



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Paradoxical Consumption Practices and Creative Identity Work in Consumption Styles – The Concept of Reflexive Bricolage

by Cihan Koray Mavruk & Julian Weller

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand Management

Supervisor: Jon Bertilsson

Examiner: Clara Gustafsson



Lund, May 2017

Abstract

Purpose The purpose of this study was to explore the underlying reasons that drive consumers, belonging to a particular consumption style, to engage in paradoxical consumption practices and attempt to explain these practices. For the purpose of this study, the non-static hipster youth style was used as the empirical example of a postmodern consumption style.

Methodology This study is based on eight unstructured phenomenological interviews that were conducted with individuals identified by a snowball sample with entry points in Stockholm, Cologne and Berlin. The resulting natural language data was subjected to a narrative analysis that was guided by an iterative, bottom-up approach, designed as a combination of hermeneutics and grounded theory.

Theoretical perspective The Material was scrutinised under consideration of the linguistic concepts of irony and cynicism as ways to create distance, and the concepts of bricolage and semiotics to highlight the meaning that is created through novel style compositions.

Empirical foundation Eight interviews with mid-to-high-cultural-capital Swedish and German members of the hipster style, that resulted in seven and a half hours of audio transcripts and 102 double-spaced pages of text.

Conclusion This study presents the concept of *reflexive bricolage* as a method for consumers to create reflexive distance towards their own fashion discourse by (1) using paradoxical objects to create ironic or cynical distance or by (2) performing role-play in order to disappear into a virtual self. Reflexive bricolage represents a way for consumers to (a) innovate the style, (b) avoid the ridiculousness of simply acting out the style, (c) create opportunities for identity work (d) and accomplish a sense of freedom from fashion discourse.

Keywords Paradoxical Consumption; Hipster; Irony; Cynical Distance; Reflexive Bricolage; Fashion Discourse; Self-Identity Project; Consumption Styles

Acknowledgements

The topic of the thesis that lies before you, has delighted, fascinated and haunted us for the last seven months. For both of us, it represents the pinnacle of our academic careers and marks the end of a journey that took us from a rather practical focus into the land of academic research, widening our horizons in unforeseeable ways. We would like to thank a few carefully selected individuals without whom this effort would have never been possible.

First of all, we want to acknowledge our Supervisor *Jon Bertilsson* for respecting us and meeting us at eye level in five inspiring discussions, and show our respect for his ability to foresee things that sometimes took us some weeks to accept. We would like to thank *Sofia Ulver* for helping us lay the groundwork for this study, without her encouragement we would not have pursued this topic for our master thesis. We want to thank the participants of our study for their patience and their willingness to share with us their opinions and personal stories. Additionally, we would like to thank Christos Giouzouktsidis for taking the time to proof-read this thesis.

Our parents and siblings deserve infinite credit, because without them and their endless support we would never be where we are today. To our new and old friends, thank you for your backing and your endless endurance of conversations about hipsterism, fashion discourse and identity projects.

Lastly, we want to underline the intensity of this academic journey, marked by a strong mutual support and encouragement, which has resulted in a great friendship.

We will now continue this journey with an epic road trip.

Hoşçakalın & auf Wiedersehen,

Cihan Koray Mavruk

Julian Weller

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Literature Review	5
2.1	Unfolding Hipster	5
2.2	Paradoxical Consumption	7
2.3	Identity Work	8
2.4	Fashion Discourse.....	9
2.4.1	Paradoxes in Fashion Discourse	10
2.5	Creative Methods for Identity Work in Consumerism	11
2.5.1	A Critique of Prior Research.....	13
3	Theory	16
3.1	Bricolage as an Act of Creating New Meaning	16
3.2	Semantics, Semiotics and Myth.....	18
3.3	Creating Distance Through Language	20
3.3.1	Creating Distance Through Irony	20
3.3.2	Sarcasm as a Form of Irony	22
3.3.3	Consumer Cynicism	22
4	Methodology	25
4.1	Research Philosophy.....	25
4.1.1	Implications of Choosing the Hipster Style	27
4.1.2	Reflecting on the Role of the Researcher.....	27
4.2	Research Design	28
4.3	Data Collection	30
4.3.1	Snowball Sampling	30
4.3.2	Unstructured Phenomenological Interviews	31
4.4	Method of Analysis.....	34
4.4.1	Narrative Analysis.....	34
4.4.2	An Iterative, Bottom-up Approach	35
4.5	Quality of the Research	36
4.6	Ethical Considerations	38
4.7	Limitations of the Study	38
5	Analysis	40
5.1	Creating Distance to Avoid Ridiculousness	41
5.1.1	Reflexive Distance as a Result of Growing Up	41
5.1.2	Distancing from Living out a Strict Style	43
5.2	Creative Consumption and Identity (Role-)Play	48
5.2.1	Role-Play as a Manifestation of Reflexivity	49
5.2.2	Role-Play as an Expression of Social and Cultural Knowledge	50
5.2.3	Myth-Manipulation as Creative Identity (Role-)Play	54
6	Discussion	57
6.1	The Concept of Reflexive Bricolage	57
6.2	Discussing Previous Literature	60
7	Conclusion	64
7.1	Theoretical Contributions	64
7.2	Practical Contribution.....	65
7.3	Limitations and Further Research.....	66
	References	68
	Appendix A	77

List of Tables

<i>Table 1: Overview of Participants</i>	40
--	----

1 Introduction

It is really cool to have this (Barbour) jacket, it is helping you to have an experience. I could imagine myself like having a gun, going to the forest, shooting some foxes, you could completely imagine how this must feel, people have their rubber boots, and I like it. And you know in the city contexts, nobody needs that of course, there is no British weather, nobody is hunting foxes, but it is cool to have something like this, because this makes sense. (Thomas)

Berlin, Stockholm and Cologne, arguably the hipster strongholds of Europe are the places to be when it comes to trends in fashion, music and culture in general. The inhabitants of these cities, we find, shape contemporary taste and consumption styles like no one else. However, once in a while even these cities show behaviour among their inhabitants that leaves the most fashion savvy insiders stunned. Thomas is just one example of such complex and contradicting behaviour within a style. When hipsters like him started adding objects such as luxury jackets and handbags or flamboyant brand prints into their otherwise simple and plain style compositions, we were unable to comprehend their paradoxical consumption behaviour in the context of their consumption style.

The strong dynamics and vigour of fashion discourse by consumers is known to be a solid foundation for identity work and self-portrayal (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Here, a feeling for individual identity is developed by contrasting one's perceived fashion preference with others in their context. Fashion emerged to become an individual manifest for particular cultural meanings and values and mediates between tensions of autonomy versus conformity to style manifestos. This is indeed one of the major reasons why fashion is today highly significant in terms of building and boosting social identity.

This identity work through fashion discourse is however not always uncontroversial or straightforward. Paradoxes in consumerism have been primarily investigated from two perspectives: the individual consumer and the consumer collective (Skandalis, Byrom & Banister, 2016). Paradoxical behaviour patterns in consumer collectives had been witnessed before when highly educated people suddenly started watching reality-TV (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014) or ultras-groups dedicated themselves to expensive, noble brands such as Burberry (Bertilsson, 2009). The addition of luxury brand objects to otherwise simple style compositions could not be comprehensively explained if we consider the interaction with marketer-generated material (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) as a part of the process of constructing a consistent and unified self-identity (Ratneshwar, Mick & Huffman, 2000).

Researchers in the consumer culture theory field made paradox qualities in current consumer culture a subject of discussion (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), the focus lies obviously on individual consumer paradoxes (Skandalis, Byrom & Banister, 2016). The power relation between brands and consumer groups are set to change and brand managers need to adapt a strategic foresight to be fully aware of potential risks or opportunities involved, so that

necessary strategic and operative measures can be implemented. We are therefore convinced that paradoxical practices and negotiations in consumer collectives have to be thoroughly researched as they shape our contemporary society regardless of the subculture, field or community. Because of its rather obvious paradoxes and generally complex consumption behaviour we have chosen the hipster style as an empirical example of a postmodern consumption style.

The process of constructing self-identity is, according to Belk (1988) largely connected to our possessions or the objects we own. “We learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions” (Belk, 1988, p.160) he states. The tendency of consumers to continuously advance their individually promoted and collectively shared identity projects through socio-cultural processes is however not limited to fashion discourse. These socio-cultural processes in general have been widely discussed in consumer culture theory (Brown, McDonagh & Shultz II, 2013; Diamond, Sherry Jr., Muñoz Jr., McGrath, Kozinets & Borghini, 2009; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Particular emphasis is given to marketplaces, which serve as sources for symbolic and mythic resources to construct identity (Belk, 1988; Holt, 2002; Levy, 1981). A distinctive stream in consumer market research established, for example, that certain measures implemented by certain consumer groups have a great impact on manipulating consumer objects or symbols in order to protect their investments in identity projects (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson & Arsel, 2004)

One of the streams in consumer market research focuses particularly on how consumers deal with the mythic resources when advancing their identity projects. This stream established, for example, that some measures implemented by certain consumer groups have a great impact in protecting their investments in and advancing their identity projects (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Consumers have shown evermore sophisticated and innovative methods to advance their identity projects (Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 2004). This convergence of creativity and consumption has been discussed in postmodern research (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), where creative usage and understanding of tangible and intangible goods could create new resources for advancing personal identity projects (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). The (creative) combination of cultural objects and artefacts for the purpose of creating new meaning, which is referred to as bricolage is another similar way (Bertilsson, 2009; Hebdige, 1979; Lévi-Strauss, 1962). Furthermore, it has been researched that individuals may consume or even work at a cynical or reflexive distance (Bertilsson, 2015; Fleming & Spicer, 2003).

While consumer culture theory assists researchers in gaining a better understanding of certain consumption patterns used in order to advance identity projects (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), there are particular behaviours that deserve closer observation. As indicated earlier, certain paradoxical consumption patterns cannot be sufficiently explained using the existing theories and behaviours developed by literature (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Particularly, wearing luxury hunting jackets or clothing with large

logotypes of major fashion brands, which can be considered rather unusual for the hipster culture, stands out. This is because, the original mindset of the modern-day hipster is characterized by their general foible for craft and artisanal things (Van Den Bergh & Behrer, 2016). Some authors go as far as stating that “designer clothing is the antithesis of hipster style” (Flaherty, 2012), which explains why hipsters prefer to compose their fashion style with independent labels. These characteristics of the hipster mindset oppose the attributes that large logotypes of major fashion brands or designer handbags represent. Using the existing literature on identity construction and identity work, these contrasts cannot be sufficiently explained. Even if bricolage might help us to explain some of the methods used by the hipsters, the reasons for applying this method remain uncertain.

Sociologically, the hipster culture is characterized with a foible for irony and nostalgia (Schiermer, 2014), which poses the question, whether this paradoxical behaviour might also contain an ironic, satirical or even cynical intention. Given that Schiermer (2014) investigates hipster culture from a sociological point of view and does not explicitly examine paradoxes in consumption, triggered by an ironic intention, the underlying reasons of paradoxical consumption patterns have yet to be adequately researched. Scholars looking at media consumption previously explored similarly paradoxical behaviour. Their work explicated the paradoxical behaviour using the concept of irony with particular regard to solving normative contradictions (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014). Holt (2002) discusses irony from a brand perspective. He introduces it as a technique of the postmodern branding paradigm that is increasingly utilised by brands to create a sense of authenticity. The linguist Gibbs attest irony to be the postmodern substitute of the metaphor as the “king of all figurative language” (2000, p.5). Surely, irony is not the only concept that could be applied to explore paradoxical consumption. However, despite various indicators pointing towards the relevance of irony, no research in the field of consumer culture theory that we are aware of, has yet provided a more in-depth exploration of consumption through a conceptualization of irony or other linguistic concepts.

We strongly believe, that paradoxical consumption practices as a result of identity work, depicted by certain members of a consumption or youth style, demand further research. A reason for this may be the unpredictable and non-conforming characteristics of consumers in postmodernity (Berner & Van Tonder, 2003), where self-portrayal is created through symbolic value (Firat, 1991). This is particularly relevant, as hipsterism and therefore the hipster style is strongly associated with postmodernity and has therefore the potential to serve as a prime example for postmodern consumption styles tending to paradoxical consumption practices. Apart from being a powerful example for paradoxical consumption practices within consumption styles, the hipster style attracts socio-cultural and commercial attention, as it greatly influences the style of (what is considered to be) the mainstream (Victoriano, 2014). Our aim within this study is twofold. First, we aim to conceptualize paradoxical consumption practices in an attempt to create a better understanding. Second, we aim to explicate the underlying reasons why members of a particular youth or consumption style engage in such paradoxical consumption behaviour, and choose a specific composition of objects and symbols, considering this is part of their identity work. We already hinted at two theoretical concepts, irony and bricolage, that have in our view increased relevance for the aim of this research. In addition to these concepts, we will introduce a semiotic perspective on myths, in order to increase the understanding of first- and second-order meanings of the used objects

and symbols, and introduce the concept of cynicism as a way for consumers to create distance towards cultural authorities. For the purpose of this research these concepts provide theoretical perspectives helping us to achieve the aim of this study and investigate the following research question: *What are the underlying reasons for contemporary consumers, belonging to a consumption style, to engage in paradoxical consumption practices and how can these practices be explained?*

We hope to contribute to the consumer identity project pillar of consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) by explaining how paradoxical consumption can be a part of identity work and inquiring into the underlying reasons that motivate such behaviour. Additionally, we hope to contribute to the literature on paradoxical consumption (Bertilsson, 2009; McCoy & Scarborough, 2014; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010) by explaining how identity work may result in paradoxical consumption practices. Lastly, we aim to contribute to the literature on (subcultural) styles and point out how these styles are being innovated and evolve over time (Clark, 1979; Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Hebdige, 1979). Contributing in the above ways, we aim to help theorists and practitioners to explain paradoxical consumer behaviour that was previously difficult to understand. By doing this, we intend to raise brand managers' and marketers' understanding of the increasingly confusing consumption patterns in consumption styles. Results of this study may additionally help brand managers and marketers to assess potential risks and opportunities that paradoxical consumption patterns pose to their brands. Furthermore, this study comprises a humanistic motif, as it seeks to gain a better understanding how we, as humans, behave and engage in identity projects.

In the following sections, we therefore first unfold the literature that discusses hipsterism from different perspectives. Thereafter we explain the concept of paradoxical consumption before we go into detail about the literature on identity work and the role that fashion discourse plays in constructing identity. The literature review is concluded with an overview of the two literature streams that highlight the most creative methods for protecting identity investments and advancing the self-identity project. Finally, we criticize these research streams to argue for the theoretical concepts introduced in the theory chapter. By doing this, we aim to create a better understanding for the underlying reasons that drive contemporary consumers to engage in paradoxical consumption practices.

2 Literature Review

In the following chapter, we review prior literature that we deem relevant in order to understand and be able to discuss the topic of this research. We first introduce the hipster style as our empirical example of a consumption style that exhibits paradoxical consumption practices. Consequently, we explain the concept of paradoxical consumption, before getting involved with how consumers conduct identity work, with a particular emphasis on fashion discourse. This chapter concludes by introducing the two main literature streams that thematise particularly creative methods for identity work in consumerism and a critique of prior research.

2.1 Unfolding Hipster

Although the term *hipster* is continuously used in popular culture and much-discussed even in academia (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014; Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010), there are many considerable discrepancies regarding appropriate definitions, categorizations and contexts. An *Urban Dictionary*¹ definition clearly underlines this:

“Definitions are too mainstream. Hipsters can't be defined because then they'd fit in a category, and thus be too mainstream.“ (Urban Dictionary, 2017, p.1)

Many investigations about the hipster culture start with referring to the flowering periods of jazz, emphasizing the roots of the notion hipster resulting from black subculture slang expressions (Hill, 2015; Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014). Hipsters are associated with connoisseurship (Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Hill, 2015), forming cultural elites but also with a foible for being pretentious (Hill, 2015). However, the hipster culture is not stable and uniform, rather it is subject to constant change, diversity and cultural context, which is highlighted in various studies (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Hill, 2015; Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014). Researchers in this field use either layman handbooks or publicly accessible online dictionaries, which serve as platforms for decoding and understanding present-day distinguishing features or identifications of the hipster (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Hill, 2015; Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014). Among these, hipster is defined as a unisex subculture of people in their twenties and thirties, characterized by independent thought, counter-culture, high regard of creativity, independent music and arts, and a general rejection of mainstream consumption styles (Urban Dictionary, 2017). This rejection of mass-

¹ *Urban Dictionary* is an online dictionary primarily designed to provide information about slang words and phrases. It is a free, crowdsourced online dictionary that serves as a practical tool to grasp current sociocultural phenomena.

production and highly commercialized mainstream culture was primarily pushed by white middle-class people, who possess a higher amount of cultural than economic capital, and have established themselves in big cities such as Chicago or New York (Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010). Since the turn of the millennium, the hipster culture has spread around the globe and hipsters clearly shaped the urban landscape of districts such as Kreuzberg in Berlin (Hill, 2015), Nørrebro in Copenhagen or Södermalm in Stockholm (Schiermer, 2014). In this context, Hill (2015) speaks of hipsters as shapers of local collectives, promoters of alternative lifestyles and strong transformers of their surroundings. This expansion was provided by that Hill (2015) calls the *hipster gentrification*.

Inside and outside academia, fashion has been declared as a major component of the hipster culture (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Hill, 2015; Lanham, 2008; Maly & Varis, 2016). The hipster style is largely composed by fashion and ethical precepts concerning consumption (Maly & Varis, 2016). Although online dictionaries and layman handbooks refer to prevailing hipster style characteristics such as vintage or vintage-inspired clothing, they also refer to specific brands such as American Apparel (Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Urban Dictionary, 2017) or Urban Outfitters (Urban Dictionary, 2017). However, there is scepticism in academia if these brands, that represent the companies behind mass-produced niche products and myths (Barthes, 1972), could be seen as an antithesis of neoliberalism (Maly & Varis, 2016). The rapid development of this commercialized fashion trend led to a variety of marketplace myths, which started to threaten the identity investments of pioneers and early adopters of this consumption style. (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). In this context, a chronological distinction, or in other words an early consumption of hipster style trends, may prevent the authentic hipster from being called a mainstream or fake one (Maly & Varis, 2016). Paradoxically however, the hipster is ready to protect her identity investments in this consumption style, but refuses to openly confess that she identifies herself with the term hipster (Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014). This becomes particularly obvious in further Urban Dictionary definitions:

“The only sure fire way to tell if someone you're talking to is, in fact, a hipster is to ask them ‘are you a hipster? [...]’. If they respond no, and turn their cassette player on, you can be sure you're dealing with a hipster.“ (Urban Dictionary, 2017, p.2)

The authentic hipster seeks to gain authenticity and uniqueness but is unconsciously forming a collective style (Maly & Varis, 2016; Sousa, 2016). Meanwhile, the desire for an authentic individuality is complicated by the fact that potentially individualistic aesthetic secrets can be easily decoded via the Internet (Sousa, 2016). In this regard, hipsters appreciate aesthetics from the recent past, or in other words, conserve or reinvent former fashion trends and unfold popular culture ironically by appreciating kitschy objects (Schiermer, 2014; Sousa, 2016). Recent sociological studies indicate that irony and kitsch are important elements of the hipster style (Schiermer, 2014; Sousa, 2016), but what seems to be missing is a thorough investigation of the reasons behind this consumption pattern. As aforementioned, the hipster style is subject to change and diversity and therefore experiences innovation within its style (Hill, 2015). The normcore hipster trend, for instance, is characterized by “adaptability not exclusivity“ (K-Hole, 2013, p.24) and strives for uniformity, which is the absolute opposite of the traditional hipster style phenomenon. Hill (2015) illustrates this style innovation (development) as a strategy towards “minimizing aesthetic irony“ (Hill, 2015, p.56). In this

research, we do not participate in the discussion whether hipster could be defined as a subculture or not (Schiermer, 2014). Instead, we see the hipster as a non-static youth style (Hebdige, 1979), that includes paradoxical elements and, embodies postmodernism (Hill, 2015; Horning, 2009). With respect to the purpose of this research, we regard the non-static hipster youth style as the empirical example of a consumption style.

2.2 Paradoxical Consumption

“The pace, complexity, and unintended consequences of our scientific times have played major roles in fermenting a postmodern age in which the human condition is characterized, in large part, by paradoxes.” (Mick & Fournier, 1998, p.124)

Now, almost two decades later, this statement is truer than ever. Life stepped up its rhythm exceedingly and the complexity has multiplied through technological advancements. This has resulted in umpteenth paradoxes that can be experienced in everyday life and that are discussed by various researchers from different realms (e.g. McCoy & Scarborough, 2014; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Bertilsson, 2009; Skandalis, Byrom & Banister, 2016; Mick & Fournier, 1998, Thompson & Haytko, 1997). What has not changed seems to be how individuals deal with these paradoxes, it remains true that “the only viable response is to accept them and attempt to cope” (Mick & Fournier, 1998, p.125). For the purpose of this research we want to adopt the definition of the logician Quine, who defines a paradox as “any conclusion that at first sounds absurd but that has an argument to sustain it” (1966, p.1). He goes on to add, that the argument that supports the paradox can have sweeping effects when it ends up challenging an underlying assumption of that research field. Due to the prevailing relevance of paradoxical consumption in modern society and a lack of research on paradoxical consumption at the tribal level (Skandalis, Byrom & Banister, 2016) we aim to investigate paradoxical consumption among consumers who identify with a consumption style.

Literature on paradoxes although scarce has multifold, complex perspectives and departure points, which vindicates a clarification of these perspectives. Researchers such as Mick and Fournier (1998), Maclaran and Brown (2005) and Kozinets (2001; 2002) thematize instances or phenomena in which individuals *cope* with paradoxes that they are being confronted with in their everyday life. Kozinets (2002) for example researches how the Burning Man festival marks a way for consumers to deal with the paradox of engaging in capitalist consumption practices and feeling the somewhat nihilistic need to emancipate from the constraints of the capitalist market. In contrast to the literature that deals with how consumers cope with paradoxes, another body of literature thematizes the ways in which consumer behaviour *results* in paradoxical consumption (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Bertilsson, 2009). These researchers inquire into and discuss the underlying reasons that result in paradoxical consumption, in other words they discuss instances in which consumers create paradoxes.

Paradoxes as the result of consumption are researched from different perspectives and in various research fields. In social psychology, Sivanathan and Pettit (2010) have looked into

how consumers' strive for protecting their self-integrity might play a role in motivating paradoxical consumption, in this case the acquisition of a house that far exceeds the financial abilities of the buyer. From a sociologic perspective, consumer's love for 'trash' TV was researched by McCoy and Scarborough (2014) as a case of paradoxical consumption. Their study highlights the ways in which consumers deal with the normative contradiction of transcending the boundaries of 'good' and 'bad' television and how they legitimize this behaviour for themselves. The aforementioned studies focus on paradoxical consumption on an individual level, where the paradox accrues in relation to the context of that individual's identity (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014) or economic situation (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). On the contrary, only a small number of studies that we are aware of focusses on instances of paradoxical consumption where the paradox accrues in relation to the context of a style (Bertilsson, 2009). Bertilsson (2009) looks at young consumers, who indicate paradoxical consumption when they appropriate for example luxury brands such as Burberry apparel into their style, which seems to contrast their otherwise hooligan style and identity. In other words, the 'statement' these individuals give by wearing Burberry only becomes 'absurd' in relation to the context of their hooligan style. In this research, we shall focus on an instance as the one described above, where the consumption becomes paradox in relation to an individual's consumption style.

