WE ARE WHAT WE HAVE
CONSUMPTION AS MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING ONE’S IDENTITY
PROCESS BOOK

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Construction of personal identity

Personal identity

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research


CITATIONS:

- Dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings. (p.868)
- The consumption of market-made commodities and desire-inducing marketing symbols is central to consumer culture, and yet the perpetuation and reproduction of this system is largely dependent upon the exercise of free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life (Holt 2002). (p.869)
- The term "consumer culture" also conceptualizes an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that groups use—through the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities, and meanings—to make collective sense of their environments and to orient their members' experiences and lives (Kozinets 2001). These meanings are embodied and negotiated by consumers in particular social situations roles and relationships. (p.869)
- The disciplinary pioneers of CCT encouraged investigation of the contextual, symbolic, and experiential aspects of consumption (p.871)
- Consumption and possession practices—particularly their hedonic, aesthetic, and ritualistic dimensions—have perhaps been the most widely studied constellation of phenomena identified with the CCT tradition. (p.871)
- More broadly still, CCT research has emphasized the productive aspect of consumption. Consumer culture theory explores how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2001, 2002; Mick and Buhl 1992; Penaloza 2000, 2001; Ritson and Elliott 1999; Scott 1994a). (p.871)
- Consumer Identity Projects. Consumer culture theory concerns the co-constitutive, co-productive ways in which consumers, working with marketer-generated materials, forge a coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self (Belk 1988; McCracken 1986). (p.871)
- The corollary premise is that the marketplace has become a preeminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people, including those who lack resources to participate in the market as full-fledged consumers, construct narratives of identity (Belk 1988; Hill 1991; Hill and Stamey 1990; Holt 2002; Levy 1981).
In this work, consumers are conceived of as identity seekers and makers. Consumer identity projects are typically considered to be goal driven (Mick and Buhl 1992; Schau and Gilly 2003), although the aims pursued may often be tacit in nature (and vaguely understood; see Arnould and Price 1993; Thompson and Tambyah 1999) and marked by points of conflict, internal contradictions, ambivalence, and even pathology (Hirschman 1992; Mick and Fournier 1998; Murray 2002; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Otnes et al. 1997; Thompson 1996). (p.871)

Holt (2002) details how the postmodern economy thrives by producing “unruly bricoleurs” who express personal sovereignty and claims to personal authenticity through nonconformist acts of consumption and thereby place the marketplace and its symbols at the center of their identities. In a related vein, Grayson and Martinec (2004) suggest that experiences of authenticity (in tourist settings) are systematically linked to particular forms of signification (indexical and iconic authenticity) and consumers’ corresponding imaginative and fantasy-oriented elaborations upon these different semiotic modalities. (p.873)

MAIN POINTS:

This text helped in the process of getting a deeper understanding about what consumer culture theory is and how it has developed over the last few decades. Here also I narrowed down to one particular ‘chapter’ of the CCT, the Consumer Identity Projects, which is the part that includes the subject I have chosen.

Products in the marketplace are perceived as “desire-inducing marketing symbols”, however people have the freedom to choose to purchase a certain product or not. According to the research done in this paper that consumers do rework and transform symbolic meanings attached to products and there is literature that substantiates the fact that I believe that sometimes people are consuming things not only based on their technological or practical value but also because there are some symbolic meanings behind some particular products or brands. Meanings behind particular brands or products are used as a means of developing a collective sense/sense of belonging and are operated in different social situations, roles and relationships; hence the meaning of the product has to be understood by multiple people in the group.

Next I understood that the value constructs of products are closely related to the sense of self and probably sense of belonging. Through the consumption processes people are seeking and creating their identities, however it is one very complicated process and the purchase decisions are hard to track and explain.

After reading this text, I set a goal to understand, what is personal identity and sense of self, and what role this plays in consumption.
Self and Social Identity*


CITATIONS:
- Personal self vs Social self
- How reflected appraisals from others contribute to the definition of self (p.162)
- Group cohesion is often conceptualized as stemming from interpersonal ties between individual group members (see also Hogg 1992, Prentice et al. 1994), effects of the group on people’s self-definitions are examined by assessing expectations of individual ingroup members about each other (Swann et al. 2000), or the tendency to either associate with or distance the self from particular groups is explained by considering how membership in the group can be beneficial for the individual in question (p.162)
- Western societies, in which most of this theorizing and research has been carried out, can be characterized as cultural contexts with a strong emphasis on personal identities and individual achievements (Hofstede 1980, Triandis 1989). (p.162)
- The notion that even in social situations personal identities tend to be primary (Gaertner et al. 1999, Simon 1997) (p.163)
- The lengths that people sometimes go to in order to protect their group, and the collective self, also belie the notion that the collective self is necessarily subservient to the individual self (p.163)
- Rather than trying to decide whether the individual self or the collective self is more important, we think a more fruitful approach is to specify the conditions under which one is likely to take precedence over the other, and with what effect. (p.163) At first sight, it would seem that processes associated with the collective self are often similar to those that occur for the individual self, except that they occur at the group level instead of at an individual level (e.g., a concern with positive esteem). However, the inclusion of group-based aspects of self and identity also implies that additional issues and processes come into play, so that theoretical and empirical insights on topics such as self-perception, self-esteem, or self-presentation cannot simply be transferred from the individual level to the group level (e.g., Schmitt et al. 2000, Schopler & Insko 1992). Moreover, the interaction and competition between the personal and collective levels of self add a further level of complexity (Spears 2001). (pp.163-164)
- Whereas the personal self is defined as a unitary and continuous awareness of who one is (Baumeister 1998), it is less clear how we should conceive of the social self, which can be as varied as the groups to which we belong. An important consequence is that differential perceptions of self and others may emerge, depending on which identity is most salient (p.164)
- We argue that when collective identities are concerned, the level of commitment to a particular group or category determines how group characteristics, norms, or outcomes will influence the perceptual, affective, and behavioural responses of individuals belonging to that group. (p.164)
- it is the social context, rather than specific group features, that determines the evaluative flavor of any given group membership. (p.165)
MAIN POINTS:

This text I chose to understand more about personal identities. Found out that this text divides personal identity in two parts - personal self and social self. In western societies a strong emphasis is put on person as an individual, with their own individual identity and achievements. However people are still choosing to associate themselves with some particular groups according to their choosing and their personal benefits. This leads to a conclusion that in social situations personal identities are primary – basically it all starts with the personal identity of the person. However, in collective situations there are more processes that come into the play. Basically the social self can belong to more than just one group, based on the situation and circumstances. Here the salience of the identity is important, which is dependent on the social context in which the person either chooses to be situated in or he/she just is.
Consumer Self-Concept, Symbolism and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach


- Behavioural sciences: Two conceptual areas within the bs which promise to yield meaningful information about consumer behaviour are *self-theory and symbolism*. (p.22)
- Linking the psychological construct of an individual's self-concept with the symbolic value of goods purchased (p.22)
- The self is what one is aware of, one's attitudes, feelings, perceptions and evaluations of oneself as an object. The self represents a totality which becomes a principal value around which life revolves, something to be safe-guarded and, if possible, to be made still more valuable. An individual's evaluation of himself will greatly influence his behaviour, and thus, the more valued the self, the more organized and consistent becomes his behaviour. (p.24)
- The self develops not as a personal, individual process, but it evolves through the process of social experience. From the reaction of others, man develops his self-perception. (p.24)
- A more meaningful way of understanding the role of goods as social tools is to regard them as symbols serving as a means of communication between the individual and his significant references. Defined as 'things which stand for or express something else,' symbols should be thought of as unitary characters composed of signs and their meanings. If a symbol is to convey a meaning it must be identified by a group with which the individual is associated whether the group consists of two people or an entire society, and the symbol must communicate similar meaning to all within the group. (p.25)
- If a product is to serve as a symbolic communicative device, it must achieve social recognition, and the meaning associated with the product must be clearly established and understood by related segments of society. This process is in reality a classification process where one object is placed in relation to other objects basic to society. A prime example of symbolic classification is fashion. If a particular style becomes popular, behaviour of a segment of society will be directed toward the purchase and use of items manifesting this style. (p.25)
- Classification and symbolism become means of communication and of directing or influencing behaviour. If a common symbol exists for two or more people, the symbol should bring forth a similar response in each, and therefore members of a group can use the symbol in their behaviour pattern. Further, the symbolic social classification of a good allows the consumer to relate himself directly to it, matching his self-concept with the meaning of the good. (goods which have a desirable social meaning). (p.25)
- Goods as symbols serve the individual, becoming means to cause desired reactions from other individuals. intrinsic and extrinsic value as a means of self-enhancement

- This private and individual symbolic interpretation is largely dependent on one’s understanding of the meaning associated with the product. Though the individual may has learned the symbolic meaning from the public sources. (p. 25)
- Consumption of symbols: A means to Self-enhancement.
- As they now are as they would like to be (p.26)
- The role of the image an individual has of himself as a motivator of (p.26)
- Self-concept is formed in the interaction process between the individual will strive for the self-enhancement in the interaction human behaviour in the marketplace individual and others; therefore, the process. (p.27)

MAIN POINTS:

A person perceives and evaluates him/herself as an object – that could be the short definition of the self-concept.

Behavioural science links the construct of an individual’s self-concept and the symbolic value of goods.

There is a relation between an individual’s buying behaviour and his self-concept. The self-evaluation plays big role in the behaviour. It is clear that the development of the self-concept is highly affected by the social processes and the experience gained from those; reactions and feedback from others is important when developing a self-perception. Goods are perceived as social tools – symbols, which are serving as means of communication.

between the individual and people that he perceives as important. Symbols have to be understood by the group in which the individual wants to belong to. There is a classification process, in which one thing is compared against another by a certain group of people, and thus the meaning of it is achieved. However I think now it is a bit harder to classify different things with all of the post-modernism going on. But I’ll think about this later.

Goods that are perceived as specific symbols for some groups allow a person to choose a product which would fit the way he perceives himself/want to be perceived, and signalise it to other people, who attach the same meaning to that product. In this way the person gets an external validation of his choice. The notion of a person perceiving symbols behind the products are learned from society. There is a close relation between the individual, audience and the object, as illustrated in the figure 1 (page 25 in the original text).
Self-concept in consumer behaviour: A critical review


-Most scholars seem to agree that the term “self-concept” denotes the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object”. (p.287)

-Actual self refers to how a person perceives herself; ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive herself; and social self refers to how a person presents herself to others. (p.287)

- two self-concept motives – self-esteem and self-consistency (Epstein 1980). The self-esteem motive refers to the tendency to seek experiences that enhance self-concept. The self-consistency motive denotes the tendency for an individual to behave consistently with her view of herself. (p.287)

-Products, suppliers, and services are assumed to have an image determined not only by the physical characteristics of the object alone, but by a host of other factors, such as packaging, advertising, and price. These images are also formed by other associations, such as stereotypes of the generalized or typical user (p.287)

-Distinction of products as communication vehicles – visibility in use, variability in use, and personalization (p.288) For a product to have personality associations, it has to be purchased and/or consumed conspicuously or visibly. ...without variability, no differences among individuals can be inferred on the basis of product use. The personalizability of the product denotes the extent to which the use of a product can be attributed to a stereotypic image of the generalized used. [Product image in direct association with the self-concept]

-Many self-concept investigators argue that a product image is, in essence, defined as the stereotypic image of the generalized product user, usually measured on a semantic differential scale. The measurement of the product image in a direct association with the self-concept has employed a product-anchored Q-methodology. The respondent is asked to indicate the extent to which a specific product is associated with her actual self-concept, ideal self-concept and so forth. (p.289)

-Munson and Spivey (1980, 1981) brought out the notion that product images can be activated in various forms. Two possible “product-expressive” self-constructs involve (1) self-perception given a product preference – defined as how one perceives oneself given a preference for a specific product, and (2) others’ perception of self, given a product preference – defined as how a person believes other people view her given preference for a specific product. However, results showed that consumers may not be able to distinguish between their “own” feelings about a product and their beliefs about how they are viewed by others (cf. Locander and Spivey 1978) (p.289)
There is ambiguity and confusion on the precise conceptualization of self-concept in the consumer behaviour literature. (p.288) 1-Single self-construct tradition. 2-multiple self-constructs tradition – the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept. 3-social self-image and 4-ideal social self-image (p.288)

The choice of which self to express is influenced by the specific characteristics of a given situation (p.289) once an individual decides which image to express in the social situation, she looks for ways of expressing it. The use of products is one means by which an individual can express self-image. Thus, products that are conspicuous, that have a high repurchase rate, or for which differentiated brands are available might be used by consumers to express self-image.

