WE ARE WHAT WE HAVE
CONSUMPTION AS MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

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1. This report, as part of the graduation project aimed at attaining the BA title from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, has been written and/or compiled solely by me.

2. This project report (or any amended form of it) has never before been submitted by me or anyone else in the framework of a learning assignment aimed at the attainment of a certificate or degree, within the AMFI programme or elsewhere.

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The process of consumption has been described as more than just purchasing a specific product. Our possessions are a central part of creating our identity, of creating ourselves. Now more than ever the consumer is faced with an enormous amount of choices which he/she has to make every day. In today's markets most of the products have reached high level of technological advancement hence functional value of analogous products is similar (Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer, 2011).

A considerable part of the research in consumer culture theory is devoted to the subject of consumer identity projects, where consumers, with purchasing and possessing products that are available in the marketplace, are constructing their identities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Nowadays the act of consumption could be defined as the main instrument that allows people to express their authenticity, and consumer researchers argue that making a decision to buy something is closely related to the consumer's sense of self (Sirgy 1982) and their wish to intentionally or unintentionally enhance and extend their personal and public image by using products that have hedonic and symbolic meanings attached to them (Levy, 1959; Belk, 1988).

This means that people are engaging in consumption and possessing things in order to contribute to the creation and maintenance of the self.

With a deeper knowledge of the behaviour and identity constructs of the consumers, marketers can position their brands and products in a way that appeals to their customers (Klipfel, Barclay and Bockorny 2014), and customers can recognise and develop an understanding about their consumption and possession practices in order to create a more stable and healthier self (Belk, 1988; Ahuvia, 2005).

To get a better understanding about the identity construction and the role consumption and possessions play in it, I would like to propose the following research goal:

**UNDERSTAND HOW POSSESSIONS INFLUENCE THE CREATION OF SELF**

To develop a better understanding of the link between consumption and the self, three sub-questions were developed, namely:

1. What influences the construction of self?
2. What is the link between the self and possessions?
3. How do possessions influence the self?

To gain the necessary information mostly qualitative research methods were used. For researching the way personal identity and self are constructed, documentary analysis was performed. This way it was easier to gather the necessary base of knowledge and to understand what are the main thoughts and developments in the field of consumer research and the construction of self. This means that existing literature on this topic was found and analysed.

It is possible the documentary analysis is hiding some important and more current information hence a small case study was performed. Studying a case will provide that more recent and 'real-life' information will be collected and observed. Interviews will be the main part of researching the case as some observations could be made during them.
IDENTITY
The identity of an individual, although it has become a bit vague and ambiguous, is usually defined as the attitudes, qualities, beliefs, characteristics, expressions and social relations that make a person, that defines what one person is; this process happens both on an individual and group level (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Leary and Tangney, 2012).

This leads to a proposal that identity can be divided in two parts, which are always intertwined – one always affects the other. These two parts could be personal identity and social identity. According to Baumeister (cited by Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002, p.164) “personal identity is defined as a unitary and continuous awareness of who one is”. In other words a person is aware of his/her values, feelings, characteristics, experiences and actions, and all these traits shape their individual personality. All the experiences this one person has had shape him/her in an individuality because the things that he/she goes through in life, he/she is always going to perceive differently and they will leave a different impression and experience to this particular person than they would to any other.

However, this self-perception is not only shaped by itself as an individual process; it is heavily influenced by the social experience and connections one has (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). This means that all the social activities and interpersonal relationships that one person has, have the power to affect and shape the development of the identity. Through social interactions the social identity of a person is created. It determines how and in which groups a person will fit in and communicate with; it also influences the personal identity of a person.

According to professor of marketing Americus Reed (2002), not all identities are alike – two people who consider themselves belonging to the same social identity, e.g. a student won’t have the same behaviour because each one of them has a different understanding and emotional connection of ‘being a student’.

Multiple scholars argue that a person’s identity is also influenced by the surroundings in which the person is situated – in a particular situation one identity can become stronger than the other (Reed, 2002). For example, if a fashion student is sitting in a classroom full of architecture students, he/she would definitely feel and act differently than around his/her fellow fashion students; or, if in the same situation as previously one would be the only girl in the room that would again influence the way they socialise with others – their social identity. Basically, the social framework in which a person is situated – this could be a sports event, ballet, walk in the park or informal Christmas dinner – determines which aspects of their identity will be the strongest, and how they will behave (Maltzahn 2013).

In western societies a strong emphasis is put on person as an individual, with their own individual identity and achievements. According to marketing professor Bernard Cova (1997) we are now living in an age where people have become extremely individualistic. However identity plays an important role when it comes to the group belonging. A person is not only an individual being, the feeling of belonging, on a higher or lower level, depending on the person, is always necessary (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002).
SELF-CONCEPT

Both parts – personal identity - the way in which an individual evaluates him/herself and social identity - the way in which a person socializes and identifies with other people and groups – constitute to the creation of a person's self-concept. According to Reed (2002), whose ideas are based on an earlier work by sociologist Morris Rosenberg (1979, 1989), the self-concept includes everything that the individual thinks and feels about himself as an object of thought and how it relates to other objects. It is a generalised opinion someone has about himself, it is a sum of different identities that guide the behaviour of a person.