2.3 Identity Work

The concept of self, arose from psychology and has been intensively researched by Markus and Nurius (1986) with their introduction of possible selves. Possible selves represent a variation of selves that individuals aim to be or not to be, such as the creative self or the alone self. In addition, possible selves serve as a reflection of the current self and as a driving force for future behaviour (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Discussing postmodern consumption, Elliot and Wattanasuwan (1998) emphasise the necessity for marketers to actively examine the concept and understanding of self, in order to take advantage of potential opportunities. The self is described as a symbolic project, which must be broadened through an active creation of symbolic materials (Thompson, 1995). Self-identity is therefore not immutable nor a fixed entity and expands continuously with one's reflection of its self (Giddens, 1991).

Consumer culture theory has devoted special attention to the relationship of consumption and the definition of self-identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Marketplaces, which contain diverse symbolic and mythic resources, can be used by consumers as a source for identity construction. Consumers can therefore actively develop and manifest their own identity by transforming symbolic meanings in consumption goods such as brand products to fit their self-identity project (Belk, 1988; Holt, 2002; Levy, 1981). According to Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh (1995), the central element for goal and purpose-oriented consumption is the consumer's intensive analysis of goods to customize self-representation. Levy (1959) introduced the concept of symbolic consumption, as a means to achieve psychological goals and symbolize personal attributes. The latter is confirmed by Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), who highlighted the symbolic importance of consumption goods in order to stabilize consumers' self-esteem by utilizing the perception of others. The goal-oriented and

productive process of identity development in consumer culture theory is defined as a self-identity project (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

The management of these self-identity projects varies depending on the life orientations and circumstances consumers find themselves in (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). For the purpose of this research, we regard self-identity projects as the dynamic process of maintaining and constructing self-identity (Ratneshwar, Mick & Huffman, 2000) to achieve the desired selves (Belk, 1988) by interacting with marketer-generated material (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) from a consumer perspective. By sharing the perspective of Lambert, Desmond and O'Donohoe (2014), we concur that self-identity projects create opportunities for self-expression.

2.4 Fashion Discourse

Consumer goods are widely considered to have a cultural meaning that has a similar value to the consumer as their functional properties or economic value (McCracken, 1986). McCracken (1986) has, at length, discussed how the cultural meaning that these objects bear, is transferred from the culturally constituted world to the product and onto the individual. He has also uttered, that today's societies offer consumers the background before which they have the ability to freely choose "the meaning they may draw from goods" (1986, p.80). As part of his *meaning transfer model* McCracken (1986) places an emphasis on the ways consumers can transfer the meaning of the goods they own by simply *possessing* them, *grooming* them, or *divesting* in them. These rituals clearly show the opportunities consumers have to transfer the cultural meaning to themselves by: (1) owning the good, comparing and discussing it with others, (2) bringing out the hidden meaning in a good by tending to it and paying particular attention to detail, and (3) getting rid of an object and its meaning by selling it or reworking an object entirely. Although McCracken (1986) did not solely talk about fashion as an area in which meaning transfer occurs, he did mention it among another area which is advertising.

Taking a closer look at the three meaning transfer rituals described by McCracken (1986) one can understand why today, scholars like Berger describe fashion as "a means of asserting one's identity" (2016, p.57). Almost a decade after McCracken's (1986) work on the cultural meaning of goods, Thompson and Haytko (1997) discuss the particular ways in which consumers construct their identity through fashion discourse. In his re-inquiry into their seminal work, Murray rightly remarks that their work does justice to the more "dynamic and consumer centered" (2002, p.427) ways that consumers use to construct their identity, as supposed to the meaning transfer model introduced by McCracken (1986). Like McCracken (1986) however, Thompson and Haytko (1997) talk about the myriad of interpretive positions that consumers can occupy in order to choose the meaning a good has for them. They advance this thought further and establish how consumers tend to use these meanings to make sense of contradicting values and beliefs. Furthermore, Thompson and Haytko (1997) discuss how consumers are able to advance their sense of self by juxtaposing their fashion orientation with that of other members of their social surroundings. Interestingly enough, many of the

behaviours and dynamics that Thompson and Haytko (1997) mention in the context of fashion discourse can still be considered highly relevant and appropriate in today's contemporary society. For the purpose of this research, we therefore regard fashion discourse as the act of constructing and advancing self-identity through the consumption and display of fashion.

2.4.1 Paradoxes in Fashion Discourse

Neither consumption in general, nor fashion discourse in particular, is always straightforward and easily comprehensible. We have already briefly described the complexity that occurs when consumers use goods and different interpretations of these goods to construct a sense of self. The myriad of interpretive positions that individuals can occupy to draw meaning from a consumer good (McCracken, 1986; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) only mark the tip of the iceberg, of possibly problematic or confusing interpretations of consumer behaviour. In their work on fashion discourse, Thompson and Haytko (1997) carve out and describe two paradoxes that are prevalent in consumers' identity work. Before elaborating on their ideas, it is important to note, that these two paradoxes do not necessarily lead to consumer behaviour that is perceived paradoxical from an outside perspective. Instead, they illustrate two rather ubiquitous paradoxical instances that consumers find themselves confronted with on a regular basis. Having said that, these paradoxes can of course result in unintentional or intentional paradoxical consumption behaviour.

The first and possibly the strongest paradox mentioned by Thompson and Haytko (1997), is the paradox of autonomy versus conformity. This paradox describes consumers' strive for autonomy, or in other words their strive for an individual sense of self that is distinct from other members of their social surroundings. For these consumers, fashion in particular offers opportunities to differentiate themselves or to construct an anti-conformist narrative (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). In opposition to this endeavor for individuality and autonomy exists a hardwired desire for conformity and belongingness (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Thompson and Haytko (1997) have uncovered different techniques how individuals cope with these negatively connotated instances of conformity that they discover in their own behaviour. One such way is to simply see the act of conforming to one style as a differentiation of another style. It can be concluded that consumers have developed sophisticated explanations to make sense of their own conforming or autonomous behaviour.

The second paradox of fashion discourse is marked by the contradicting interpretations of glamorizing versus trivializing fashion (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Glamorizing or idealizing fashion is considered to be the act of imagining an "ideal consumption world" (Thompson & Haytko, 1997, p.18) in which the consumption of high fashion directly transmits the lavishness of a glamorous lifestyle to the individual. Trivializing fashion in contrast highlights consumers' attempt to take a more moral and sensitive stance towards fashion (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). This stance is then used by consumers to form a more moralistic and serious image of themselves. Paradoxically, fashion brands have been observed to incorporate these anti-fashion notions into their products which were in turn consumed to trivialize fashion. All in all, the complex nature of this second paradox can be grasped, at the same time, seeing evidence for both interpretations among individuals is not seldom the case.

The paradoxes of fashion discourses don't necessarily result in paradoxical consumption behaviour. However, fashion discourse highlights one way how consumers deal with some of the paradoxes that they find themselves confronted with regularly (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The two paradoxes introduced above are surely not exhaustive but sensitizing for them seems sensible in light of their ubiquitous nature and due to their obvious applicability for the purpose of this research.

2.5 Creative Methods for Identity Work in Consumerism

Consumer research thematizes the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption. The seminal work of Arnould and Thompson has turned this field of research into a "viable disciplinary brand" (2005, p.868) referred to as consumer culture theory. Within this disciplinary brand, four main research areas are prevalent (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). For the purpose of this research we will solely focus on the first area of research which thematizes the aspirational (Mick & Buhl, 1992) identity projects that consumers pursue to create a sense of self (Belk, 1988). Aiming to create an identity for themselves consumers draw on both mythic and symbolic resources (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). According to Arsel and Thompson (2011) it is these resources that drive people to consume. Levy (1982) goes one step further and attests consumers with the ability to project how they want themselves and thus their identity project to be seen by others. This skill points towards a certain level of abstract thinking, an ability to consider first and second-order meaning when it comes to consumers' own identity projects. Other studies also showed a particular ease with which consumers seem to be navigating the marketplace looking for objects that can advance their sense of self (Diamond et al., 2009; Holt & Thompson, 2004). These contributions paint a picture of a consumer that is very committed to advancing the self-identity project, highly skilled in using different methods, and reflects on how one is seen by others.

The various, very advanced methods applied by consumers when constructing their self-identity will be referred to as *creative* methods in this research. This is underlined by Firat and Venkatesh (1995), who described consumption as creative identity play in their study. To clear up any confusion towards our understanding of creativity as a concept, we will adopt Hennessey and Amabile's summary of different works stating that "creativity involves the development of a novel product, idea, or problem solution that is of value to the individual and/or the larger social group" (2010, p.572). Our review of the literature will highlight the cases in which consumers have been particularly creative when creating methods in order to (1) *react* to potential threats to their identity investments in order to protect their self-identity project, and when (2) *actively* creating novel meanings in order to advance their self-identity project. In the available literature about advancing self-identity projects, two particular streams are visible that thematize the use of creative methods to manipulate consumer objects or symbols (Thompson, 2004; Diamond et al., 2009), the own style (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), how objects are combined (Thompson & Haytko, 1997) for the purpose of advancing the self-identity project or how narratives that chaperone particular objects or behaviours are thought up (Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010). These streams can be

described as (1) reactive and (2) active. In the following section we will go into more detail and highlight the cases in which the consumers have shown particular creativity when manipulating consumer objects.

Reactive

The first stream of literature refers to the creative measures that consumers use to react to potential threats in order to protect their identity projects, such as e.g. new members in a consumption field (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), or the negative connotations imposed by a certain marketplace myths (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). Arsel and Thompson (2011) extensively researched how consumers, vested in a consumption field, defang a potential threat to their identity investments, by aesthetically discriminating the threatening marketplace myth and thus isolating their own consumption field. Another, rather creative measure was found by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) who observe the creation of entry barriers and hierarchical structures used to obstruct new members to their consumption field, who are perceived to dilute their identity investments. Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler (2010) have found individuals who tend to alter the context or setting of their own behaviour to fight a particular narrative that impends to threat their identity investment. Lastly, Thompson and Arsel (2004) observed behaviour among individuals who protect and advance their self-identity project simultaneously, by opposing brands, that threaten their identity investments, with culturally inspired narratives. Although the subjects of these studies, individual or collective, experience threats towards their identity projects, we argue that the methods, though negatively motivated, are no less creative than if the motivation would have been positive.

Active

The second stream looks at ways in which consumers actively mix and match objects and meanings by blending, linking, merging and combining them in order to advance their self-identity project. This is done by freely interpreting the meaning of certain consumer objects (Diamond et al., 2009) or combining objects at their own leisure (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Thompson (2004) highlights a behaviour among individuals which he refers to as tailoring or matching the own identity narrative to the structure of the market in order to serve a particular purpose in the identity project. Holt and Thompson (2004) focus, in their research, on how consumer objects and ads representing certain meanings are used to advance the identity project in an almost game-like fashion. Diamond et al. (2009) point towards a behaviour where consumers seamlessly switch between the original meaning of a brand and a transmuted meaning, to further their identity project. Holt (2002) focusses on the ways in which consumers evaluate how brands provide meaning that could potentially contribute to their own identity project. They do this, according to Holt (2002) like an artist who chooses which objects to use for a creation. Lastly, Thompson and Haytko (1997) write about behaviour among consumers, who combine and adapt objects with different meanings in order to create something new. While staying rather ominous concerning the procedure, Firat and Venkatesh (1995) sum up the different methods appropriately by stating that consumers devote themselves to the images and symbols they produce as they consume. We argue that these contributions have collectively pointed towards a high level of creativity that consumers display when envisioning methods used to advance their self-identity projects. In contrast to the reactive stream of creative methods, the methods found in this stream are positively

motivated. Notwithstanding, the methods introduced above are neither more nor less creative than the methods of the reactive stream.

The two literature streams explored above show different, particularly creative ways in which consumers create meanings in order to actively advance or reactively protect their identity project. In this way these contributions help to further the understanding of the methods which consumers have started to apply, in efforts to build their identity project. They highlight the level of refinement and sophistication that consumers have reached when it comes to envisioning and applying creative methods as part of their consumption behaviour.

2.5.1 A Critique of Prior Research

More often than not, prior research tends to regard the process of advancing self-identity, or protecting identity investments for that matter, as an end in itself (cf. Diamond et al., 2009; cf. Holt & Thompson, 2004). These contributions knowingly or unknowingly imply that the act of advancing self-identity, is what consumers aspire to do. We want to question this assumption and suggest that there might be a more complex structure that leads the consumer to envision such sophisticated methods in order to advance their self-identity. Advancing their self-identity project for no apparent reason does not, in our view, suffice to explain the effort consumers go through to create these methods.

Connected to the aforementioned critique of prior research, is also a lack of methods that are described in previous literature (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Arsel, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). We argue that the methods used by members of contemporary consumption styles such as the postmodern hipster are actually far more sophisticated and difficult to identify at first glance than is captured by literature. Few authors hint at this complexity by e.g. describing identity work through consumption as creative identity play (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Advancing the knowledge on the methods used by members of the hipster style and postmodern consumers in general therefore seems necessary to provide a more holistic understanding of the paradoxical consumption practices and identity work through consumption.

One of the limitations of prior research is that it only offers partial explanations for the paradoxical consumption behaviour that was observed and that initiated this research. The creative methods presented by both the active (Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) and the reactive (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson & Arsel, 2004) stream only suffice to explain some aspects of the paradoxical consumption. The mixing and matching methods of the active stream (Diamond et al., 2009; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) e.g. only explain that consumers combine some objects to create new meaning. However, these contributions fail to fully resolve the underlying reasons for these combinations of objects that are then used by consumers to advance the self-identity project. The combination of objects seems to be an important way for consumers to create new meaning. The concept of bricolage (Hebdige, 1979) therefore presents a valuable way to identify updated compositions in consumerism but does not suffice to explain the motivations

for this sophisticated consumption behaviour. Furthermore, the paradoxical consumption that we observed could combine two or more of the methods, such as the free interpretation of meaning (Diamond et al., 2009) and the combination of objects (Thompson & Haytko, 1997), described by prior research and envision new methods that are not yet explainable.

The contributions in the two literature streams are limited in scope as they almost exclusively consider individual consumer actions. Apart from the contributions that look at individual behaviour in the context of a consumption field (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), limited research that we are aware of, considers the use of creative methods in the context of a more tightly bound group of individuals, or in other words a community. This is particularly surprising considering communities' "widely acknowledged significance, particularly in the context of consumption" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.412). Further addressing this under-researched aspect of communities in consumer research (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) therefore seems to be an obligation.

The existing accounts rely heavily on a rather objectified understanding of the meaning of consumer objects and symbols. Looking at the language used in prior research, the authors often talk about 'using' meaning, 'engaging' with material or 'creating' meaning (e.g. Diamond et al., 2009; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). These formulations leave us dumbfounded as to how this interaction with the meaning of an object or a symbol takes place. This overly objectified understanding of meaning, caused by the formulations, prevents the reader from reflecting on the very subjective and intangible nature of meaning, and thus chokes off the potential debate about how a meaning is 'used' or 'created' or how material is 'engaged'. In light of the increasing sophistication of the methods used by consumers to actively advance or reactively protect their identity projects, looking into the details of how consumers engage with the meanings of objects and symbols could yield meaningful understandings.

Our main argument in the critique of prior research is that it widely disregards linguistic concepts and structures, that could be used to create better understandings and explanations of consumption behaviour. To explain this argument in more detail we have to take a small detour. Murray briefly hinted at the underlying aspect of our critique, when he stated that constructing a style through consumption was "analogous to the creativity involved in the speaking of a language" (2002, p.428). He further explains that the speaker of a language is restricted by the structure of that language, much like a consumer is restricted by the objects at its disposal. By drawing these parallels between consumption and language Murray (2002) outlines a valid relationship: If anthropologists such as Rayfield (1972) are correct in stating that the structure of a story or narrative is hardwired into the human brain, and psychologists such as Cohler are rightly concluding that narratives are the "internally consistent" (1982, p.207) way for individuals to make sense of the past, the present and the future, then language in general and narratives in particular, provide the structure that guides our thinking. The same structure could therefore also be used to better understand how we consume, because it serves as the platform of everything we do. In other words, if language and narratives serve as the structure of how we think, then how we consume is also enabled by this structure. This parallel would in turn inspire the use of linguistic concepts to be utilized to explain consumption behaviour.

The under representation of linguistic concepts and the neglect of various sophisticated methods, show the shortcomings of prior literature, which overall does not do enough justice to the intense complexity of consumers' strive to advance their self-identity. This could be due to a simple ineptness of researchers to comprehend the dynamics of youth styles in particular, due to their relative distance. To conclude this critique of prior research two shortcomings have to be highlighted. First, it has to be noted that a focus among scholars, on the creative methods used by consumers to advance their self-identity projects, has left those methods applied to protect and preserve self-identity, under-theorized. Second, although previously hinted at by researchers, an adequate consideration of linguistic concepts as the enablers of identity work through consumerism is still largely missing in prior research.

It is for the critique described above, why we will introduce three linguistic concepts in the following section. These concepts serve as a lens through which the empirical data is to be looked at. The concepts of irony, sarcasm and cynicism as taken from linguistics, serve as the main concepts which will introduce the linguistic perspective to this study that prior research did not incorporate. By taking the linguistic perspective into consideration we hope to provide a structure that does justice to the complexity found in consumption among postmodern consumers. Choosing this linguistic perspective shall help the reader to see the structure that underlies the process of consumption. By introducing the semiotic perspective on myths we hope to create a better understanding of the first- and second-order meaning that consumers construct of the objects which they combine into compositions. The concept introduced to understand the creation and selection of these compositions is bricolage. Bricolage we argue, is more prevalent than the amount of literature that thematizes this concept might suggest. Bricolage shows how the poised combination of consumer objects can enable consumers to construct entirely new meanings. It is one of the only concepts that indicates the refinement with which consumers go about their identity work.

3 Theory

In the following chapter we want to introduce three concepts. We knowingly call them concepts because of their practical application and abundant variety in different disciplines. The first concept is a set of language devices, which we borrowed from linguistics, such as irony or cynicism, the second concept is bricolage, which refers to the compositions of objects to create new meaning. The third concept is a semiotic perspective on myths, which aims to provide a better understanding of the first- and second-order meanings of the objects combined into compositions through bricolage. These concepts are introduced to serve as theoretical lenses, utilized to better understand the empirical data by sensitizing the reader for particular patterns and structures and avoid naive interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). We realize that introducing these concepts might frame the reader. However, we are convinced that the elevated theoretical understanding condones potential disadvantages connected to framing the reader.

At this point we want to stress the relationship of the three introduced concepts. We encourage our readers to regard the concepts of bricolage and semiotics as two different levels on which meaning might be created or altered. The first level of meaning is represented by the semiotic perspective on myths which helps to understand the meaning of the object. The second level of meaning is highlighted by the concept of bricolage, which thematizes how the object or symbol is combined with other objects to create new meaning. The language devices irony, sarcasm and cynicism serve to better understand the ways in which consumers create distance and express their reflexivity. Depending on the concept, some aspects, structures or patterns are highlighted and others are concealed. However, the reader should be aware of the level of meaning she is considering and retain the ability to look at them unencumbered. In addition, the above introduced concepts distinguish themselves in their conception and assist the reader to perceive the investigated phenomenon in the hipster style from different angles. By doing that, it is possible to gather new insights and explanations.

3.1 Bricolage as an Act of Creating New Meaning

The term and concept of bricolage has been used in various disciplines such as contemporary music studies (Shuker, 2017), cultural studies (Clark, 1976; Hebdige, 1979), linguistics (Schlobinski, 1989; Schlobinski, Kohl & Ludewigt, 2013) consumer culture theory (Bertilsson, 2009; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) and philosophy (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). With reference to the diverse areas of application, we want to underline the dynamics and capability of the concept and acts of bricolage. The origins of the term bricolage are to be found in an anthropological work of Lévi-Strauss (1962), where he introduces the *bricoleur*, as an opposition to the traditional craftsman, who “works with this hands and uses devious means“

(p.11). In this respect, bricolage is introduced as a more experimental and improvised act compared with inflexible working patterns, as for example in the case of an engineer, whose work is mostly accomplished by a specific pool of tools and methods (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). Acts of bricolage, however, are characterized by their flexibility and spontaneity and initiate communication via things (and the medium of things) and therefore disclose personal information about the bricoleur's identity (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). Briefly, and in plain words, through the act of bricolage, elements are in many different and improvisational ways put together and thus result in the creation of new meanings (Lévi-Strauss, 1962).

Within cultural studies, especially in the theory of analyzing subcultures, bricolage is among other things introduced as a concept that has the ability to substantially form youth styles (Hebdige, 1979). This dynamism can be seen by looking at the mod subculture, whose members, or in other words "mods", are originally associated with brit-pop, coming from a working class background and the longing for future and change (Feldman, 2009). By a somewhat paradoxical contrast, these members integrated the leading symbols of the elite - suit & tie - into their style. Using these acts of bricolage, the suit and tie are placed into a new context, or as Hebdige puts it: "symbolic ensemble" (p.104, 1979), which leads to a transformation or even a possible elimination of the objects' original meanings. With this concept, Hebdige (1979) manages to interpret the style of punks or mods by semiotically scanning it. In sum, he states that identity and even resistance are embodied in clothing or other materials.

In sociolinguistic research on identity construction, Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou (2003), refer to acts of bricolage in discourse of young adults. In this respect, youth groups construct identity by combining different speaking and language styles (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003). In doing so, youth groups draw on a pool of diverse cultural resources, such as popular culture or advertising (Schlobinski, 1989; Schlobinski, Kohl & Ludewigt, 1995). Another example are german youngsters who make use of bricolage while integrating elements of turkish language into their speaking and language style (Dirim & Auer, 2004). Moreover, since it is known that identities are constructed in and through discourse (Bamberg, Fina & Schiffrin, 2007), we are convinced that bricolage is of enormous importance for identity work even beyond the context of combining tangible objects.

The concept of bricolage also involves potential risks as bricoleurs not only integrate unbranded clothing, but of course also branded goods into their style. Bertilsson (2009) presents a netnographic research, which demonstrates how status-affirming brands such as Burberry evolve to be defined as authentic brands for hooligans. Supposedly, the online discourse about these authentic or non-authentic hooligan brands indicates that hooligans turn out to be bricoleurs, too. Nonetheless, it is very likely that the brand department of Burberry would not be amused to hear about these defamatory acts of bricolage. However, bricolage does not necessarily have to sabotage or degrade a different brand, and neither can it only be practiced by a spectacular youth style or subculture, but also within a normal, or in other words, mainstream style (Shuker, 2017). This is further suggested by the fact that even mainstream fashion includes elements of bricolage (Shuker, 2017).