Consumers have many self-concepts (p.289). Consumption of a brand may be highly congruent with self-image in one situation and not at all congruent with it in another.

Self-image/product image congruity theory (p.289) – the value or ‘meaning’ of a product image is not independently derived but is, rather, inferred from evoked self-image dimensions.

1. Positive self-congruity – comparison between a positive product-image and a positive self-image belief
2. Positive self-incongruity – comparison between a positive product-image and a negative self-image
3. Negative self-congruity – comparison between a negative product image and a negative self-image belief
4. Negative self-incongruity – comparison between a negative product image perception and a positive self-image belief.

These different self-image/product-image congruity states will influence purchase motivation differently.

From a self-esteem perspective, the consumer will be motivated to purchase a positively valued product to maintain a positive self-image (positive self-congruity condition) or to enhance herself by approaching an ideal image (positive self-incongruity condition). The consumer will be motivated to avoid purchasing a negatively valued product to avoid self-abasement. (p.290)
MAIN POINTS:

Within the self-concept there are three different dimensions - Actual self which refers to how person perceives himself; ideal self which means the way in which the person would want to perceive himself; and social self which is all the actions of how person presents himself to others.

Products have an image that people are associating to hence creating some stereotypes about the typical user of a particular thing.

Here as well the author proposes that the self-concept is also determined by the situation the person is facing at the moment. Here again a person has the personal identity and the social one, where in the first case they are using a product and have particular feelings towards the product and what is does to their self-concept, in the second case they have a particular opinion about what others think about them when using the same product. However what is the most interesting part is the fact that people sometimes can’t really distinguish between their own actual feelings about a particular product from the feeling they get from other people they are socialising with.

The self-image/product image congruity theory is discussed in this paper. It basically means that a person will always buy a product which, in their opinion, can raise their self-concept higher, closer to their ideal self-concept.
Social identity as a useful perspective for self-concept-based consumer research


CITATIONS:

-Self-concept research in consumer behaviour has been characterized as fragmented, incoherent, and highly diffuse (Sirgy, 1982). Broadly conceived, the term self represents the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings that have reference to him- or herself as an object of thought (Rosenberg, 1979). (p.235)

-the major conclusion from this analysis is that social-identification perspective on the self-concept is a particularly meaningful yet underutilized approach (at least explicitly) in consumer research. (p.236)

-at a very basic level, most individuals are aware of how they are differentiated from their surroundings. This notion is commonly referred to as an individual's sense of self. Unfortunately, attempts to operationalize a construct like sense of self is problematic. Perhaps it is more productive to consider the notion of a self-concept, as it is a somewhat less nebulous and manageable starting point. (p.236)

-Self-concept paradigms:

-1. The self as an object of Introspection – self as knower and self as known.
-2. The self and Behaviourism. Each successive time that the athletic shoe brings self-gratification through positive reinforcement, whether it be from the individual's relevant reference group, or positive associations from advertising, and so on, this will increase the probability that the athletic shoe will be selected to fulfil future needs. (p.240)

-The self, social Relationships, and social identity. Whether human behaviour is guided more by private consistency or public displays, and considers society and the self-concept as an important, single unit of analysis. (p.245)

-Social identity: a recent and useful approach that spans paradigms

-in later stages of maturation, the identification process involves conscious choice and discrimination among possible identities. (p.252)

-These models conceptualize identification as an interdependent process, whereby the relationships are carried out via cooperating participants. (p.253)

-in any event, social identity and self-categorization theory emphasize the independence and, in the case of social categorization, the possibility of competition between in-group and out-groups in the identification process.
- Not all social identities are alike. (p.256)
- Object-relevance – For example a consumer who perceives herself as a working mother may be more favourable to an automobile that emphasizes safety and practicality. (p.266)
- In any theory of social-identity based consumption, object relevance through feedback seeking is a critical process outcome. External feedback from others becomes important at least initially. (p.258)

MAIN POINTS:

There are multiple social identities in which one person can belong, and in a particular situation one identity can become stronger than the other. For example, if I’m a fashion student sitting in a classroom full of architecture students; or, if I’m the only girl in the room, because all of the other students in this room are male. Basically the situation in which a person is in determines which social identity is more salient. Not all social 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 to ‘being a student’.

The object has to be relevant to the social group as well, it has to mean something to that particular group in order for that product to gain an emotional attachment. When entering a new social-identity group consumers need the validation and feedback from others. The more validation one gets from other by using a specific object or a specific brand, the more likely this person is going to buy the same product/brand in the future.

After a while a consumer internalises the values that belong to that particular group. He/she starts making conscious choices of what to buy and what to avoid.
Dutch identity in fashion: Co-evolution between brands and consumers


CITATIONS:

- Whether we choose in favour or against a popular style – it all ends the same: there is no escape from identifying with someone or something. At the end of the day we all want to belong, somehow. ... Identification takes place between individuals and groups. (p.4)
- The consumption of products reaches beyond the actual purchasing act. As a consequence, common interests around brands and products have the potential to forge a link between people who identify with one another on the basis of symbolic attributes (Cova 1995; Cova 1997; Cova and Pace 2006; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Ostberg 2007). Consciously or not, consumers may use clothing as a medium to illustrate their identity and relation to other individuals or groups. (p.13)
- When we speak of identity the concept itself is not without its problems. Nowadays, the term is used rather loosely and seems to signify many things at the same time. As a result, it has become a kind of catch-all word whose definition is somewhat ambiguous. (p.13)
- ...during the past couple of decades we have progressed towards a sociality of plural identities (Huyssen 1986, 1988; Jameson 1998; MacG uigan 1999; Muggleton 2000; Sarup 1996; Wilson 1990). Personal identity is treated as fragmented and multireferential, polyvalent and diversified. It is assumed that every day we are confronted with a plethora of economic and cultural offerings from which we “borrow” fragments to build our social identities. (p.13) Bauman (2000: 80-82) equals this manner of constructing our social selves to a ‘supermarket of identities’ where we can shop around and mix and match different parts to come up with an authentic combination.
- The claims about pluriformity are certainly true to the extent that the way we construct our identity nowadays is not altogether uniform as we draw on a plurality of different sources. In my eyes, however, it is questionable to what extent we can actually speak of ‘fragmented’ or ‘multiple’ identities. In fact, in the majority of cases people after a certain age have a relatively consistent self-image, so that the amplitudes between different ‘social representations’ of ourselves are not all that strong. Instead, we would prefer to speak of gradual shifts in certain directions depending on different social frameworks (e.g. formal/casual, work/friends, professional/private) that we operate in. (p.14)
- Personal identity is not only built around displaying uniqueness but signifies belonging to bigger collective entities. ... We are thus faced with two opposing forces: the quest for authenticity and singularity and the desire to belong. (p.14) ... Hekman (2004: 7) specifies this argument by making a distinction between personal and public identities. The former distinguishes us from others based on the sum of experiences that have shaped (and keep shaping) our character. The latter is enmeshed with cohesive powers that integrate us in a specific social and cultural context. ... As she states, “[o]ur personal identity makes us different from everyone else. Our public identity identifies us as the same as particular others” (Hekman 2004: 9). In short, our identity is built around the poles of individuality and commonality. We construct our identity in relationship to specific groups and develop a sense of self within (or against) their inclusive powers.
To be sure, group identity and a sense of belonging are not necessarily based on face to face interaction. Benedict Anderson (1983) developed the concept of ‘imagined communities’ whose members will never meet in real life in the majority of cases. Belonging to such a community is based on mental images of affinity that are shared by its members – sometimes at a concrete, sometimes at a more abstract level. Following his argument, they are socially constructed entities, based on public imagination. (p.14)

Social bonds that are based on mutual recognition and identification can be imagined or direct, mediated or interactive. Topically, social media are a case in point. The same goes for brand communities that emerge around a brand persona (e.g. Harley Davidson, Apple). Someone who imagines himself to be part of that community will familiarise and identify with other devotees, based on shared rituals and common markers of identity (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001: 415). … Anderson himself points out that belonging to an imagined community can be triggered or even reinforced by all kinds of public media that shape public imagination and help create specific narratives. Marketing messages or particular company profiles may therefore contribute to the emergence of communities and sustain their existence across various media channels. - Belonging to a certain brand community can be an imaginary experience that does not require sharing direct contact with other aficionados.

-It is assumed that group identities – or the feeling to belong to bigger social entities, for that matter – take precedence over individuality. After all, a developed personality is always the product of discourse and interaction with other people, so there is a constant dialogue with the social environment that shapes and deflects, moulds and adjusts our persona. Having said that, the construction of identity is also an ongoing process, so we do not necessarily belong to one group, but we are attached to a plurality of groupings that change over the course of our lives – or, from a more contemporary perspective, even during the course of the day. (p.16)

Ellemers et al. (1999: 372-373) distinguish between three different levels of identification: cognitive, evaluative, affective. The cognitive level refers to self-categorisation and awareness of one’s membership of a group (e.g. ‘I am an artist and part of the creative community of my town’). The evaluation of this membership can be either positive (e.g. ‘I am proud to be part of that group’) or negative (e.g. ‘In order to sell my art it is important to be part of the group, but actually I don’t like it’). Emotional involvement with the group might be the result of the previous two components. The more positive a person’s evaluation of his membership, the more likely it is that he will be emotionally involved. We may even want to add a fourth component: conative identity. By this we mean that people move to a stage where their level of emotional involvement starts to influence their identity. (p.16) … (visual) extension of his personality. (p.16-17)

Consumption is determined by the extent to which goods are perceived as a match or a complementing factor in the construction of personal identity. Specific product preferences are explained by their use value as well as by their symbolic congruence with the identity concepts of consumers. The more a product is considered a manifestation of the self, the more consumers will be involved with it. (p.21)

Dolich’s self-congruity theory (1969). Simply put, the theory suggests that consumption interests are precipitated by individuals comparing their self-concept with the general image they attach to a brand, as reflected in the stereotype of a typical user of the brand. First, it is assumed that the prevalent image, consumers associate with a brand, allows them to express and enact different dimensions of their self-concept (Belk 1988). Second, it is claimed that consumers start to develop a relationship with a brand once they identify consistencies between their identity constructs and the primary characteristics of a brand (Aaker and Fournier 1995: 391). (p. 21-22) Consumer goods, then, are not only defined by material properties but represent stimuli for cueing and strengthening the self-concept of consumers. Identification with specific products or brands is therefore not exclusively based on functional attributes, but it creates symbolic connections that transcend the use value.
MAIN POINTS:
Identification with something or someone is happening regardless the fact that a particular person might not want to send some sort of an identity message out there. So even if this identification process in unconscious, it’s still taking place.

When talking about identity, nowadays there are so many different opinions and definitions of what it is that the word itself has become very vague. Currently scholars have come to a set of multiple identities, where one person has more than just one identity and it is dependent on the situation in which one is located. Author of this text proposes to talk about identity change within different social frameworks, e.g. I would act differently when I’m in school, more business-like, compared to my behaviour at home.

However identity could be divided in two parts – the personal identity and the public identity. People do want to be individuals, especially in the Western culture, as I have already read previously, however they also want to have the feeling of belonging to something. Personal identity is something that differentiates me from others – the experiences I have had are different than those of my peers. This makes me an individual, this makes me different from others. Public identity could be described as those traits and characteristics I have, that put me in a particular social frame – something that I belong to, some group that shared the same values that I do. As a result identity is built up from two different things – wanting to be an individual and wanting to belong to a social group.

What is interesting in this text is the theory about the ‘imagined communities’. This means that people don’t actually have to meet each other to feel a special bond to some sort of a group, hence social bonds can be both – imagined and created via internet for example, and ‘real’, that is happening in real life, when you meet people and bond over one thing or another. For the ‘imagined communities’ social media is a big part of creating those bonds. In this text author states that it is assumed that group identities are conceived as being superior to personal identities, because a personality is always developing via the interaction with others.