According to professor of marketing Joseph Sirgy (1982) multiple scholars historically have had disagreement about the number of levels self-concept should be divided into, which has led to inconsistency and ambiguity of the self-concept definition. Historically there has been a division of the self-concept – actual and ideal self (Sirgy, 1982; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). However, research on self-concept has developed so far that there is a common agreement of the multiplicity of self-concept. Sirgy (1982) refers to four different but intertwined dimensions of the self-concept – actual self, ideal self, social self and ideal social self. Actual self can be defined as a perception a person has about him/herself and ideal self – how the same person would like to perceive him/herself; social self can be defined as the beliefs one person has on how he/she is viewed by others and ideal social self refers to how this person aspires others to see him/her (Sirgy, 1982; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014).

Self-concept is an important aspect when it comes to the consumer behaviour and self-congruence theory, which is discussed later in this work. People tend to perceive products they consume as symbolising different things and having multiple meanings, that is why they are using these meanings of specific products and brands to identify with them in order to enhance their self-concept (Dolich, 1969; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014).
SELF-CONGRUENCE THEORY

Self-concept is the basis of self-congruity theory developed by Joseph Sirgy (1982). Self-congruity is the extent to which the product personality correlates to the self-concept of a person. As defined by Joseph Sirgy (cited in Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny 2014, p.130), it is “the match between the product’s value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience’s self-concept”.

There is a distinction between two types of product attributes - utilitarian (functional) and value expressive (symbolic) (Cova 1997; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). Utilitarian products are products that are purchased because of their utilitarian value or in other words their use value. If a person buys a utilitarian product, the practicality is more important than the value of the product. The consumer expects to use it in a certain practical way in order to gain the result the product is supposed to give. A value expressive product, or a product that has a particular symbolism attached to it, allows the individual to express his or her self-concept by using it. This means that, if a person purchases a value expressive product, they expect to have a congruence between the product and their self-concept in order to strengthen it.

According to this, the self-congruence theory is more important to value expressive brands and products, as the possibility that a person is going to buy and use a product is higher if there is a congruence between the symbolic meaning the person believes the product has and the self-concept of that same person (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). If there is a similarity between the way the consumer compares his/her personality with a specific brand or product, it is more likely that this consumer will make the purchase decision in favour of that brand or product.

People have the inclination to keep their self-concept fixed and stable, to preserve it in some ways and to approach their ideal self, which means that product purchase choices they make, are made according to the need to preserve and boost up their self-concept (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). As an example, a person who believes that he/she is very sporty and active will more likely choose a footwear brand and a specific shoe model that signalises the same fit and active lifestyle. Because this person identifies with the values that the brand/product has to offer he/she felt that the product can preserve and enhance their self-concept and as a result made the choice to buy the product. By making the choice to purchase (or quite opposite – not to purchase) a specific product, they are boosting their actual self in order to get closer to and achieve the idea of their ideal self.

Goods are also perceived as social tools, which are serving as means of communication between individuals (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982; Reed 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). This is why they can be used as indicators for certain things. Theory of the extended self as explained in this work is also supporting the self-congruity theory, as the basic meaning of it is that possessions of a person can signalise who they are, they become the person and the person becomes their possessions.

Despite the freedom of becoming and being individualistic, the contemporary individual does feel the need to experience a renewed sense of community, otherwise he/she eventually will feel alone and separated (Richardson, 2013).
According to Bernard Cova (2002) objects and services of consumption are moved to the background as people nowadays are more interested in the social links and identities that these links and relationships can provide. This means that the product will be more likely bought if it represents something the person aspires to in a wider social sense.

Choosing a particular product or a brand allows the person to present him/herself to other people, with whom he/she socialises, in a way that they want to be perceived in order to identify with that particular group and to gain an external validation and a feeling of group belonging. This external validation again serves as a means of boosting the self-concept. This is why purchasing goods from specific brands are used as the main method of enhancing the self-concept. However, because the meaning making behind products is a social process, it leads to a conclusion that specific symbols and the value expressive meanings behind them have to be understood by the group in which the individual wants to belong to (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Cova 1997; Sirgy 1982; Reed 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005).

EXTENDED SELF

According to Belk's (1988) findings that have been approved by more recent research performed by A. Ahuvia (2005), people are engaging in consumption practices in order to identify themselves on an individual and social level and to reach a sense of fulfilment in life. Identity and self are central to these consumption practices. Russel Belk has developed the theory of the extended self in 1988. As he argues:

“Our possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities.” (Belk, 1988, p.139)

To be precise, he considers that things we own not only signalise who a person is and allows to express his/herself; they are also perceived as becoming a part of us. This means all the products a person possesses and consumes simultaneously become a part of a person's self. Things to which one feels attached is one of three categories that is the most clearly extended, other two being persons and places (Belk, 1988).

Contemporary research on consumption shows that, after the development of money, buying power is one of the biggest contributors to one's sense of self and things people consume offer another way to enhance their identity and the sense of self (Belk, 1988). This leads to a conclusion that it is also possible to define what a person is by the possessions he/she has.

This means that the things a person owns could be directly related to the identity of that person and they signalise specific lifestyle, opinions and life goals. According to Belk (1988, p.146):

“In other words, having and being are distinct but inseparable.”

There are two ways in which an object can “extend” a person (Belk, 1988). However, according to more recent study performed by Professor of marketing at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Aaron Ahuvia, there is no reason to perceive one category as extending person more than the other. In other words, they are equally important and strong. First way is to literally extend a person, for him/her to be capable of doing things that he/she was not able to do before. For example a washing machine. In the past it was a hard, long and exhausting work to wash dirty clothes, because it was done...
by hand, water had to be heated etc. Now there is such a beautiful thing as a washing machine – just put the dirty clothing in the machine, whenever it is needed, and it will become clean. And if there is a tumble dryer – life has never been easier and faster. The second way of extending a person is symbolically, when a new possession or a specific way of dressing convinces a person that he/she can be different or incomplete if he/she did not possess that object or was able to dress that way. For example, if a girl attends a school where they are wearing school uniforms, she feels different when wearing it, maybe more professional and belonging to a particular group of people, than if she would when wearing jeans. It is also that other people might perceive her or any other person differently – according to possessions he/she has.

