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Identity-Related Media Consumption

*A Focus on Consumers' Relationships with
Their Favorite TV Programs*

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Julkaisun nimike Identiteettiä rakentava median kuluttaminen – Tarkastelussa kuluttajien suhteet suosikkitelevisio-ohjelmiinsa			
Tiivistelmä Mediat nousevat nyky-yhteiskunnassamme merkittävään rooliin niin yksittäisinä kulutuksen kohteina kuin vaikutusvaltaisina kulttuurisina instituutioina. Tässä kulutustutkimuksen alaan sijoittuvassa tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan medioiden kuluttamista symbolisesta, erityisesti kuluttajan identiteetin rakentumisen näkökulmasta. Mediasisältöjä lähestytään tuotteina ja palveluina, joita kuluttajat voivat ostaa ja käyttää. Työn tarkoituksena on valaista kysymystä siitä, miten televisio-ohjelmat ja kuluttajan identiteetin rakentuminen ovat yhteydessä toisiinsa. Tutkielmassa pyritään tunnistamaan ja analysoimaan, millä tavoin kuluttajat hyödyntävät mediatuotteita rakentaessaan identiteettiään ja käsitystä itsestään, ympäröivistä ihmisistä sekä sosiaalisista suhteistaan. Työn ensimmäisenä tavoitteena on selvittää, millaista medioiden symbolinen kuluttaminen on ilmiötasolla. Tätä ymmärrystä rakennetaan opiskelijoiden keskuudessa laadullisin menetelmin toteutetun esitutkimuksen myötä. Esitutkimuksen myötä piirtyy kuva monivivahteisesta median kuluttamisesta, jonka symbolisia merkityksiä rakentava luonne näyttäytyy selvänä, joskin implisiittisenä ominaisuutena. Työn toisena tavoitteena on analysoida, miten kuluttajan suhde televisio-ohjelmaan rakentuu käsitteellisesti. Saadun esiymmärryksen ja kirjallisuuskatsauksen myötä tutkimusasetelma tarkennetaan koskemaan muodostuneen kulutussuhteen intensiivisyyttä, lujuutta ja luonnetta. Käsitteellistä mallinnusta koetellaan myös empiirisesti televisionkatsojien keskuudesta kvantitatiivisesti kerätyllä Internet-kyselyaineistolla. Työn kolmantena tavoitteena on analysoida miten televisio-ohjelmien kuluttaminen ilmenee käytännössä, eli miten ja missä määrin televisio-ohjelmat toimivat resursseina kuluttajien identiteetin rakentamisessa. Edellä mainittuun kyselyaineistoon perustuva analyysi osoittaa, että kuluttajien välillä on selkeitä eroja suhteessa suosikkiohjelman saamaan rooliin omassa arjessa ja minäkäsityksessä. Tässä yhteydessä televisio-ohjelmien genrekohtaiset erot selittävinä tekijöinä saavat kuitenkin vain osittaista tukea, kun taas vastaajan ikä näyttäytyy merkittävänä tekijänä.			
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Abstract Different media vehicles hold a significant role in our contemporary society as important objects of consumption and influential cultural institutions. The field of the study is consumer research and it investigates media consumption from a symbolic perspective as an identity constructing activity. Media contents are approached as products and services that consumers can buy and use. The purpose of this study is to uncover how consumption of television programs and identity construction are connected. In other words, purpose is to investigate different ways in which consumers make use of television programs to construct their identities as well as make sense of their selves, others and social relations in their everyday lives. The first research aim is to understand the phenomenon of symbolic consumption of media products. This understanding is gained along with a pre-study phase with qualitative methodology and a focus on university students. Based on the pre-study it can be outlined that media consumption is a multifaceted phenomenon, of which symbolic nature is unquestionable, yet fairly implicit. The second research aim is to construct a comprehensive conceptual model of identity-related consumption of TV programs and to test its validity with empirical data. Based on pre-understanding and literature review, conceptual framework is constructed based on a relationship perspective with a focus on intensity, strength and nature of consumer-media relationships. This conceptual model is tested against quantitative, online survey data. The third research aim taps into specifying how and to what extent consumers use TV programs as resources for their identity construction in practice. This investigation deploys the same above-mentioned data source and reveals that there are clear differences between consumers in their relationships with favorite TV programs. In this connection, program genre -based explanation for the differences receives only a partial support, whereas age of the respondent seems to make a significant difference.			
Keywords Media, consumption, identity, relationship with a television program			

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Now, when this journey of a doctoral candidate is approaching its end, I look back and ask: has it been worth travelling? How has the road been, and what kind of sceneries and travelling companion has it offered me along the way? I have navigated through several crossroads, confusing roundabouts, and faced some uphill struggles every once in a while. I have also had a chance to take some exciting bypaths to the conferences, and listen to the words of wisdom from the more experienced ones. However, mostly I have been forced to sit tight in my office room and think over my steps. Although I like running fast, I was advised not to rush and therefore miss all the lessons to be learned on this road.