Interesting is the distinction of three levels of identification, and how author proposes a fourth level – the conative identity, where the level of their involvement with a particular brand is actually influencing the identity. Consumption is done according to the feeling if one particular product will compliment one’s identity.
Handbook of self and identity


CITATIONS:

-Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. (p.69)

-Together, identities make up one's self-concept variously described as what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself (Neisser, 1993; Stets & Burke, 2003; Stryker, 1980; Tajfel, 1981), one’s theory of one’s personality (Markus & Cross, 1990), and what one believes is true of oneself (Baumeister, 1998; Forgas & Williams, 2002). (p.69-70)

-Identities are not the fixed markers people assume them to be but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment. Choices that feel identity congruent in one situation do not necessarily feel identity-congruent in another situation. This flexibility is part of what makes the self useful. (p.70)

-Self and identity researchers have long believed that the self is both a product of situations and a shaper of behavior in situations. Making sense of oneself-who one is, was, and may become, and therefore the path one should take in the world-is a core self-project. Self and identity theories assume that people care about themselves, want to know who they are, and can use this self-knowledge to make sense of the world. (p.71)

-Self-concepts are cognitive structures that can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments and are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one’s goals, and protect one’s sense of basic worth (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Thus, if the self is an "I" that thinks and a "me" that is the content of those thoughts, one important part of this "me" content involves mental concepts or ideas of who one is, was, and will become. These mental concepts are the content of self-concept. (p. 72)

-People may organize and structure their self-concepts around some domains that others commonly used to make sense of them—their race or ethnicity, their gender, their weight, their age, their academic standing in school. (p.73)

-Self-concept researchers have documented that whether people focus on social roles and relationships or individuating traits and characteristics in describing themselves depends significantly on their immediate situational cues. Researchers can easily "prime" (bring to mind) one way of thinking about self-concept or the other. (p.74)

-However, the term identity can also be conceptualized as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept (p.74)
MAIN POINTS:

I chose to read this book because after reading around 7 other texts about identity and self-concept and how it is related to the consumer identity construction, I understood that I am starting to feel very confused about what exactly the identity and the self-concept is, and what is the difference between one and another.

This text made it clearer what is what and what is the relation between them. It also complements all the other texts I have read in the way that it supports most of the information I have gathered.

In the summary I could say that identity is a part of the self-concept, but other people use the words identity and self-concept as synonyms. People have more than just one identity and both concepts are some sort of a mechanism that helps people to structure their lives in order to understand and cope with them better.
Self-Congruity: A Determinant of Brand Personality


CITATIONS:

-Self-congruity is the extent brand personality and self-concept are compatible. It is “the match between the product’s value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience’s self-concept” (Johar & Sirgy, 1991, p. 24). Self-concept, according to self-congruity theory, influences consumer behaviour in a way that results in the purchase of a product (Johar & Sirgy, 1989). (p.130)

- With deep psychological knowledge of target consumers rather than surface-based demographics, marketers can more accurately position their products in a way that appeals to their customers. (p.130)

- Or alternatively, self-concept can be thought of as a collection of self-schemas made up of generalizations about the self (p.131)

- Although self-concept has been consistently defined in the literature, general acceptance in definition does not provide a universal understanding of the relationship between self-concept and consumer behavior, and there were some growing pains in this regard in the process of theory formation. Disagreement about the extent of self-concept, that is, the number of sub-concepts it should be divided into, has historically led to confusion and uncertainty in self-congruity research (Sirgy, 1982). (131)

- Individuals tend to perceive products in terms of symbolic meaning (Dolich, 1969), and the greater the congruence between this symbolic meaning (e.g., a youthful and exciting shoe) and the consumer’s self-concept, the more likely there will be a positive evaluation of, and ultimately purchase of, the product (p.131)

- Thus, consumers have a tendency to try to preserve their self-concept and will buy products that promote its maintenance, (p. 131)

- Sirgy (1982) summed up the importance of self-concept in self-congruity theory like this:
  1. Self-concept is of value to the individual, and behavior will be directed toward the protection and enhancement of self-concept.
  2. The purchase, display, and use of goods communicate symbolic meaning to the individual and to others.
  3. The consuming behavior of an individual will be directed toward enhancing self-concept through the consumption of goods as symbols. (p. 132)

- Brand personality is “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347), and is an important aspect of advertising (Plummer, 1984). Consumers think of brands in terms of human personality traits. Use of advertising strategies that utilize this fact, such as anthropomorphization, personification, and creation of user imagery, can give the brand a personality that, like human personalities, is distinct and lasting (Aaker, 1997). (p.132)

- A distinction to note is the difference between brand personality and product personality. Product personality refers to the image of a specific product within a brand, and is defined as “the set of human personality characteristics used to describe a specific product variant” (Govers & Mugge, 2004). This distinction was important to Govers and Mugge’s (2004) study on product attachment. Product attachment is “the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product”
Govers and Mugge (2004) iterated there is an emotional tie between products and their owners, and the product is meaningful to the owner in a deep and important way. When a consumer becomes attached to a product, the product provides additional benefits to him or her that go beyond those of other products in the same product category (Govers & Mugge, 2004). (p. 133)

- One reason consumers become attached to their products is self-expression (Govers & Mugge, 2004). When products are seen as self-congruent (i.e., having a similar personality to the consumer’s self-image), their consumption serves the symbolic function of self-expression. Govers and Mugge (2004) contributed to self-congruity research by showing consumers become more attached to their products the greater the congruence they experience with them. Higher congruence increases the product’s symbolic meaning to the owner, and the owner consequentially becomes more attached to the product (Govers & Mugge, 2004). (p. 133)

- Both utilitarian (functional) attributes and value-expressive (symbolic) attributes affect product preference (p. 134)

- Utilitarian attitudes are based on product attributes and their inherent benefits, and product attitudes that serve a utilitarian function “have the goal of maximizing rewards and minimizing punishments associated with the product” (Shavitt, 1992, p. 47). The utilitarian function deals with the notion of expected reward (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Consumers buy products for their utilitarian attributes when they expect to reach a certain goal with their purchase.

- An attitude about a value-expressive product “allows for a positive demonstration of one’s central values and self-concept” (Johar & Sirgy, 1991, p. 26). In other words, attitudes that serve a value expressive function are perceived to symbolize one’s own identity and values (Shavitt, 1992). A value expressive product might be Apple’s iPhone, which has a young, cool brand personality and is consumed for symbolic purposes. This is in contrast Android’s Droid, which is has a more functional (utilitarian) appeal relative to the iPhone (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak, & Sirgy, 2012). (p. 134)

- The success of value-expressive brands is largely determined by the self-congruity effect (Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al., 2012), and functional congruity is the determining factor in the success of utilitarian brands (Shavitt, 1992). (p. 134)

- Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Brands can serve a symbolic or value-expressive function as well as a utilitarian function (Keller, 1993). When the brand is serving a value-expressive function, brand personality becomes the route to self-congruity. (p. 136)
This brand personality framework provided some relief for those disappointed with the “weak empirical support for self-congruity effects” (Aaker, 1997, p. 353). Recognizing the fundamental differences between human personality and brand personality allows researchers to better understand the nature of the match between them. (p.137)

Branaghan & Hildebrand (2011) revamped the old mold by being the first to measure self-image and brand personality images in the same associative network. The advantage of measuring brand personality images and self-image in the same associative network is comprehensiveness. Marketers can visually see how the self relates to selected brands while simultaneously seeing how these brands relate to each other (Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011). (p.137)

Like that of Aaker (1999; 1997), all research consistent with self-congruity theory considers self-congruity to be at least partially a function of brand personality (Govers & Mugge 2004; Sirgy 1982; Sirgy 1979; Dolich 1969; Levy, 1959), and holds that brand choice reveals the personality of the consumer (Sirgy 1979). But researchers have thus far failed to explore the possibility that the reverse is also true; that is, brand personality is a function of self-congruity. In other words, the extent to which consumers see a brand as having a personality congruent with their own self-image can influence the brand’s perceived personality. There is room for research considering a dynamic, two-way relationship between brand personality and self-congruity. (p.139)

It was Phau & Lau (2001) who pioneered the idea that consumers can influence how a brand personality is perceived, rather than the traditional thought that brand personality is solely the creation of marketers and advertisers and is exclusively dependent on their actions and intentions. (p.139)

When consumers build a trusting relationship with a brand as a result of a favorable perception of the brand, they are likely to form a preference for the brand (Phau & Lau, 2001). This initial favorable perception of a brand could be attributed to self-congruity between the consumer and the brand. (p.139)

Put another way, high brand preference skews perceived brand personality; consumers will see what they want to see in a brand’s personality. Interaction between brand and consumer not only causes the consumer to actively receive the personality projected by the brand, but the consumer’s personality can be transmitted to the brand, changing or replacing the existing brand personality (Phau & Lau, 2001). (p.139)

Past research has shown that individuals can transform the social meanings of objects (Phau & Lau, 2001). Consumers tend to see their own behavior and judgments as normal and alternative behavior as uncommon or inappropriate, a concept known as egocentric attribution or false consensus (Berkowitz, 1977). The specific image an individual attributes to a brand is affected by his or her egocentricity, a person’s tendency to assume that the personality of a product he or she uses must necessarily be similar to his or her own personality (Sirgy, 1982). For example, say a woman sees herself as fashionable and trendy. When she buys
a new article of clothing, she will assume that the item she buys will be trendy because she herself is trendy, and the product she buys must possess the same qualities she does. On a macro scale, egocentricity could lead to brand image change. Marketers must be aware of egocentricity and other brand image influencers about to be discussed to prevent unwanted brand image change (p.139)

-The key with false congruity is the congruity the consumer experiences is with a brand personality that is not intended by the marketer. ... Examples of marketers trying to save their brand image from use by untargeted consumers are Dr. Pepper Ten’s “it’s not for women” plea or Volkswagen’s “it’s a boy!” campaign for the 2012 relaunch of the Beetle (Avery, 2012, p. 322). Marketers of both brands may be concerned their target market, men, will not consume their brand if its product-user image is feminine. Avoiding unwanted brand associations is vital to brand positioning. (p.140)

-For the purposes of this paper, actual self-image refers to how consumers believe they are in reality (the traditional definition), and real self-image refers to the image consumers project to others in reality, or how others see them. Real self-image is distinguishable from social self-image in that social self-image refers to the image one believes others have of him or her, and real self-image is the image others actually have of the individual. (p.140) ... When early adopters acting on ideal congruity consume a brand, they project their real personality—not their ideal one—onto the brand and the brand image may change as a result, as in the case of false congruity. For example, a company may launch a new line of sunglasses aimed at teenagers. But to this company’s dismay, the first to pick up their sunglasses (i.e., the early adopters) are middle-aged consumers looking for products that will project a youthful image. When teenagers see their parents’ generation wearing the brand, they may form an unfavorable image of the brand. Instead of the sunglasses’ image being projected onto the middle-aged consumers, the reverse happens; the sunglasses are seen as having a middle-aged user.

MAIN POINTS:

Rather long text with a lot of interesting information. At least in my opinion. Basically this text is about the self-congruity theory which was developed by M. Sirgy in 1982. When I was re-reading the text from this scholar about self-concept in consumer behaviour, I got really excited about self-congruity theory and felt that I need to understand and read more about it; that is how I found this relatively fresh text from 2014.

This text expands on his findings and provides more examples in order to understand the theory better. First, it is defined what self-congruity theory is. It is basically the extent to what the person finds a product or a brand similar to his/her self-concept. Because a person always wants to enhance their self-concept to get it closer to the ideal self-concept, products and brands are used to do this. Person’s self-concept is very important to him/her hence they are going to do everything to make it better – as in to enhance their self-concept. Because goods have symbolic meanings attached to them, they are somehow the easiest things to use in order to promote and boost up the self-concept.
This text also gives some explanation about brand personalities and the ways in which consumers develop a deeper connection with them and products. Self-expression is one of the means which is influenced by the self-congruity and used products.

A distinction between utilitarian and value-expressive brands is made. Self-congruity is more important to value expressive brands as the value of them is more determined by the self-congruity.
Community and consumption: Towards a definition of the "linking value" of products or services.