This means that the relationship a person has with a possession always involves a third person – his/her opinion about it. As already seen in the self-congruency theory, the feedback from other people has a strong influence on how a person perceives him/herself, his/her self-concept (Belk, 1988; Ahuvia 2005). Hence the process of extending one's self is a fundamentally social process which strongly relies on the relationship with other people.

Identification with one's possessions starts quite early in life – children learn to distinguish themselves from their surroundings and then their possessions from other children's possessions (Belk, 1988). It is sometimes very obvious that if one child sees another one playing with something, and if he/she will desire that toy, there will be fight and tears. Children are very possessive of their things because of the reason that for them it is something that identifies who they are. As Australian writer Kate Veitch (2016, p.152) states in her new article "Stuff: Why do we own so many things?":

"It starts early. Watch pre-verbal toddlers at play and I can guarantee you at least half their conflicts will be over who's got possession of some object. This is me is followed very swiftly by this is mine, and as we grow the two concepts become ever more closely intertwined."

Over time emphasis on material possessions tends to decrease. However, it is still existing throughout the whole life of a person (Belk, 1988; Maltzahn, 2013).

Although consumerism has a slightly negative connotation, because people tend to rely only on possessions and monetary gains to reach happiness in life, Belk (1988) argues that extending self into material possessions can actually bring some positive benefits to a person. People use their possessions not only to express themselves, their identity, and to achieve the feeling of happiness. They also use these things to see how far in life they have come, to see their accomplishments, to remind themselves about other people in their lives. According to Belk (1988) things (and memories of things) that people surround themselves with help to come to a better understanding of who they have been in the past, how far they have come and who they are now, and maybe who they are going to be in the future. Possessions help people to systemise and structure their lives.
BRAND IDENTITY

A look into what brand identity is will allow for explanation and better understanding of the relationship between brands and their consumers. Today, in order to preserve the existing market share, establishment of a good brand reputation is necessary. Currently multiple brands have very similar product attributes which means that by enhancing the brand with a unique personality it becomes easier to differentiate it from its competitors (Phau and Lau, 2001).

It is argued that there is a symbolic use of brands, which is possible due to the fact that consumers often perceive brands in terms of them being human, possessing human characteristics (Aaker, 1997). As defined by professor of marketing Jennifer Aaker (1997, p. 347):

“In consumer behaviour research, a considerable amount of attention has been given to the construct brand personality, which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.”

This means that consumers can easily think about brands in terms of being alive and having emotions, the same way humans do. This is why brand identity is an important aspect of advertising. By developing brand personality and specific characteristics, it is possible for marketers to create images that correlate with a specific image that consumer seeks in order to match his/her actual self or to enhance his/her image in eyes of the others (the ideal-self) (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). A variety of marketing variables can be used to create brand identity – packaging, imagery associated with that brand, advertising, logo and symbols (Phau and Lau, 2001).

As already mentioned in this paper, there are two types of product attributes - utilitarian (functional) and value expressive (symbolic) (Cova 1997; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). Brands can also serve symbolic or value-expressive function as well as a utilitarian function; brand personality usually tends to provide the value-expressive (symbolic) function (Aaker, 1997). Development of a specific brand personality attributes can provide symbolic or emotional brand attachment from the consumer which can lead to preferring one brand over another, even if the utilitarian values of items produced by two brands are analogue. According to Aaker (1997), this happens because using products that brand provides allows the consumer to enhance or maintain his/her self-concept. In other words, consumers prefer brands who possess set of personality traits that are congruent with their characteristics (Sirgy, 1982; Aaker, 1997; Phau and Lau, 2001; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014).

According to Phau and Lau (2001) the perception of brand identity is not only influenced by the actions and creations of marketers and branders; consumers can also influence the way brand personality is perceived. The way a consumer identifies with a brand depends on his/her self-concept and the notion that personality of the product, he/she possesses or intends to possess, are automatically and with no doubt congruent (Sirgy, 1982). This means if a group of people see themselves as being very trendy, everything that they acquire and consume will most likely be perceived as being trendy by them. This way if consumers have a high brand preference, in addition to the values and characteristics developed by marketers, they will most likely see other personality traits
that they want to see in brands (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). Ultimately consumption of a brand can lead to not only enhancing the self-concept, but also adding and creating new characteristics to that specific brand (Phau and Lau, 2001).

There is also a difference between brand personality and product personality. Brand personality is already explained in this chapter. Product personality is analogue to brand personality, according to Govers and Mugge (2004, p. 4):

“Product personality differs from brand personality, in that it refers to a specific product variant, and not to a global brand. It is defined as “the set of human personality characteristics used to describe a specific product variant”. “

Self-congruity theory and theory of the extended self both provide an explanation for the reason people get attached to their products, which correlates with why people get attached to brands – in order to construct and enhance their self-concept. When a product is seen as self-congruent, strong emotional bond between a person and a product can develop. Higher congruence increases the product’s symbolic meaning of the product in the eyes of the owner, which leads to bigger attachment to the product (Govers and Mugge, 2004).
As described by the self-congruence theory and theory of the extended self, brand identity and consumer attachment to one particular brand or product has a higher importance to value expressive brands and products (Belk, 1988; Cova 1997; Govers & Mugge, 2004; Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014). As argued by marketing and business management professors Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak, and Sirgy (2012), Apple’s iPhone can be described as a value expressive product, because it offers a “young and cool” brand personality and is consumed for symbolic purposes. Apple is also the most valuable company in the world in 2015 (Satista, 2016; Forbes, 2016) and also one of the most admired ones.