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VIII

*I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

*I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.*

~ Louis Armstrong lyrics

Vaasa, May 2012

Jenniina Halkoaho

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1 INTRODUCTION TO SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION OF MEDIA PRODUCTS

What is understood by *consumption* has changed over time. We can recognize a shift from studying buyer behavior to investigating consumer behavior as one of the important developments in consumption-related research in the postmodern era. Among other consumer researchers, Firat and Dholakia (1998: 96) have recognized that “for the postmodern consumer, consumption is not a mere act of devouring, destroying, or using things...but an act of production of experiences and selves or self-images.” Thus the scope of consumption has broadened to take in pre- and post-purchase considerations, rather than focusing solely on buying situations. This shift has created discussions on consumption experiences and the usage of products. There are, however, multiple perspectives from which to look at consumption. Probably the most pervasive conception of consumption in the postmodern era emphasizes that consumption is an identity-constructing activity that involves self-expression and individual choices of lifestyle. In other words, the search for identity is seen as a key determinant of postmodern consumption. In scientific terms, this means that consumption is viewed from a *symbolic* rather than an *economic*, *psychological*, or *sociological* perspective. The economic approach would view consumption purely as a utility-maximizing allocation of time and money, whereas psychology sees it mainly as a form of decision-making that includes perceptions, memories and attitudes. A sociological perspective highlights cultural and social structures of consumption (consumption as cultural practice).

The general goal of a consumer researcher is to understand the role and meaning of the consumption objects (products, brands, and services) in relation to the lives of its users. In this spirit, Fournier (1991) recognizes that the consumption objects may play *functional*, *experiential*, and *identity* roles in the everyday life of a consumer. Many products and services, such as cleaner products and bank services, play purely functional, utilitarian roles in the life of consumers by fulfilling necessary functions. Other products, such as perfumes and video games, have a mainly experiential role by providing sensory pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment, and entertainment. A third role of products, that of identity function, concerns both individual and group levels, since products such as clothes and cars, may serve as expressions of a consumer’s self-concept, role, and position. Here, the function of product is predominantly symbolic.

The present study approaches consumption from the symbolic perspective as an identity-constructing activity. There are some obvious reasons to do so, which all relate to the nature of contemporary consumer culture (see e.g., Elliott 1997).

First of all, we have an enormous array of products and services available to choose from and, at least relative to our ancestors, more leisure time, and more freedom to play with and construct our identities. (Shankar & Fitchett 2002: 502). The second reason is the general prosperity of our society, as well as the willingness to strive for it. Nowadays, we tend to have more material wealth, and we are also well aware of what more we could have, how we could live, and what we could be like. In this respect, mass media are especially good at informing us about the current trends, styles and ideals in consumption. If the philosopher Eric Fromm (1976: 23) is to be believed, consumers can identify themselves with the formula “I am = what I have and what I consume.” Thirdly, there is an interesting tension between self and social symbolism in contemporary consumer culture. On the one hand, there is a striving for individuality and uniqueness. On the other, there is a tendency to share consumption experiences collectively, to form social collectivities through consumption, and to assume lifestyles as social constructions that are based on symbolic boundaries between collectivities that have distinctive consumption patterns (Holt 1997). As a whole, this perspective of symbolic consumption is multifaceted and connects with individual-, social-, and cultural-level phenomena in postmodern consumption.