- Community and postmodern marketing
- Non individual level phenomena
- Putting the emphasis on the return of community in our Western societies, a phenomenon usually called neo-tribalism (p.297)
- The individual has never been so free in his or her private and public choices as today, and never so alone and cut off from the spirit of community. (p.298)
- Postmodernity is characterized by individualism, the logical conclusion of the modern quest for liberation from social bonds, whether those of traditional communities or complex modern societies. The postmodern individual, freed from the restricting limits of communities, is restored to themself and able to become totally autonomous. In postmodernity, the conquest of self has become inescapable and each individual, wherever they come from, must accomplish the feat of becoming someone by showing their difference. The right to liberty unbounded in theory - but limited in modernity to the economic, political and intellectual field - is affecting all aspects of daily life... We have now entered the age of the ordinary individual, that is to say an age when any individual can (and must) take personal action so as to produce and show their own existence, their own difference. (p.299)
- Postmodernity can therefore be understood as a period of severe social dissolution and extreme individualism. But, attempts at social re-composition can also be glimpsed: the individual who has finally managed to liberate them from archaic or modern social links is embarking on a reverse movement to recompose their social universe on the basis of an emotional free choice. Less than differentiation, it is de-differentiation which seems to be guiding individual action. Postmodernity can therefore be said, according to a second sociological current (Bauman, 1992; Maffesoli, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993), not to crown the triumph of individualism but the beginning of its end with the emergence of a reverse movement of a desperate search for the social link. In this view, individualism corresponded solely to a short period of transition: late modernity as described by architects, and not to postmodernity. (p.299)
- The word "tribe" refers to the re-emergence of quasi-archaic values: a local sense of identification, religiosity, syncretism, group narcissism..., the common denominator of which is the community dimension. These tribes try to revive the community archetype of the village or the district, but they are not communities which are clearly definable in spatial terms; some use all the resources of the latest technical means of communication (micro-computers, minitels, fax) in order to form virtual tribes in which face-to-face encounters or co-physical presence is not compulsory. (p.299)
- Postmodern tribes are, therefore, constantly in statu nascendi (Nascent state- in the course of being formed or developed) rather than essendi, brought ever again into being by the repetitive symbolic ritual of the members but persisting no longer than the power of attraction of these rituals (Bauman, 1992, pp. 157-8).
- Postmodern society, unlike modern society - conceived as an ensemble of social groups (socio-professional categories, classes) - looks like a network of societal micro-groups in which individuals share strong emotional links, a common sub-culture, a vision of life, ... develop their own complexes of meanings and symbols and form more or less stable tribes which are invisible to the categories of modern sociology (p.300)
The symbolic and emotional role of persons within ephemeral tribes. Each postmodern individual belongs to several tribes in each of which he or she might play a different role and wear a specific mask; this means that the modern tools of sociological analysis cannot classify him or her. (p.300)

In fact, late modern individualism has moved to an “aestheticization[1] of everyday life” (Featherstone, 1991) made up of shared emotions favouring the concatenation of small ephemeral entities. In a sense, it can be said that there is aesthetic enjoyment in everyday life, in the collective passions of the tribes, in all ephemeral communions. (p.300)

From a postmodernist perspective, it is first possible to think of categories other than those defined by modernity to classify the consumer (lifestyles are a first attempt at this, already overtaken by events). (p.301)

The possibility of free choice for the postmodern individual in all aspects of daily life, without limits being imposed by any social constraints, is totally in step with preferences which have nothing to do with class. In fact, for the postmodern individual, the essential quality of products and services is the zero defect and their main virtue is to serve and satisfy their slightest needs in a personalized fashion. Their use value may be functional (material attributes), symbolic (immaterial attributes) or a mixture of the two, what seems always at stake is the person in their independence and their distinction compared with others. (p.302)

One of the important consequences of individualism is that the postmodern individual, who has become their own Pygmalion, is on a never-ending identity quest, a quest for the meaning of their life (Elliott, 1994). Everyone constructs themself and their life like a work of art, which leads to an aestheticization of everyday life, and consequently to an aestheticization of consumption (Featherstone, 1991). In the absence of traditional or modern references - a consequence of the decomposition of traditional communities and modern utopias – the individual turns towards objects and services, that is to say the system of consumption in order to forge an identity. (p.302)

MAIN POINTS:

Text about consumption in the post-modernity and how people are now belonging to tribes. Nowadays people have so many choices and chances to prove their individuality that they have moved towards building communities.

I find this text a tad hard to understand that is why I’m moving on to reading the book in which a lot of Cova is mentioned in a language that is easier to understand. At least for me.
**Congruence Relationships between Self Images and Product Brands**


CITATIONS:

- This article examines whether products as symbols are perceived and organized into congruent relationship with the self-concept.

- The main points in developing psychological involvement are (a) the individual's perception of products as symbols and (b) existence of a self concept to which the individual relates the product symbol. (p.80)

**Possessions and the Extended Self**


CITATIONS:

- Our possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities. (p.139)

- A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves. (p.139)

- That we are what we have (e.g., Van Estcrick 1986; Feirsiein 1986; Rosenbaum 1972) is perhaps the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behaviour. (p.139)

- The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between possessions and sense of self. (p.139)

- The extended self is seen not to be limited to external objects and personal possessions, but also includes persons, places, and group possessions as well as such possessions as body parts and vital organs. The notion of extended self is a superficially masculine and Western metaphor comprising not only that which is seen as "me" (the self), but also that which is seen as "mine." (p.140) As James (1890, p. 291) notes, the two concepts are interwoven in the way we think of ourselves:
The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of me. But it is clear that between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine the line is difficult to draw.

- Although prior theories and research on consumer self-concept (see Sirgy 1982 for a review) are moderately supportive of the contention that possessions are incorporated into self-concept, this research probably considerably underestimates the extent to which this is true. But, one can hold an object like the Statue of Liberty to be a part of one’s identity without having to hold a self-concept composed of characteristics attributed to this statue. Second, as argued by Belk (1984b), the focus of these studies on brand images prior to acquisition is too limited. Both non brand images (e.g., cigarette smoker, wine connoisseur) and post-acquisition object bonding (e.g., with one’s pet) may contribute strongly to the sense of self. Third, as argued by Belk (1984b) and Solomon and Assael (1988), rather than a single product or brand representing all of one’s self concept, only a complete ensemble of consumption objects may be able to represent the diverse and possibly incongruous aspects of the total self. (p.140)

- McClelland (1951) suggested that external objects become viewed as part of self when we are able to exercise power or control over them, just as we might control an arm or a leg.

- These findings suggest that besides control over objects, control by objects may also contribute to an item being viewed as part of self. That is, we may impose our identities on possessions and possessions may impose their identities on us. (p.140)

- If both hypotheses are correct, the more we believe we possess or are possessed by an object, the more a part of self it becomes. (140)

- Apparently, in claiming that something is “mine,” we also come to believe that the object is “me.” McCarthy (1984) concludes that such objects act as reminders and confirmers of our identities, and that our identities may reside in objects more than they do in individuals. (p.140-141)

- regarded not only as a part of self, but also as instrumental to the development of self. Other work on the role that special possessions play in easing life transitions also suggests that possessions can be instrumental to maintenance of self-concept (e.g., McCracken 1987a). (p.141)

- Added to the previously noted findings then, we may summarize the major categories of extended self as body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences, and those persons, places, and things to which one feels attached (p.141) Of these categories, the last three appear to be the most clearly extended.

- The idea that we make things a part of self by creating or altering them appears to be a universal human belief. (p.144)

- After the development of money payment for labour, purchasing objects offers another means for investing self (in this case more symbolically) in possessions. (p.145)
- Contemporary consumption also shows that the feeling of identity invested in material objects can be extraordinarily high. (p.144-145)

- The scope of this article also is delimited by its predominant focus on societies that hold an individualistic concept of self (p.145)

- Objects in our possession literally can extend self, as when a tool or weapon allows us to do things of which we would otherwise be incapable. Possessions can also symbolically extend self, as when a uniform or trophy allows us to convince ourselves (and perhaps others) that we can be a different person than we would be without them. (p.145)

- Thus, having possessions can contribute to our capabilities for doing and being. The relationships among having, doing, and being are strong and have been most fully explored by existential psychologist and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. (p.145)

- Further, Sartre maintains that the only reason we want to have something is to etilarge our sense of self and that the only way we can know who we are is by observing what we have. In other words, having and being are distinct but inseparable. (p.146) ... Thus, according to Sartre, possessions are all-important to knowing who we are. People seek, express, confirm, and ascertain a sense of being through what they have.

- Besides others sometimes serving in an object capacity as possessions, others are an important mirror through which we see ourselves. These others first come to associate possessions and possessor and then, depending upon which is known best, either come to infer the traits of the person from the nature of the possessions or the nature of the possessions from the traits of the person. (p.146) ... However, as Douglas and Isherwood (1979, p. 72) remind us, to think that a single item can successfully inform others about us is equivalent to thinking that a single word from a poem can convey the meaning it creates in the context of the poem.

- The problem with having, in Marx's view, is that it produces a false path to happiness through "commodity fetishism" (Marx 1978). In commodity fetishism, consumers worship goods and believe that goods have magical powers to bring happiness, provoking a pervasive and ongoing expectation that happiness lies in the next purchase or "I would be happy if I could just have..." Marx suggests instead that real happiness is achieved through doing meaningful and properly rewarded work (Marx 1967). (p.146)

- "radical hedonism," or concentration on having, as being unrewarding. (p.146) ... All acknowledge, however, that having possessions functions to create and to maintain a sense of self-definition and that having, doing, and being are integrally related.

- This motivation is labelled "competence" or "mastery" motivation (White 1959). Furby (1980) expanded this concept by suggesting that we develop a stronger sense of self by learning to actively control objects in our environment rather than feeling controlled by them. (p.147)
In this sense, relationships with objects are never two way (person-thing), but always three-way (person-thing-person). This brings forth a meum ei mum concern with object ownership (Beaglehole 1932). “The rivalry aspects of possessions” (p.147)

Sartre feels that buying an object is merely another form of creating the object, and that even the latent buying power of money contributes to sense of self. (p.150)

Three means - control/mastery, creation, and knowledge

However, there is another sense in which the individual has a hierarchical arrangement of levels of self, because we exist not only as individuals, but also as collectivities. We often define family, group, subculture, nation, and human selves through various consumption objects. (p.153)

However, contemporary collections more often are specialized to allow the collector an ability to gain control and uniqueness within self-prescribed boundaries (Treas and Brannen 1976) (p.154)

clothing items such as shoes or hats, both the items included and the order imposed on them are expressive of one's identity. We may not be able to control much of the world about us, but the collection, whether of dolls, "depression glass," or automobiles, allows us total control of a "little world/" Furthermore, collecting legitimizes acquisitiveness. (p.154)

A relationship should exist between incorporation of an object into one's extended self and the care and maintenance of the object. ... Generally then, the more an object is cathected into one's extended self, the more care and attention it tends to receive. (p.158)

Another instance when consumers should shed or neglect possessions is when possessions no longer fit consumers' ideal self-images. This can occur either because the ideal self-image has changed or because the images of the objects formerly incorporated in extended self, have changed. (p.159)

The preceding subsection should not be taken to suggest that possessions are merely a crutch to shore up weak or sagging personalities. The possessions incorporated in extended self serve valuable functions to healthy personalities. One such function is acting as an objective manifestation offthe self. As Douglas and Isherwood (1979) noted, such possessions are "good for thinking." Possessions help us manipulate our possibilities and present the self in a way that garners feedback from others who are reluctant to respond so openly to the unextended self. The possessions in our extended self also give us a personal archive or museum that allows us to reflect on our histories and how we have changed. (p.159)

This is not to suggest that extending self into material possessions has only positive effects. Research on materialism suggests some of the negative consequences of relying on possessions to provide meaning in life. But the construct of extended self also suggests that possessions can make a positive contribution to our identities. ... By considering the role of consumption in providing meaning in life, we may develop a stronger vision of the significance of consumer research.
Consumption is a central facet of contemporary life, but it has seldom been considered from this broader perspective. The construct of extended self, offers some promise for cultivating such a broadened appreciation of the potential significance of consumer research. (p.160)

-It seems an inescapable fact of modern life that we learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions. Developmental evidence suggests that this identification with our things begins quite early in life as the infant learns to distinguish self from environment and then from others who may envy our possessions. Emphasis on material possessions tends to decrease with age, but remains high throughout life as we seek to express ourselves through possessions and use material possessions to seek happiness, remind ourselves of experiences, accomplishments, and other people in our lives, and even create a sense of immortality after death. Our accumulation of possessions provides a sense of past and tells us who we are, where we have come from, and perhaps where we are going. (p.160)
Beyond the Extended Self: Loved Objects and Consumers’ Identity Narratives


CITATIONS:

- This article investigates the possessions and activities that consumers love and their role in the construction of a coherent identity narrative. In the face of social forces pushing toward identity fragmentation, interviews reveal three different strategies, labeled "demarcating," "compromising," and "synthesizing" solutions, for creating a coherent self-narrative. Findings are compared to Belk’s “Possessions and the Extended Self.” Most claims from Belk are supported, but the notion of a core versus extended self is critiqued as a potentially confusing metaphor. The roles of loved objects and activities in structuring social relationships and in consumer well-being are also explored. (p.171)

- In the use of products, Richins (1997) finds that love is a common consumption-related emotion. Love is so prevalent in consumption that when Schultz, Kleine, and Keman (1989) asked participants to list feelings that they experienced when they thought about objects with which they had an emotional attachment, love was the second most commonly listed emotion, superseded only by happiness. (p.171)

- The people, and things, we love have a strong influence on our sense of who we are, on our self. (p.171)

- In the consumer behavior literature, consumer identity has frequently been linked to constructs related more or less directly to love, including special possessions (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), involvement (e.g., Celsi and Olson 1988), cathexis (e.g., Rook 1985), and consumerbrand relationships (e.g., Fournier 1998) (p.171)

- Consumer-brand relationships are at once broader than love, since love is only one type of relationship, and narrower than love, since they focus exclusively on brands. Nonetheless, all of these constructs share a strong focus on the way people use consumption to maintain their sense of identity through time and define themselves in relationship to other people (p.171)
- Issues related to how consumers use products to construct their identity have permeated interpretive consumer research and become major topics in experimental and survey-based work as well. Belk (1988) brought together a large body of literature to support the thesis that consumers use key possessions to extend, expand, and strengthen their sense of self. (p.171)

- Belk rejects any definition of what is included in the self that can apply uniformly across individuals and cultures because he believes that what constitutes the self is a subjective assessment that changes between people and over time. Nonetheless, Belk suggests a consistent structure for the self, at least in Western individualistic cultures. Belk sees consumers as possessing a core self that is expanded to include items that then become part of the extended self. (p.172)

- For example, summarizing earlier research, Belk concluded that for those particular respondents the “body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences” are likely to be part of their core self, whereas “persons, places, and things to which one feels attached” are more likely to be seen as part of their extended self, and items to which they do not feel attached are not part of the self.