At first let’s take a small look into the history and statistics to gain a better understanding about the company Apple - the most valuable company in the world in 2015 (Statista: Brand value of the most valuable companies in the world 2015, 2016), and the producer of the iPhone – the product that, in the third quarter of 2015, accounted for more than 60 percent of Apple’s total revenue (Statista: Global Apple iPhone sales, 2016).

**APPLE iPHONE**

The first Apple iPhone was introduced nine years ago, and brought innovative features (such as touch screen and virtual keyboard) to the smartphone industry, and since its introduction to the consumer market, there have been eight generations of the iPhone released Statista: Apple iPhone market share 2007-2016,2016). Apple has been amongst the top 5 smartphone vendors in the world since 2009 and has consistently maintained the position of second most popular smartphone vendor in the world since 2012 (Statista: Apple iPhone market share 2007-2016, 2016).

Apple’s iPhone sales have consistently increased over the last few years. Recent data from statistics portal Statista (Apple iPhone unit sales worldwide 2007-2016, 2016) shows that from around 1.4 million iPhones sold in 2007 it has grown to more than 230 million iPhones were sold in 2015 and over 125 million iPhones have been sold in first two quarters of 2016 (Table 1). The iPhone runs on Apple’s own mobile operating system iOS which the second most popular smartphone operating system in the market (Statista, 2016).
The success of value-expressive products is largely determined by the self-congruity effect (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014), which means that if people feel that the iPhone somehow interacts and corresponds to their views about who they are as personalities, there is a bigger chance that a positive purchase decision will be made. One of the reasons that makes the iPhone a value-expressive product is the core strategy of the producer itself. As noted by architect of the Mac OS X operating system Cordell Ratzlaff (Thomke and Feinberg, 2012, p.2):

“We did the design first. We focused on what we thought people would need and want, and how they would interact with their computer. We made sure we got that right, and then we went and figured out how to achieve it technically. In a lot of cases when we came up with a design that we knew really worked for people, we didn’t know how we were going to build it. We had a design target, and we worked with engineering to reach it. We ended up doing a lot of things that we initially thought were impossible, or would take a long time to do. It was great because we were applying a lot of creativity and ingenuity on the design side and then pushing the engineers to use the same kind of creativity and innovation to make that happen.”

In other words Apple has a set of principles that extend to a deep commitment to great product design. It can be said that design thinking is at the core of the company and simplicity for them is the ultimate sophistication. However, this notion of design being important, according to them, never excludes functionality. Compromise between simplicity of use and functionality is (supposedly) not there – the product has to be both beautiful and consistent as well as functionally exceptional (Thomke and Feinberg, 2012).

There is a special link between Apple and its followers. According to American television host Jimmy Kimmel (2015), when talking about an iPhone:

“We’re now programmed to feel like if we don’t get the new one, we’re missing out on something.”

In a social experiment TV show hosted by Kimmel performed in the streets before the iPhone 6s came out, they gave the oldest version of iPhone, the one that came out in 2007, to people and convinced them that this is the new iPhone 6s. It was interesting to see how people reacted to it – they actually started stating that this model is much faster than the previous one, the resolution of the screen is a lot higher and colours are more vivid (Kimmel, 2015). When asking people if they would get this phone, they said that absolutely, and not because it is “better than ever”, but because “you got to have it”.

This information confirms the idea that there is more to the iPhone than just the functional value. It might be that its users engage with this phone with their self-concept and their internal image. To own an iPhone could be a way to enhance the self, to earn affirmation of self. According to professor of consumer behaviour Brendan Richardson (2013, p.7), Apple owners feel like their devices are a statement of “creativity, style, and difference from the grey and uninspiring world of the PC”. This way they feel that any device produced by Apple is superior.

This is why a case study was performed. I chose 4 people with radically different relationship
towards the iPhone. The first person has had multiple iPhone models for several years now and has only had one other phone besides the iPhone in the past. The second person has had an iPhone for a few years now, along with multiple other Apple devices. Person number three bought his/her first iPhone quite recently – in February 2016; and person four has always had an Android device, and only used iPhone as a replacement phone for two weeks.

Person 1
The person 1 has had almost all iPhone models (exception being the first one). She admits that it is an expensive investment to have an iPhone, however she really cannot imagine herself using another phone, as she is so used to it – iPhone was her second phone and the first smartphone she has had. She tells that iPhone is easier to use, it is more minimalistic and easily understandable. She stresses the fact that all the Apple devices are connected and how important and convenient it is for her. She demonstrates an ongoing opinion through the whole interview that phones with the Android system are inferior to the iPhone because they are constantly lagging and having slower internet. In her opinion every function that iPhone has is a lot more convenient and has a better design to it. She admits that she doesn't care what sort of a phone a person has, however she prefers iPhone as it has a luxurious feel to it (compares iPhone to the brand Celine) and that the owner of an iPhone

The fact that she has never owned a smartphone with the Android system is important here, because she has this convincing opinion that iPhone is better, however there is no clear personal substantiation why she believes so. Her mother has an Android phone, which she presumably hates. She has had an Android phone for two weeks as a replacement phone and admits to getting used to it and not having any problems with it. However, she says that the phone definitely extends her as a personality and when she had to live with another phone for two whole weeks she was sad and didn't feel like herself.