Since we are now aware of the dynamics and hazards of bricolage, we want to place special emphasis on its ability for personal identity construction through consumerism in the sense of Firat and Venkatesh (1995). For this purpose, we humbly position ourselves among other

theorists who strongly associate bricolage with postmodernity (Gergen, 1991; Schouten & Alexander, 1993. Thompson, 2000). In this context, we see bricolage as:

“Mix n’match acts of self-creation [that] freely and compulsively borrow styles and preferences from all over the cultural map to produce personal identities that are idiosyncratic and constantly in flux. (Thompson, 2000, p.131)“

Thompson emphasizes the protean identity mantra of postmodern consumers and represents bricolage as a part of flexible consumption and therefore a “cultural metaphor of the flexible system” (2000, p.132). Consumers remain what they always were - adaptable and flexible - and therefore adapt different cultural elements or goods into their style (Thompson, 2000). This is opposed to the confused perception of an outside observer who may not be able to understand or contextualize these adaptations (Thompson, 2000). Nevertheless, especially in fashion, consumers make use of these acts of bricolage to feel autonomy and are thus able even to innovate the style (Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

In consideration of our research, we are convinced that the concept of bricolage may set the foundation to gain a better understanding of constructing identity through consumption in the hipster style. Since we defined hipsters as a showcase example for postmodern consumers, we agree with Thompson, who calls postmodern, flexible consumers „cultural chameleons“ (2000, p.193), as they are difficult to categorize, contextualize, identify and do not have uniform consumption habits (Thompson, 2000). However, the purpose of this research is to comprehend the reasons and motives for the hipsters’ paradoxical consumption practices. Understanding the concept of bricolage is therefore an important prerequisite as it serves as a gateway to the even more important semantics of selection (Clark, 1976). The latter outlines the motives and motivations according to which members of a youth or consumption style adopt a specific and not random composition of symbolic objects into their style. Hence, groups or collectives have to be able to recognize and identify each other in the newly created symbolic setting among the recontextualized and rearranged symbolic objects (Clark, 1976). These objects, however, have to reflect these collectives’ or groups’ values (Clark, 1976).

As we have defined the hipster as a youth style in the sense of Hebdige (1979), it is important to differentiate this style from spectacular subcultures as they often include an intentional communication (Hebdige, 1979). Here, we would like to mention explicitly that investigated subcultures or styles such as punks or mods have, in our humble opinion, more visible and unhidden values, motives for resistance or manifestos than, for instance, hipsters. Both styles may possibly make use of bricolage, but the visibility of semantics of selection in the hipster style is considerably smaller. This makes it all the more important to get a deeper insight of the hipsters’ semantics of selection.

3.2 Semantics, Semiotics and Myth

Before going into detail about why a semiotic perspective on myths provides a useful perspective on the empirical data, we want to take inventory. First, we have established that an individual’s identity is largely influenced by its possessions, in other words, by the objects

she owns (Belk, 1988). Belk goes even further and states that “we learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions” (1988, p.160). Sartre (1943), one of the authors that Belk bases his arguments on, goes as far as saying that enlarging our sense of self is actually the only reason why we would ever want something. In conclusion, we can say, that the objects we own play an integral part in defining who we are. However, one key question remains. If Belk (1988) is considered to be correct in assuming that individuals are largely defined by the objects they own, and enlarging their sense of self is really the only reason they could ever want something (Sartre, 1943), we need to explain what an individual owns and why. For this purpose, we also need to understand the meaning of a single object within and outside of its context. This knowledge allows us to understand and explain the aforementioned semantics of selection. Or in other words, why individuals select certain item to be a part of their style.

In the course of this research, we plead for semantics, as the study of meaning and a subcomponent of the study of signs, abbreviated to semiotics (Føllesdal, 1997). A semiologic model, which is presented by Roland Barthes (1972) and based on the former work of swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), provides assistance in the understanding how meaning is produced. However, in this context, the concept of signs is essential. According to Roland Barthes (1972), a sign lies in the relationship between a signifier, and a signified, or in other words, a physical/material existence and a mental concept. Let us take an orange as an example for a sign: if the orange-colored fruit, round shape and peel would describe the physical existence or signifier, the mental concept or signified would be an orange. In concrete terms, signs result from how we build the relationship between signifier and signified.

The main difference between Saussure (1966) and Barthes (1972) lies in the fact that Saussure has a one-dimensional perspective on the concept of sign, signifier and signified and limits the scope of application only to the field of language. Barthes’ extension, however, introduces myths, which builds upon already existing signs, regardless if they are texts, images, sounds or even clothes. Barthes (1972) picks up where Saussure (1966) stops: myths enable signs to be taken and put into a signifier which results in a completely new signified or concept. It is therefore a “second-order semiological system“ (Barthes, 1972, p.113), which allows transforming first-order into second-order meanings. Back to the previous example, the orange could now turn into a new signifier and result in a completely new signified such as the Federal State of Florida. This results in a myth of the orange, the landmark of the Federal State of Florida.

We are confident that the semiotic concept of myth comes in handy as it motivates us to critically scrutinize the real meaning behind the signs or objects used and combined in the hipster style. Furthermore, we are aware that myths have the ability to hijack meaning and operate on a meta-level.

3.3 Creating Distance Through Language

“[...] life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it.” (Wilde, 2013, p.15)

Irony, cynicism and sarcasm - a popular variety of our everyday language and undoubtedly an essential part of a lifestyle or culture. It would appear that contemporary society is familiar with the concepts of these measures, stating that these three terms are very close to each other. Due to their popularity in culture and language, many people assume they know what these concepts mean, but they're often misinformed. We are convinced that passive knowledge in this field could be very misleading and have set the objective of this section to refute that myth and indicate the key differences of these concepts. With this in mind, we want to suggest potential explanations for paradoxical consumption practices within consumption styles.

3.3.1 Creating Distance Through Irony

The word irony as used in everyday life commonly refers to the concept of verbal irony borrowed from the field of language. Irony can be explained as a “complex language device used by speakers who intend to convey an attitude that is of opposite valence to the meaning of the words spoken” (Nicholson, Whalen & Pexman, 2013, p.1). Research has shown that social and cultural knowledge is needed to comprehend and appreciate this form of communication (Pexman, Glenwright, Krol & James, 2005). To understand irony, the listener has to realize that the speaker of the statement meant for the message to be understood as the opposite (Nicholson, Whalen & Pexman, 2013; Nilsen, Glenwright & Huyder, 2011). To do that, the listener of the message must deduce the beliefs of the speaker (Colston & Gibbs, 2002; Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Winner & Leekam, 1991). Additionally, the listener needs to interpret the context in which the statement is delivered and consider what and how it is being said (Nilsen, Glenwright & Huyder, 2011). By intending for irony to be understood, the speaker accepts a certain probability that the message is misinterpreted. Unlike literal language, irony allows the speaker to fine-tune the message, increasing (Colston, 1997) or decreasing (Dews, Winner, Kaplan, Rosenblatt, Hunt, Lim, McGovern, Qualter & Smarsh, 1996; Dews & Winner, 1995) the critical meaning of what is being said. It is probable that the speaker choosing irony to deliver a verbal message is aware of and accepts the risk to be misunderstood, as a trade-off for the merit of increased flexibility when molding the meaning of the statement.

Increasing the flexibility in designing the meaning of the message is not the only reason why irony is so frequently used in common talk. Leggitt and Gibbs (2000) refer to a growing set of psycholinguistic research that thematizes the social functions of irony in addition to the communicative functions. Some of these include the elevation of one's social status, being humorous, provoking reactions or mocking others. In another contribution, Gibbs (2000) elaborates further on the mockery aspect of irony, by highlighting the teasing intention in various kinds of irony such as sarcasm and rhetorical questions. Through teasing, the speakers of ironic statements undertake a discourse that allows them to “learn about, negotiate, and

assume social identities” (Gibbs, 2000, p.8). According to Gibbs (2000), the behaviour can reach a level where the individual assumes another role or pretends to be another person when they use irony. As he notes, this is further complicated by instances where in addition to the pretended role of themselves, the individual imagines another person to be the receiver of the message then the person that the statement is directed at. Having said that, the social functions of irony are not always this complex. Sometimes, expressing mutual displeasure, while muting the critic intend (Gibbs, 2000; Harris & Pexman, 2003) can be enough to create a sense of belongingness.

Assuming that consumers are aware of the trade-off between the communicative and social functions of irony and the probability to be misunderstood, the benefits of using irony must be exceeding the risk quite frequently for irony to be evident in one of twelve (Gibbs, 2000) conversational turns. Some individuals try to overcome this risk of being misunderstood. Kreuz and Roberts (1995) have researched consumers who use rather explicit cues such as their tone of voice or their use of hyperboles to direct the receiver of the message to the right interpretation. Whether or not consumers are showing similar behavior in their non-verbal – and thus more complicated – fashion discourse remains to be seen. As indicated earlier, there is an entire research area concerned with the social function of irony in language (Colston & Gibbs, 2007). It is this myriad of social functions of irony and the apparent risk that speakers are willing to take to gain the merits of this tool (Nicholson, Whalen & Pexman, 2013) that form a source of possible explanations that could be transferred to irony in fashion discourse. Particularly the act of demarcating those people who do not understand the ironic message, is a way for individuals to distance themselves from others.

Ironic Consumption

Traces of irony can also be found in consumption. As indicated earlier, McCoy & Scarborough (2014), in their studies on why people with high cultural capital watch reality-TV, point out that such viewers encounter a normative contradiction. In the course of their work, they are able to develop a typology of ironic consumption. In her book *No Logo*, social activist and author Naomi Klein (2009) refers to ironic consumption from two perspectives. She stresses the role of irony in consumption practices within the system and refers, for this purpose, to ethnologist de Certeau (de Certeau cited in Klein):

“Going to Disney World to drop acid and goof on Mickey isn’t revolutionary; going to Disney World in full knowledge of how ridiculous and evil it all is and still having a great innocent time, in some almost unconscious, even psychotic way, is something else altogether.” (2009, p.78)

Ironic consumption allows consumers to be in-between, which serves as a gateway to freedom in contemporary culture. Klein emphasizes the kitsch and glamorous character of not only cultural but also physical goods and recommends brands to “layer this uncool-equals-cool aesthetic of the ironic viewer onto their pitch” (2009, p.78). Irony and kitsch have great potential and can be a failed brand’s guarantee of success, because it is working less dodged and determined than desperately serious brand strategies (Klein, 2009). As a representative of consumer culture theory, Thompson refers to the “being so bad that it is good cliché” (2000, p.133), as an ironic consumption guideline for postmodern consumers, who now dropped off their superciliousness and started to enjoy the beauty of these ill-favoured things. This section

illustrates further application areas of irony as an original linguistic concept; emphasis should be placed on the interplay between irony and consumerism. Having said that, we believe that the expansion of irony into consumption may broaden our knowledge base of creative methods for identity work in consumerism which may enable us to grasp paradoxical consumption practice within consumption styles.

3.3.2 Sarcasm as a Form of Irony

First off: there is a likelihood of association between irony and sarcasm. Both concepts have their roots in oral history (Burton, 2009; Haiman, 1998) but are unique in their kind. Winner, Windmueller, Rosenblatt, Bosco, Best and Gardner speak of an “ironic family“ (1987, p.15), which is determined by understatement, hyperbole and sarcasm. In this context, Winner et al. refer to sarcasm as the most simple form of irony (1987). This is supported by Burton, who calls sarcasm the “poorer, less sophisticated, cousin of irony“ (2009, p.77) and distinguishes it from satire in terms of the missing carefully worded sophistication. Sarcasm seems clearly to count as an aggressive form of verbalization (Lee & Katz, 1998; Haiman, 1998; Gurillo & Ortega, 2013), which apparently represents a larger extent of ridicule than irony (Lee & Katz, 1998). What, amongst others, truly differentiates sarcasm from irony lies in the fact that it is only applicable to people - a situation itself can not be sarcastic (Haiman, 1998). Besides its limitation to people, sarcasm always necessitates a personal intention, whereas irony can be triggered unintentionally by a person, or in other words, in an arbitrary way (Haiman, 1998). Strictly speaking, however, sarcasm appears rather as an acoustic or verbal concept than a literary one (Partington, 2006). Another difference between these terms are its (intrinsic or extrinsic) trigger points. Ironic utterances are commonly initiated through self-reference, whereas sarcasm result from an external-reference, as it is, in many cases, triggered by an information acquisition of one’s external environment (Räwel, 2007).

Sarcasm could be characterized as bipolar, as it is a concept which can be understood both in an amusing or injurious way (Partington, 2006). It may in some cases happen that it can play a bonding role between people, but in most cases, it is rather negatively connotated, as it functions at the expense of the opposite (Partington, 2006). Sarcasm could act to save face (Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988), and has the ability to make utterances more memorable, and therefore increase one’s self-respect and social recognition (Orwenjo, 2016). Essentially, it could be said that the use of sarcasm can guide individuals to stick out of the mass through a striking and clarion form of discourse.

3.3.3 Consumer Cynicism

“They know what they are doing, but they still do it [...]” (Sloterdijk, 1987, p.5)

In this research, the historical background of the term cynicism will not be deepened here. Instead, we strive to give a basic understanding in a concise form allowing the reader to comprehend the relationship between consumerism and cynicism (irony and sarcasm). For the purpose of this research, we understand cynicism as a means for individuals to create distance

towards cultural authorities (consumption styles, organizations and cultures) in order to achieve simplicity in their way of living, consumption practices and coping strategies within a poor, faulty world.

In his bestseller, 'The Sublime Object of Ideology', the Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic, Slavoj Žižek (1989), investigates cynical distance from a macro perspective. He marks cynicism as a fundamental cornerstone for human agency. Society's social realities are primarily driven by the illusion that objects truly have monetary and other values which provides the background rationale to why society remains committed to a carefree way of living as "they know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know" (1989, p.32). This unconscious disregard of the *real* world and the resulting illusion Žižek (1989) calls the *ideological fantasy*.

Consequently, society refuses to remain faithful to ideological truths and its deadly seriousness and prefers rather to distant itself through cynicism in its social activities (Žižek, 1989). It is precisely this cynical distance that explains that "even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them*" (Žižek, 1989, p.33, emphasis in original). The handling of illusions within society's social activities is of significant importance to understand cynical distance, as the following saying makes clear:

"They know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it. For example, they know that their idea of Freedom is masking a particular form of exploitation, but they still continue to follow this idea of Freedom." (Žižek, 1989, p.33)

Apart from this, cynics are also introduced as people who resign themselves to their fate of being in a corrupt, faulty and poor world, but still find ways to handle these actualities (Stanley, 2012). In this context, one can see that cynics have a certain ability for critical reflexivity. This is supported by consumer culture theorists, who bridge cynics' crucial reflexivity either to skepticism for marketing activities (Holt, 2002) or to a certain way of reflexive resistance (Odou & de Pechpeyrou, 2011). This resistance, however, is strongly shaped as an abstract form of criticizing consumption (Bertilsson, 2015), as it is taken for granted that consumerism is ethically questionable (Holt, 2002). In addition to this form, cynicism can also be experienced in a more modern way. In times of postmodernism, a large part of the population have understood that any criticism of the established system is meaningless and therefore cannot reach a strong revolutionary momentum (Sloterdijk, 1987). The modern cynic is familiar with the dubiousness of consumerism, but still prefers a deliberate handling of consumption activities, no matter if it is doubtful or not (Bertilsson, 2015). Modern cynicism has therefore shaped contemporary consumer culture and lost its power as a classical form of criticism and resistance (Bertilsson, 2015). One could even go so far as to say that the modern cynic is consuming paradoxical at first sight - but with a smirk on her face.

In the field of critical management studies, cynicism is introduced as a mental concept of surrendering to the dogmas and domination of employers. In that sense, co-workers use cynicism to develop a critical distance from the values of the organization they are working for and express their doubts, indeed their incredulity, but still comply with their obligations as dutiful employees (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). This corporate removal of identification means

that co-workers distant themselves from the corporation's values and culture, but instead of a fundamental and critical questioning, they simply comply with the rules and work at a 'cynical distance' (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). It should be noted that the resistance towards the organization does not take place on an absolute level, explained partially by the fact that there is space in-between a full identification and a full dis-identification with the organization (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). From a management perspective, the integration of cynicism into the employees' working world is surely not ideal-typical, but on the other hand does not necessarily affect adversely the organization's daily business (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Hence it can be said that the resulting alienation, which arises through expressed cynicism allows employees within their working environment to save face and avoid potential ridiculousness which would arise with an absolute identification with the organization's values and culture.

Due to the purpose of our research, we are convinced that both the modern form of consumer cynicism, as well as the concept of irony and sarcasm will assist to comprehend the underpinnings behind the investigated paradoxical consumption practices in consumption styles. This led us to explore the described consumption patterns of the hipster culture using the concept of irony, sarcasm and cynicism. We are convinced that these concepts will help us to deepen our understanding of the social functions of fashion discourse by showing the similarities e.g. the social functions achieved through irony in literal language. Furthermore, we are convinced that the concepts of bricolage and semiotics assist the reader to comprehend the semantics of selection that lead to a particular style composition, which is essential to grasp the underlying reasons for paradoxical consumption practices.

4 Methodology

For this study, we have investigated members within the hipster style and established contacts with an online journalist, art student and DJane, and snowballed through people in their network, using Cologne, Berlin and Stockholm as entry points for the data collection process. The collected data is composed of eight phenomenological interviews (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio, 1989) which, overall, represent over seven and a half hours of interview records. All interviews were conducted by both authors. Due to the limited time available, the interviews were selectively transcribed literal from the original interview records, resulting in 102 double spaced pages of text. To ensure the anonymity of the participants of this study, all names were changed. An overview of the participants' profession, age and paradoxical consumption objects is presented in *Table 1*.

Each interview yielded interesting conversations about a myriad of different topics, focussing on the participants', jobs, friends, hobbies and passions. All participants opened up and shared their thoughts and stories about the composition of their own consumption style, and their interplay with paradoxical consumption objects. Each author conducted half of the interviews as the main interviewer and the other half as the note-taker. While the main interviewer asked most of the questions, the more detached and reflexive role of the note-taker enabled him to occasionally ask follow-up questions about stories that the interviewer might have overlooked. Overall, the interviews were received positively, without any signs for scepticism and distrust, although consumerism can be considered a sensitive topic within the hipster consumption style.

4.1 Research Philosophy

The main philosophical debate among researchers pivots around the nature of reality and knowledge, referred to as ontology and epistemology, respectively. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) These concepts greatly affect the quality of research and therefore need to be considered and discussed when designing and conducting research. More importantly though, these concepts are underpinned by philosophical positions and assumptions that have great influence on the methods applied in research, thus demanding a more detailed discussion. In their book, Burrell and Morgan (1979) argue that some of these philosophical positions are paradigms because their underlying assumptions are incompatible. For the purpose of this study we want to refrain from overly indulging ourselves in debates about ontology and epistemology or arguments such as the one brought forward by Burrell and Morgan (1979). Whether or not something can be regarded as an ontology, epistemology or paradigm is not of concern to us. However, we want focus our resources on a more reflective

discussion of the philosophical positions and assumptions that we find beneficial for our research.

“The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not ‘mean’ anything to molecules, atoms, and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist— social reality—has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have preselected and pre-interpreted this world, which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs, which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men [and women!], living their daily life within the social world.” (Schutz, 1962, p. 59)

What Alfred Schutz formulates in this frequently quoted part of his work, is one of the most tangible critiques of naturalism and the *raison d'être* for phenomenology. As part of the interpretivist tradition, phenomenology is concerned with the ways in which humans make sense of the world around them (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It is immediately evident that as an interpretivist, Schutz (1962) emphasizes the fundamental differences between natural and social sciences and rejects the application of the same methods. Schutz implicitly calls for an epistemology that does justice to the fact that in contrast to natural science, social reality means something to its participants (human beings). For the purpose of this research we regard constructionism as the answer to this call, because constructionism allows us to both consider human’s ability to create meaning for themselves and grasp how they make sense of these meanings and how that affects their behaviour.

As constructionists, we regard social objects as socially constructed. In line with Becker (1982) we also regard culture as socially created and constructed and in a state of continuous flux. Lastly, we even regard the categories we use to make sense of the world as socially constructed, whether it is in our function as human beings or researchers. Due to the apparent complexity and interdependency of the socially constructed reality, we sympathize with the hermeneutic approach which “seeks to understand understanding as an ontological state” (Arnold & Fischer, 1994, p.66). Hermeneutics elevates the importance of the process of understanding itself. Thematizing the nature and process of understanding in greater detail is essential, considering the nature of the topic and the researchers’ role in the research.

The assumptions mentioned above have numerous implications for the way in which we design and conduct our research. This study will research how socially conscious human beings, that are part of a socially constructed consumption style, construct meaning of a socially constructed world in which they consciously play a role themselves. More importantly, this study will focus on *why* these human beings do what they do. Additionally, the researchers themselves are associated with the hipster style and use socially constructed categories in order to explain the phenomenon. In order to do justice to these premises we will first focus on the implications of choosing the hipster style and reflect on our role on the research. After that we will explain how our ontology and epistemology motivate our research design before we start a detailed description of our data collection and analysis methods. This chapter is concluded with a reflection on the quality of our research, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

4.1.1 Implications of Choosing the Hipster Style

Our investigation started with identifying a striking phenomenon in the hipster style leading us to review existing literature and explore discussions about hipster identity and discourse in academia. However, we are opposed to the debate if hipsterism could be defined as a subculture (Schiermer, 2014). Rather, we consider the hipster ethos more as an aesthetic “style“, with a special predilection on authenticity, chronological distinction and individualization. The hipster consumption style and its consumption practices and characteristics changes permanently and reflect the area of postmodernism very well (Hill, 2015; Horning, 2009). Brand managers, consultants and marketers showed particular interest in order to reach this group, but it is not surprising that extracting marketplace myths out of this particular consumer culture is regarded as a supreme discipline. We therefore take the view that understanding paradoxical consumption practices in youth or consumption styles and its resulting consequences for the brand and its marketplace myths are of enormous importance for brand managers and marketers, since fast response is critical in order to gain control over these dynamic situations. The hipster style, with all its properties, is perfectly suited to act as a showcase example for paradoxical consumption behaviour and will also serve as a prime empirical example of postmodern consumption styles.

4.1.2 Reflecting on the Role of the Researcher

Prejudice or prejudgment refers to the fact that prior to any interpretation, or research for that matter, the object of the interpretation and we as the researchers conducting the interpretation, exist (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). Researchers like any human being are part of the social world which they research. In the case of this study, we are even associated with the hipster style we research. Due to this association with the hipster style, the researchers undeniably have (pre-)understandings and prejudgments about the style. Adopting a hermeneutic approach, these (pre-)understandings can be regarded as enabling the researchers rather than constraining them. The preconceptions function as a frame of reference necessary to create understanding (Gadamer, 1975). This frame of reference or temporal perspective forms the basis for a more grounded understanding (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994).