- This means that in addition to seeing one’s identity as a list of attributes (e.g., I am tall, I value achievement), these attributes are linked in memory to key episodes in one’s life, which in turn are strong together to form a story. This story line allows people to make sense of who they are and provides a connected identity from past, to present, and into possible imagined futures. This narrative also explains one’s affiliations with certain people and rejection of others based on their roles as other characters in the narrative. This narrative view is consistent with metaphors that see identity as a kind of performance in which consumers use goods to enact personalized versions of cultural scripts (p.172).

- Thus people are provoked to engage in serial (and potentially endless) rounds of lifestyle consumption— attempting to identify and master the lifestyle and accoutrements that will bring fulfillment. (p.172)

- Belk’s related assertions that (a.) identity issues are central to consumption and (b.) that possessions are a part of the self are important and lasting contributions of his classic article. The current research is completely consistent with these claims. (p.179)

- The current study found that loved items were connected to the self both by expressing the self (i.e., making visible internal dispositions, preferences, and impulses [Wong and Ahuvia 1998]) and by transforming the self into some new desired form. (p.180)

- There is a legitimate distinction between possessions whose value is primarily physical and instrumental versus those whose value is mostly symbolic, but there is no reason to see one category as more literally part of the self than the other. If anything, the current data suggests that possessions steeped in sign value are often the most intensely integrated into the respondent’s sense of identity (p.180).

- This can give rise to the idea that the core self is prior to, and ontologically distinct from, the extended self. We might think more clearly if we speak in terms of strong versus weak identification with objects, hot versus cold cathexis, or more versus less salient aspects of our identity. We should acknowledge that selfness is
a continuous variable with a grey area between possessions that are, or are not, part of a consumer's identity. But it need not imply an authentic core self, or that two objects can both be part of the self yet one be more literally part of the self than the other. (p.180)

- These cases, then, reaffirm the fundamentally social nature of consumption and reiterate the importance of the trilateral person-thing-person framing of consumer behavior. In these two case studies, we also saw that the social nature of consumption was often experienced interiorly by the respondents as an identity conflict where the question of "which group should I belong to" became framed as "who should I be." (pp.180-181)

- As Wilk (1997) points out, it is often the products that consumers reject (and their associated rejected identities) that say the most about the consumers' desired self. (p.181)

- Cushman's (1990) empty-self model was somewhat more consistent with these case studies. As Cushman argues, these consumers want to create a unified, coherent (although a complex) identity but face difficulties owing to their mobility, abundance of lifestyle options, and exposure to a variety of subcultures, each with competing norms and symbolic systems. ... Driven by a psychic hunger, individuals consume and dispose, consume and dispose. There is little room for the idea that they might personalize the meanings of things by bringing them into a web of meaning both internally (through integration with the life narrative) and externally, through storytelling or other forms of sharing with a community. (p.182)

- Like Belk's work (1988), the current study shows how some forms of consumption can help us create a meaningful life. But whereas Cushman tends to focus on goods that are quickly purchased and just as quickly forgotten, loved items tended to be objects and activities that demanded a sizable investment of time and energy. ... This investment of energy into the love object helps make it existentially meaningful and helps integrate it into the self. (p.182)

- Cushman's description of people running on an endless treadmill of vacuous spending might accurately describe cases in which consumers look to quick and facile forms of consumption in search of identity. And indeed, the literature on materialism (Kasser and Ahuvia 2001), and also on the lack of connection between income and happiness (Ahuvia and Friedman 1998), suggests that much of consumption is an ultimately unfulfilling activity. ... Current research focuses on the exceptional consumption experiences that these respondents found most emotionally rewarding. It is worth noting how frequently these loved objects and activities required the direct expenditure of time and energy and not simply the expenditure of funds. They were, as the cliché would have it, labors of love. In these interviews, pleasure could be bought, but love was made. (p.182)

- It is not surprising then that these few loved objects and activities play a special role in consumers' understandings of who they are as people. It must also be noted, however, that self-extension and love are not identical. Unless one has an unusually high level of self-esteem, there are inevitably aspects of oneself that one does not love, so love objects are only a subset of the things that make up a consumer's identity. (p.182)
This article supports Belk's basic claim regarding the importance of identity issues in high involvement consumption. It suggests, however, that the metaphor of core versus extended self may not be the most useful way of describing this phenomenon. Instead, it may be simpler and clearer to keep Belk's thesis that products, ideas, activities, and so forth, have varying degrees of selfness for a consumer, without invoking the potentially misleading notion of a core self.
Extended Self in a Digital World

Reference:

CITATIONS:

-Belk (1988) posited that “knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves” (139). The article posited an individual self with an inner core self as well as aggregate selves ranging from family to neighbourhood to nation. Enhancing these self constructions are various possessions, which are regarded by their owners as having different degrees of centrality to one or more of their individual or aggregate senses of self. The focus on possessions rather than brands highlighted the singularity of our relation with objects once they are separated from their commodity origins. (p.477)

-persons, places, and things to which one feels attached. Of these categories, the last three appear to be the most clearly extended. (p.478)

- Among the important points here are that the self is seen as embodied (i.e., not merely thoughts) and that material things (i.e., objects in the noun categories) most clearly make up the extended self. (p.478)

- Belk (1988) noted that possessions, comprising the extended self, serve not only as cues for others to form impressions about us but also as markers for individual and collective memory. The memory marker objects of extended self function both intentionally and unintentionally to prompt recollections of our prior experiences, linkages to other people, and our previous selves. ... both the objects we preserve and the memories associated with them were described as self-enhancing and nostalgic. (p.478)

- But he goes on to suggest that this is a new kind of collecting that is also magical, thrilling, and enthralling. He marvels at the ease of online acquisition, the ease of instantly re-categorizing and rearranging tunes, and the ease of sharing them with distant others. We can begin to see here some basic behavioral changes. What was previously a more private act of music acquisition and appreciation can become more of a group practice. (p.479)

- The emergence of dematerialized and nonmaterial possessions raises the question of whether consumers can become as attached to immaterial possessions as they can to material possessions (which include digital devices) and whether we can gain status and an enhanced sense of self from virtual possessions. Following Belk (1988), we may also ask whether we mourn the loss of digital possessions and feel a diminished sense of self. ... Lehdonvirta (2012) takes issue with this distinction, arguing that “there is no such thing as completely immaterial consumption” (22). As Slater (1997) emphasizes, “even material commodities appear to have a greater non-material component. This includes . . . design, packaging and advertising imagery” (p.479)

- Finally, Lehdonvirta (2012) argues that phenomenologically digital goods are very real to their owners and that on the Internet it is material goods that are not real. (p.479)
BRAND IDENTITY

EXISTING CITATIONS:

Brands have personalities or images, and consumers seek those brands that match their self-image or the image they would like to project to others (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997; Solomon, 1996) and brand personality traits provide symbolic meaning or emotional value that can contribute to consumer’s brand preference and can be more enduring than functional attributes (Rajagopal, 2005). To differentiate their brands, marketers focus on incorporating emotional values into their brand, portraying this through the metaphor of brand personality (McEnally & De Chernatony, 1999) since brands competing in the same category have become functionally more similar (De Chernatony & Mc Donald, 1997) due to advances in technology which make difficult to sustain a functional advantage (Lambin, 1997).

Dimensions of brand personality


CITATIONS:

-Although a considerable amount of research in personality psychology has been done to conceptualize human personality, identify the “Big Five” dimensions, and explore the meaning of each dimension, no parallel research has been conducted in consumer behaviour on brand personality. (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. Researchers have focused on how the personality of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self, ideal self, or specific dimensions of the self through the use of a brand.

-due in part to the lack of consensus regarding what brand personality really is. (p.347) ... as a result, an understanding of how and when brand personality relates to a consumer’s personality and thereby influences consumer preference has remained elusive. ... furthermore no research has been conducted to develop systematically a reliable, valid and generalizable scale to measure brand personality.
In contrast to “product-related attributes”, which tend to serve a utilitarian function for consumers, brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function. (p.347)

It is argued that the symbolic use of brands is possible because consumers often imbue brands with human personality traits. Consumers easily can think about brands as if they were celebrities or famous historical figures and as they relate to one’s own self, which may be due in part to the strategies used by advertisers to imbue a brand with personality traits such as anthropomorphisation, personification, and the creation of user imagery. Through such techniques, the personality traits associated with a brand, such as those associated with an individual, tend to be relatively enduring and distinct (p.347-348) For example – coca-cola – cool all American and real – relatively enduring and differentiate Coke from its competitors.

-motivated by this logic, previous research has suggested that the greater the congruity between the human characteristics that the greater the congruity between the human characteristics that consistently and distinctively describe an individual’s actual or ideal self and those that describe a brand, the greater the preference for the brand. However, the empirical exploration of this hypothesis has been handicapped by a limited conceptual understanding of the brand personality construct and the psychological mechanism by which it operates. (p.348)

-Although human and brand personality traits might share a similar conceptualization, they differ in terms of how they are formed. Perceptions of human personality traits are inferred on the basis of an individual’s behaviour, attitudes, physical characteristics and beliefs, and demographic characteristics. In contrast, perceptions of brand personality traits can be formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand. Personality traits come to be associated with the brand – such as the brand’s user imagery, which is defined here as “the set of human characteristics associated with the typical user of a brand”; the company’s employees or CEO, and the brand’s product endorsers; ... the personality traits of the people associated with the brand are transferred directly to the brand; ...however, personality traits come to be associated with a brand in an indirect way through product related attributes, product category associations, brand name, symbol or logo, advertising style, price and distribution channel. + DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS – age, gender, class(p.348) Virginia slims – female, Marlboro - male

-To examine how the relationship between brand and human personality may drive consumer preference, two types of brand personality scales are used. The first type are ad hoc sales which typically are composed of a set of traits ranging from 20 to 300. ... second type ... are those that are more theoretical in nature but are based on human personality scales, that have not been validated in the context of brands,

-In this research a framework of brand personality dimensions is developed .... perhaps most important, this framework and scale are generalizable across product categories. ... can enable researchers to understand the symbolic use of brands in general versus the symbolic use of brands within a particular category. As a result, the symbolic nature of brands can be understood at the same level as the utilitarian nature of brands which tends to be captured by models that are generalizable across product categories across product categories,
- If true, this premise would suggest that one reason for the weak empirical support for self-congruity effects (both actual and ideal) is the focus on matching the personality between the brand and a consumer at the aggregate level (i.e., across all personality traits). Rather, this research suggests that dimensions of personalities must be examined. Furthermore the importance of these dimensions must be examined in order to understand their centrality to the self and the extent to which they influence preference for brands across situations. (p.353-354)

- the brand personality framework and scale developed in this research also can be used to gain theoretical and practical insight into the antecedents and consequences of brand personality, which have received a significant amount of attention but little empirical testing. In terms of antecedents, many have suggested that brand personality is created by a variety of marketing variables. However the extent to which these variables independently influence brand personality has yet to be determined. ... similarly in terms of consequences, researchers suggest that brand personality increases consumer reference and usage, evokes emotions in consumers and increases level of trust and loyalty.