Person 2
The person 2 has an iPhone for two years now and she hasn't had any other iPhone models. She bought the iPhone because her old phone was broken and she needed a new phone. At first she was really against the whole iPhone hype, but her boyfriend had an iPhone and convinced her that it is a smart choice. She admits to buying the iPhone as being more social influence than a personal one, because she was convinced by others that this phone is the one to buy. When changing from the Android device to the iPhone she felt like iPhone is a lot more personalised from the beginning. She felt like it was easier to use the iPhone, like all the steps were already designed for you. That is the main difference she felt – with the Android it feels like you have to make the phone personalised, with iPhone, everything has already been done for you. Design-wise she compares iPhone to Mercedes – beautiful but more expensive to use. She admits to iPhone being more expensive, however she says that the luxurious feel that she gets from it is worth the price. She feels that iPhone also somehow just excludes you from the operating systems, you just somehow need to buy other Apple devices, because then it is easier to function – all devices are synchronised together which means that wherever you go, you can always access all the
data you have. She believes that this is one of the main things that does make iPhone a better choice, maybe not technologically, but convenience-wise definitely.

She has an opinion that iPhone (and all complementing devices she has from Apple) makes her life easier and helps to express her personality better, she identifies with her phone and it makes her feel more confident, because she feels like a part of a closed group. However, she believes that iPhone has a special symbolic meaning to teenagers, because then it matters more what phone the person has. When a person grows older, phone as a status symbol loses its meaning. She admits from her own experience that for teenagers it is really important to have a cool phone, and iPhone is the “it” phone when it comes to teenagers.

**Person 3**
The third person has bought an iPhone relatively recently. Although at first she states that she bought the phone because of its functional values, later in the interview she admits that buying the iPhone is partially because many people around her have one and she felt the need to fit in.

She also states that price was one of the factors when making the decision – iPhone is not as expensive to buy as it used to be; new Sony Xperia Z series phones are actually more expensive choice.

When switching from Android device to iPhone she felt restricted. She believes that the Android device has a lot more options to customize the phone. For her it took almost two months to get uses to the iPhone. According to her many functions take a large amount of time to figure out. She would not call iPhone a phone that is simple to use.

She does feel that iPhone is a lot more expensive to maintain and use. She states that most of the necessary mobile applications are not available for free, and it’s impossible to listen music on it, because everything has to be bought in the Apple store.

She does prefer iPhone when it comes to the design because it feels more customized and here she feels that everything is simplified – for example if the background image is changed, the motive automatically adjusts to that particular image.

Because of its looks and the exploitation costs she would compare the iPhone to a BMW – for some people it symbolizes their status and lifestyle. Now when she is used to the phone, she believes that iPhone is the phone for her as she never has anything superfluous in any of her devices. She believes that iPhone is perfect for a minimalistic lifestyle, because it is simple, elegant and doesn’t have unnecessary functions.

**Person 4**
The person 4 has always had an Android device and was using iPhone as a replacement phone for two weeks, which gave him an idea about the difference between an iPhone and an Android device.

He believes that the phone is simple, so simple that their interface is even too simplified; either it is not possible to do some necessary things or it is just ridiculously complicated to do them. He states that when using the Apple phone it felt like all his habits were altered just to fit in one common flow. Thus he believes that in the essence there is only one way the phone can be used, it is impossible to make it more personal and adjust to different necessities. He believes that some people might find this nice, that everything is done for them, but he found it very restricting. In his opinion Android gives a lot
more freedom to the personal manifestations. This person also has the opinion that for teenagers it is really important to have a certain phone model that symbolises certain things. However, as people grow older and have a healthy mind-set, the necessities of the person are taken into account, not what other will think about “me” using a particular phone.

He believes that now iPhone is not something technologically superior to other phones, maybe when in just came out, because it was such a revolution. He states that he has never had problems with the Android device lagging or being slow, because new Sony Xperia and Samsung phones are just as good as iPhone. He actually believes that it is not worth paying more for iPhone as it has fallen behind other products both technologically and in terms of customization, it is just marketing and advertising that somehow positions iPhone as a superior device.

After interviewing these people, a table (Appendix, Table 2, P.20) was created, that included their opinions about multiple factors concerning the iPhone.

One of the people participating in this case study believes that iPhone is superior to any Android device, however this person can really be called an Apple fanatic. Two other people believe that Android has a lot more possibilities to customize the phone, and that functionally Android is not inferior. However they claim that iPhone is more suitable for their personalities as it is more minimalistic in its interface, it doesn't have anything unnecessary about it. Fourth person, which prefers an Android device believes that iPhone is just too simplified for most part, but agrees that for some people it could be a good option.

Three people in their interviews state that iPhone has a beautiful design and a luxurious feel to it. They feel that it is elegant, functional and convenient, and compare iPhone to other high class brands, such as Mercedes, BMW and Celine.

Most people believe that iPhone really symbolises something society wise – may it be a status symbol or a way for a person to express him/herself. Everyone agrees that as a status symbol this phone is more meaningful to younger people (teenagers). When people grow older, they don't see their possessions, such as mobile phones, as signalising their identity as much.

All three iPhone users did state that owning an iPhone did make them feel better and more confident about themselves on social as well as individual level. The only Android user also stated that he feels better using an Android phone as it just fits him and doesn't restrict his personality as much as the iPhone does.

This is a clear demonstration that people do choose their phones according to their personality traits and what they think their phones do for them on both individual and social levels.