More pragmatically it can be stated that being considered a member of the consumption style under scrutiny is, in this case, an advantage for two reasons in particular. (1) Belonging to the consumption style we have unique access to possible entry points that other researchers would find hard to reach (French, Merritt & Reynolds, 2011). Additionally, as a result of being associated and thus up to date with the complex and constantly evolving hipster style we can overcome many constraints and delays that other researchers might have when preparing for and conducting such research. Prolonged immersions into the style and tedious exploration of signs and objects will not delay our research and neither will awkward imitations of slang language annihilate our research. (2) The hipster consumption style in particular shows emic²

² Linguist Kenneth Pike (1954) refers to emic characteristics as aspects of a language which can only be distinguished by speakers of that language.

characteristics, making the style hard to distinguish for outsiders, let alone isolate or even define. This aspect increases our ability and credibility when attempting to define the style and distinguishing members and non-members.

4.2 Research Design

It is our aim to explain the underlying reasons that result in paradoxical consumption behaviour among some members of a particular consumption style. In the section above we have already outlined our understanding of the nature of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology). These understandings and convictions have a very strong influence on how we perceive the paradoxical consumption that we encounter, and more importantly how we aim to inquire into and explain this behaviour. In order to attempt to explain the paradoxical consumption behaviour with this research, we aim to arrive at an in-depth explanation of the individuals' social world, which triggers the paradoxical behaviour. We will do this while providing details about the context in which this behaviour takes place. This is opposed to a quantitative approach which would focus on measuring the phenomenon and establishing causalities linked to the paradoxical behaviour (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

According to Bryman and Bell (2015) we follow the approach defined as qualitative research, because among other reasons, we focus on text, rather than numbers. By following a qualitative research approach we aim to take into consideration, individuals' ability to reflect upon their own social world (Schutz, 1962) and the notion that human beings construct or make knowledge rather than find or discover it (Schwandt, 2003). These are however not the only aspects that motivated our choice for a qualitative research design and subsequently our method for the collection and analysis of data. We follow this design, because we believe that (1) theory should be generated out of empirical material, (2) an explanation of the social world can only be reached through the eyes of its actors and (3) social properties are not simply 'out there' but the complex result of the interactions among individuals (Bryman, 2012). As indicated earlier these beliefs have a number of implications which we will discuss in the following three paragraphs.

Theory should be generated out of empirical material. "The flexibility of qualitative research permits you [researchers] to follow leads that emerge." (Charmaz, 2006, p.14) This statement from Kathy Charmaz (2006) perfectly summarizes our view of qualitative research and our understanding of how to explain a phenomenon and generate theory. Taking empirical data as the basis for generating theory is described as *induction* (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It has to be stated however, that an inductive approach that is grounded in empirics also has some levels of deduction. The deductive aspects accrue when, after establishing some preliminary form of theory, the researchers go back to the data to consider the conditions under which the theory holds and might not hold (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Although we start from the data to develop theory, the approach we adopt in this research is more *abductive* than it is inductive. As an approach that is used when existing theory cannot describe a phenomenon, abduction aims to explain the puzzle or surprise in the best possible way (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) aptly describe abduction as looking for patterns and structures. Abduction

also entails an iterative or back-and-forth approach to data analysis apparent in grounded theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015, Charmaz, 2006), being applied in this research.

An explanation of the social world can only be reached through the eyes of its actors. When researching a phenomenon, the goal is to attain a first-person perspective of an individual's experience (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). This approach is described as phenomenology (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Phenomenology hence focusses on a specific experience and not on abstract descriptions of an event (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). Phenomenology views experience as a pattern that emerges from context, which is why it places a strong emphasis on the description of these contexts (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). For the purpose of this research we shall regard paradoxical consumption as the phenomenon under scrutiny and hence adopt a phenomenological approach. At this point we want to stress again the importance of considering, in the research, the individual's ability to reflect on the surrounding world. This notion creates a strong argument for why qualitative research in general and our research in particular, focuses on viewing the subject through the eyes of the people we study. The social world has to be interpreted from this perspective (Bryman & Bell, 2015) in order to explain the phenomena that we encounter.

Social properties are not simply 'out there' but the complex result of the interactions among individuals. We have mentioned before, that we regard both the world, and the categories employed by individuals to make sense of that world, as socially constructed. In this sense, we share with social constructionist views and philosophical hermeneutics the critique of seeing meaning as objective (Schwandt, 2003). For us, meaning is not simply 'out there' waiting to be discovered. Potter (1996) aptly describes this by stating that truth, or meaning for that matter, is in constant flux and can always be altered. Bryman and Bell (2015) refer to such a perspective of the social world as *postmodernism*. We realize that some researchers see strong postmodern views as disruptive because postmodernism questions our ability to ever know anything (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We reject these destructive ideas, because they undermine the *raison d'être* of research. We adopt a more *affirmative* dichotomy of postmodernism as described by Kilduff and Mehra (1997). Postmodernism as we see it is vividly explained by Harvey (1989) as considering pluralism and fragmentation and emphasizing difference and heterogeneity. In simple words, we believe that there is no objective reality out there that is waiting to be uncovered. The only way of inquiring into this reality then, is to access it by interpreting narratives (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and to see reality through the eyes of the people we study (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989).

After briefly touching upon the three main beliefs that motivates our choice of method, we want to add, that we want to prevent both oversimplifying and overcomplicating the phenomenon and hence the understanding for our readers (Stake, 2010). Oversimplification is one of the main critiques that postmodernists voice towards modern social science (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997). By getting lost in descriptions of context and possible concurrences, researchers can however also complicate things with the result of confusing or potentially losing their readers. We shall prevent this from happening and adopt a more pragmatic approach.

Keeping this pragmatic approach in mind and regarding the understanding of our readers we do however feel the need to discuss the issue of talking about cause and effect for qualitative researchers in particular. Stake (2010) states that, even though qualitative researchers want to talk about the causes and effects of certain events, they cannot do so with certainty or confidence. Stake (2010) explains this shortcoming by referring to Tolstoy (1869|1978), who comprehensively highlights the multitude of concurrences that lead to an event. We agree with Stake in the sense that our research should be seen as an interpretation of data that persuades one explanation of a particular phenomenon more than another does. We shall therefore use language carefully (Stake, 2010) to present our explanations for what they are and not imply cause and effect. We will however, still think about causes, because it disciplines our research (Stake, 2010).

4.3 Data Collection

In the following section we first discuss snowball sampling as the method used to identify the relevant subjects for the purpose of this study. In the second part, we debate unstructured phenomenological interviews as the data collection method for this research and particularly the implications of reflexive pragmatism (cf. Alvesson, 2003) for this method.

4.3.1 Snowball Sampling

Sampling from a constructionist point of view is not about gathering a huge sample, rather identifying a few subjects relevant to the research objective (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). McCracken (1986) emphasises the importance that a small sample does not represent the larger world, but rather a small glimpse through the door through which complicated groups and their culture can be seen. As presented, the participants are few in number but they are relevant for the research and can give a glimpse of understanding.

This research aims to gain a better understanding of a paradoxical consumption behaviour shown by a particular group associated with the hipster style. A distinguishing feature for the hipster style is its tightly-knit network and scepticism of the general public (French, Merritt & Reynolds, 2011). This makes it harder for researchers to obtain access to followers of the hipster style and investigate their behaviour. However, in this research, the difficulty of access is even greater, mainly because the apparently paradoxical phenomenon is not related to the majority of hipsters. In addition, this research focuses on the participant's self-identity project and the underlying reasons for her consumption practices. The combination of both factors - the small group of followers, and the sensitivity of the topic, might cause the potential participant to hesitate identifying herself if approached directly by the researchers. It is, amongst others, for these reasons, why Snowball sampling is advisable for this research. This sampling technique increases the chances that the potential participant opens up, particularly because the participant is introduced by someone who shares their experience or status (Gelles, 1978).

Another important point which supports our sampling method selection is the large diversity of the hipster style. Apart from enormous time expenditures and costs, it would be extremely difficult to distinguish relevant participants nested within the largely diverse hipster style. Based on their knowledge of potential sub-groups within the hipster style, the participants can guide us to additional members, who are valuable for our research and can lead us to further participants.

Furthermore, Snowball sampling is an appropriate sampling method when individuals are difficult to identify and seldom found in the population (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). This is precisely the case here, where relevant participants are *hard to reach* and a strong level of trust and interaction between participants is needed to initiate the necessary contacts. Since we are ourselves observers of the phenomenon, our judgement to select the relevant entry point is based on our perception and assessment that the individual can assist us to explore the phenomenon. However, we are conscious, that the following phases in the snowball sampling process may generate a risk of sampling bias. To prevent sampling bias we will therefore choose three individuals in different cities as entry points, ensuring sufficient sample diversity. By using different entry points we also ensure that the subsequent sample reflects varying influences and levels of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

4.3.2 Unstructured Phenomenological Interviews

A phenomenon is defined as “a thing which appears, or which is perceived or observed” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017). Phenomenology as a philosophy was founded by Edmund Husserl around 1900. In a non-philosophical way the phenomenological approach has been widely present in qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Alfred Schutz initially introduced phenomenology to qualitative research. He was strongly influenced by the work of German sociologist Max Weber and his concept of *verstehen* (Bryman, 2011). *Verstehen* which translates to ‘understanding’ best describes phenomenology which can be understood as understanding a social phenomenon from the person’s own perspective (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Phenomenology is concerned with the process of understanding in the qualitative research interview, because it assumes that reality is what people perceive it to be (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

For the purpose of this research it is crucial to understand, in depth, the phenomenon of paradoxical consumption from the participants’ point of view. Kvale describes the interview as “perhaps the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences.” (Kvale, 1983 cited in Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989, p.138). Because, the intention of this research is to create an understanding of why consumers’ advances of their self-identity projects leads to paradoxical consumption practices, we have chosen *unstructured phenomenological interviews* to inquire into this phenomenon.

The stories and narratives that are relevant for this research will therefore be gathered through primary natural language data. This is done by applying a qualitative research method. If the intention is to make sense of a social world and how people behave within it, then interviews are a desirable choice (May, 2011). An interview is a way of getting a subjected opinion from the participant through understanding their attitude and behaviour (Easterby-Smith, Thrope &

Jackson, 2015; Kvale, 1996). The aim of this research is to create an understanding of paradoxical consumption practices in the hipster style. Gathering subjective opinions is therefore essential.

In a phenomenological interview it is essential that the interviewer does not take the expert role away from the participant. An interviewer that is perceived as more power- or knowledgeable should be prevented (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). In line with the basic principles of an unstructured interview the phenomenological interview is supposed to be a conversation and not simply a game of questions and answers. In order to prevent bias for the interviewer it is important to mirror the participant's language (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989) which subsequently increases trust. Dissident from many other interview forms, the phenomenological interviewer should not use *why* to follow up on questions. This habit steers the conversation away from the actual experience and onto a non-desirable abstract discourse, given that the aim is to get a first-person understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

According to Bryman (2011) the unstructured interview is a favourable tool to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's world because of its flexibility. With unstructured interviews the interviewer can guide the conversation along different themes that have been prepared, through a topic guide. The themes are not direct questions, rather important subjects that the participant can answer openly without the feeling of being controlled by the interviewer (Easterby-Smith, Thrope & Jackson, 2015). There is a certain complexity in understanding the social world connected to the hipster style, which is why the increased flexibility of an unstructured interview will be helpful when exploring their consumption behaviour.

One of the characteristics of hipsters is their scepticism towards the general public (French, Merritt & Reynolds, 2011). Its ability to reduce scepticism by creating a more open conversation is another reason why we choose unstructured interviews. The topic guide also creates safety for the interviewer to stick to the relevant themes for the purpose of the research. It is not seen as a limitation but rather as a security for the interviewer to stay on point, regarding the complexity of the research.

To guarantee that sufficient data can be obtained during the interviews, the participants need to be given enough room to speak (Mishler, 1986). Mishler (1986) concludes his own experiences and that of other researchers, that participants who are in fact given enough room to speak, tend to answer with narratives and stories which will subsequently form the basis for our interpretation. It's therefore essential that we use unstructured interviews in order to (a) give the participant enough room to speak and (b) allow them to decide which topics to discuss and when to do so at their own discretion (Mishler, 1986).

Reflexive Pragmatism

When conducting interviews we have to be aware of the complexity of the situation between participant and interviewer. Mats Alvesson (2003) emphasises that an interview is a socially complex and linguistically rich situation, better appreciated when adopting a reflexive pragmatic mindset. The risk of naivety associated with a belief that data simply reveals reality

will occur if no reflexive pragmatic approach is used (Alvesson, 2003). This research will adopt a reflexive pragmatic view in order to remove the notion that data simply reveals reality. That way we acknowledge the complexity of different identities and behaviours within the postmodern hipster style.

Additionally to the points brought forward by Alvesson (2003), two more specificities of the unstructured interview with the focus on narratives have to be discussed. According to Mishler (1986) the role of the researcher is particularly evident in an interview setting that encourages narratives. First, the interviewer is involved in the creation of the story by letting the participant continue freely and openly in their own voice, to facilitate the creation of the narrative. Secondly, the researcher is the audience to whom the participant presents herself in a certain way. Although these aspects have partly been discussed by Alvesson (2003), we want to put a focus on the researcher's influence on the creation of the story.

To gain an in depth understanding of the participant's world we believe it is necessary to adopt some of the principles that are part of the romantic view on interviews, according to Alvesson (2003). The search for genuine human interaction, by establishing trust and commitment between participant and interviewer is relevant in order stimulate participants to share their personal stories. By adopting some of the romantic principles, this research aims to explore the inner world of the participants to understand their social reality. We aim to gain a better understanding of paradoxical behaviour shown by particular consumption style. In order to thoroughly explore the phenomenon, the data collected from participants needs to have depth. Building trust through the sampling method and in the interview situation is therefore essential to collect genuine responses from the participants.

Alvesson (2003) points out certain complications that may arise during an interview situation. When being interviewed the situation can make the participant adapt a deceptive attitude that creates a problem if the research is to get a deep understanding of the phenomenon. In order to prevent a deceptive attitude the interviewer has to frame the situation in a way that encourages and helps the participant to show her authentic self by making genuine responses possible (Alvesson, 2003). It is a demanding task for the researcher to make the participant feel comfortable and establish trust so that the participant opens up to the researcher (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Dissident from other research we encourage impression management to a certain degree. To understand the image that participants are really aiming to create for themselves and subsequently explore their self-identity project, we want them to feel some need for impression management.

Scepticism plays a role in the hipster style which creates a possible obstacle for the creation of trust. The participant will possibly take on a deceptive attitude during the interview situation if no trust is created between researcher and participant. In order to create trust the interviews are conducted in bars and cafés that are familiar to the participant. Additionally, Madden (2010) highlights the importance of preparation in order to understand the language that is common in the participant's subculture. Taking the researchers' familiarity with the hipster style into consideration an additional exploration of the words and slang, commonly used among hipsters, was not necessary.

4.4 Method of Analysis

In this section we first discuss narrative analysis as our method for analysis before relating it with our overall approach of analysis which originates from a combination of the concepts of grounded theory and hermeneutics.

4.4.1 Narrative Analysis

It cannot be taken for granted that individuals have the capacity to explain and describe their internal realities (Wittgenstein, 1953). Regarding the object of study, it is safe to say that most participants are not consciously aware of concepts such as the self-identity project. And even if participants were aware of the existence, one could question “whether people actually have definite, unambivalent conceptions [...] which are (or can be) explicitly expressed at all” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.229). This paradox is by some authors described as the “‘linguistic turn’ of the social science” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) or the “postmodern perspective of the human world” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It refers to a dyadic understanding of language as something that reflects and constructs our social world. While language is used to describe objects and events or give explanations to why things happen (Mishler, 1986), language’s ability to mirror complex circumstances is questioned and researchers of the hermeneutic tradition, among others, are asked to be critical towards viewing language as merely a vehicle for articulating thoughts (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994).

Having said that, “meaning is expressed in and through discourse” (Mishler, 1986, p.66). Complex linguistic rules and structures guide this discourse and vary depending on whether or not its function is e.g. to describe an object or express feelings (Mishler, 1986). Such a form of speech is the narrative account or story. Stories or narratives are essential for individuals who give meaning to or share experiences (Mishler, 1986). In fact many types of qualitative data such as interviews, conversations or documents and even research itself takes a narrative form (Silverman, 2001). This relevance of narratives for individuals who aim to articulate their experiences is further highlighted by researchers in anthropology (Rayfield, 1972), linguistic (Gee, 1985), psychology (Cohler, 1982), literary criticism (Jameson, 1981) and philosophy (MacIntyre, 1981).

As a research method, narrative analysis attempts to understand individual’s experiences through the stories they tell (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). This way, narrative analysis adopts a view of the experience as the phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). By interpreting these narratives we aim to explore how the participants construct meaning for themselves. By using a hermeneutic approach to focus on the narratives we subsequently attempt to understand the underlying reasons (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994) that motivate our participants’ paradoxical consumption behaviour. Some advocates of narrative analysis stress the need to deconstruct a narrative into its elements (Propp, 1968) or analyse a story’s plot, structure or genre (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For the purpose of this research we follow a less rigid variant of narrative analysis and simply regard narrative accounts as

“one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to order, organize, and express meaning” (Mishler, 1986, p.106). Attempting to understand these meanings therefore legitimizes our primary focus on narratives and stories.

In the context of narrative analysis, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) stress the importance of the hermeneutic circle to highlight the interdependency of narratives and metaphors. Metaphors, they argue, should be placed into the context of narratives, because it is this context that forms the backdrop to the metaphor’s understanding. Another similarity they highlight is that metaphors are a way of “seeing something as something else” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p.129) in the same way as narratives or stories are ways of seeing isolated events as a plot. Metaphors are in fact described by Alvesson (2003) as the basis for all thinking about complex phenomena. This interdependency of narratives and metaphors shall extend our efforts beyond narratives to discover and interpret metaphors and their meaning in the context of narratives. This endeavour will hopefully enable a more holistic and detailed description of the reasons that motivate our participant’s behaviours.

4.4.2 An Iterative, Bottom-up Approach

The methodological debate about induction versus deduction dates as far back as Aristotle and Plato (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). We want to withdraw ourselves from this theoretical dispute and adopt a more pragmatic approach to our data analysis. For the purpose of this study two concepts in particular inspire the process of analysing the data and are therefore of vital importance: grounded theory and hermeneutics.

Our underlying understanding of research is comparable to that of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who highlight the generation of theory as the researcher’s main goal, adding that anybody can do so as long as their efforts are grounded in the socially constructed reality. We also want to ground our theory-generation efforts in reality. Thus, adopting a grounded analysis method seems natural because it ensures consistent interaction with the data while staying involved with the analyses (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). However, we reject the harsh *tabula rasa* idea of wiping out any previous knowledge, which is present in some more rigorous definitions of grounded theory (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). No individual is able to disregard the set of cognitive and theoretical frames that guides their perception and understanding of the world (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Russo & Shoemaker, 1989). This is where the hermeneutic circle (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994) adds a more pragmatic perspective, accepting and encouraging the (pre-)conceptions of the researchers as a necessary basis for a more grounded understanding (Gadamer, 1975; Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994). The hermeneutic circle shares with grounded theory the focus on an iterative approach (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012) that is both necessary and desirable in order to generate empirically grounded theory.

To analyse our empirical data, we want to apply grounded theory with a hermeneutical approach, in order to allow the flexibility to go back and forth between the data and the theoretical perspectives while staying grounded in reality. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) define this approach that is neither truly inductive nor deductive as *abductive*. They describe it as looking for patterns or structures by diving into the empirical data after getting an

overview of the theoretical and empirical research field. The hermeneutical circle offers another implication that will possibly improve the quality of the generated theory. The pre-understanding, understanding logic explains how the iterations of the hermeneutic spiral will incrementally increase the understanding (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). In practice this means that, after interpreting each transcript individually, global themes, or in other words interesting aspects that emerge from the empiric data, are captured to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). A less academic description of our process would be a *bottom-up* analysis. Starting from the *bottom*, the empirical material, we move *up* the ladder of abstraction through continuous iterations, shifting between individual narratives and general context, pre-understandings and understandings, and empirical material and theoretical perspectives, to eventually generate an empirically grounded theory.

4.5 Quality of the Research

This research draws primarily upon qualitative research methods and seeks to be recognized as a phenomenological investigation in the sense of Lincoln & Guba (1985). Prior to the book's publication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), Guba (1981) emphasized the importance of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research studies and attracted academia's attention with highlighting four elementary criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. With reference to internal validity, Guba (1981) determined credibility as a key criterion for producing trustworthy studies.

Credibility

In order to enhance the credibility of this research, we exploit the method, that several researchers described as prolonged engagement (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through this method or activity, researchers seek to establish a positive relationship based on familiarity and trust between themselves and the participants of the investigated area (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, researchers have to spend much time in the investigated area to place values, relationships and behaviour patterns in a social context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Given, 2008). Since we involuntarily have observed and accompanied the hipster style over the last years, particularly because our cultural and fashion taste is strongly associated with the hipster style, we have the distinct advantage of having an in-depth understanding of the hipsters' everyday life. We are therefore familiar with the evolution, innovation and *zeitgeist* of the hipster style, which enables us to grasp the respondents' manifold and often ambiguous realities, experiences, aspirations and expressions in a much broader way. Certainly, there is also the counterargument that the longer researchers operate and observe the field, the higher the probability that their professional judgements will be influenced and therefore questionable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This legitimate argument can be rebutted by pointing out the key difference between the hipster style and traditional subcultures. In that context, we agree with Schiermer (2014), who accentuated that hipsters have greater concerns and bonds with themselves than with the entire hipster collective. Hipsters have no constituted leaders, no real cause and no distinct borders, which distinguishes the hipster style clearly from less inclusive and more uniform

traditional subcultures (Schiermer, 2014). Therefore, the influential power of the hipster style is considered as less dynamic, manipulative, manifest and hierarchical than traditional subcultures and minimizes the researchers' risk of distortion in the sense of Lincoln and Guba (1985).

A further activity that will increase the credibility of our findings is the usage of certain tactics to assist participants to provide credible answers (Shenton, 2004). These tactics offer eligible candidates the chance to refuse participation and seek to incorporate only motivated participants into the data collection process. Furthermore, the autonomy of this research will be directly communicated to the participants in order to dispel fear and skepticism that the participant's answers would support, for instance, the process of setting up a marketing strategy commissioned by companies associated with strong neoliberal or unethical thoughts. The participants are informed that they may refuse to answer or talk about certain topics with no need to state reasons to the researchers. This is particularly important given the background that hipsters traditionally reject mainstream consumption styles and commercialized mainstream culture (Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010). Through the application of these tactics, we hope to create an appropriate setting for producing credible, unforced and valuable findings.