**Brand personality and consumer self-expression: Single or dual carriageway?**


- This paper thus proposes that consumers have a part to play in influencing how a brand personality is perceived. (p.428)

- A brand is perceived to possess a ‘personality’. Consumers use it to ‘self-express’ or to experience the emotional benefits of the brand. (p.428)

- As products have moved from a utilitarian perspective to a perspective of consumer-brand relationships, brand personality seems to be a contemporary tool for marketing strategists to use to build and enhance brand equity. (p.429)

- By endowing a brand with a unique personality, brand strategists can differentiate brands with similar product attributes. Plummer argues that for many product classes, the brand personality is the key element in understanding brand choice. (p.429)

- Brand personality can be developed through a variety of marketing variables, such as user imagery, packaging, sponsorships, symbols and advertising (p.429)

- Several models have been suggested to define brand personality, some of which include ‘brand identity prism’, ‘Big Five prototypes’ and ‘ACL’. All these models attempt to define traits that are related to the personality of brands. However, they only describe the personality traits that are perceived by consumers. They are not described as a set of consistent personality dimensions that are available across other brands. As such, Aaker suggests that brand personality should be defined
as ‘the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand’. To bridge this gap, five personality dimensions are introduced, namely ‘sincerity’, ‘excitement’, ‘competence’, ‘sophistication’ and ‘ruggedness’. (p.429)

- In light of this, consumers are perceived to prefer brands that are associated with a set of personality traits congruent to their own. (p.430)

- As consumers interact with their preferred brand, they not only participate actively in receiving the personality that the brand projects, but also transmit and create a new personality to it. Ultimately, a consumer who prefers a certain brand will perceive that its personality is congruent to his/her preferred personality and will project their preferred personality on to the brand. (p.431)

‘I love my jeep, because it’s tough like me’, The effect of product-personality congruence on product attachment.


- Product attachment is defined as the emotional bond a consumer experiences with an object. This study examines the influence of congruity between the personality of a person and the personality of his/her product (i.e., product-personality congruence) on product attachment. Respondents indicated stronger attachments to products that were congruent with the owner’s personality (p.3)

- People own many products for the functional or symbolic benefits they provide. Generally, these products are easily discarded and replaced, sometimes even while the product is still functioning properly. On the contrary, most people also own products that they refuse to discard, although they may have lost their instrumental value (Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan 1989). They care for these objects in special ways and have developed a long-lasting relationship with them. They have become emotionally attached to these products. (p.3)

- Self-congruity refers to the fact that consumers prefer products associated with an image that is similar to their self-concept (p.4)

- Product personality differs from brand personality, in that it refers to a specific product variant, and not to a global brand. (p.4)
- Products with personality associations similar to the personality of the owner allow him/her to show the world who (s)he is. Consequently, the product gains symbolic meaning to the owner, due to which the owner becomes more attached to the product. (p.10)

**Apple**

*Design Thinking and Innovation at Apple.*


**CITATIONS:**

- On March 15, 2012 ... became the most valuable publicly traded company in the world. (p.1) Currently #1 - http://www.forbes.com/global2000/list/#tab:overall

- Even so, through that difficult period, the core commitment to product design and development had stayed alive. (p.1)

- Anyone who used the Apple II in 1978 and then picked up an iPhone three decades later would find a familiar object. Somehow the new device was the same as the old one: different, but the same. (p.1)

- Simply put, the “Apple Way” was a set of principles with a deep commitment to great products and services at its core: design thinking, clear development strategy and execution, its CEO as chief innovator, and the rational courage to conduct bold business experiments. (p.2)

- Moreover, they reasoned, potential customers would have to fall in love with computers if they were to master the machine’s apparent complexity and spend a lot of money to do so. People would have to see how this tool would benefit them and want that benefit for themselves. (p.2)

- Cordell Ratzlaff, a major architect of the Mac OS X operating system (circa 1990), noted:

> 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. (p.2)

- Worrying about the smallest detail, which includes even the packaging of Apple products, has helped realize co-founder Steve Jobs’ design sensibility: that simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. Distinct from organizations whose notion of “detail” is often conflated with “features,” Apple products are often noteworthy for what they do not contain. (p.3)

- Given the sleek appearance of iPods, iPhones, the iPad and Mac computers, and all these products’ prominence in media depictions, it’s tempting to attribute their popularity to Apple’s ability to tap into a zeitgeist—a sense of what is popular, fashionable, trendy at the moment. (p.3)

- In fact, Apple goes beyond superficial trends and gets to the essence of customer experience such that its “design” seems to happen from the inside out, while the outside continues to be deeply appealing and, ineffably, “cool.” According to Steve Levy, who’s written extensively about Apple, the iPod managed the amazing feat of being deemed individually cool while also being deemed cool for millions upon millions of users. (p.4)

- The appearance of Apple products is thus “the result of painstaking attention to detail,” according to Ive. “The thing that all of our competitors are missing is that they think it’s about fashion, they think it’s about surface appearance. . . . And they couldn’t be further from the truth.” Ive was talking about the vivid iMacs that debuted in mid-1998 and signaled Jobs’ return to the company. (p.4)

- This notion of design-as-product-integrity (p.4)

- Significantly, the beautiful, smooth, and consistent interface didn’t sacrifice features, some of which would not be seen on other PCs until years later. Apple’s vision of simplicity, one that arises from a thorough understanding of elegance and the integration of sophisticated features and functionality, did not imply an inherent tradeoff between these elements. There was no compromise between simplicity of use (beautiful, smooth, and consistent) and functionality, which included “prescient” features (like hypertext), compared to products that, in the guise of simplicity, in fact did only one thing (the “one-button” approach tried for cameras and phones, for example).

- The creative core of technology development had managed to exist during this period of Apple upheaval, but the process became more “traditional” and resembled approaches found at other companies. (p.6)

- Apple has been notoriously tight-lipped about both its strategy and operations—an approach that has turned into marketing magic and high expectations among its followers. (p.7)
Broadly, firms that follow platform strategies envision a family (or generation) of products at the earliest stages of product concept and planning. At this point they think ahead to not only what would be needed for the initial product’s release, but also what would be required subsequently—and when that should happen. With all this in mind to one degree of specificity or another, companies then design the initial product as a platform, with an architecture that will accommodate the development and production of the (derivative) products envisioned. For companies, like Apple, who put a premium on design, resources and time invested into the initial product is leveraged across derivative products; these can be developed and ramped up more quickly because they build on and make use of existing design elements in the platform. This is efficient, as well. With high levels of sharing and reuse of assemblies, sub-assemblies, and parts, the result is greater reliability and lower costs, benefiting company and suppliers alike. Company employees benefit too, through the knowledge they gain in designing, producing, and supporting the platform (i.e., initial) product. That in turn can be efficiently transferred to derivatives. (p.7)

And finally, customers benefit from a company’s effective use of a platform strategy. More stable and reliable designs mean products that require less repair, maintenance, and service, in general and particularly for first-time users. Commonality of user interfaces and design elements means that repeat customers face less of a training hurdle; they are applying their knowledge of how the product family “works.”

The idea that design should be driven first by user needs and desires is reinforced by Cordell Ratzlaff, referring to the development of Apple’s operating system OS X (circa 2000):

There is nothing that I would not consider changing; I think an interface really has to be appropriate for the people who are using it. People don’t use a computer to enjoy the operating system. . . . They use a computer because they want to create something. . . . The computer is just a tool . . . it’s about what people want to do . . . you have to know who those people are and what they are really trying to accomplish. (p.8)

Apple’s ability to change from the passionate advocate of pristine white to the driving force behind colors and new materials suggests the importance of design as a motivation to continued innovation, rather than as a static approach that assumes a single conclusion. It also suggests a passion for and close attention to new materials and manufacturing processes, which can offer new opportunities for product innovation. This passion enables a paradox. As Jobs noted, Apple’s explosive growth is not an excuse to “play it safe. That’s the most dangerous thing we can do. We have to get bolder. . . .” (p.9)

Company founders essentially imprint their organizations with their own personality characteristics, and Apple-Jobs is no exception. (p.9)

Products are launched on time and with high quality. Product concepts and early prototypes are never shown in public. Apple’s promise is an integral part of its relationship with customers: once the company introduces a product in public, it would become commercially available through its retail and on-line stores. This excellence and commitment is demanding—“the really great person” who digs into a problem and finds the “beautiful elegant solution that works” works very hard indeed. (p.10)

Jobs’ vision held that Apple products were to be personal tools that enabled and enhanced individual efforts for such problem solving. (p.10)
Beyond the vision, the drive, the total hands-on involvement in decision-making, from strategy to product and service design to packaging, Jobs has been the face of the company. Products are not rolled out; they are presented to the public by Apple’s management team in periodic extravaganzas that are shrouded in elaborate (and much-ridiculed) secrecy beforehand. To penetrate it, even web cams have been deployed dockside to scrutinize shipments coming in from factories in Asia in an attempt to determine what will be unveiled. This cat-and-mouse game, going on for more than a decade, has propelled Jobs into what one analyst called the Princess Diana of business leaders. Unlike other popular “front men,” however, Jobs has used his prominence to effectively, dramatically, and boldly move his company into new spaces, all of which, when looked at in retrospect, seem like totally evident changes. When the iPhone debuted, Apple Computer was renamed Apple, perhaps signaling “[T]hat simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” In November 2009, Fortune Magazine named Jobs CEO of the decade. (p.10)
Brand value of the most valuable companies in the world 2015


The chart shows the ranking of the most valuable companies worldwide in 2015. Google ranked second, with a brand value of 173.65 billion U.S. dollars. According to Millward Brown Optimor, Apple is the most valuable brand in the world.

Brand values – additional information

Brand is an important asset to any company. They often come in the form of a name or logo which is used to identify and distinguish a company's product from others. The success of a brand can be determined in a variety of ways, such as monetary value, customer awareness and customer trust.

The customer experience of a brand can have a lasting effect on its reputation. One way in which customer experience can be assessed is based on the simplicity or complexity of its products, services, interactions and communications. In November 2014, over 12,000 consumers were surveyed on their customer experience and the leading brands were ranked by simplicity of the experience. The results showed that Zappos.com, the online apparel retailer, provided the simplest experience for consumers with the highest simplicity score of 914. Other brands which ranked high included Amazon, Subway and Pizza Hut.

Strategies are often put in place to ensure and maintain healthy relationships between a brand and its customers. In the spring of 2014, consumers in the U.S. were surveyed to ascertain the brand-customer relationship building measures they found important. During the survey it was revealed that 72 percent of respondents stated that rewarding loyal customers was important and a further 72 percent stated that offers and promotions were important in building relationships.

Advertising is a key component when it comes to the public interaction, awareness and perception of a brand, and high budgets are often invested to ensure that a brand’s advertising is a success. In a worldwide survey among internet users in September and October 2013, the influence of advertising was assessed as respondents were asked; ‘Are you likely to buy products from brands that have great advertising?’ Of those who answered yes, China had the highest share with 61 percent of respondents. In comparison, only 27 percent of respondents from the U.S. answered yes.
Apple has been amongst the top 5 smartphone vendors in the world since 2009. With the decline of Nokia and RIM, market leaders at one point, both Apple and Samsung grew their presence in the market. Samsung took the lead, and has held a share of 20 to 30 percent since 2012. The Korean electronics company shipped more than 320 million smartphones worldwide in 2015. Apple has consistently been Samsung's closest competitor, maintaining the position of second most popular smartphone vendor in the world since 2012. Apple's market share has varied between 14 to 21 percent over the years. Apple's iPhone sales have consistently increased over the last few years, going from almost 170 million units in 2014 to more than 230 million iPhones sold in 2015 alone.

Much of this recent growth can be attributed to the release of the iPhone 6 and 6s. With the introduction of these new models to the market in September of 2014, iPhone sales improved considerably. Apple’s share of global new smartphone sales reached almost 20 percent in the last quarter of 2014 and 18.2 percent in the first quarter of 2015 (4Q ‘14 calendar year). Since then, Apple sales have remained strong, accounting for 18.7 percent of all smartphones sold worldwide in the last quarter of 2015. The company registered a new record in terms of iPhone sales in the first quarter of 2016 (4Q ‘15 calendar year), with nearly 75 million units sold in that quarter. The iPhone 6 and 6s accounted for about 80 percent of all iPhone shipments in the last quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015.
Global Apple iPhone sales from 3rd quarter 2007 to 2nd quarter 2016 (in million units)


This statistic shows Apple iPhone sales worldwide from the third quarter of 2007 to the company’s most recent financial quarter. In the second quarter of 2011, 18.65 million iPhones were sold worldwide. In the 2011 fiscal year, Apple sold 72 million iPhones.