There are multiple limits to this small case study. All of the people interviewed are around 20, where, according to previous chapters in this work, people are not as concerned about their material possessions as opposed to if they would be younger. Also all of these people are living in one area, which makes it impossible to compare the opinions of people living in other countries, where the iPhone might be more popular. To draw a conclusion it is positive that people do feel a rise in self-esteem by using a certain type of mobile phone, however it does not have to be the iPhone.
CONCLUSION

The link between consumption and possession practices and the construction of identity has been studied in this research report. The main goal was to understand how possessions influence the creation of self.

To get a better understanding at first the process of creating the self was researched. The self or self-concept is a crucial tool when it comes to identifying and evaluating with one on an individual and social level. This is why self-concept can be divided in two sections on both (individual and social) levels, namely actual and ideal. It was clear that the construction of self is heavily influenced by the social relations one has, as well as by the tendency to continually enhance the actual self in order to get closer to reaching the ideal self.

It was clear that there is a link between possessions and the enhancement of one’s self – by choosing different things to buy, or right opposite – not to buy, people are adding to their self in order to reach the ideal self.

Because people are identifying with their possessions, it was important to understand why people have the preference of some particular products and brands. A short look into brand identity provided the necessary information to understand that people are seeing brands in terms of human personality traits (Aaker, 1997), and this is the reason why some brands for some people are more important than others – it is because they can relate to those brands, they identify with the message that the brand is coming across with. The same idea goes for products. And according to the self-congruence theory, if a person identifies with a brand (or a product) as reflecting who he/she is, the chance that a purchase will be made is high.

After the documental research a small case study was performed. The Apple iPhone was taken as an example due to the mind-blowing success of this product and the company itself (Statista, 2016; Forbes, 2015; Fortune, 2016). Four people with totally different relationship towards Apple iPhone were chosen for an interview. These interviews provided a really good look into how people relate to their phones and to what extent they extend and complement their selves. Results showed that in all of the cases people did identify with their phones (even if it was not an iPhone) and believed that the functions and
the look that the phone provides are consistent with their personalities and that was the main reason for choosing a particular phone model.

To conclude this research it is possible to say that the consumption and possession practices that people have, do constitute to the construction of who one is. Although nowadays consumption has negative connotation, due to the excessive consumption practices that people are engaging in, it is possible to say that to some extent possessions and experiences (such as travelling) that one has or aspires to reach one day, can constitute to a development of a healthy personality (Belk, 1982).

This research paper is taken as an inspiration to develop a mobile application for people who feel the need to confine their possession practices, retain healthy relationship with their possessions or just to get a better overview of what is going on in their lives and to somehow structure them.
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<td><strong>iPhone model</strong></td>
<td>3, 4s, 2x5s and 6s</td>
<td>5s</td>
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<td><strong>why iPhone</strong></td>
<td>iPhone seemed to be the only logical choice - had macbook and the app store, and the fact that a new phone was needed</td>
<td>was convinced by boyfriend and</td>
<td>was one of the best choices</td>
<td>replacement phone</td>
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<td><strong>attitude towards Android</strong></td>
<td>inferior to iPhone technologically as well as design wise. Android - SAZ shoes</td>
<td>Android is like a common system for the most part of the society. Has a lot more options</td>
<td>more possibilities to customize the phone</td>
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<td><strong>attitude towards iPhone</strong></td>
<td>practical, easy to understand and use, good layout. iPhone - Celine shoes.</td>
<td>everything really personalised. it is the premium to pay for. somehow excludes from using other operating systems; compares to Mercedes</td>
<td>switching from one to another didn't feel easier or simpler to use; nice design, faster, convenient small details, however more expensive to maintain; it's like bmw</td>
<td>simplified to a level of degeneration, necessary things ridiculously complicated; in essence there is only one way this phone is meant to be used</td>
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<td><strong>for society</strong></td>
<td>iPhone as a symbol of status, trendy people - bloggers, dj's</td>
<td>allows to express yourself as a personality, but it's not something that special after a certain age</td>
<td>maybe indicates your status in the society somehow, at least for some; again, not something special after certain age</td>
<td>important for teenagers to have the coolest phone in their class; after a certain age it doesn't matter; probably symbolic attachment</td>
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<td><strong>personal feeling</strong></td>
<td>addicted to her phone and all other Apple devices, doesn't feel like herself without the iPhone</td>
<td>gives the extra confidence, want it or not and a part of a group (when one person out of three has it.)</td>
<td>I never have anything superfluous that's why its simplicity is a perfect fit; increases self-esteem</td>
<td>by using it felt restricted; many better alternatives in the market</td>
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<td><strong>in few words</strong></td>
<td>complete purity and clarity</td>
<td>innovative, personalised and functional</td>
<td>elegant, classical, handy and fast</td>
<td>good marketing and advertising</td>
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**PERSON 1**

I've had all of them, except the 1st one. 1x3, 1x 4s; 2x5s and 1x6s. Shitloads of money. I chose iPhone because I got really used to the whole Macintosh system. My first computer was mac, my parents bought it. I had Nokia as a phone then. When I needed a new phone iPhone seemed to be the only logical choice. Ohh, and I would probably throw up from constant heating up of android, as well as all the lagging, and how slow is the internet on those things. I just want to literally vomit from android. You can totally write it down. :D

iPhone is a lot more practical and has more options. Access to multiple applications and data bases is a lot easier. Screen is easier to understand and use, keys are a lot more practical on iPhone when compared to Android. I hate that Androids are lagging so much. Oh, and the display layout just sucks, as well as the sound. It just sounds like sort of a bubble. So stupid. And all the stupid ring tones, gosh, they're so annoying, like that 6th symphony etc. it is hard to imagine worse sound.