In addition, we will make use of what Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as peer debriefings. These debriefings serve as a forum for meeting superiors in the operating field in order to present and test ideas, interpretations and sketches. The advantage of this technique is that the debriefing with well-informed experts and experienced scientists may assist us to identify potential biases or preferences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

As this research seeks to produce findings that result from applying qualitative research methods, or to put it more precisely, doing phenomenological interviews with a limited number of participants sympathizing with a specific style, the transferability of these findings requires some explanation. We do not intend to follow traditional positivistic ideals and wish to distance ourselves clearly from the attempt to produce findings that are generally applicable. This attempt would have been condemned to fail as our findings and conclusions are based on a fundamental understanding of the hipster style. For this purpose, a detailed description of the hipster style is provided, as it takes into account the context, which gives the findings meaning. With this in mind, we share Lincoln and Guba's view that it is not the researcher's task to provide an "index of transferability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.316), rather it is the researcher's responsibility to establish a comprehensive contextual data pool that allows a potential transfer. Furthermore, special attention should be devoted to the dynamics and resulting consequences of the investigated consumption pattern and not to the missing universality. In that sense, we agree with Kvale (1994) who states that the quest for universal knowledge is replaced by local knowledge in the postmodern culture.

Dependability

The concept of reliability refers to the "consistency and trustworthiness of research findings" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.245). The question arises whether a duplication of this research, including the same methodological approaches, would supply the exact same results.

Florio-Ruane (1991) emphasizes the importance of the situational setting of the study as it is strongly linked to the researcher's observation of the phenomenon. Consequently, data and descriptions are of static nature and "frozen in the ethnographic present" (Florio-Ruane, 1991, p.5). Reliability can be seen controversially regarding the purpose of this research, because the hipster style and its context is not stable and continuously changing and innovating. However, we recognize the importance of reliability in social research and adopt Moisander and Valtonen's (2006) reliability criteria by adding a transparent description of the research process and explicitly mentioning theoretical stances and the effects thereof.

Confirmability/ Validity

Validity commonly refers to the truth, the correctness and the strength of research. Like most other concepts of research-quality, validity originated from quantitative studies. The relevance of correctness and truth as indicators for quality need to be questioned regarding the purpose of this research. As stated above, in a postmodern era, truth in and around the self-identity project is created through dialogues, narratives and stories. This is particularly evident within the hipster style, where much of the identity work is done through discourse (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). The concept of truth is therefore replaced by something referred to as knowledge claims. These claims gain relative validity with each falsification attempt they withstand (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). We therefore aim to increase the validity of this research by looking for alternative explanations and interpretations for the collected stories and constantly try to refute our own knowledge claims.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have to be taken seriously in research in order to protect and respect the privacy of the participants (Bryman, 2011; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Due to the explorative nature of this research, it is essential to protect the participants who reveal their thoughts and feelings. To increase the participants trust and willingness to share their thoughts during the interview, the participants' names are changed to a pseudonym. Additionally, the material will only be used for scientific purposes and solely remain in the possession of the researchers. By taking these ethical precautions, the risk of being emotionally harmed will be decreased for the participants.

4.7 Limitations of the Study

This research has been carefully designed to yield results that enable the exploration of the research question, under consideration of the limited timely resources. Nevertheless, the choice of method poses some limitations that should be acknowledged. Namely, these limitations include the role of the researcher, the implications of phenomenological interviews and the limitations and shortcomings of an iterative, bottom-up analysis. Firstly, it has to be noted that the researchers themselves are associated with the consumption style under

scrutiny. This leaves the researchers with a somewhat biased (pre-)understanding of the style. In light of the inaccessibility of the research subject, this bias is relativized by the positive ramifications such as the researchers' unique access, their organic immersion into the style and their ability to detect emic characteristics of the style. Secondly, unstructured phenomenological interviews as method for the collection of data entails a noteworthy concern. This concern is the potential influence of the researcher on the course of the conversation due to the lack of a predefined structure of the interview. For the purpose of this study, the researcher's influence was restrained by mirroring the participant's language and letting the participant guide the interview's course and pace. Thirdly, the iterative, bottom-up approach entails an undeniable influence of the researcher. Having said that, for the purpose of generating theory, the influence of the researcher is inevitable and was, in this research, minimized by all available means.

5 Analysis

In the following chapter we analyse the data from the phenomenological interviews while including the theoretical concepts and ideas discussed in the literature review. First, we introduce instances in which the participants of our study have distanced themselves from a strict acting out of their consumption style. Second, we present those cases, where consumers have indulged in particularly creative forms of consumption and performed role-play to disappear into a virtual self. The following table gives an overview of all eight participants, their age, occupation and the paramount paradox of their consumption style.

Table 1: Overview of Participants

Individual	Age	Occupation	Style	Paradoxical Object
Thomas	29	Product Development Lead	Minimalistic, monochrome	Luxury outdoor and hunting jacket from a British heritage brand
Emily	26	Design Furniture Sales & Art Student	Minimalistic, casual, plain, foible for vintage sneaker	Sweatshirt from a premium Swedish designer label with flamboyant brand print
John	28	Graphic Designer & Design Thinker	Minimalistic, monochrome, simple	Golden automatic, diver-watch
Chloe	25	Junior Brand Strategist	Focus on vintage and retro items	Black leather, BDSM choker
Anna	28	DJane	Mainly black with some colourful items	Bikini from a high-priced American designer label with large brand print
Oliver	29	Journalist & Online Editor	Mass-produced niche hipster wardrobe, vintage-oriented	Beanie from a German designer label founded by a Gangster Rapper
Leah	24	Producer & Creative Director	Retro brand prints and vintage items	High-priced designer handbag
Maya	26	Art Student	Simple, plain, dark coloured	French, luxury-image handbag

5.1 Creating Distance to Avoid Ridiculousness

The common denominator of the participants is that they all consume paradoxical, according to the hipster manifest, but some do it - with a smirk on their face, or in other words, with a certain form of distance. What was in earlier times noble to solely follow a non-major brand oriented clothing style is today rather “simply ridiculous”. Taking into account that many participants purchased marketer-generated material that is rather paradoxical to the classical hipster wardrobe, it is important to mention that these purchases are relatively expensive investments. This also illustrates one of the greatest differences to classical ironic consumption practices in the sense of Klein (2009) and Thompson (2003). We are no longer talking about consumption practices resulting from the hipster’s foible for kitsch or irony (Schiermer, 2014) as showcases for a “being so bad that it is good cliché” (Thompson, 2000, p.133). Instead, we are now confronted with consumption practices of high-priced branded goods selling myths in the sense of Barthes (1972). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that these investments automatically flow into the self-identity project.

The next two chapters introduce two ways of distancing oneself, from a consumer perspective, within a particular style. On the one hand, we provide with ironic distance, a way of distancing oneself from a strict acting out of a particular style, and on the other hand a way of innovating the style in itself by making use of bricolage (Hebdige, 1979). In addition, we provide with consumer cynicism, from a consumer point of view, a very comfortable method to purchase paradoxical consumption goods and therefore create identity investments. Furthermore, it holds a mirror up to strict followers of a style and identifies them as ridiculous or immature. It eventually became clear, that some of the investigated paradoxical consumption practices within the hipster style are a result of consumer cynicism. The difference to the ironic distance lies on the one hand in the financial scope of the investment (consumption practice), and on the other hand, in the intention of the individual.

5.1.1 Reflexive Distance as a Result of Growing Up

In the preceding section, it becomes visible, how reflective and ironic behaviour towards the own style can result in paradoxical consumption behaviour. Oliver, 29, music journalist and DJ, a hipster in the classical sense, shows how the controversy of the fact that he has grown up, greatly affects his fashion discourse. In this first passage, it becomes clear how he deals with the fact that he has grown up.

Interviewer: Can you give us an example what you wear like now to look cool or be recognized by other people?

Oliver: Maybe like, I think really cool sweatshirts because when, I don't know, you have like a big piece of pizza on the top, you know like printed and it's like funny. I don't know it's easier to explain it seven years ago I guess. Because now everybody is like ‘I am doing what I want to do’ and I'm buying clothes that I want, but I don't buy them to get in the scene because I am 29 now you know.

Oliver aptly describes, referring to his age, how everybody is *now* doing what they want to do. He follows this trend and no longer buys cloth in a struggle to become part of a certain scene. His age seems to have a lot to do with the independence from this struggle of having to buy certain items just to be the member of a particular scene. He also states that, ‘seven years ago’ it would have been easier to explain certain behaviour which has now become more and more idiosyncratic. In that sense, Oliver has already turned his back towards authentic hipsters who often, in an attempt to be authentic and unique, unconsciously form a collective style (Sousa, 2016; Maly & Varis, 2016). By buying what *he* wants, for reasons other than belonging to a scene, he has renounced himself from a lot of the struggle that was seemingly connected to his purchasing behaviour before. Oliver adopted another attitude towards consumption in this process. As the next passage reveals, he created ironic, new symbolic ensembles (Hebdige, 1979) that have a particular function, with items from different scenes.

Interviewer: What items give you the most respect in your scene?

Oliver: I would say my beanie, that I wear right now, the *BRUDI* beanie is something which is really interesting because it speaks to two scenes: one kind of self-ironic scene, listening to guitar music and stuff, but is really doing a lot of internet jokes to which I belong too. And, of course, the Hip Hop scene because it's like the beanie from *Haftbefehl*, a really famous German rapper, you know, and I noticed, all the time when I wear this beanie little kids, like I don't know 13, 14 and of course Turkish kids as well look at my beanie and they know it's from *Haftbefehl* you know and they're like ‘hey that's really nice but the dude is not really like *Haftbefehl*’ [laughs]. It is funny to see.

Interviewer: So, they are kind of confused?

Oliver: Yeah because they just know it from the Hip Hop scene, and I am definitely not from the Hip Hop scene, and you know like the independent scene is like looking at it and they're ‘like oh that's nice’. You know like because yeah, it's like *Haftbefehl*.

Before going into detail about why Oliver might wear this beanie it is important to highlight the paradox of his consumption practice. Here we have a classical hipster, who has integrated into his style, the beanie of *Babos*, the designer label of a famous German gangster-rapper. A rapper who has been criticized for his anti-Semitic and controversial texts (Peltonen, 2012) and his provoking use of classic gangster-rap symbols such as cars and guns (xxlmag, 2014). Combining this symbolic item with his otherwise simple hipster style creates an obvious paradox that needs explanation. In an attempt to break down the multilayered meanings of his behaviour we will first look at how he vindicates this behaviour for himself. Oliver talks about the fun that is connected to wearing the beanie. For him, wearing the rapper’s beanie although not being anything like the rapper, conveys an attitude of opposite valence to the meaning (Nicholson, Whalen & Pexman, 2013). In other words, it is ironic. As is typical for the use of irony in language, his behaviour also entails a humorous or fun aspect (Leggitt & Gibbs, 2000). The second aspect, that makes his behaviour particularly interesting is the fact that, similar to another social function of irony in language (see Gibbs, 2000), Oliver seems to elevate his own social status by using the irony to confuse little kids and get respect from his peers. What becomes evident here is that he distances himself from all those people who lack the cultural and social knowledge to correctly interpret the ironic intent of his message (Pexman, Glenwright, Krol & James, 2005). With this demarcation, he subsequently puts himself among his peers who interpret the context – the way he bricolages his style with Hip-Hop items – correctly and pay him respect for his ability to transcend the common scene boundaries and innovate the style. A third and final aspect worth mentioning, is that in

addition to getting respect from his peers for his creative combination of this symbolic object, Oliver seems to legitimize the beanie in a way. Apparently, the mere fact, that a classical hipster like him wears this Hip Hop item, makes it okay. It seems like the end, or the simple act of bricolage, justifies the means. In a way, he almost baptizes the *BRUDI* beanie as a legitimate hipster symbol through his behaviour. Certainly however, this would not be possible without a well respected status in his consumption style.

In summary, Oliver has shown particular sophistication when dealing with his discontent towards having to buy what other people want him to buy. Due to his age, and the fact that he has now grown up, he no longer has to partake in this constant strive for belongingness and can buy whatever he wants. If anything, he has now gained the ability to transcend the traditional scene boundaries through irony, thus creating a reflexive distance between himself and those who are still entangled in the strive for belongingness. In objects from alien subcultures he has found an outlet that allows him to create new symbols at will and subsequently elevate his social status. A status that he only truly shares with those who have the cultural and social knowledge to interpret his consumption behaviour correctly.

5.1.2 Distancing from Living out a Strict Style

A significant characteristic of hipsters is their rejection of mainstream consumption styles (Urban Dictionary, 2017b). Many participants, however, have done precisely that. From this point of view, the question now arises if the modern cynic, who prefers a deliberate handling of consumption activities, no matter if they are dubious or not (Bertilsson, 2015), has taken another shape - the shape of the modern hipster. There is abundant evidence that many participants are distancing themselves from an orthodox enforcement of the *hipster laws*, or in other words, manifestos. This means that a disciplined way of living out all of these manifestos, such as following all ethical precepts, trends or being the first through chronological distinction, seems ridiculous now.

The next illustrations reveal the consumption practice of a wax jacket, marketed by the international premium brand Barbour, whose products are mostly segmented in the upper price segment. This piece is a strong example for paradoxical consumption practices in the hipster style, as it stands for something that the original hipster is not, namely 'mainstream' (Maly & Varis, 2016) and therefore understandably not posh brand oriented. The traditional hipster does not want to be associated with brands who are selling prestigious or poshy myths in the sense of Barthes (1972), and furthermore not with commercialized and cliché hipster features. Instead, the hipster is always on the run to avoid these unpleasant associations. However, Thomas makes use of bricolage in the sense of Thompson (2000), as he borrows freely an outstanding feature from the alien style to produce personal identity. His mix n'match style is composed by combining the Barbour jacket with traditional hipster fashion elements, such as skinny jeans or short-sleeve patterned button-down shirts. It reflects the previous introduced protean identity mantra of postmodern consumers due to the fact that his flexible acts of bricolage are - adaptable and flexible - (Thompson, 2000) and allow him a feeling of autonomy and even a sense of superiority. Having said that, he has now the potential to adapt the role of the *member of the hipster avant-garde* and can thus innovate the style (cf. Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The paradoxes, however, are that Thomas, a twenty-

nine years old hipster working in the creative industry, consumes and proudly presents a mainstream brand's high price wax jacket, although he formerly announced that his clothing style is pretty simple and is composed without much brain effort and strategic or tactical considerations. Another and probably the most striking paradox is that this eye-catching piece is in sharp contrast to the classical, non-major brand, monochrome wardrobe of the hipster.

Interviewer: How do you use your style, what do you think you do with the way you dress?

Thomas: Okay personally, I really like, hmm, I think it should be super simple. [...] I don't want to compare myself with Steve Jobs but I don't want to put too much effort in the decision-making in the morning what I should wear or not. [...]

[...]

Thomas: Well I like to combine those with my Barbour jacket, it is kind of funny you know, it's you know, it reminds me somehow hunting (laughing) in a way and this is sometimes in a way, and you know these narratives that are working somehow. I think this Streness, this is more like a poshy attitude for a person would not consider himself as poshy but you know like I really like these dissonances to play with. So this is really fun for me. For example, a hunting jacket, do you know this green wax Barbour jacket?

In the course of the interview Thomas thaws slowly to elaborate more on the underlying reasons for his consumption practice. What might at first glance look like a funny, or in other words, ironic way of consumption deserves in reality a more in-depth view. His consumption practice is not equal to the typical form of ironic consumption such as the „being so bad that it is good cliché“ (Thompson, 2000, p.133), instead it is of rather cynical nature.

Consequently, there has been a transition in Thomas' life and his world views. He now switched his political compass from left to liberal and embraced capitalism, no matter whether he works in the creative industry or not. He underlines the general association of neoliberalism and day-to-day business, but he also states his own opportunistic interests and accentuates the distinctive feature of contemporary young urban professionals, who now stand out as workaholics in a hipster outfit. This somewhat opposed trend of aspiring young urban professionals, working in the creative industry and sympathize with the hipster style is currently called *Yuccie* - young urban creatives (Infante, 2015). Taking into account his personal and professional growth, it can be clearly seen that Thomas has shed light on the other side of the story. He has now an understanding of how brands work and thematises strategic brand concepts such as brand storytelling or brand narratives. Moreover, he emphasizes the absurdity of the marketplace myth of Barbour's wax jacket as it aims to create a story of a hunting trip in the countryside under British weather conditions. He stresses out the manipulative character of this myth, as none of these conditions take place in his home context. It is precisely these insights that indicate his full awareness of the dubiousness of consumerism. But instead of criticizing or resisting, he rather has a conscious approach towards marketer-generated material and consumes it - with a smirk on his face. This is in line with the indications introduced in the theory chapter as Bertilsson (2015) states that modern cynicism has lost its power as a classical form of resistance or critique and has now the ability to evolve into a form of conscious consumption. The next illustrations show these findings:

Interviewer: So, you know what kind of buttons to push, huh?

Thomas: Definitely but they know the same for me as well. they sometimes associate me with neoliberalism but I'm not in a way really... I think sometimes you do exactly and I voted for the left party also years ago but this time I will definitely vote for the liberal party. I see it more in the whole context and what is good for the whole society in the end. [...]

Interviewer: I am really interested in the Neoliberalism thing. Is there a common ground in your scene? Like a codex?

Thomas: Well, I would say I have enough smart people to doubt systems like this. This is may be funny, because those people are also influencing me in a way. I have these influences everyday also in my work, you could say working is neoliberalism, of course but yeah maybe if you are a yuppie than it is different, you know. You look like a hipster, but I am really into working and get the personal best.

[...]

Interviewer: What about the aesthetics of the jacket?

Thomas: I also like the aesthetics, somehow, I like, but it depends as I said in the context. Of course, somehow it is really really nice. Somehow, if you ask me about brands, and I think brands they all tell somehow a story. Nowadays, they really try hard you know - Storytelling, Narratives are quite popular in the moment. [...] And you know in the city contexts, nobody needs that of course, there is no British weather, nobody is hunting foxes but it is cool to have something like this because this makes sense.

However, he can and certainly does not wish to live out this kind of modern cynicism in his consumption practices on an everyday basis. Instead, his paradoxical consumption practice could be seen as a form of cynical distance from the hipster style in the traditional sense, as he sympathizes with some parts, such as the simplicity of the hipster style, but regards an orthodox way of acting out the hipster style as ridiculous and immature. Evidently, he has normcore elements in his current style, as some of his outfits are characterized by a significant degree of inconspicuousness and adaptability (K-Hole, 2013, p.24). This may be partly because a minimized clothing style has strongly evolved to a manifest for successful entrepreneurs wearing the same kind of clothes in order to save precious time, which they can instead use in their creative work. He obviously identifies himself with that underlying idea and, moreover, contributes to his self-identity project by the discourse of what we call the Tech-CEO clothing myth³. This is in itself a paradoxical mix, as throughout the interview process, it becomes evident that Thomas is far beyond away from being a full-time minimalist or normcore style icon. However, his entrepreneurial, minimalistic, or in other words, non-cynical mind-set set the base for his outbreak into cynicism and paradoxical consumption practices. In this context, it is interesting to note that modern cynicism allows almost maximum freedom in style composition and semantics of selection in the life world of the modern hipster. At the same time, we might say that modern cynicism can be seen as a free ticket for breaking all fundament hipster rules. This is particularly well illustrated in the following illustration where John talks about his attitude towards hipsterism:

John: Everyone has the same but to be fair everyone tries not to be a hipster. Everyone tries not to be a hipster and I just, like last year I just said 'f*** it, now I'm trying to be the worst of them all' that's what I'm doing now, that's why this as well [shows cap with logo print].

Cynical distance not only enables a legitimation of somewhat paradoxical consumption practices relating to a specific context, such as, in this case, the hipster style. Furthermore, it

³ A fashion trend, which was made famous by Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and CEOs (e.g. Steve Jobs & Mark Zuckerberg), whose wardrobe is made up of just one outfit in order to avoid spending valuable time for decision making

also introduces the cynic into the role of the 'superior'. Through the acts of bricolage, no matter how blatant or extreme, bricoleurs in the hipster style not only enjoy freedom and independence in their consumption practices. Furthermore, the corresponding cynical distance, above all, has the ability to protect identity investments and is even able to unmask individuals who strictly act out a consumption style. The protection of identity investments is particularly important because many of the participants' consumption goods are relatively expensive. In particular, they make use of sarcastic utterances, when necessary, as the following illustration shows:

Thomas: And I found myself afterwards in the Heideglühen (hipster club in Berlin), in my suit, and then I was like with the white shirt, tie and this kind of stuff. And this was course, in the club scene, so it was like so many people, "Why the fuck do you wear it? and you're like "Why not? Why do you look like shit? [laughs]

Indeed, this kind of utterance could easily be highlighted as a showcase example for sarcasm, because of its clearly recognizable verbal aggression (Haiman, 1998), saving face character (Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988) and its highly memorable experience, which results in advancing the self-identity project (Orwenjo, 2016). In this context, it could be said that not only the paradoxical consumption practices result in advancing the self-identity project, but also the discourse in itself, regardless of whether or not it results from an external-reference. It is interesting to note that Thomas, as a clear representative for modern cynicism, makes use of sarcastic utterances in order to let orthodox, or in other words, strict hipsters appear as laughing-stocks. As a result, he can protect his expensive identity investments and boost his self-identity project not only by eye-catching paradoxical consumption practices, but through memorable discourse as well. In short, he kills two birds with one stone.

Another case of paradoxical consumption practice becomes obvious, and reveals the cynical attitude that is decisive for this kind of consumption behaviour. The true cynicism of this participant becomes evident towards the end of the conversation, where Emily runs out of sensible justifications for her purchase. To illustrate the paradox of Emily's behaviour we shall first consider how she talks about aesthetics and style. Emily, a design student and furniture sales person, describes her style as simple with clean outlines and no overwhelming colours, as is visible in the next extract.

Interviewer: What is your foible for aesthetics?

Emily: I think I like it simple but with different, it depends on which way if it's like to take in fashion or if it's more in a product way, it is really hard to define it.

Interviewer: So, let's go with fashion.

Emily: I think we are surrounded with lots of little things daily, like if I have a real messy work table and so many different clothes around it, I want to have a bit more clear and simple view. When it comes to furniture or fashion, simple outlines not overwhelming colours and yeah this is my kind of aesthetics. And it also has to be, if it comes to fashion, it has to be comfy and fit for everyday life or for your work or whatever you are doing. Because it has to like, suit in your daily society life.

For Emily, her style is a way of dealing with things that otherwise clutter her life. This is why, according to herself, her style is defined by simple and clean forms and muted colours. This could also be interpreted as the description of a traditional hipster wardrobe. In addition to

this decluttering aspect of fashion she also describes how fashion has to be comfortable and fitting to the tasks of everyday life. It seems like fashion for her fulfils much more than what is traditionally required from it. This behaviour is generally speaking not that surprising, considering the multitude of interpretive positions that consumers can assume in order to define the meaning an object has for them (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). That being said, the perception of her style becomes increasingly more complex and paradoxical as the conversation progresses, visible in the next passage.