The first generation of Apple’s iPhone was introduced in 2007, bringing innovative features such as a touch screen interface and a virtual keyboard to a broader audience. Considered by many as a revolutionary product, the Apple iPhone drove growth for the smartphone market.

Since its introduction to the consumer market, Apple has released eight generations of the product, along with new features and updates. The iPhone runs on Apple’s own mobile operating system iOS, the second most popular smartphone operating system in the market. As of the third quarter of 2015, the iPhone made Apple the second-largest mobile phone vendor in the world, with a global market share of 9.6 percent.

The iPhone has changed Apple’s business dramatically. iPhone sales have risen strongly over the years, from around 1.4 million iPhones sold in 2007 to almost 170 million units worldwide in 2014. In total, Apple has sold more than 590 million iPhones from 2007 to 2014 worldwide. In the third quarter of 2015, iPhone sales accounted for more than 60 percent of Apple’s total revenue, generating more than 31 billion U.S. dollars in revenues.
Partly thanks to the iPhone’s success, Apple is amongst the most valuable brands in the world. The technology company has achieved this position by combining technical innovation and minimalistic design. Apple’s success translates into strong brand loyalty, as well as into its revenue growth. In ten years, Apple’s revenue increased from 8 billion U.S. dollars in 2004 to more than 180 billion in 2014.

Revenue results


What Apple Store’s Biggest Fan Taught Us About The Customer Experience

Quiz: Are You An Android Or iPhone Person?


25 Reasons Why The iPhone SE Is A Big Risk For Apple


Things

Case study APPLE: what is the symbolic meaning of the iPhone, how does it influence consumer decisions?

APPLE iPhone SE as a result for clients wishes.

The success of value-expressive brands is largely determined by the self-congruity effect (Klipfel, Barclay, and Bockorny, 2014).
Because Apple is a brand that has the design at the core of its values (reference), it is interesting to see how the...

Apple iPhone is a thing that people are queueing to get and somehow there is this huge discussion about what is better – iOS or Android.

- Products, suppliers, and services are assumed to have an image determined not only by the physical characteristics of the object alone, but by a host of other factors, such as packaging, advertising, and price. These images are also formed by other associations, such as stereotypes of the generalized or typical user (Sirgy 1982)

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**iPhone Owners Love Superman and Sushi; Android Fans Dig Batman and Booze.**

What Kind Of Person Prefers An iPhone?


iPhone SE & iPhone 6s Sales: Good, Bad, Meh?


Apple's iPhone SE Could Be Doing Better Than Expected.


iPhone SE Fails to Make A Splash.

NOT USED (or how I got to my final subject)
**Consumer tribes**


**CITATIONS:**
- Consumer Tribes, the title of this book, is difficult and problematic. ... But the Consumer Tribes in the chapters of this book are doing far more than that (consuming) (p.3) They do not consume things without changing them; they cannot ‘consume’ a good without it becoming them and them becoming it; they cannot ‘consume’ a service without engaging in a dance with the service provider, where the dance becomes the service. (p.4)
- Active and enthusiastic in their consumption, sometimes in the extreme, tribes produce a range of identities, practices, rituals, meanings, and even material culture itself. They re-script roles, twist meanings, and shout back to producers and other groups of people while they fashion their own differentiation strategies. They both absorb and resist the pre-packaged, off-the-shelf, brand-and-product meanings of marketers. (p.4)
- So, in the first instance, let’s be clear that consumer Tribes rarely consume brands and products - even the most mundane ones - without adding to them, grappling with them, blending them with their own lives and altering them.
- Consumers are consumers primarily in that they take commercial identities as important aspects of themselves and their collectives, that they use these identities to relate to themselves, to other people and to the world around them through lenses that incorporate a vast range if commercial and commercially produced pursuits, objectives and definitions if the self. (p.4)
- The hunger of community, expression, transcendence, a natural state (p.5)
- Human life is essentially social (p.5)
- There are not abstract modernist structures. We belong to many little tribes and not one tribe. (p.5)
- As Bernard Cova has argued, the ‘links’ (social relationships) are more important than things (brands, products, experiences, ideas) (p.6)
- Consumer tribes are activators (p.7). Whether consumption involves consumers choosing between two theoretical alternatives. In one, they let themselves be immersed within and submerged by the system of commercial consumption. In the other alternative, consumers are dodgy dissidents who resist the market. – a poor representation of what consumption actually entails.
- Posing everyday questions in absolutist terms (p.8)
- Consumers are no manipulated but engage in tactic compromises. Consumers, in other words, are not naive about living in their commercial-material world. They know the game plan. Conscious of a partial manipulation, they decide to what extent they will be manipulated and they manipulate too. (p.8)
- We can see the metaphor of Consumer Tribes as players who activate and enliven a social process of commercial meanings and identity production-consumption. (p.8)
- Many collective experiences tend to re-appropriate products and services from the consumption system without consciously associating any oppositional attitude with this act. (p.9) ... in their own way, these groups are imbuing such products with meanings and usages that differ from the ones they originally conveyed.
- Building meaning through shared experiences and emotions constitutes a daily episode in the creation, consolidation, and preservation of a communitarian sentiment within these groups. (p.9-10)
-marketing is no longer the reserved domain for companies and corporations, but a set of practices, accesses, codes, and rituals that are available to all communities. (p.16) Between markets and communities is much hybridization. (p.17)
-one key element in today's market in a way that is more and more entrepreneurial. Indeed, as recently discussed by Thomas O’Guinn and Albert Muniz (2005), one key element in today’s tribe-market interactions is that companies can lose part of their control over a brand, to be replaced by a Consumer Tribe that is trying to re-appropriate it. (p.17-18)
-the existence of groups of united consumers ‘implies that power is shifting away from marketers and flowing to consumers,’ as consumers are increasingly saying ‘no’ to forms of marketing they find evasive or unethical. (p.19)
-unlike similar forms of artisan intelligence, tribal knowledge can be converted, albeit with some difficulty, into company property... (p.21)
-companies do not need to send totally coherent messages to the marketplace. Consumers fill in the blanks, and they often do a better job of colouring in the picture than the marketers would do.
-we need to cast a spotlight on situations where consumers adore a cult brand but hate the company that developed it because the firm lacked commercial taste, such as the fans of star wars... or the followers of the Newton, who reject Apple.

Tribal aesthetic
Michel Maffesoli
-In the same way that politics were the sign of modernity, aesthetics may be the sign of postmodern society. (p.26)... people feeling emotions together. This is the sort of aesthetics that provide foundations for a community, offering a basis for what I have in the past called the postmodern ‘tribe’.
-unconscious desire to act like other people, to only exist through others and in their sight. ... I am what I am because the other recognises me as such. This assertion may shock but it seems to be a good description of the empirical functioning of societies. (p.30)
-thus, above and beyond individualism (be it theoretical or methodological in nature). Empirical societal life is no more than the expression of a succession of feelings of belonging. (p.31) ... Thus we participate magically alongside some rock singer, sporting idol, religious guru, intellectual or political leader. Such participation generates a quasi-mystical communion, a common sentiment of belonging. ... in any event, identity, free will, decision or individual choice may be affirmed or demanded but the reality is that all of these factors remain tributary of the identities, decisions and choices of the group to which their protagonists belong. (p.31)
Tribal Marketing, Tribal Branding: An expert guide to the brand co-creation


CITATIONS:
- Tribes are not just loyal to their chosen brands – they are passionate about them. This passion means that they voluntarily become advocates for the brand, going out of their way to promote the brand to non-users. They organize events that celebrate and promote their chosen brands, thereby providing brand-related experiences that convert more consumers to devotion to those brands. They engage with one another online and offline, affirming each other in the practice of brand rituals that tie each consumer into a deeper relationship with the brand. (p.1)
- Tribes are first and foremost a means whereby the contemporary consumer experiences a sense of community. ... As Bernard Cova first explains in his initial discussion of consumer tribes in the European Journal of Marketing, community has taken on a new form for contemporary consumers. Even though so many traditional sources and forms of community, such as extended family or village community, have become weaker or less significant, human beings are still essentially social animals. We need to feel part of a community... because we have a fundamental need for social relationships, ... to position brands as a means of accessing social relationships. (p.2-3)
- What increasingly differs from past experience is the means whereby we access community and feelings of belongingness. Traditionally (and I accept I am over-simplifying for the sake of brevity) consumers could derive a sense of community from ties of kin, religion, and geographic location. Identity could be constructed out of shared cultural practices, practices mutually communicated through family, through the rites of religious faith, and so on. However, in recent decades, for a variety of reasons, these traditional sources of affiliation have begun to lose their hold. ... consumers increasingly wished to embrace their own individuality, free from the ties of tradition, organized religion, and so forth. The era of individualization – or as some called it, hyper-individualization – was born out of the desire to differentiate the self from the conventional and escape the restrictive mores and dogmas of the past. However, the fulfilment of this desire to carve out a hyper-individualized identity could not overcome the fundamental and enduring need to feel a sense of connection to others; hence the emergence of what has been termed ‘social re-aggregation’. (p.3)
- According to Cova, the so-called postmodern consumer, in their desire to express and complete the self through individualized consumer identity projects, still needed to feel a sense of social connectedness. The need for community could not be so easily discarded after all. Hence in the midst of this process of hyper-individualization was a process of social re-aggregation. However, this need for social connection has manifested itself in a different way to more easily defined traditional forms of community. These new communities, or tribes, are not rigidly structured or hierarchical in nature. Instead they are founded out of a shared passion for activities or objects that people freely choose to become excited about. Rather than submitting to any obligation to comply with the rules – and restrictions – of traditional communities, members of these new communities have begun to affiliate around objects and practices of shared devotion because they choose to do so. It is, as Cova says, ‘an emotional free choice’. (p.3-4)
- Instead, when individual consumers discover that they have something important in common with each other, the social contact experienced through shared devotion to an activity or brand becomes an important means whereby their need for community is fulfilled. (p.4)
- community with a specific sense of shared identity drawn from collectively imagined and shared emotions, practices, and values. (p.4) ... That’s why when we speak of contemporary consumer tribes, we use the term ‘linking value’ to indicate that tribes gather together around what they collectively imagine or construct as sets of shared values, practices, and emotions, sometimes represented by tangible objects and brands, and sometimes not.

- Linking value: Tribes affiliate together first and foremost due to a sense of shared values and emotions. Whether these shared values, when scrutinized, are more imagined than ‘real’ is not unimportant, hence we will revert later on to a much more detailed consideration of the entire notion of imagined community. (p.4)

- Tribes are not held together by some sort of need to remain in a community purely for the sense of social connection that this provides. Instead, the social connection stems from the shared emotion, the shared belief, that a particular object or practice really matters.