In this study the focus is on the *consumption of mass media products*, especially *television programs*, as they have been important objects of consumption for decades. Certainly, mass media (-products) relate to our daily lives in various ways, as many of us tend to read the newspapers in the morning, surf the web during the day, and watch television in the evenings. However, a great variation in media consumption within populations, and changes in the significance of different media vehicles is also noticeable. A certain transitional period can be recognized in terms of an increase in consumption of computers and the internet, and then their overtaking of television as an important media vehicle. Yet television has survived well in this transition period, and the viewing of television programs has even increased in recent years. According to the study of Taloustutkimus (Yle Uutiset 2011) nearly 40 % of Finns aged 15 to 79 years could not imagine giving up television. The significance of television has even increased since 2008. In particular, television is good at provoking discussions. The results of the study indicate that 69 % of the respondents discuss about television programs weekly.

One could argue that consumption of media is not really consumption at all, but it is about viewing, reading and listening. In effect, it all depends on the perspective used in approaching media use. *Media usage* can be seen as a relatively straightforward construct. One can understand media usage in the same way as, for example, orange juice usage. Usage is overt, actual behavior. It is not about how people subjectively think and feel about that behavior. On the other hand, we may

study not how much people use media, but how they *experience* it. In the first case, we are interested in *amount of consumption*, but the latter taps into the *nature of the consumption*. Therein lies an important distinction. As a consequence, two people's usage might be the same, but their experiences can be very different. (Calder & Malthouse 2004). As Wilska (1995: 42) notices, it is relatively easy to ascertain what and how much has been consumed, but not why it has been consumed in that way. Having said that, Turkki (1998: 31) stresses that in many cases the intensity of the participation is more relevant than the actual amount of consumption.

When considering media usage, it is clear that it is not always a significant activity for a consumer. As we all know, from time to time it is virtually meaningless, or at least a secondary activity. Therefore it would be inaccurate to suggest that, for example, everything we watch on television is equally important and meaningful. However, in this study I wish to shed light on the active and meaningful side of media consumption. I want to stress the importance of engaging and activating media consumers, and help marketers to understand the nature of consumers' relationships with media products from the consumer's perspective. As a first pre-assumption that grounds the execution of this study, termed here as 'premise', *I argue that investigating symbolic consumption is necessary in order to understand what drives consumers' engagement with products, brands, and companies.* I note that engagement with a product requires a consumer to see the product as self-relevant to him or her in one way or another. Accordingly, this study taps into the media product's relevance in terms of a consumer's *identity construction*.

1.1 Research setting and objectives

The theoretical grounding for this study lies in symbolic consumption literature. Following the line of thought of this branch of literature, which argues that *we are what we have and consume*, we may ask, could it be that *we are what we watch on TV*? The empirical evidence which might be expected to cast some light on the phenomenon of *identity-related media consumption* is surprisingly sparse and recent. In essence, Hirschman and Thompson (1997) were among the first consumer researchers to study consumption of media from this perspective. Jansson (2002: 6) notes that while there is a growing body of research dealing with consumer culture and everyday life which involves analyses of the cultural experience and expressivity of consumption, there is also a quite extensive field of audience studies investigating various aspects of media consumption. However, what is missing is empirical work that explicitly fuses these areas together.

Even though the relevance of identity issues in consumption has been widely acknowledged in the literature on symbolic consumption, empirical research and support for the connection of identity construction and consumption is still somewhat lacking. This is largely due to difficulties encountered when trying to operationalize issues related to identity (see e.g., Wilska 2002: 197). Mittal (2006: 550) has noticed that the concept of ‘self’ has been under-explicated in consumer research literature. Furthermore, the psychological processes by which the consumer incorporates objects of consumption into self have remained somewhat vague and under-identified. Although identity/self has been of interest to consumer behavior for five decades (dating back to Levy 1959 and Grubb & Grathwohl 1967), we are still seeking a coherent picture of the relationship between identity and consumption. This is especially the case when considering media consumption. In previous studies material goods, fashion items, and brands have been identified as viable resources for constructing self (Soonkwan 2008), however, there is not much empirical evidence on how products provided by mass media, such as television programs, act as resources for identity construction. This research should yield insights into consumer relationships with these less conspicuously consumed and immaterial products, enabling researchers to understand consumers’ relationships with a fuller spectrum of products.

1.1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to uncover how consumption of television programs and identity construction are connected. In other words, my purpose is to investigate different ways in which consumers make use of television programs to construct their identities as well as make sense of their selves, others and social relations in their everyday lives. Specific research questions for the study are as follows:

1. What kinds of meanings and interpretations do media products yield in terms of consumers’ identity construction? In other words, the first aim is to understand the phenomenon of symbolic consumption of media products.

This question demands clarification of the nature of self-definition and social classification of consumers in a media environment. This question will be approached empirically by means of qualitative research in order to gain a rich and deep understanding of the nature of this phenomenon. An interpretive frame of analysis is employed when analyzing the contents of essays and theme interviews on media consumption. This first research question will be addressed in Chapter 2.

2. How is a consumer's relationship with a television program structured in terms of identity-related consumption, and how can it be measured? In other words, the second aim is to construct a comprehensive conceptual model of identity-related consumption of television programs and to test its validity with empirical data.

This question relates to conceptualizations about what can be understood by identity and (symbolic) consumption of television programs, and how the connection between these can be understood. Accordingly, I will elaborate three kinds of bonds as key concepts of this study; *connectedness*, *attachment* and *self-connection* (see Section 3.5.1 for definitions). This second research question will be conceptually and theoretically addressed in Chapter 3, and empirically modeled in Chapter 5 based on quantitative data obtained from an online survey.

3. How does identity-related consumption of television programs become evident among television viewers? In other words, the third aim is to specify how and to what extent consumers use TV programs as resources for their identity.

Empirical evidence from the online survey regarding the aspects of connectedness, attachment, and self-connection helps us to reveal general tendencies and facets of identity bonds with favorite TV programs, and profile respondents based on their consumer-program relationships. Analysis of the nature of self- and social-identification among TV viewers gives additional insights into the conclusions about the role that television programs play in identity construction. This third research question will be addressed in Chapter 6.

1.1.2 Positioning the study within marketing field

Understanding and predicting consumers' responses to offerings (products, services or brands) represents a fundamental issue for marketing. Consequently, a variety of responses have been identified, including preferences, intentions, satisfaction, loyalty, involvement, willingness to pay price premium and more (Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006). Following this line of thought, understanding and evaluating differences in consumer-media relationships should be essential when assessing the true impact of media-based marketing efforts, such as advertising and product placements. This seems particularly important when considering the fact that nowadays consumers can easily skip the commercial breaks, to see nothing but their favorite television programs. Obviously, television programs themselves are also important and influential to consumers because of their nature as consumer-relevant phenomena, for instance with regard to providing models for lifestyles, social roles and subcultures. A valid measurement model of consumer-media relationships should also predict consumers' investment in a television

program (and associated products), such as willingness to pay for it, to use time, and to make other efforts to obtain it. Panula (1997: 39) has remarked that, when creating value for their products (such as television programs), marketers can connect the ‘media effect research’ and ‘consumption research’ approaches by having consumer/user needs as a starting point, and so influence the consumers.

Moreover, it is important to explore whether some consumers are more likely to derive their identities from television programs than others, and further, what kind of television programs are likely to stimulate identity construction. Shankar and Fitchett (2002: 513) remind us that if consumer behavior is recognized as an inherent part of an individual’s state of being, marketing activities should also be designed to facilitate this desired being-ness, as opposed to designing fulfillment of a consumer’s short-term satisfaction.

This study is in many ways at the crossroads of studies on *consumer behavior*, *media uses and gratifications*, and *social psychology*. Essentially, it is about identity construction in the context of media consumption, which means that it is an applied form of *audience research* and *identity research*. Primarily, this study aims to advance the theory of symbolic consumption of media products, rather than finding new dimensions of media reception or of identity construction. *In the end, this study on symbolic consumption and identity construction provides insights into the ‘how’ (conceptual dimensions and phenomenological embodiments) and the ‘why’ (motivations) of symbolic consumption of television programs.*

1.1.3 *The philosophical foundation and research approach for the study*

The wide field of consumer research does not rely solely on either qualitative or quantitative methodology, but embraces methodological pluralism when striving to understand consumers and their behavior. Both the stream of interpretive consumer research and experimental and survey-based work in consumer research have tapped into issues related to how consumers use products to construct their identity (Ahuvia 2005: 171).

The field of consumer research has adopted several paradigms from positivist to interpretivist research approaches in the past years. Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) have provided a typology of different co-existing paradigms in the field of consumer research, identifying four types; buyer behavior, consumer behavior, consumer research and consumption studies. These paradigmatic lines have somewhat different perspectives on how consumers should be understood. The paradigm of *buyer behavior* is the oldest one of the paradigms in consumer research.