Interviewer: How is your style perceived from the outside?

Emily: Like all my friends here in Bremen, as Bremen is always 5 steps behind Berlin in fashion and even 20 steps behind London or something, they would say that ‘wow you're really into fashion’. All my female friends want to borrow my clothes. I just recently did flea market and I sold out all my stuff within, I don't know, 2 hours. I consume really differently, I have new stuff like, I have clothes for I don't know 500 Euros, like sweaters for 500 Euros in my wardrobe and I have like 2 Euro shoes from the flea market so it is strange and not really sustainable at all [laughs].

Interviewer: Let's stay at your non-vintage wardrobe. You said you have a 500 Euro sweater. What's the story about it?

Emily: It's like *ACNE Studio* sweater it's nothing. It's like a black sweater, it's really basic I bought it in Berlin and I was like ‘I can't spend 500 Euros on this sweater’ but then I went back the same day and bought it.

Interviewer: Is it printed?

Emily: Yeah, it says ACNE. I just feel so comfy in that sweater and it was just perfect.

Interviewer: So, that's the only reason you bought it?

Emily: I just triple and double checked the fabric and yeah it is really timeless as well. Obviously I will not buy it if my bank account would be empty, so yeah that's it.

The paradoxical nature of the way she combines different objects to form her style becomes immediately obvious. Her act of bricolage is clearly detectable. The simple style, that is meant to declutter her life and be comfortable and fitting for everyday tasks, is complemented by a 500€ sweatshirt from a Swedish designer label. The paradox of this behaviour is only underlined by the different narratives and arguments she brings forward to seemingly justify her purchase. We are not saying that an *ACNE Studio* sweatshirt is not comfortable or of high quality, but it is interesting to see that, at first, these are the only justifications she proposes to vindicate her purchase. Another aspect that becomes obvious in this passage is that she shows pride in the fact that her friends envy her style. In that sense, her style seems to have yet another function connected to her status among peers. As stated before, the true nature of her purchase only becomes visible towards the end of the conversation as this final passage shows.

Interviewer: Can you remember a specific moment or emotion or feeling in that sense?

Emily: I sometimes feel that I have to justify myself about spending these 500 Euros. And there is no justification, I just can't [laughs] and they really think I have to. But it is still my money and I earned it, so.

Here, the cynical underpinnings of her behaviour and her honest attitude become very obvious. In line with Stanley's (2012) description of cynicism, Emily indirectly resigns herself to the faulty and poor nature of the fashion industry and concedes that there is no

justification for her purchase. What makes this a prime example of cynicism is how she has accepted the fact that even though she tries to justify her purchase, although she knows that she can't, she still purchases the sweatshirt. Interestingly though, after admitting that there is not apt justification for her paradoxical consumption behaviour she proposes the last and final argument for her purchase. To her, the purchase of this item is, on its deepest level, a way of showing her independence, of showing that with her money, she can do whatever she wants and is accountable to no one.

The fact that she has truly understood the nature of the fashion industry, becomes visible through the cynicism which underpins her paradoxical consumption practices. Emily illustrated how her reflexivity and understanding enables her to create a cynical distance between herself, the fashion industry and those people who think that she has to justify herself. What is controversial about this distance, that she has created for herself, is that it allows her to partake in fashion discourse in the same way as everyone else, particularly by buying a 500€ branded sweater. In that sense Bertilsson (2015) is right in introducing consumer cynicism as a way of a deliberate handling of consumption activities, no matter if they are dubious or not.

5.2 Creative Consumption and Identity (Role-)Play

Consumption is sometimes described as creative identity play (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). In this sense consumer objects and the act of consuming is used creatively in order to construct identity. Through this logic, the construct of self-identity is constantly redefined and thus in flux. Consumers have attained sophisticated skills, and different methods that they use in order to construct their identity or to create a sense of self (cf. Belk, 1988). Some of these methods require a certain level of creativity and abstract thinking to be invented and conducted. These creative uses of consumer objects, particularly the act of bricolaging consumer objects to create new meaning (Hebdige, 1979) are prone to result in paradoxical consumption behaviour. This is because consumers sometimes combine objects in new and innovative ways in order to create meaning tailored to their particular needs. And even if consumers draw on known objects for their compositions, the outside observer who may not be able to understand or contextualize these adaptations (cf. Thompson, 2000) due to a lack of social and cultural knowledge. On rare occasions, consumers even create entirely new objects using them to advance their self-identity. In some instances, this is being done in order to assume roles for particular occasions. Other consumers bricolage symbolic objects to create meaning that simply accommodates or advances their identity project.

The following three chapters indicate, consumers' advanced understanding of consumption as creative identity play. Particularly the creative methods and abstract thinking employed by consumers to take part in this game, are of interest here. Therefore, instances are highlighted where consumers' participation in creative identity play resulted in notably paradoxical consumption behaviour. The preconditions that allow consumers to have these abilities and to partake in the game, like their understanding of the fashion discourse and their ability to use and combine objects, are highlighted.

5.2.1 Role-Play as a Manifestation of Reflexivity

In the preceding section, consumers' understanding of the dynamics of the fashion industry and its forces is indicated by their understanding of fashion as a game. Their relative distance to the act of consuming, necessary to partake in this game, becomes obvious. This reflective understanding is expressed by the art-student Maya, who in her description of her rather simple and normal style also thematises her understanding of fashion in general.

Interviewer: How did you dress, was that also something that you were thinking about before you went to the exhibition?

Maya: I tried to dress as normal as possible.

Interviewer: Because you went to the exhibition, you didn't decide to wear something else?

Maya: No just as normal.

Interviewer: What role in general does fashion and the way you dress yourself, what role does that play for you?

Maya: I think as you grow older you see how it's, what function it has [laughs] more clearly and then you can kind of, you not so maybe, you can see more from the outside and don't have to embody everything. What role? I think, I try to make it more, it's more a game.

Maya's understanding of fashion has clearly developed as part of her growing up. Becoming more mature has given her the reflective distance that is needed to understand the true nature of fashion, and to develop the ability to take part in fashion. Seemingly, this reflexive distance allowed her to refrain from having to embody everything that she used to have. Her relationship to fashion and her own fashion discourse is not that serious anymore. The fact that she talks about being able to see the function of fashion more clearly now, underlines this distance and reflexivity that she was able to acquire by getting older. This feeling of distance is further highlighted by her description of seeing the function of fashion from the outside, indicating, even more, her spatial detachment from the fashion industry and her own fashion discourse. This detachment seems to be necessary prerequisite in order to assume different roles and partake in creative identity play. This ability to take part in the game and the understanding of the game as a role-play, is further underlined by the next passage where Maya talks more about deliberately taking a specific role. In this case, the paradox that results from assuming a role also becomes apparent. She combines her normal and simple hipster style with a French designer bag that represents a somewhat luxurious image, an obvious paradox.

Interviewer: How do you deal with that, what do you wear?

Maya: No no, you imagine roles. Okay like *Longchamp*, like kind of posh and then you are like okay why not you will be perceived completely different and people will also interact with you differently. And then another day just, I don't know, more neutral. But you get the idea, like you think inside of a role.

Interviewer: Do you have like a big wardrobe?

Maya: I don't have a big wardrobe. I don't need like, it's not a big variety these people don't see me that often I have a few clothes for something. It's not that specific like some clothes you can also wear for different contexts but I think you can, like I have for example for fun a *Longchamp* bag and then you can just in a certain context just try it out, how it is to wear this.

Interviewer: Do you get some feedback for that?

Maya: No just surprise by art students maybe. But this can be also already a distinction. It doesn't matter really but there's such a big world behind it still.

Here, Maya talks about a particular object, the Longchamp bag, that allows her to assume a certain role. Interestingly enough, she takes this role at will. It becomes obvious how assuming this role is something that is fun, and that she tries sometimes, and in certain contexts. Likewise, she seems to be able to leave the role when she does not want to take it. Her role-understanding and more importantly her ability to switch between the roles at will, becomes obvious. Another aspect, worth mentioning is the way she describes her ownership of the bag. For her it's something that is fun – she owns a French designer bag, because it is a fun way of assuming another role and trying something out. Interestingly, Maya has a very clear understanding of the kind of role that she can assume by integrating the handbag into her style. She seems to be very aware of the kind of contexts in which wearing the handbag would result in taking up another role. Even the kind of reactions that are connected to the role, like being perceived and interacted with completely different, are obvious for her and seem to be part of the decision-making process that precedes a role.

One could argue, that Maya's behaviour entails a somewhat ironical intend. She seems to be very aware of the contradiction between her normal style and the symbolic character of the Longchamp bag. However, she still uses this object that is of opposite meaning to her general beliefs and her style. Similar to her behaviour, Gibbs (2000) described instances where through irony, individuals assumed other roles, or imagined themselves to be another person. This observation of irony in language, contains a surprising similarity to the way Maya uses the irony of the contradiction or paradox to assume another role. Another possible interpretation would be that Maya, through irony, expresses a muted version of her displeasure (cf. Harris & Pexman, 2003), with the social roles that are connected to symbolic objects such as the bag. Simply put, by wearing the bag she implicitly criticizes society for the fact that she is treated differently just because of wearing a certain object which might suggest a different level of economic or cultural capital.

Maya has surely demonstrated a high level of reflexive distance and holistic understanding of the fashion industry. In addition to that she has shown an appreciation of the higher meaning of the handbag, something Roland Barthes (1972) would refer to as the second order meaning of this object. These understandings have not only allowed her to *play the game* and assume certain roles, she has also been able to create a reflexive distance between herself and the fashion industry. Maya clearly shows a consideration for how she wants to be perceived by others, an ability which Levy (1982) attested consumers. Her role-play can be seen as a manifestation of her reflexivity. Because without her reflexivity and relative distance from the fashion industry, she would not be able to construct her identity the way she does, using symbolic objects in order to assume different roles.

5.2.2 Role-Play as an Expression of Social and Cultural Knowledge

In the preceding section, yet another instance becomes apparent, where the participation in creative identity discourse led to paradoxical consumption patterns. Here, similar to the situation above, the consumer assumes a particular role by appropriating a special consumer

object. More precisely, this object is combined with the objects or cloths that already make up the style, an act of bricolage. This highlights the experimental and improvised aspects often associated with the act of bricolage (cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1962). Why this act of bricolage can be considered paradoxical becomes obvious when looking at how Chloe describes her style.

Interviewer: And your style your fashion style for example how would you describe that, like what are your preferences?

Chloe: Well my main rule of thumb is: vintage always beats anything. I really, really love, like I love to dig for records but I also love to dig for really cool, weird-ass clothes that I find in s***** little thrift stores. [...] I mean like funky weird stuff and then I combine that with like just very normal pants and *Doc Martens*, they're my favourite kind of shoes because they're just all rounders and great for going out but also traveling and also in the winter to keep you warm so that's a given. And retro, anything retro I'm really big on, like I don't get this whole health goth trend where people just wear Nike all over, I mean, I don't know.

Chloe articulates a picture-perfect definition of the hipster style. Her explicit focus on everything vintage and retro really highlights the way she values chronological distinction (cf. Maly & Varis, 2016). In other words, she distinguishes herself from her peers by using objects that are vintage or objects which refer to a vintage item. Although she doesn't mention it explicitly, it can be assumed that she also considers owning an object first, before others pick up on the trend, a valuable distinction. This behaviour makes her, in the sense of different scholars (cf. Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014) a true hipster. Mentioning *Doc Martens* as her favourite kind of shoes and rejecting the new health goth trend that is pushed by an overrepresentation of brands such as *Nike* further underlines her affiliations. However, Chloe's style is not that unequivocal as we will see in the next passage. Here she shows her understanding of fashion discourse and how she uses fashion to manipulate other people's image of herself by assuming different roles.

Interviewer: What is the meaning behind that?

Chloe: Well, it really depends on what kind of choker. If it's just a Halsband [neckband] which is maybe satin or that kind of fabric, then it doesn't mean anything, it's just a different style of a necklace. But if it's a certain choker that has a code in certain scenes, for example, anything leather with like you know with a ring right here [points to larynx] it shows what you're into it's definitely a BDSM code. If you wear that and you mean it, it can show your sexual preferences. It is kind of a fetish outfit.

Interviewer: You say, if you wear it and you mean it. Can you wear it and not mean it?

Chloe: Exactly, because it is super trend now, chokers are so trendy now, that even people who do not know s*** about that scene wear it because *Lana (Del Rey)* wears it now. You know, the choker was kind of like leather choker style was taken out of context and people started wearing it.

Interviewer: But how is it for you?

Chloe: Well I know what it means and I play with that image, and I only wear it at some parties, where ya, it's just the style, you know? If you go to some parties like *KitKat* [Berlin Techno Club], or where people get naked, it is a fun way to play with your image, you know, you wanna send a certain message, you can do that by your outfit. If you wanna be seen kinky you have to wear something that makes you kinky. For example, a choker if you mean it. If you don't, other people would be like what the f*** is this about?

Chloe sees the choker as a way to assume a certain role. As a symbol of BDSM culture, or as she puts it 'a BDSM code', wearing this object allows her to alter her image. Combining the choker that stands for subordination with her rather emancipated hipster outfit is clearly a paradoxical combination. In so doing, she assumes a kinky role that is more fitting in certain contexts (cf. Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Similar to Maya's understanding of the Longchamp bag, Chloe also considers the role changing ability as a fun way to play with her own image and thus the way other people perceive her. She really illustrates the playful character that consumption and the creation of her own style has for her (cf. Firat & Venkatesh (1995). This behaviour suggests some kind of evaluation and consideration of possible roles, or as Markus and Nurius (1986) put it, possible selves. Chloe assumes the role whenever she desires so, provided the context is right. By talking about the choker and the meaning connected to its role in BDSM culture, Chloe highlights her social and cultural understanding. This behaviour is similar to the understanding of ironic utterances, where social and cultural knowledge is needed in order to correctly interpret the intent of the speaker (cf. Pexman, Glenwright, Krol & James, 2005). Chloe is not shy to articulate her discontent with people who do not have the same level of social and cultural understanding. She demarcates herself from them. This is an apt depiction of the reflexive distance that the social and cultural understanding gives her compared to other individuals. It is this knowledge that allows her to assume the role of the kinky BDSM girl. Notwithstanding, she only plays with that image at some parties and in some contexts.

The role of the BDSM neckband is twofold then. First of all, the choker is a manifestation of Chloe's social and cultural knowledge. Without this knowledge, she wouldn't be able to understand the true meaning of the symbol, a condition she strongly criticizes. She articulates her discontent towards all those people who unknowingly wear the choker without understanding its true symbolic character. Through this demarcation, she creates a distance between herself and those people who do not understand the symbol, due to their meager social and cultural knowledge. The second aspect of the BDSM neckband is its role assuming function. In order to assume or play a role, Chloe needs particular objects as artefacts. Much in the same way as props are needed in theatre to help someone portray a certain role or character. In order to understand which props are needed to assume a certain role, the above mentioned social and cultural knowledge and a detailed understanding of the meaning of these props is necessary. Chloe has shown the necessary understanding and is now able to assume the role of the kinky girl by wearing the choker.

The choker represents an object or prop that is particularly meaning laden. It is debatable whether or not the choker additionally represents a certain myth. Nevertheless, Chloe has shown a high level of understanding for what this object represents. Only through this understanding was she able to utilize the object as a prop in order to assume a certain role. This appreciation of both the first and second order meaning (cf. Barthes, 1972) of objects such as the choker is imperatively necessary to even consider assuming another role as it was portrayed by Chloe.

The role-playing behaviour shown by both Chloe and Maya has led to paradoxes. Bricolaging objects that represent props for certain roles, with their normal hipster style has resulted in contradicting compositions. In order to understand these style compositions, social and cultural knowledge is necessary. Highlighting the lack of this knowledge has been one way

how the individuals created distance between themselves and cultural illiterates. In other instances, the sheer ability to assume roles at will created a sense of distance. This sense of distance creation through role-play is something that Goffman (1961) extensively researched. He described role playing as instances where individuals completely disappear into their role, something that was also evident in the interviews.

Maya: I don't know, I think like, it's not like drastic roles, if I dress in a special way and I go into the role I don't really make a distinction between myself and the role.

Interviewer: So, when do you go into a role, when does that happen?

Maya: I think anytime there's different roles, like as I said, because you're different in different contexts and it's maybe just like emphasizing.

Interviewer: When you buy something to you already have a role in mind?

Maya: No, it's very intuitive.

Maya explicitly articulates the level to which she disappears in her role. As she states herself, when in the role, she no longer makes a distinction between herself and the role. Interestingly, she implicitly describes the transition phase where she goes from being herself to being in the role. She describes it by saying 'and I go into the role'. This marks the moment when she completely disappears into the role (cf. Goffman, 1961). Whether or not she advances her role-play through the right gestures and behaviour remains uncertain.

Nevertheless, there was evidence for attempts to retain some form of room for maneuver while at the same time assuming a role (cf. Goffman, 1961). Maya, Chloe and Emily all highlighted the fun aspect of their role-play. All three of them described either the act of assuming a role, or the object that would allow them to assume a role, as fun. This becomes evident in the next three passages.

Maya: I don't have a big wardrobe. I don't need like, it's not a big variety these people don't see me that often I have a few clothes for something. It's not that specific like some clothes you can also wear for different contexts but I think you can, like I have for example for fun a *Longchamp* bag and then you can just in a certain context just try it out, how it is to wear this.

Emily: [...] I do not, if you have a seen a picture of me dancing, we made outfits with raver, fake fur style bras and kind of love parade thing in Berlin and we were dancing on the trucks. This is not serious but yea, its funny. It's a funny costume as well, you know?

Interviewer: Costume in what way?

Emily: Costume to switch to another role and switch the role, I always depend it on my mood what I want to present.

Chloe: Well I know what it means and I play with that image, and I only wear it at some parties, where ya, it's just the style, you know? If you go to some parties like *KitKat* [Berlin Techno Club], or where people get naked, it is a fun way to play with your image, you know, you wanna send a certain message, you can do that by your outfit. [...]

In the words of Goffman (1961), these explanations can be understood as making room for maneuver. By stating the fun aspects of their role or the object, the individuals retain some kind of safety distance between themselves and the role. This way they cannot get caught up

in the role and remain ahead of it at all times. For them it is a way of keeping a certain distance between themselves and the role. At the same time, the role seems to be an important resource that serves their identity project. The distance only further emphasized the reflexivity that allows them to even assume certain roles in the first place. The fun aspect, also serves as an easy explanation of why they go through the trouble of even assuming another role. It therefore protects them from potential critique such as that their role play is a result of their discontent towards their own identity. For them it is a way to protect their identity project.

5.2.3 Myth-Manipulation as Creative Identity (Role-)Play

In the preceding section, the level of understanding and reflexivity that is shown, exceeds the levels witnessed before. Whereas in the examples above, the individuals simply utilized an object that already represented a certain role, the next passage shows a consumer who adapts a marketer-generated object for his own purposes. This example is particularly interesting because this very advanced level of creativity in the consumption results in a particularly paradox consumption practice.

Thomas, a 29-year-old product manager and freelancer, describes his style as simple. He even employs the Tech-CEO Clothing Myth of not thinking about style and what to wear in an attempt to save time for more valuable tasks. The next passage shows how he defines his style.

Interviewer: How do you use your style, what do you think you do with the way you dress?

Thomas: Okay personally, I really like, hmm, I think it should be super simple. [...] I don't want to compare myself with Steve Jobs but I don't want to put too much effort in the decision-making in the morning what I should wear or not. [...]

In stark contrast to the simplicity and functionality that he assigns to his clothing style stands the kind of thinking that was encountered later in the interview. The complexity of his style started to become explicit when Thomas mentioned his Barbour jacket. A Barbour jacket is a rather high-priced wax jacket intended for outdoor uses such as hunting and fishing. Nevertheless, Thomas bricolages the jacket with his otherwise simple, monochrome clothing style. This clearly marks a twofold paradox in Thomas' style. First of all, the jacket opposes to the allegedly simple and functional nature of his clothing style. Secondly, wearing such a hunting jacket in an urban environment such as Berlin is not necessary. Thomas is obviously aware of these contradictions and the paradoxical nature of his consumption behaviour as the next passage shows.

Thomas: It is really cool to have this (Barbour) jacket, it is helping you to have an experience. I could imagine myself like having a gun, going to the forest, shooting some foxes, you could completely imagine how this must feel, people have their rubber boots, and I like it. And you know in the city contexts, nobody needs that of course, there is no British weather, nobody is hunting foxes, but it is cool to have something like this, because this makes sense.

Although Thomas is clearly aware of the contradiction that his behaviour entails, this aspect does not stop him from wearing the jacket and supposedly feeling like a hunter himself. The

detail with which he describes the symbolic character and the myth that this jacket represents (for him) is striking. He demonstrates a clear understanding of the first and second order meaning of this object in the sense of Barthes (1972). However, he does not settle for the myth that the jacket and the brand offer him. He shows an unseen level of reflexivity and understanding towards myths and the dynamics of how brands work. Thomas therefore manipulates the object in an attempt to create his own myth and subsequently assumes the unique role that this new object and the accompanying myth allow him to take. The next extract shows his thinking in more detail.

Thomas: For example sometimes you know when, okay this sounds really pretentious, but sometimes when we go out like and go nuts, it's, I love, there is a (*Barbour*) jacket, no, there is a pocket in the back where exactly fits like a champagne bottle [laughs] and you know it is a kind of stupid findings but when you go to a party and all of a sudden have like a, like a *Veuve Clicquot* Champagne something which is you know, does not happen too often, don't worry, so I am not that person, but you know sometimes it is really fun. This is surprisingly funny to play with because apparently something just super rich pretentious m***** would do, but you know? If I do it with the context that people know me this, like the contradiction, that makes it interesting for myself, to play with.

Thomas does not use the original hunting myth that the Barbour jacket provides him with. However, using the Barbour jacket, he creates a new object for an entirely new role. He describes, in detail both how he adapted the jacket to fit his personal needs and the occasions during which he uses the jacket. By repurposing the poachers pocket of the jacket, to fit an expensive Champagne bottle, Thomas creates the urban-hunter-jacket. By adding the Champagne bottle and through the context in which he wears the jacket, he therefore envisions what we refer to as the urban-hunter-myth. Created for the intention of going out, he can hence, adopt the role of the urban hunter, when he wears the jacket. The creation of a new custom object that is solely brought into being to allow Thomas assumes a certain role, exhibits a very high level of creativity and a particularly advanced method of identity work. If other consumers have understood creative identity play as a game (cf. Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), then Thomas has cracked the game.

Looking at other parts of the conversation with Thomas and the way he talks about 'picking up girls' one could argue that, in his role as the urban hunter, he is actually hunting girls. The next passage reveals how he thinks about that.

Thomas: [...] I studied communication as well, there is like a saying: 'there is no bad advertisement'. So if people even hate you, you know it's easy because apparently you made an impression and this person will recognize (you). And you know if you are eloquent enough to use that certain situation for your personal goals. But it is the same with picking up girls. It is a pick up style. You know so many girls I met they used to hate me so much before, and that's okay! [...]