When speaking about the status – well, now it is actually cool that you cover the small apple on the back of the phone with a sticker or something. Sort of to be different from other iPhone addicts. It's like you have this cool phone but you just hide it. And only a specific group of real apple fans know that it is an iPhone. Yeah, many people are doing this now. And I have noticed that I have become socially addicted to my phone. Of course, if I forget my phone somewhere, I always have my mac or iPad and I have all the stuff I need there, which is absolutely amazing. I have my Instagram and fb even on my moms and dads iPads just in case. Like, I don't need the phone to connect to people anymore. I sometimes feel afraid I could miss any sort of information, I am curious, want to know everything.

That is why I have all of the Apple products. I just need them. I want to get the iWatch as well. I love the design with the metallic wristband. It is possible to run and connect it to the app that counts the km. I wouldn't need my phone then, because it is a bit uncomfortable to hold it while running. It’s just inconvenient. MY COMFORT ZONE. Yes, that’s it. I love living in my comfort zone. And it is hard to get out of it.

- Do you know about the whole “war” situation between iPhone and Android users?

No, what war? I don't fight with my mom. Although she is in a constant fight with her Android. She actually beats it, and goes psycho. So many times. She liked the iPad a lot more. Said that it is really convenient to use and easy to perceive. And that Samsung and other Androids have so many unnecessary sensor keys that she unintentionally clicks and weird stuff always pops open. When I'll have some extra money, I'll buy her an iPhone. She's 60 and she likes the whole iOs thing. My dad likes iPad as well, but he has Nokia, although he thinks iPad is amazing and he never leaves it out of his hands.

I personally don't care what sort of phone someone has. Don't give a fuck. My friend has HTC and Samsung tablet. Doesn't seem so bad. But I prefer the material and the metal carcass, and the sensor unblocking, and the number blocking. To compare – Android SAZ shoes, iPhone – Celine. iPhone – it is complete purity and clarity.

With Android you can never understand, what just popped up, what closed and why, it’s a whole mess. If they made it simpler, it would be better. I would say iPhone is meant for all the fashion bloggers. Like, really trendy people. Because by itself it is a fashion item. Like Burberry. All the people that have iPhone are somehow perceived as being really cool. It's the perfect phone for people in fashion and music. There are constant
updates and new possibilities. The same would go for business people. Drug dealers would always have a really old Nokia for work and then iPhone as their personal phone. Because they have to be on top as well. iPhone is like an addiction. Good design, and a whole computer in your phone. I am addicted. :D I love the technological opportunities it gives. I love how I can do everything with this one device. If I would lose it, I would just get an iPhone the next day. I have had that situation. My iPhone was stolen. I got used to the android I was using for two whole weeks, it wasn't that bad, but I was sad all the time and just didn't feel like myself. I could say that I identify with that phone. It is like my baby. Some people have beer, I have my iPhone. I have never held anything in my hands as often as my iPhone.

PERSON 2
Ok, at first I was really against iPhones. I just didn't understand the whole hype. But I was convinced by my boyfriend, the app store, and the fact that I just needed a new phone. People warned me about the fact that most of the apps are not for free. iPhone is like Mercedes – beautiful, but expensive to maintain. But I have to say, all the standard applications are for free. If you want something more interesting, that is when you need to pay.

At first, changing from Android to iPhone everything seemed really personalised. Android is like a common system for the most part of the society. iOS system somehow personalizes you with itself. Each device you have has its own id and your name to it, there is the option to access the location of it. It is the premium that we are paying for. As well as all the devices are connected, they synchronize the information. It's just easier.

- I've heard an opinion that with an Android device you have a lot more options.

Definitely. When you start using an iPhone you are in an essence just excluded from all the other operating systems, because it just is not convenient anymore, you have to duplicate everything, because most of Windows files are not recognised by Mac and it just changes the format.

I think for me everything started with the trying out something new. This tale is as old as it gets – everyone is using this one thing and sharing their positive experience, which leads to individual curiosity. When you start using it, you just get so much involved with all the new possibilities and applications, which help you to express yourself as a personality. And then you are the one who can share the positive experience. And then you buy the next complementing device because you feel that you need it and it will allow for new technical functions, and then the next one... after two years now I rarely use Windows or Android systems in my daily life.

When talking about how it allows me to express myself as a personality, I would say because I have all these devices that are synchronized and I can get a better grip on what is going on where and I can control the whole thing better. iPhone just gives me the extra confidence, want it or not, to feel like myself, especially now when one person out of three has it. Together with buying the iOS I have the opportunity to shape myself how I want to in all social media, through all the
applications. Like, my Facebook and Instagram, applications for healthy living, nutrition, when travelling. I would say it is innovative, personalised and functional.

I definitely want to buy the iWatch, because I have always used a watch and shit, now you can answer your calls on your watch? That, baby, is the future. But I wouldn't buy all the next new things that Apple comes out with, especially not phones. I'm quite sceptical on that. I like the model I have for two years now. I would buy a new one if the old one just wouldn't function anymore.

I wouldn't say that iPhone is something special. Especially now, when we have reached this age when we can afford to buy our own things, when we are not dependent on our parents anymore. But, gosh, I have to tell you, the whole obsession kids have with it, that's just crazy. At least here, in Latvia. I feel really sorry for the parents that cannot afford it, because it is expensive. I have an example – one of my relatives couldn't deal with his son for a really long time. His 13 or 14 I think. And he just demanded that phone, because everyone supposedly has it. Because now parents usually have their private lives after their families. I think that is one of the reasons parents buy this crazy expensive stuff to their kids, to somehow feel better that they don't spend as much time with them. And of course the more wealthy parents that have the less time buy the most expensive phones. And then everyone needs that phone. Of course in the end little douchebag got his iPhone. For teenagers I guess it is really important what kind of stuff you have. Now, when we're in our 20, it's just not important.