- This notion of shared performance brings us to another key concept that is central to an understanding of what tribes are all about – that concept is group narcissism. (p.4)

- Because tribal identities and linking values are founded on shared passion, whether that is passion for a brand, an activity, or both, this shared passion must be demonstrated and upheld (p.5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 A sample of tribes with simplified tribal typology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tribe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Mac owners</td>
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(p.6-7)

- Another point is that tribes usually tend not to have restrictions on membership. Anyone can be a member of more than one tribe – there is nothing to stop a member of the Star Trek community from choosing to become a ‘foodies’, a ‘Little Monster’, or a member of the snowboarding tribe, or all four. Occasionally membership of certain tribes might preclude individuals from becoming members of other tribes. For instance, where a tribe has a singular devotion to a particular brand this might mean a shared antipathy towards competing brands (such as the Beamish community’s dislike of Guinness). (p.8)

- Unless individuals actively imagine themselves to be part of a community of like-minded people and actually want to interact with others who share their sense of excitement, they are not a part of the tribe. (p.8)
Clearly some tribes are more active online than offline, and the online dimension of tribal identity often makes it far easier for like-minded people to make contact with one another, but offline activity is also critical to the identity and experience of a great many tribes. Second, tribes need to operate in conditions of relative freedom – freedom to create their own meanings around brands and activities, freedom to criticize the marketer’s narratives and instead write, re-write, or engineer their own, and the freedom to interact with one another as they see fit. Some tribes have developed into communities who are exclusively devoted to one brand (hence the term ‘brand community’ and the likely presence of stricter rules and somewhat more formal social structures), while other tribes are less brand-focused and more activity-focused, so that any one of a number of brands may be deemed acceptable by the tribe. (p.10)

Contemporary consumers are inclined to express identity via consumption, so we tend to choose those consumption objects that help us to express our sense of identity. If you think that this seems to have an element of self-fulfilling prophecy about it, you are right. In what Susan Fournier and Lara Lee have notably described as the turbulence of today’s world, the search for meaning and a sense of purpose is ongoing, and is often expressed via products and brands. When we come across something that feels special or different, that feels authentic and meaningful, this can help to anchor us and affirm a sense of who we are. We increasingly define ourselves by means of ‘those activities, objects, and relationships that give our lives meaning,’ to use John Schouten and James McAlexander’s memorable and insightful phrase. If you are passionate about something, it is through your passion for this object, that activity, that you choose to engage with other people, form relationships, and ‘share meaning and mutual support’) p. (16)

Furthermore, because contemporary consumers are also concerned with the demarcation of difference (in other words, the important principle that what I am is also understood by what I am not), we need to feel that the objects we engage with, or the ways we engage with them, are different to the ways in which others engage with their particular objects of devotion. Tribes need to feel that there is not only something authentic about what it is that they do, but that this is something distinct from and superior to the expressed preferences and choices of others. This sense of difference can even take place within the wider context of more loosely defined tribes. (p.16)

People join tribes, and tribes form around activities and brands, for a small and surprisingly simple number of reasons. Yes, people will affiliate around those things that give their lives meaning, as noted above. People will seek out social affirmation or validation of the meaningfulness and singularity of these things quite simply because it is gratifying to discover that someone else ‘gets it’ for the same reasons as you. (p.17)

Hence the motives for engaging in ‘tribal’ consumption include both the need to express the self and experience community. Postmodern consumers’ ‘desperate search’ for social links (Cova 1997) is thus fulfilled through feelings of affinity generated from shared emotions. (p.18)

Members of brand tribes strongly affect each other’s perceptions of brand quality, for instance... Very often, people can be drawn to brand tribes because they sense that by doing so they can experience a fulfilling sense of community. Their perception of the brand shifts so that it somehow personifies the link or emotional connection they feel to that community. (p.15)

It is equally important to bear in mind, as indicated earlier, that choosing to become loyal to a particular brand doesn’t make you part of the tribe. Being a member of the tribe is not compulsory. If you feel you want to be part of the tribe, then, in effect, you are, and this will continue for as long as the tribe exists, provided you experience sufficient affirmation of your imagined engagement. It also follows that individual consumers can belong to as many tribes as they wish, although clearly they will self-exclude, or otherwise be excluded from, tribes that are regarded as representative of tastes and preferences that differ from specific tribal choices of theirs, as in for instance the PlayStation example. (p.18)
Contemporary consumers are inclined to express identity via consumption, so we tend to choose those consumption objects that help us to express our sense of identity. (p16)

A number of potential benefits to commercial organizations can derive from the existence of brand tribes. In the first place, members of brand tribes are advocates for the brand. The brand is meaningful for and important to them, so they are predisposed towards spreading its message.

However, the overall effect is the mutual affirmation of positive feelings and attitudes towards the brand, and the spreading of the brand’s message to ‘newbies’. Because members of brand tribes tend to be passionate about the brand, they will encourage others to adopt it or to keep using it.

MAIN POINTS:
Linking value refers to the shared emotions and values that the group members have.
Group narcissism means being active and showing that you are a part of the group.
Tribes are developing because of the need to express a person’s individuality and simultaneously have a feeling of belonging to a group that shares the same emotions and values.
A person only belongs to a tribe if they are involved with it and they demonstrate this involvement. Also, a person can belong to as many tribes as they wish. There are some tribes where belonging to that one tribe automatically excludes belonging to another brand. Usually this happens with the rival brands. For example, if a person has an iPhone, and he/she is very passionate about the Apple and recognises him/herself as a member of this tribe, he/she will most likely exclude Android devices of the everyday life.

I mainly just use the citations as I have found that it is easier for me to look at them and then just write the original text and re-arrange everything there instead of writing small texts about the article here and then going through it again in order to understand which citations I want to use and what should be the order and so on.
To what extent and why individuals try to belong to certain groups (tribalism) – NOT USED

As already stated in previous chapters, according to Bernard Cova (1997), the age we are living in – postmodernity – can be characterised as an age of extreme individuality, where a person has a free choice with no limitations for every aspect of his private and public life. People have the desire to be different and to reach the liberation of any social limitations and restrictions (Richardson, 2013). With the unlimited choices of today any individual has the opportunity to be unique in their own way. Because of this privilege of independence, people really have the opportunity to become very individualistic beings, however human life is in fact very social.

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). However, as opposed to the hierarchical and strictly structured communities of the past, due to this newly acquired emotional freedom, new forms of communities have developed (Cova 1997; Richardson 2013). According to Brendan Richardson (2013) these communities do not have a set of restricting rules of who a person should be and how it is they have to behave. People can join these communities just because they have a common interest around some activities or specific products, and they are passionate about them. They can freely choose to join the community according to their liking, preferences and values.

According to Brendan Richardson:

“Tribes are first and foremost a means whereby the contemporary consumer experiences a sense of community.” (2013, p. 2)

In other words, tribes are social groups in which people are creating networks and connections with like-minded people. As a result of sharing common values, interests and activities, individuals who identify with and feel passionate about all of those values and interests, together are creating a sense of belonging, a sense of community. In this framework, brands or specific products can be used as the means of this value attaching and meaning making in order to create something for people to be passionate about and create tribes around them.

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.

As already looked at in the previous chapters about the construction of the self-concept, consumers are choosing to purchase specific products or services in order to express and enhance their identity. People are adding value to objects and purchasing them in order to define who they are and to demonstrate it to others. Tribes are developing because of this need of a person to simultaneously express their individuality and have a
feeling of belonging to a group that shares the same emotions and values. (Richardson, 2013). It is important for a person’s self-concept to be contented with themselves as an individuality, as well as to gain an external approval and validation from others. Belonging to a tribe guarantees that a person can express their individuality via certain products or activities. Being a part of a tribe also promises the feeling of belonging to a group of people who are thinking in the same direction, have the same values, and approve the choices the individual makes. A person can always choose to be a member and anyone can be a member of particular tribe. The only thing a person has to do is to be passionate about the brand or the activity, as well as this passion and this has to be showed and maintained (Richardson 2013).

Being a member of multiple tribes simultaneously is also possible (Cova 1997; Richardson 2013). If an individual feels strong affection towards more than just one brand and activity, they can easily participate in tribes that have developed around those activities/brands. However sometimes, according to Brendan Richardson (2013) if a person is a member of a tribe, it can mean that people in this tribe are neglecting the participation in another tribe which might be built around the competing brands or activities. This means that there are some tribes where belonging to that one tribe automatically excludes belonging to another brand. Usually this happens with the rival brands. For example if a person has an iPhone, and he/she is very passionate about the Apple and recognises him/herself as a member of this tribe, he/she will most likely exclude Android devices of the everyday life. So, as a result, person only belongs to a tribe if he/she chooses to do so and is involved with it as well as this involvement is consciously demonstrated.

Because tribes are social formations in which people are searching to find the validation for their self-expression and feeling of a group belonging, the opinion of brand members matters. Members can influence the way how the social thought of that tribe is being formed, what is the perception and attitude towards different objects and situations, as well as they can encourage others to start using a product or services of a particular brand (Richardson 2013).

What is interesting, is the theory about the ‘imagined communities’ According to Bernard Cova (1997) people do not need co-physical presence or face-to-face encounters to form tribes. This means that people don’t actually have to meet each other to feel a special bond to some sort of a group, hence social bonds can be both – imagined and created via internet for example, and ‘real’, that is happening in real life, when you meet people and bond over one thing or another. For the ‘imagined communities’ social media is a big part of creating those bonds. (Maltzahn 2013)
Pleasure principles: A review of research on hedonic consumption


CITATIONS:

- As Hirschman and Holbrook themselves originally characterized it, hedonic consumption consists of “those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products.” (p.2)

- Many acts of consumption are driven by some combination of utilitarian and hedonic motives, and identifying the relative strength of each can be a daunting task. A single product (e.g., a smartphone or computer) can simultaneously help its user pursue dual utilitarian and hedonic goals. (p.2)

- Aside from pleasure- and thrill-seeking, consumption of these activities is motivated by a need for group membership or a sense of community, self-expression, and personal growth and achievement. Even relatively mundane consumption behaviors can be multiply motivated by a desire for adventure, social interaction, mood enhancement, and altruism (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; see also Sherry, 1990). Moreover, some have characterized valueexpressive motives as possessing both hedonic and utilitarian aspects (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000). These various findings recall longstanding research on the symbolic nature of consumption, in which “hedonic goods” are purchased for the non-hedonic objectives of status-seeking or identity-signalising.
Minimalism

Millennials Becoming ‘Minimalists’

CITATIONS:
- Of all the impacts of the Recession, the impact on Millennial attitudes and shopping behavior may be the most lasting.
- The result is a generation that is more consciously frugal and actively reconsidering the role of material possessions, luxury, sustainability, career in their lives. 
THE RESULT MAY BE A NEW GEN Y AESTHETIC, ONE THAT PRIZES MINIMALISM AND SIMPLICITY OVER LUXURY AND STATUS IN THE CHOICE OF HOMES, FASHION, TECHNOLOGY, TRAVEL AND MORE.
- Recycled and vintage are hot. Even the value of an elite education is increasingly being questioned.

The Rising Trend of Minimalist Marketing

- The minimalist trend isn’t rising, it’s here, it’s everywhere around us. We’re living in a society that ultimately wants less.

Stuff: Why do we own so many things?
WE GET TO vote just once every few years, but every single day we consume, we buy, we acquire. Stuff. And more stuff. Each item had to be made or manufactured and transported to us, all at vast cumulative cost to the world’s resources. Most of us accumulate far more than we can use, and regularly yearn for a home devoid of clutter.

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 mine, and as we grow the two concepts become ever more closely intertwined.

Those two imperatives, known these days as style and status, form the pincers by which many of us are gripped. And how could we not be? Every time we watch the TV, see a tram go by, open a newspaper or magazine, while away half an hour on Facebook, we’re exposed to adverts, programs, articles and updates relentlessly spruiking the latest, coolest, hippest, funnest stuff. Our appetites are constantly being stoked, our psyches groomed for dissatisfaction with what we already have.

I know I don’t need the smartphone, and – though it galls me to admit it – I guess I didn’t really truly need my glamorous new kitchen either. But our economy does. It needs me to want both, and more besides. It needs me to want the latest clothes and furnishings, to eat in the latest cafés, travel to the latest destinations.

Remember what George W Bush told Americans after 9/11? ‘I encourage you to go shopping.’ Those evil terrorists who hate us for our freedoms – we’ll stand up to ‘em. ‘Get down to Disney World in Florida,’ he urged. ‘Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed.’

After 2008, when the banks all but failed and across the nation tens of thousands of people with low-doc or no-doc mortgages had to walk away from houses they could never really afford, he went through some lean years. Plenty of properties for sale, but no buyers. Home after deserted home he appraised, and in many he found one room after another jam-packed with stuff. Closets so full of clothes the doors couldn’t close, sporting goods and kitchenware, massive plasma-screen TVs, video game consoles, uncountable numbers of children’s toys. A lot of it, he told me, his voice soft with a kind of awe, was still in its packaging.

Given that the US is the land not only of super-sized plenty but also of contrasts, it stands to reason that a movement toward conscious minimalism should arise there. Ryan Nicodemus and Joshua Fields Millburn met climbing the corporate ladder together, both on six-figure incomes at thirty but overstressed, overweight and up to their armpits in debt. They decided to jettison almost everything they owned, climb out of the debt pit and do things very differently. Now, just a few years later, they write about ‘living a meaningful life with less stuff’ for four million readers at theminimalists.com. Still canny marketers, they smartly position their brand as delivering more, not less: ‘more time, more money and more freedom’, and ensure there’s no challenge to the essential worth of individualism (‘a twenty-year-old single guy’s minimalist lifestyle looks different from a forty-five-year-old mother’s minimalist lifestyle’). But you’ve got to start somewhere, and minimalism, they suggest, starts with ‘something as simple as asking yourself one question: How might your life be better if you owned fewer material possessions?’
- And there at last, I see it: the largest part of why I, at least – and maybe you, too – own so many things. More than style, more than status, more than wordless demonstrations of our good taste or prosperity, more even than their beauty, the things we hold on to are treasured for the memories they evoke. The stories of our lives are in them: just to look at them, to pick them up and hold them, we are close again to the people we loved, the adventures we had, the experiences that made us who we are.