Thomas clearly reveals a somewhat provocative style when it comes to picking up girls. He even refers to his education stating that 'there is no bad advertisement'. Even though he does not particularly refer to his Barbour jacket and the role when talking about how he picks up girls, it is not hard to imagine what the urban hunter intends to hunt.

The understanding and reflexivity expressed in the excerpts above show a very high level of creativity and abstract thinking. The fact that Thomas creates his own symbolic object with the compatible myth shows (a) how far consumers are willing to go in order to assume certain roles and (b) their level of creativity and sophistication when it comes to envisioning both these roles and the objects needed to assume them. In that sense Thomas underlines yet again, how consumers are willing and able to advance their self-identity project in an almost game-like fashion (cf. Holt & Thompson, 2004). That being said, Thomas, like Chloe and Maya, also retains a certain safety distance to the role of the urban hunter by mentioning the fun aspect that the role offers him. This lack of seriousness, suggested by his 'fun' argument, allows him to always maintain this last bit of ironical distance to the role, so that nobody can accuse him of losing himself in the role.

In summary, the role-playing behaviour of the individuals entails different reasons and arguments. First of all, individuals use the act of role playing in an attempt to further their identity discourse. It marks one of the more advanced and sophisticated measures conducted by individuals. This is because the ability to assume a role depends on various factors. These factors include a sufficient amount of social and cultural knowledge in order to comprehend which objects function as props for which role. The social and cultural knowledge has to be accompanied by the ability to understand first and second order meanings of objects. This knowledge and appreciation has to be combined with an understanding of the kinds of contexts in which assuming a role is possible and beneficial. Secondly, the act of assuming a particular role is a way for individuals to show that they have the social and cultural knowledge necessary to perform role-play. This understanding and reflexivity creates a distance between themselves and other members of their consumption style, who lack this level of understanding. The role-play is a manifestation of their reflexivity. Furthermore, it creates a reflexive distance between themselves and things such as fashion and style. Due to their role-playing ability, nobody can accuse them of being too caught up in fashion or just blindly following a certain style. Thirdly, although the role-play represents a way to show reflexive distance towards fashion and style, the individuals still remain somewhat distant even from the roles that they assume. By constantly highlighting the fun aspect of these roles, they allow themselves room to maneuver within the role and prevent others of accusing them to get too caught up in a role. Fourthly and lastly, some consumers go to great lengths in order to envision and assume roles that otherwise don't exist. By doing that they create a particularly unique role for themselves that is hard to copy for other consumers. This behaviour points towards incredibly high levels of reflexivity and creativity when it comes to applying methods in order to advance their self-identity project.

6 Discussion

In the following chapter, we introduce the concept of *reflexive bricolage* as a method for consumers to create reflexive distance towards their own fashion discourse, before going into detail about the implications of this concept. Thereafter, we discuss the findings of this study with concepts from previous literature and highlight the ways in which our study contributes to prior research.

6.1 The Concept of Reflexive Bricolage

By investigating the hipster style, whose ethos and consumption practices serve as a showcase example for a consumption style representing postmodernity (Hill, 2015), the purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the underlying reasons which motivate consumers within a consumption style to engage in paradoxical consumption practices. A further aim was to provide a detailed explanation of these consumption practices. Based on the empirical material provided in form of phenomenological unstructured interviews, we discovered two underlying reasons for paradoxical consumption practices within a consumption style. Firstly, paradoxical consumption practices enable consumers to ironically or cynically distance themselves from a strict acting out of the consumption style in order to avoid potential ridiculousness. Ridiculousness arises when peers and other members of the consumption style render the behaviour absurd, question the individual's authenticity and when an excessive compliance to style manifestos compromises the consumer's individuality. Secondly, paradoxical consumption practices are the result of consumers' occasional break out from their native style to do role-play and disappear into a virtual self. Both paradoxical consumption practices are marked by a high degree of self-reflexivity and allow consumers to create a reflexive distance between themselves and their fashion discourse. In this context, fashion discourse represents the act of constructing self-identity through fashion. The dissociation from the own consumption style and the occasional break outs are achieved by a very particular form of bricolage. We term the act of using bricolage to establish a reflexive distance towards the own fashion discourse, *reflexive bricolage*.

Reflexive bricolage allows consumers to establish a reflexive distance towards their own fashion discourse by (1) integrating paradoxical objects into their style composition to create ironic or cynical distance, or (2) by performing role-play to disappear into a virtual self. Through *reflexive bricolage* consumers (a) innovate the style, (b) avoid the ridiculousness of simply acting out the style, (c) create opportunities for identity work (d) and accomplish a sense of freedom from fashion discourse. (a) Integrating objects from opposing consumption styles into the own style composition through reflexive bricolage creates paradoxes. Due to the novelty of these paradox style compositions, consumers organically innovate the

consumption style. Additionally, due to the paradoxicality, consumers prevent the democratization of the objects by large brand that make them available to the masses. (b) The paradoxical objects assist consumers in distancing themselves from the ridiculousness of strictly acting out the style. The hipster style in particular visualizes the ridicule with which consumers of a style are met when living out the style in a strict or convulsive way. Avoiding such a strict acting out while still showing the belongingness to the consumption style, is what reflexive bricolage allows the consumers to do. (c) Through the act of reflexive bricolage consumers create paradoxes that get the attention of peers. While only those peers with sufficient amounts of social and cultural knowledge understand the true nature of their behaviour, the contradiction creates encounters that consumers use for identity work. (d) The reflexive distance created through reflexive bricolage that is mostly manifested in the ironic or cynical nature of the act, accomplishes a sense of freedom for the consumer. Understanding the poor and faulty nature of neoliberalism and identity work through fashion discourse allows the consumer to surrender and henceforth, continue their behaviour unchanged and consume whatever they please.

By doing *reflexive bricolage*, consumers automatically create opportunities for extended identity work and enjoy almost limitless freedom in their styles' semantics of selection and can coincidentally protect their previously gathered identity investments and position within the original consumption style. The two identified underlying reasons suggest that paradoxical consumption practices within a consumption style are strongly related to a large extent of self-reflexivity. This is particularly advantageous for consumption or youth styles with a tendency for having stringent manifestos for consumption preferences, as is the case in the hipster style. This self-reflexivity can be expressed through a particularly refined form of cynicism. Modern cynicism within a consumption or youth style is therefore advantageous as it equips the cynic with a free ticket for almost any possible consumption practice, no matter if it exceeds the native consumption style's boundaries.

The modern cynic is, according to Bertilsson (2015), fully aware of the dubiousness of consumerism, but prefers a conscious approach and therefore a sense of freedom in consumption practices and preferences. The modern cynic is now enlightened about the functionality of the world, but still acts in a contradictory and paradox way (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). There is little space for consumer resistance in postmodernity, as most members of a consumption or youth style have understood the insignificance of criticizing the system (Bertilsson, 2015). It is also strenuous and exhausting to explain oneself for consumption practices by means of convincing arguments in front of a strict style tribunal. Modern cynicism represents the most simple and memorable way to avoid the discomfort of that style tribunal, which allows the consumer to save face within the style hierarchy, while creating opportunities for identity work.

The concept of *reflexive bricolage* supports Žižek's (1987) and Fleming and Spicer's (2003) view on cynical distance. Even if individuals successfully fade out the power of ideology by using reflective distance or taking things less seriously, "[they] are still doing them" (Žižek, 1987, p.33). Beyond that, his insights about freedom within an ideological fantasy are also supported. In this spirit, consumers are very aware that their perception of freedom is of exploitative nature, nevertheless they remain faithful to this idea of freedom (Žižek, 1987). The act of role-play fulfills a similar purpose, serving as the manifestation of the consumers'

reflexivity and their social and cultural knowledge. Consumers are very aware of the double-sided nature of their role-play that is only possible through the kind of consumption from which they wanted to distance themselves initially. However, the ability to disappear into a role or virtual self, creates an unmatched sense of freedom, which is protected by carefully crafted narratives that highlight the ‘fun’ nature of role-play. With these narratives, consumers create room to maneuver (cf. Goffman, 1961), and avoid the ridiculousness of convulsively acting out a role and prevent themselves from being criticized for getting lost in a role. Ironically, with these occasional breakouts, consumers handle their lack of sufficient amounts of cultural capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1984) that would be required to sincerely live the real life that the role embodies. But instead of relieving themselves from the meagerness of their cultural capital, they corroborate the fact, that in truth they will always lack the required amount of cultural capital.

In addition, the concept of *reflexive bricolage* supports Bertilsson's (2015) insights about freedom as a result of cynicism. This freedom, however, allows contemporary consumers to thus consume as usual, as if nothing happened in the meantime. In particular, *reflexive bricolage* entails, that consumer cynicism should not be equated with impactful forms of consumer resistance and may shape contemporary consumer cultures in a way that allows to find “something good or right in a cynical reason” (Bertilsson, 2015, p. 464). However, in this particular study, the hipster style was selected, as a representative for postmodern consumption styles. In times of postmodernity, it may not be advisable to consider consumption practices within consumption styles in a black and white manner; instead, it has to be acknowledged that consumption styles undergo changes and develop their own dynamics in order keep their ethos alive and avoid extinction. They achieve that through reflexive bricolage, an adaption of the traditional concept of bricolage in the sense of Hebdige (1979), Clark (1976), Lévi-Strauss (1962) or Thompson (2000), which extends the classical definition range of the term by introducing reasons and motives for applying such a sophisticated, contradicting form of bricolage.

Bricolage was formerly known as a spontaneous act, today, *reflexive bricolage* is a strategic, defensive weapon that boosts the self-identity project within a consumption or youth style. Our findings support bricolage as a concept to form youth styles (Hebdige, 1979) and style innovation (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Furthermore, however, our extension of bricolage, *reflexive bricolage*, differs from the original concept due to its practitioners’ clear and strategic target orientation. Furthermore, the concept of reflexive bricolage has the ability to provide deeper insights into the key motives behind paradoxical consumption practices within consumption styles. Reflexive bricolage has two main characteristics: Firstly, it clearly underlines the potential risks of ridiculousness that arises through a strict acting out of a style and its ‘manifests’, and, secondly, enables the consumer to cope with a very significant contradiction: the urge for being posh, glamorous or simply different while lacking sufficient embodied cultural capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1984) to be part of the elite. Cynicism and irony shape this concept in a significant way. Enlightened consumers in consumption styles may use this self-centric concept to boost self-identity, but simultaneously innovate the style and protect previously gathered identity investments and obtained identity positions. In that sense, the era of postmodernism is also the era of meta consumption styles or - in this case - the birth of the *enlightened hipster*, representing a new breed of enlightened consumption style members.

6.2 Discussing Previous Literature

The findings of this study contribute to prior literature on the aspirational identity projects that consumers pursue to create a sense of self (Belk, 1988; Mick & Buhl, 1992) by highlighting the sophistication of the creative methods that consumers apply to advance their self-identity projects. More specifically the findings advance the work of Levy (1982) who has attested consumers the ability to think abstractly and consider first and second order meanings when projecting how they want to be seen by others. The findings suggest that the levels of abstraction and the number of variables consumers consider when projecting how they want to be seen, are far more refined and sophisticated than what was previously considered (cf. Levy, 1982). In addition to that, the findings add to our current understanding of how consumers navigate the marketplace looking for objects that can advance their sense of self (Diamond et al., 2009; Holt & Thompson, 2004). Rather than simply navigating the own marketplace in the search for objects, or alien marketplaces for that matter (cf. Hebdige, 1979), it is therefore possible that consumers roam the marketplaces of alien subcultures or styles opposing their own values, on the look for possibly contradicting objects and symbols. These findings underline the level of complexity that consumers are able to grasp when constructing their self-identity (cf. Levy, 1982) and highlight the ease and nonchalance with which the consumers advance their identity project.

Whereas various prior contributions suggest different, creative methods applied by consumers to actively advance their identity project (Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2002; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) or react to potential threats (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), our findings paint the picture of individuals who seamlessly combine many of these methods at once. Consumers seem to constantly evaluate brands' potentials for their identity project (cf. Holt, 2002), combine and adapt objects with different meanings (cf. Thompson & Haytko, 1997) in their original and transmuted form (Diamond et al., 2009), and match their own identity narrative to the market and their own behaviour (cf. Thompson, 2004), while implicitly creating entry barriers and hierarchical structures (cf. Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). The consumer thus becomes a highly sophisticated individual that is able to draw from a multitude of creative methods that comprise her identity-toolbox. In that sense, we can only underline Firat and Venkatesh (1995) who have, in their study, described consumption as creative identity play. We want to emphasize the playfulness and the creativity that becomes visible in our study as consumers combine different methods when consuming.

In addition, the findings contribute in yet another way, to the same literature on creative methods for identity work (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Diamond et al., 2009; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Arsel, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) by suggesting a potential, third stream, that comprises new methods that consumers apply to *prevent* potential threats to their identity before they appear. This stream then, would be the addition to the two streams that discuss how consumers react to potential threats to their identity investments in order to protect their self-identity project and, how they act to create novel meanings in order to advance their self-identity project. The findings put forward through the concept of *reflexive bricolage* outline, amongst others,

methods such as the creation of ironic and cynical distance, as ways in which consumers may prevent damage to their identity investment, or worse, their identity project. The cynical or ironic distance may in some cases serve as a protective layer that allows consumers to repel any threat. The findings of this study also support the work of Fleming and Spicer (2003), by extending the scope of application of cynical distance within critical management studies into consumption practices within consumption styles. In that respect again, consumers make use of a space in-between a strict acting out and a full dis-identification of a consumption style and achieve through expressed cynicism ‘face protection’ within their cultural milieu.

The findings put forward in this study contribute to the literature that describes and thematizes the hipster (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Maly & Varis, 2016; Schiermer, 2014) whether they refer to it as a subculture or as we concluded, a non-static youth style. More specifically, the outright rejection of mainstream consumption styles, one of the main defining characteristics of the hipster style, can at least partially be revoked. This is evident, at least, for a new kind of hipster, that has understood the neoliberal nature of mass-produced niche products (cf. Maly & Varis, 2016) and witnessed the commercialization of vintage items. We termed this consumer the ‘enlightened hipster’ due to their understanding of fashion and their reflexive distance towards fashion discourse. Rather than rejecting mainstream objects and symbols, as suggested by literature, enlightened hipsters with high levels of social and cultural knowledge embrace mainstream or mass-produced objects that are less likely to be democratized by style curators (such as Urban Outfitters or ASOS) or large brands, that make them available to the masses. Given this changing behaviour, the concept of chronological distinction (Maly & Varis, 2016) has to be updated. Whereas Maly and Varis propose, that “‘real hipsters’ do things ‘years before’ they become mainstream” (2016, p.640), the findings suggest, that the ‘enlightened hipster does mainstream things before they become hipster’. In addition, the enlightened hipster does not necessarily refuse to be labeled ‘hipster’. This may be due to a certain laziness towards fashion discourse, that results from comprehending the faulty and poor nature of neoliberalism. The enlightened hipster thus accepts the label, due to the strains that a rejection of the label would entail. Occasionally the hipster even embraces the label as a sign of reflexivity towards fashion discourse or to create cynical distance. The reflexive and enlightened hipster represents the prototype of a new generation of enlightened members of consumption styles.

The findings of this study advance the classical paradox of fashion discourse, as it was introduced by Thompson and Haytko (1997), by developing two levels that represent new endpoints to the original paradox. These endpoints are developed because of a lack of room for identity work between the original endpoints. With the autonomous versus conformity paradox, Thompson and Haytko (1997) originally described the contradiction between the strive for autonomy and the hardwired desire for belongingness and conformity. Our findings show that there is a more extreme endpoint to the paradox that exceeds autonomy. Rather than settling for autonomy, an attempt is made to achieve an extreme version of autonomy through the act of *reflexive bricolage*. Similarly to this behaviour, the findings also highlight, the strive for a more extreme version of the conformity endpoint of the paradox. Employing the Tech-CEO Myth of minimizing the time spent for decision making and unifying the wardrobe to create the next level of conformity, creates *normcore* (cf. K-Hole, 2013). In other words, both conformity and autonomy have been carried to the extremes. Therefore, the original

paradox is seemingly overcome while new opportunities of identity work are created. At the same time, reflexive bricolage and normcore simply comprise a new paradox that is limited in its durability until it dissolves to become autonomy and conformity, respectively.

The findings of this study offer a new perspective on irony in consumption both in the literature that discusses irony in a more general sense (Klein, 2009; Thompson, 2000) and the work of Schiermer (2014) who thematises irony as a defining trade of the hipster style. More specifically, looking at Klein's (2009) prime example of ironic consumption, 'the enlightened Disneyland visitor that has a great, innocent time', the findings of our study suggest, that consumption behaviour requires a more nuanced consideration when it comes to understanding the consumer's intention. In addition to irony, different language structures such as sarcasm and cynicism may structure behaviour. Instead of functioning as an example of ironic consumption, 'the enlightened Disneyland visitor that has a great, innocent time' stands for cynical consumption in its purest form. Furthermore, Thompson's "being so bad that it is good cliché" (2000, p.133) of ironic consumption, or in other words the appreciation of kitschy objects, can be updated with a more sophisticated form of irony. Instead of celebrating the 'badness' of objects and deifying them until they become great, consumers now tend to use 'aesthetically attractive' objects and deify them to become something better or serve a particular purpose. A natural by-product of this behaviour is a less easily detectable, more poised form of irony, or cynicism for that matter, that does away with the somewhat dull character of the ironic consumption that Thompson (2000) witnessed. The findings put forward here also demand a discussion of Schiermer's perspective, who focusses on irony as a "*collective* enjoyment of 'failed' objects" (2014, p.171, emphasis in original). Although this kind of irony has not disappeared, irony does not necessarily imply that the object under scrutiny is a 'failed' one. While the successful-understanding-creates-bonding logic (cf. Schiermer, 2014) of irony remains relevant, individuals increasingly use positively connotated or successful objects to create a more explicit, direct influence to their identity project through the use of irony.

The findings of this study redress a gap in prior literature, by highlighting how the underlying logic of irony as a language device, structures the way consumers act to advance their identity project. Murray briefly discussed this idea in his re-inquiry into Thompson and Haytko's (1997) article by stating that "speakers are bound by their ability to use a language in the same way that consumers are bound by their resources" (2002, p.428). Instead of showing a two-way interdependency between consumption and language as introduced by Murray (2002), this study suggests a strict one-way influence of language as the structuring authority for consumption. More specifically, the findings of this study show that the underlying structure of irony as a language concept guides our ability to do identity work within postmodern consumption styles. The logic of the receiver having to induce the sender's values and beliefs, and the sender accepting the risk of being misunderstood, is highly evident in consumer's consumption behaviour. Murray's (2002) thought therefore requires remediation and may henceforth be formulated as follows: 'consumers ability to use resources accrues from their capabilities to use language'. This further indicates the importance of linguistic concepts and inspires their use to research and explain consumption behaviour. One such concept that helps to better understand consumption behaviour is Kreuz and Roberts' (1995) concept of explicit irony cues. Tone of voice and hyperboles, which, applied in verbal language are indicators of ironic remarks that serve to direct the receiver to the right

interpretation, are two such methods. Although fashion discourse has to be interpreted as a rather non-verbal form of communication the findings of this study suggest that the contrast manifested in the style composition serves as an equivalent to the tone of voice, while the disparity to the overall context of the situation, in which the consumer finds itself, serves as an equivalent to the hyperbole.

7 Conclusion

This study has set off, to find the underlying reasons for why contemporary consumers, who belong to a particular style, engage in paradoxical consumption practices, and explain these very practices. As a result, this study established the concept of *reflexive bricolage* as the act of integrating obviously paradoxical objects into the style composition in order to create reflexive distance to the own fashion discourse. It concludes that these acts of reflexive bricolage are a means for consumers to (a) innovate the style, (b) avoid the ridiculousness of simply acting out the style, (c) create opportunities for identity work (d) and accomplish a sense of freedom from fashion discourse. These goals are achieved by using the paradoxicality of the object to create ironic or cynical distance towards the own fashion discourse or by performing role-play in order to disappear into a virtual self.

The *enlightened member* of a consumption style who is, through social and cultural knowledge, capable of this advanced method of identity work, represents the prototype of a new kind of postmodern consumer who finds innovative ways to create a sense of freedom in consumerism beyond fashion, that allows the continuation of knowingly dubious consumption within the faulty and poor world of neoliberalism. Although the act of reflexive bricolage is a manifestation of consumers' understanding of the dubiousness of neoliberalism and their reflexivity towards it, the act itself reproduces the same system that they claim to have understood. To put it in simple words: at the end of the day, despite their reflective distance towards consumption, they're still doing it. The enlightened consumer's reflexivity is apparent in theory but not necessarily in practice.

Using the members of the hipster style with medium and high social and cultural knowledge, as the prototype, this study provides a current perspective on contemporary consumer culture and consumption styles. We argue, that the ridiculousness of convulsively acting out given manifestos, that has led contemporary consumers to indulge in reflexive bricolage, will lead to similar behaviour in other, manifesto-dominated areas of the culturally constituted world, such as alternative consumption styles, music, arts and linguistics.

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

By introducing the concept of *reflexive bricolage*, as a way for consumers to create reflexive distance towards their own fashion discourse, this study furthers the theoretical understanding of how consumers advance their identity through fashion. More specifically, the concept of *reflexive bricolage* represents a new method that consumers apply to advance their self-identity, which simultaneously highlights the advanced levels of creativity that consumers

have achieved when doing identity work (cf. Belk, 1988). We have established, that consumers have found in *reflexive bricolage*, a way to handle the faulty and poor nature of neoliberalism, that allows them to preserve a sense of freedom in consumption, stay connected to their native consumption style and create opportunities for identity work. *Reflexive bricolage* then, represents a concept, that paints a more detailed picture of the enlightened consumer that navigates the paradox-marbled, postmodern world in an attempt to continuously advance its identity.

We contribute to the consumer identity project pillar of consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) by providing *reflexive bricolage* as a concept, that explains how consumers use paradoxical objects in their style compositions to create opportunities for identity work. Additionally, we contribute to the literature on paradoxical consumption (Bertilsson, 2009; McCoy & Scarborough, 2014; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010) by showing that the paradoxicality of the object integrated into the style composition, through *reflexive bricolage*, only serves the purpose of creating ironic or cynical distance, or allowing consumers to assume a role, thus paradoxical consumption is merely a means to an end. Furthermore, we contribute to the literature on (subcultural) styles, primarily influenced by authors of the Birmingham School (Clark, 1976; Greif, Ross & Tortorici, 2010; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1990) by showing that through *reflexive bricolage*, as a method to prevent the ridiculousness of simply acting out the style, consumers subconsciously and organically innovate a consumption style.