PERSON 3

I've had one iPhone, this is my first, 5s. I chose it because at the moment I had to buy a new phone it was one of the best choices (here I mean technically). I really liked the design, size and the home button. About it being more expensive – I didn't buy it in Latvia so it was actually a bit cheaper than an Android device with the same parameters. By the way the prices for the new Android models are quite similar to those of iPhone.

Switching from an Android it was hard to get used to using iPhone at first. I somehow didn't feel that it is easier or simpler to use because it just didn't have those functions that an android phone has. And then after two months I did find out that there are those functions, just named differently.

I would say it is almost the same as the android, it's just really bad that nothing is for free. Like, you cannot change the ringtone for free, I looked up a 30 min video to see how to change it. I wouldn't call it a simple phone.

A big pro is the fact that there really is not as much lagging as for the android. There are some system mistakes but not as many. But I cannot be super objective – the android I had was from the cheap end. I believe if you buy an android for
the same price the options are similar.
I like the design part of it, I like how the motive automatically adjusts to the picture I choose as a background. Such a small thing, but I like it. Technically as well, there are these small things, like there is a search option under settings, which android doesn't have. But if you want music, iPhone is the last thing to buy. Then I have to buy the iPod. Their whole market is bullshit. I understand that this is a way to make bigger money, but I don't like it. Oh and the battery, it's really bad. It is actually the reason I would not take another iPhone. Like, it doesn't work in the winter sometimes, there is something weird with the connection.

Well, I think that another thing that made me buy the iPhone is the fact that many people in my year (University) have it. And the fact that it has become a little cheaper when you compare to for example the Sony Z series. I am not really what you could call a fanboy, I just technically and financially decided that I could try it now. I wouldn't say that iOS is better than Android. It's just that for different people it will be different. For example I never have anything superfluous even in my computer. That is why iPhone is good for me. I don't need that many functions as Android provides.

If I would have to describe iPhone in few words I would say elegant, classical and handy. Fast as well.

-Could you describe like a typical iPhone person to me? Just your opinion.

Well, there is this girl in my class. Like, I don't know. Not to say anything bad about her, but she constantly wants to find a way to somehow demonstrate that she is better than others. Every other person just uses their phones, but she sometimes just has these weird comments. Now it is getting less though because lot of people now have iPhones. Well, she still has her BMW, which no one has, so she still has that. Yes, that's what I would say, I would say that iPhone and BMW are on the same page. I believe that this sort of phone somehow increases your self-esteem, maybe indicates your status in the society somehow. At least for some.

I know a few years back people really saw iPhone as something. Because we were younger and not everyone's parents could afford a phone like that. But now when everyone's working and earning their own money, it has become normal to have nice things. I guess it just changes with age.

PERSON 4

I had an iPhone two weeks. I used it as a replacement phone while I was deciding on a new phone. My old phone died from old age and I had to buy something new.

-So it is by accident that you got the iPhone?

Yes. I wouldn't have taken an iPhone, but someone offered me to use it. And because technically it was one of the best alternatives at that time I took it.

-Why do you say that you wouldn't have chosen it by yourself? Was there a notable difference between Android and ios?

Because their interface is just too simplified; either you cannot do the necessary things or they're just ridiculously complicated. For example, creating a new user account. Everything is just super tangled. In an essence there is a feeling that everything that is beneficial for the producer, for example for you to have your own account and things like that, is complicated only because the user wouldn't dig in to that and would just accept and agree to whatever that is offered.
Yes, the interface of iOS is easier to perceive than that of Android, it is on a total children level. Complicated are only those actions that are connected to various Apple terms of use and services and so on. Everything else is simplified to a level of degeneration. :D
When using the Apple phone I felt like all my habits were altered just to fit in a common flow. Everything in that phone is made as if all your actions have already been predicted. In essence there is only one way this phone is meant to be used, and if you want to do something else or in a different way, sorry, no chance for that. If talking about the simplifying things – when things are too simplified it just leads to restriction, which I find annoying.
In comparison Android allows you a complete freedom to make your phone into what you want it to be.
I personally don’t consider Apple to be a good product and by using it I personally somehow felt even worse.
I believe that it is important for teenagers to have the coolest phone in their class. For grownups with a healthy mind-set it doesn't matter what others think about their phone and the most important thing is how they feel with the phone. My necessities are better satisfied with an Android. For other people it might be the iPhone, but for me it’s just too ordinary when it comes to the function.
I understand that Apple iPhone was really cool when it just came out but now there are so many better alternatives in the market that I would feel silly buying an overpriced phone which has fallen behind both technologically and in terms of customization.
I believe that in everyday life people don’t give a fuck about what type of phone they have, especially older people.
I believe that there is some symbolic value to people who adore iPhone, however I personally don’t consider it in any way better than any other phones. It was uncomfortable to use it and only because it has the apple on the back didn’t make me feel any joy. It only lead me to a further incomprehension why people are buying them in such amounts, but yes, this is probably where the symbolic attachment comes in play.
And when talking about Android lagging – I have never had that with any phone that comes from the so called premium sector – I mean Sony Z series or the good end of Samsung. What I can say about iPhone in a few words is good marketing and advertising. The phone by itself is just not worth it.
REFERENCE LIST

BOOKS:


ARTICLES:


WEB RESOURCES:


WEB RESOURCES:


