. Seemingly, the practical mindset of the North European cultures has made his way on French ground, and has led to increasing savings for the ones who chooses Ikea meatballs over expensive chateaubriands.

After all, isn't this what European cultures are meant to be doing, outside Brussel politics: exchanging their knowledge and learning from each other's cross-cultural differences. The example of a prestigious Ikea in the heart of expensive Paris, is only a minor step to a more cooperative Europe.