In addition, we have contributed to the literature that deals with human endeavours for authenticity through consumerism (Arnould & Price, 2000; Belk & Costa, 1998; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006), by introducing *reflexive bricolage* as a method that creates novel and innovative style compositions. The compositions created through these sophisticated ‘DIY methods’ appropriate immense authenticity to its creator, due to their novelty and the self-made connotation, and allow consumers to handle the lack of authentic sources of meaning, owed to the pace and complexity of the postmodern society (cf. Beverland & Farrelly, 2009; Mick & Fournier, 1998). *Reflexive bricolage* can therefore be seen as the architect of ultimate, yet finite authenticity.

Overall, our study can be considered relevant, because through the concept of *reflexive bricolage* we explored a contemporary consumer that deals with the paradoxes of the postmodern world. As members of the investigated style ourselves, we were therefore able to provide a more thorough discussion, grounded in an understanding of the style that results from an organic, prolonged immersion into the style. Furthermore, we were able to contribute a contemporary discussion of the hipster as a consumption style, that was long overdue, especially when taking into consideration the constant changes that youth styles in particular endure.

7.2 Practical Contribution

The importance and dynamics of brands in postmodernity is of vital importance for many brand managers, marketers and even key management positions. In this regard, it is to be

expected that postmodernity has an enormous effect on the practical implementation of brand management and marketing (Holt, 2002). Particularly in these times, a well-drafted target audience analysis cannot exclusively guarantee that marketed products will solely find their way to the desired consumer segment. Instead, marketers consciously or unconsciously exclude groups or styles, which may also integrate these marketed, branded products into their style, everyday life, and most importantly their self-identity projects. It is therefore all the more important to track what happens to the brand's image and meaning after it leaves the factory floor. Brand managers must gain intelligence on who their consumers are, and which brands and products they are consuming and eventually integrating into, for instance, a youth, consumption or subcultural style. The concept of *reflexive bricolage* provides important insights into this shift of consumption patterns and provides brand managers with instructive knowledge, which enables them to coordinate and adjust their marketing activities.

The hazards of these dynamics are clearly visible in recent research about bricolage (Bertilsson, 2009), where status-affirming brands can be integrated into a subcultural style, which could inflict long-term damage on the brand's reputation and image. In this study, the concept of *reflexive bricolage* was developed as an extension of bricolage, which does not necessarily threaten a brand's image or reputation, but instead presents a convincing explanation for paradoxical practices within consumption styles. These paradoxical consumption practices, which are implemented through acts of reflexive bricolage within certain consumption styles, might even presuppose a promising opportunity for brands to expand their target groups. The underlying reasons for applying this concept clearly show that *reflexive bricoleurs* does not hijack the brand's meaning in the sense of Bertilsson (2009). Instead, consumers embrace the brand and its original image to authentically advance their self-identity project.

7.3 Limitations and Further Research

The research reported in this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, one could argue that albeit the research was designed with a focus on reducing the researchers' bias, the phenomenological interviews in combination with an iterative, bottom-up analysis, remain exposed to an influence of the researcher. Additionally, an infinite discussion could be led about whether the impression management encountered during the interviews manipulates the results or makes them all the more relevant and genuine. Furthermore, the thematization of more than just one, rather particular consumption style would undoubtedly have increased the transferability of the results. Nevertheless, the limitations that result from the methodological choices are, in light of the limited time resources of this study, within a reasonable scope.

While this study was able to shed light on how consumers create reflexive distance towards their own fashion discourse by integrating paradoxical objects into their style compositions, it must be acknowledged that the market dynamics providing consumers with the resources for the act of *reflexive bricolage* cannot be explained with this research. Exploring how brands can use their given image, heritage or create a 'citizen artist' character (cf. Holt, 2002) to

become (more) relevant resources for consumers' acts of *reflexive bricolage* would therefore constitute an interesting direction for future research. The empirical data generated in this study provides some interesting preliminary insights into the influence that a change in music taste for instance and newly gained economic capital has on the shift in appropriate objects for identity work. Furthermore, we would like to draw attention to ambiguous methods for identity work in today's fast-paced times and advocate further research into consumer culture which appears contradicting or unexplainable at first glance.

One might argue that adaptable and flexible consumers (cf. Thompson, 2004), obviously cause consumption styles that captivate by their adaptability and constantly changing characteristics. This in turn poses the question how strict consumption styles can still be and how, in postmodernity, the boundaries of a consumption style can even be aptly explained. The investigation of the boundaries and mergers of consumption styles within consumer culture theory as well as the investigation of style innovation through consumerism in subcultural styles pose intriguing directions for further research. Nevertheless, in light of the fast-paced society in which the emergence and extinction of trends is accelerated by social media, the discussion about the boundaries of consumption styles and consequently its members should, arguably, be lead every other month. Which poses the question if the discussion is even still relevant or whether or not has become superfluous in the postmodern world.

Lastly, by highlighting the extent to which linguistic concepts such as irony and cynicism influence consumers' ability to use objects for the purpose of advancing their identity, we hope to encourage other researchers to utilize linguistics concept when researching consumption behaviour in future endeavours. Because of the interdependency between sociology and consumer culture, we are convinced that this merger should be manifested in research into these matters. On a more general level, we particularly hope to inspire young researchers, such as ourselves, to look beyond the boundaries of their research area, for concepts and metaphors that can enrich the quality of their research and simultaneously widen their individual horizon.

References

- Alvesson, M. (2003). Beyond Neopositivists, Romantics, and Localists: A Reflexive Approach to Interviews in Organizational Research, vol. 28, no. 1, pp.13–33.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research, Los Angeles; London: SAGE.
- Androutsopoulos, J. B. & Georgakopoulou, A. (2003). Discourse Constructions of Youth Identities, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Arnold, S. J. & Fischer, E. (1994). Hermeneutics and Consumer Research, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp.55–70.
- Arnould, E. J. & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp.868–882.
- Arsel, Z. & Thompson, C. J. (2011). Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect Their Field-Dependent Identity Investments from Devaluing Marketplace Myths, *The Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp.791–806.
- Baltar, F. & Brunet, I. (2012). Social Research 2.0: Virtual Snowball Sampling Method Using Facebook, *Internet Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.74–75.
- Bamberg, M. G. W., De Fina, A. & Schiffrin, D. (2007). Selves and Identities in Narrative and Discourse, John Benjamins Pub.
- Barthes, R. (1972). Mythologies, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Becker, H. S. (1982). Becker, H. S (1982), Culture: A Sociological View, The Yale Review, Vol.71, Summer 1982, pp.513-528, *The Yale Review*, no. 71, pp.513–528.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp.68–139.
- Berner, A. & Van Tonder, C. (2003). The Postmodern Consumer: Implications of Changing Customer Expectations for Organisation Development in Service Organisations, *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp.1–10.
- Bertilsson, J. (2009). The Way Brands Work: Consumers' Understanding of the Creation and Usage of Brands, Lund: Business Press.
- Bertilsson, J. (2015). The Cynicism of Consumer Morality, *Consumption Markets & Culture*, vol. 18, no. 5, pp.447–467.
- Beverland, M. B. & Farrelly, F. J. (2010). The Quest for Authenticity in Consumption: Consumers' Purposive Choice of Authentic Cues to Shape Experienced Outcomes, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp.838–856.
- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S. J. (1975). Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences, Wiley.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, Harvard University Press: Harvard.

- Brown, S., McDonagh, P. & Shultz II, C. J. (2013). Titanic: Consuming the Myths and Meanings of an Ambiguous Brand, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp.595–614.
- Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. C. (2007). *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, London : SAGE.
- Bryman, A. (2011). Mixed Methods in Organizational Research, in D. A. Buchanan & A. Bryman (eds), *The SAGE handbook of organizational research methods*, pp.516–531.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods*, 4th edn, Oxford: OUP Oxford.
- Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*, Pearson Education.
- Burton, F. (2009). *A History of Sarcasm*, Dog Horn Publishing.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Research, *Introducing Qualitative Methods Series*, SAGE.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Rosiek, J. (2006). Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions, in D. J. Clandini (eds), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp.35-75.
- Clark, J. (1976). Style, in S. Hall & T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals*, London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Cohler, B. J. (1982). Personal Narrative and Life Course, in P. B. Baltes & O. G. Brim Jr. (eds), *Life-Span Development and Behavior*, Vol. 4, New York: Academic Press.
- Colston, H. L. (1997). Salting a Wound or Sugaring a Pill: The Pragmatic Function of Ironic Criticism, *Discourse Processes*, vol. 23, pp.25–45.
- Colston, H. L. & Gibbs, R. W. (2002). Are Irony and Metaphor Understood Differently?, *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp.57–80.
- Colston, H. L. & Gibbs, R. W. (2007). A Brief History of Irony, in R. W. Gibbs & H. L. Colston (eds), *Irony in Language and Thought*, 1st edn, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p.607.
- Dews, S. & Winner, E. (1995). Muting the Meaning: A Social Function of Irony, *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, vol. 10, pp.3–19.
- Dews, S., Winner, E., Kaplan, J., Rosenblatt, E., Hunt, M., Lim, K., McGovern, A., Qualter, A. & Smarsh, B. (1996). Children's Understanding of the Meaning and Functions of Verbal Irony, *Child Development*, no. 6, p.3071.
- Diamond, N., Sherry, J. F., Muñiz, A. M., McGrath, M. A., Kozinets, R. V. & Borghini, S. (2009). American Girl and the Brand Gestalt: Closing the Loop on Sociocultural Branding Research, *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 73, no. 3, pp.118–134.
- Dirim, İ. & Auer, P. (2004). Türkisch Sprechen Nicht Nur Die Türken: Über Die Unschärfebeziehung Zwischen Sprache Und Ethnie in Deutschland, W. de Gruyter.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P. (2015). *Management & Business Research*, London: SAGE.

- Elliott, A. (2014). *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*, Taylor & Francis.
- Elliott, R. & Wattanasuwan, K. (1998). Brands as Symbolic Resources for the Construction of Identity, *International journal of Advertising*, vol. 17, no. October, pp.131–144.
- Erlanson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L. & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*, London: SAGE.
- Feldman, C. J. (2009). ‘We Are the Mods’: A Transnational History of a Youth Subculture, Peter Lang.
- Firat, F. & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 22, no. 3, p.239.
- Firat, F. (1991). The Consumer in Postmodernity, *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 18, pp.70–76.
- Firat, F., Dholakia, N. & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Marketing in a Postmodern World, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp.40–56.
- Flaherty, S. (2012). *The Book of Styling: An Insider’s Guide to Creating Your Own Look*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Fleming, P. & Spicer, A. (2003). Working at a Cynical Distance: Implications for Power, Subjectivity and Resistance, *Organization*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.157–179.
- Florio-Ruane, S. (1991). Conversation and Narrative in Collaborative Research: An Ethnography of the Written Literacy Forum, in C. Litherell & N. Noddings (eds), *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*, New York: Teachers College Press, pp.234–56.
- Føllesdal, D. (1997). Semantics and Semiotics, in M. L. D. Chiara, K. Doets, D. Mundici & J. Van Benthem (eds), *Structures and Norms in Science: Volume Two of the Tenth International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, Florence, August 1995*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, pp.449–457.
- French, J., Merritt, R. & Reynolds, L. (2011). *Social marketing Casebook*, New York: SAGE.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and Method*, Seabury Press.
- Gee, J. P. (1985). The Narrativization of Experience in the Oral Style, *Journal of Education*, no. 167, pp.9–35.
- Gelles, R. J. (1978). Methods for Studying Sensitive Family Topics, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp.408–424.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The Saturated Self*, New York: Basic Books.
- Gibbs, R. (2000). Irony in Talk Among Friends, *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp.5–27.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Given, L. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine.

- Goffman, E. (1961). *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction.*, Indianapolis, Ind., 1961.
- Greif, M., Ross, K. & Tortorici, D. (2010). *What Was the Hipster?: A Sociological Investigation.*, New York : n+1 Foundation, 2010.
- Grubb, E. L. & Grathwohl, H. L. (1967). Consumer Self-Concept, Symbolism and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach, *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 31, pp.22–27.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper, *Educational Communication and Technology*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp.75–91.
- Gurillo, L. R. & Ortega, M. B. A. (2013). *Irony and Humor: From Pragmatics to Discourse*, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Haiman, M. J. H. P. L. M. (1998). *Talk Is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language*, Oxford University Press, USA.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell.
- Harris, M. & Pexman, P. M. (2003). Children’s Perceptions of the Social Functions of Verbal Irony, *Discourse Processes*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp.147–165.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge.
- Hennessey, B. A. & Amabile, T. M. (2010). Creativity, *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp.569–598.
- Hill, W. (2015). A Hipster History: Towards a Postcritical Aesthetic, *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp.45–60.
- Holt, D. B. (2002). Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp.70–90.
- Holt, D. B. & Thompson, C. J. (2004). Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp.425–440.
- Horning, R. (2009). The Death of the Hipster, *popMATTERS*, web blog post available at: <http://www.popmatters.com/post/the-death-of-the-hipster-panel/> [27 March 2017].
- Infante, D. (2015). The Hipster is Dead, and You Might Not Like Who Comes Next, *Mashable*, 9 June, Available Online: <http://mashable.com/2015/06/09/post-hipster-yuccie/#JfMG8r72Viqn> [Accessed 5 May 2017]
- Jameson, F. (1981). *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Cornell University Press.
- K-Hole, (2013). Youth mode: A report on freedom, *K-Hole*, October, Available Online: <http://khole.net/dl/?v=4> [Accessed 12 March 2017].
- Kilduff, M. & Mehra, A. (1997). Postmodernism and Organizational Research, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp.453–481.
- Klein, N. (2009). *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Picador.

- Kozinets, R. V. (2001). Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of Star Trek's Culture of Consumption, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp.67–88.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp.20–38.
- Kreuz, R. J. & Roberts, R. M. (1995). Two Cues for Verbal Irony: Hyperbole and the Ironic Tone of Voice, *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.21–31.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Lambert, A., Desmond, J. & O'Donohoe, S. (2014). Narcissism and the Consuming Self: An Exploration of Consumer Identity Projects and Narcissistic Tendencies, *Consumer Culture Theory, Research in Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 16, pp.35–57.
- Lanham, R. (2008). *The Hipster Handbook*, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Lee, C. J. & Katz, A. N. (1998). The Differential Role of Ridicule in Sarcasm and Irony, *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp.1–15.
- Leggitt, J. S. & Gibbs, R. W. (2000). Emotional Reactions to Verbal Irony, *Discourse Processes*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp.1–24.
- Leigh, T. W., Peters, C., & Shelton, J. (2006). The Consumer Quest for Authenticity: The Multiplicity of Meanings Within the MG Subculture of Consumption, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp.481-493.
- Lemley, C. K. & Mitchell, R. W. (2012). Narrative Inquiry: Stories Lived, Stories Told, in S. D. Laplan, M. T. Quartaroli & F. J. Riemer (eds), *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. L. (1962). *Savage Mind*, University of Chicago.
- Levy, S. J. (1959). Symbols for Sale, *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp.117–124.
- Levy, S. J. (1981). Interpreting Consumer Mythology: A Structural Approach to Consumer Behavior, *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp.49–61.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills: SAGE.
- Luedicke, M. K., Thompson, C. J. & Giesler, M. (2010). Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 36, no. 6, pp.1016–1032.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Duckworth.
- Maclaran, P. & Brown, S. (2005). The Center Cannot Hold: Consuming the Utopian Marketplace: Figure 1, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp.311–323.
- Madden, R. (2010). *Being Ethnographic. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, London: SAGE.
- Maly, I. & Varis, P. (2016). The 21st-Century Hipster: On Micro-Populations in Times of Superdiversity, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp.637–653.
- Markus, H. R. & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves, *American Psychologist*, vol. 41, no. 9, pp.69–954.
- May, T. (2011). *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Research*, McGraw-Hill Education.

- McCoy, C. A. & Scarborough, R. C. (2014). Watching 'bad' television: Ironic Consumption, Camp, and Guilty Pleasures, *Poetics*, vol. 47, pp.41–59.
- McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 13, no. June, pp.71–85.
- Mick, D. G. & Buhl, C. (1992). A Meaning-Based Model of Advertising Experiences, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp.317–338.
- Mick, D. G. & Fournier, S. (1998). Paradoxes of Technology: Consumer Cognizance, Emotions, and Coping Strategies, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp.123–143.
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative.*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1986.
- Moisander, J. & Valtonen, A. (2006). *Qualitative Marketing Research: A Cultural Approach*, London: SAGE.
- Muniz, A. M. & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand Community, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp.412–432.
- Murray, J. B. (2002). The Politics of Consumption: A Re-Inquiry on Thompson and Haytko's (1997) 'Speaking of Fashion', *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 29, no. December 2002, pp.427–440.
- Nicholson, A., Whalen, J. M. & Pexman, P. M. (2013). Children's Processing of Emotion in Ironic Language, *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 4, no. OCT, pp.1–10.
- Nilsen, E. S., Glenwright, M. & Huyder, V. (2011). Children and Adults Understand That Verbal Irony Interpretation Depends on Listener Knowledge, *Journal of Cognition and Development*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp.374–409.
- Odou, P. & de Pechpeyrou, P. (2011). Consumer Cynicism: From Resistance to Anti-consumption in a Disenchanted World?, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 45, no. 11/12, pp.1799–1808.
- Orwenjo, D. O. (2016). *Political Discourse in Emergent, Fragile, and Failed Democracies*, Information Science Reference.
- Oxford English Dictionary (2017). Phenomenon, Available Online: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/142352?redirectedFrom=phenomenon#eid> [Accessed 12 March 2017].
- Partington, A. (2006). *The Linguistics of Laughter: A Corpus-Assisted Study of Laughter-Talk*, Taylor & Francis.
- Peltonen, B. (2012). Kokain an die Juden von der Börse, *Welt.de*, 16 May, Available Online: <https://www.welt.de/kultur/musik/article106182968/Kokain-an-die-Juden-von-der-Boerse.html> [Accessed 5 May 2017]
- Pexman, P. M., Glenwright, M., Krol, A. & James, T. (2005). An Acquired Taste: Children's Perceptions of Humor and Teasing in Verbal Irony, *Discourse Processes*, col. 40, no. 3, pp.259–288.

- Pike, K. L. (1954). *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*, SAGE.
- Propp, V. (1968). *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edn, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Quine, W. (1966). *The Ways of Paradox: And Other Essays*, Random House.
- Ratneshwar, S., Mick, D. G. & Huffman, C. (2000). *The Why of Consumption*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Räwel, J. (2007). The Relationship between Irony, Sarcasm and Cynicism, *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, vol. 145.
- Rayfield, J. R. (1972). What Is a Story?, *American Anthropologist*, no. 74, pp.1084–1106.
- Ritson, M. & Elliott, R. (1999). The Social Uses of Advertising: An Ethnographic Study of Adolescent Advertising Audiences, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp.260–277.
- Russo, J. E. & Schoemaker, P. J. H. (1989). *Decision Traps: Ten Barriers to Brilliant Decision-Making and How to Overcome Them*, Doubleday / Currency.
- de Saussure, F. (1966). *Course in General Linguistics*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1943). *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, New York: Philosophical Library.
- Schiermer, B. (2014). Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 57, no. 2, pp.167–181.
- Schlobinski, P. (1989). Frau Meier Hat Aids, Herr Tropfmann Hat Herpes, Was Wollen Sie Einsetzen?, *Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie*, no. 41, pp.1–34.
- Schlobinski, P., Kohl, G. & Ludewigt, I. (2013). *Jugendsprache: Fiktion Und Wirklichkeit*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Schouten, J. W. & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.43–61.
- Schutz, A. (1962). *Collected Papers*, M. Nijhoff.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2003). Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructionism. I, in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp.292–331.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects, *Education for information*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp.63–75.
- Shuker, R. (2017). *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, Routledge.
- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction.*, London: SAGE.
- Sivanathan, N. & Pettit, N. C. (2010). Protecting the Self through Consumption: Status Goods as Affirmational Commodities, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp.564–570.

- Skandalis, A., Byrom, J. & Banister, E. (2016). Paradox, Tribalism, and the Transitional Consumption Experience: In Light of Post-Postmodernism, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 50, no. 7/8, pp.1308–1325.
- Sloterdijk, P. (1987). *Critique of Cynical Reason*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Slugoski, B. R. & Turnbull, W. (1988). Cruel to Be Kind and Kind to Be Cruel: Sarcasm, Banter and Social Relations, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp.101–121.
- Sousa. (2016). Me and You, We Could Be Something for Real: Creating Authenticity since the First Hipster Generation, *International Journal of Culture and History*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp.99–105.
- Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition.*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*, New York: Guilford Press.
- Stanley, S. A. (2012). *The French Enlightenment and the Emergence of Modern Cynicism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thompson, C. J. (2000). Postmodern Consumer Goals Made Easy, in S. Ratneshwar, C. Huffman & D. Mick (eds), *The Why of Consumption: Contemporary Perspectives on Consumer Motives, Goals, and Desires*, New York: Routledge, pp.120–139.
- Thompson, C. J. (2004). Marketplace Mythology and Discourses of Power, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp.162–180.
- Thompson, C. J. & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experiences of Glocalization, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp.631–642.
- Thompson, C. J. & Haytko, D. L. (1997). Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings', *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp.15–42.
- Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B. & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 16, no. 2, p.133.
- Thompson, C. J., Pollio, H. R. & Locander, W. B. (1994). The Spoken and the Unspoken: A Hermeneutic Approach to Understanding the Cultural Viewpoints That Underlie Consumers' Expressed Meanings, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp.432–452.
- Thompson, J. B. (1995). *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford University Press.
- Thornberg, J. & Charmaz, K. (2012). Grounded Theory, in S. Lapan, M. Quartaroli & F. Reimer (eds), *Qualitative Research*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp.41–67.
- Tolstoy, L. (1978). *War and Peace*, translated by R. Edmonds, London: Penguin. (Original work published 1869).

- Urban Dictionary (2017). Hipster, Available Online:
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=hipster> [Accessed 15 April 2017], pp.1-2.
- Van Den Berg, J. & Behrer, M. (2016). *How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generations Y and Z*, Kogan Page Publishers.
- Victoriano, C. (2014). The Hipster's Movement, *Harvard Political Review*, 28 September, Available Online: www.harvardpolitics.com/books-arts/hipsters-movement/ [Accessed 22 May 2017].
- Wilde, O. (2013). *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Dover Publications.
- Willis, P. E. (1990). *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Culture of the Young*, Westview Press.
- Winner, E. & Leekam, S. (1991). Distinguishing Irony from Deception: Understanding the Speaker's Second-Order Intention, *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, vol. 9, pp.257–270.
- Winner, E., Windmueller, G., Rosenblatt, E., Bosco, L., Best, E. & Gardner, H. (1987). Making Sense of Literal and Nonliteral Falsehood, *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, vol. 2, pp.13–32.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 1999/1967.
- XXLMag (2017). The New: 15 European Rappers You Should Know, *XXLMag*, June 9, Available Online: <http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2014/06/15-new-european-rappers/8/> [Accessed 5 May 2017]
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso.

Appendix A

Topic Guide

- 1) Work & Hobbies
- 2) Friends, Friendship & Scenes
- 3) Style, Fashion & Music