

Dutch department store tour: from international groups to family-owned business

Paris, 22 June 2022 - Taking the opportunity of the kick-off celebrations of Vanderveen's 125th anniversary in Assen, the IADS visited three Dutch department stores at the end of April 2022: De Bijenkorf and Peek & Cloppenburg in Amsterdam, and Vanderveen in Assen.

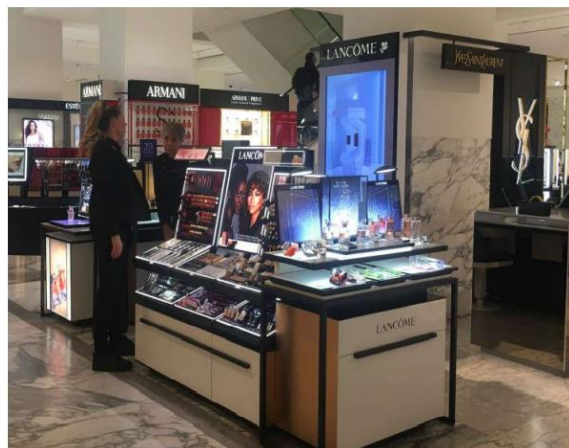
In the Netherlands, the department store business is mainly led by De Bijenkorf, running seven locations throughout the country. Peek & Cloppenburg (accounting for approximately 75 stores in Germany and now owning Magasin du Nord), runs 4 stores in the Netherlands. Finally, Vanderveen has a single location in Assen and is still run by the Vanderveen founding family.

Differences are huge between these three businesses. Each targeting specific customer groups, they offer a particular take on department stores, from international luxury to mass-market and ultra-local purpose.

De Bijenkorf, the international luxury department store

Founded in 1870 in Amsterdam, De Bijenkorf was once a member of the IADS. Since 2011 the department store is owned by the Selfridges Group. In 2013, De Bijenkorf launched its "premium experience" strategy, investing more than 200 million euros in five years: the goal was to transform the business to reach a higher international standard in terms of brands, services and shopping experience. Five stores were closed to only focus on those able to convey the premium message. De Bijenkorf now has stores in Amstelveen, Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Maastricht, Rotterdam and Utrecht. The e-commerce branch opened in 2009 to serve The Netherlands and has developed in Europe with French, German, Austrian and Belgian websites, heavily communicating on social media to catch the local consumers' attention.

de Bijenkorf 



Ground floor



Located on Dam Square, the Amsterdam flagship store takes cues from Selfridges. The ground floor is organized according to a common layout and product offer, gathering beauty on one side (including a beauty salon), and luxury accessories concessions on the other side. There was quite a lot of traffic at the time of the visit (weekday around 6 pm) and customers were queuing at Saint Laurent, Dior, and Louis Vuitton. In addition to its shop-in-shop, the latter currently has a RTW pop-up store at the very center of the floor. It didn't seem to attract customers despite its perfect execution: it

lacks the intimacy to try RTW on. Overall, with its white columns and marble, De Bijenkorf's ground floor resembles a smaller version of Selfridges' Oxford Street.

(..) De Bijenkorf in Amsterdam is the company's flagship store. The store is overall a bit disappointing besides the Selfridges look & feel on the ground floor, but minus the experiential feeling one can have in the Oxford Street location.

Peek & Cloppenburg, a high-street positioning

The first Peek & Cloppenburg store opened in 1901 in Dusseldorf. Since the 70s, the company expanded abroad, with its first two locations in Utrecht and Anvers. The expansion continued into the 90s until now with locations in Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. In 2021, the company acquired Magasin du Nord. They also run four online stores: Germany, Netherlands, Austria, and Poland.

Peek&Cloppenburg



Also located on Dam Square and facing De Bijenkorf, the store spans four small floors, and only offers women's fashion, men's fashion, and a few accessories. The store was not busy at all at the time of the visit. The look & feel is closer to a C&A store than a true department store. The store is packed with merchandise. For women, the product offer is weirdly mixing sportswear and occasion wear, local and international brands. Overall, the store doesn't offer any interesting features besides a more upbeat section located in the basement: gathering younger men and women's products from brands such as Adidas, G-Star Raw, Tommy Jeans, and Champion, more efforts are shown when it comes to music, fixtures and visual merchandising.

Vanderveen, catering to the local community

Vanderveen was founded in Assen in 1897. From the very beginning, it was ambicioning to become a department store. Today, Vanderveen is still 100% owned and run by the founding family which is very much involved in sales, operations and management. The store covers 17,500 sqm of sales floor space and is one of the top three largest department stores in the Netherlands.

The product offer, rather mass-market oriented, is amazingly broad. The ground floor gathers women's fashion, men's fashion, shoes, and leather goods (including large sneakers and denim shop-in-shops) as well as kids wear, cosmetics & beauty, jewelry, bed & bath linens, an impressive arts & crafts and stationery goods store, a souvenir shop, and a grocery section including a butcher stand and offering tables to eat or have coffee.

Across the other floors, customers can find literally everything, from a large music section completed by a stage hosting live music on a regular basis, baby apparel and equipment, toys, a gaming store, DIY & home improvement products, an Intersport store, pet supplies & small pets, an impressive bike & repair store, a computer & repair store, tableware,

cookware & kitchenware departments, furniture, a hardwood floors store, made-to-order services for kitchen furniture and curtains, an art store (pieces to buy or to rent), a WWF store, a beauty salon, an art gallery, a salon hosting talks, a book store, a wellness center and two restaurants (one of opening on a large kids playground). Many shop-in-shops are local brands run under a concession model.



VANDERVEEN

WARENHUIS VAN ASSEN
SINDS 1897



What makes Vanderveen unique compared to the usual department stores is twofold. Firstly, the endless product offer: seeing it, one understands that Assen people (the city accounts for 68,000 residents) don't have many choices other than shopping there. Besides, the product diversity clearly addresses all generations: in a way, the product profusion is rooting back to the very origin of department stores. Secondly, (...) strategy is really to cater to local customers who are coming from roughly 100 km around. In that perspective, the store also appeals to German customers: open every last Sunday of the month, Vanderveen represents an opportunity to shop knowing that German department stores can only open their doors four Sundays per year.

When it comes to retail, the Netherlands is not a major scene. Still, some interesting points are worth keeping in mind. Despite efforts to reach international standards in terms of product offer, services, and experiences, De Bijenkorf kind of fails as the offer is not really bringing any differentiation while services and an experiential feeling are nowhere to be found. The Amsterdam Peek & Cloppenburg's location doesn't really feel like a department store, with a terrible look & feel. Vanderveen, an outsider considering its single location, offers an interesting perspective on how to be an anchor and relevantly serve local communities.