It focuses on the purchase situation only and sees the consumer rather mechanically, as a straightforward and instinct-driven being, whose consumption is based solely on fundamental needs. The second paradigm, *consumer behavior*, widens the perspective adopted by buyer behavior. This paradigm considers consumers as rational decision-makers, whose consumption is based on their attitudes, beliefs, wants, and the available information. The paradigm of *consumer research*, for one, assumes that the consumer is not always rational and definite in consumption, but is also emotionally driven and consumes in order to create a meaningful life. The authors (Ibid: 12) explain that this paradigm focuses on “how consumers are living their everyday life, consuming all kinds of products and services, and how this influences their understanding of themselves as well as contributing to create an image for others to observe.” Finally, the fourth paradigm, called *consumption studies*, is a perspective new to consumer research. This paradigm has postmodern characteristics as it emphasizes social, cultural, and symbolic aspects of consumption. In this paradigm, consumers are seen as ‘tribe members’ whose consumption is guided by the awareness of the symbolic signs that are shared within the consumer culture. This paradigmatic line of research moves beyond the psychological and existential aspects that the paradigm of consumer research has. Here, the individual is no longer the primary unit of research, but rather consumer culture in general is, and relationships between consumers in particular.

With regard to the paradigms described above, the third paradigm labeled as *consumer research* is probably the most suitable one to describe the philosophical foundation of this study. The focus here is on the individual consumer who consumes goods for what they mean to him/her personally, but also because of a desire to communicate with others and to either join in a group or differentiate themselves from it. Furthermore, this study uses methodological pluralism when investigating identity-related consumption of media. A qualitative pre-study phase leans towards interpretivist approach whereas the main study phase strives to take a more generalizing stance with its quantitative methods. However, we cannot solely look at the data gathering techniques to conclude what methodological orientation is held. Instead, we must look into the assumptions, the aims, and the research process (Hudson & Ozanne 1998: 514, 509). In the light of this, the research at hand coincides with assumptions underlying interpretive rather than positivist approach. Accordingly, the ‘reality’ is seen as socially constructed, holistic and contextual-dependent, and the goal of research is to understand rather than explain causalities.

In this study, the focus is on symbolic meanings of media consumption, and how those meanings relate to the lives and identity formation of consumers. Therefore, the specific research approach adopted in this study is *symbolic interactionism*

(hereafter SI). A key concern in SI is the manner in which people go about the task of assembling *meaning*. Furthermore, one of the central themes in SI is to study how we define ourselves (Plummer 2000). That is why this research approach suits the present study well. In previous consumer research, symbolic interactionism has been considered a useful basis for advancing research on consumer self-concept and product symbolism as it offers a basis for conceptualizing the socially-oriented self (Lee 1990; Solomon 1983). In this spirit, products are regarded as social stimuli that carry symbolic meanings for identity construction. According to SI, ‘meaning making’ is considered as one of the acts of doing things together, in interaction. Related to this, SI stresses that the consumer identifies self and others within social interactions as those mediate and reflect meanings (Lee 1990).

SI is rooted in social psychology and sociology, and its development spans more than a century. George Herbert Mead (1861–1931) and his best known student Herbert Blumer (1900–1986) are credited with the development of this research approach. Blumer (1969: 2) has pointed out that SI is a philosophical approach to direct examination of the social world rather than a method of exploring it. Blumer has set out three basic premises for symbolic interactionism as follows:

1. Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters

With regard to the SI-perspective on identity construction, Mead has argued that people’s selves are social products, yet these selves are also purposive and creative (SSSI 2011). According to Mead (1934: 34), “we are more or less consciously seeing ourselves as others see us.” This conception can be articulated with the phrase the ‘looking-glass self’ that refers to viewing oneself reflectively through interaction with others. Mead (1934: 260) further states that we have “generalized social attitudes” and expectations of the “generalized other.” These perceptions make it possible for individuals to recognize themselves both as an individual subject and as an object that assumes some qualities of others. This conception of social construction of identities refers to the idea that people tend to categorize and act in ways towards each other based on their understanding of social roles, rules and symbols, yet they are free to decide whether these roles, rules, and symbols fit their own identity projects. Eventually, SI views the self as a function of personal interactions (Sirgy 1982: 287) and as a process (Shankar & Fitchett

2002). SI sees meanings and people's selves as subject to change, because meanings and selves are processes that evolve over time and adjust to the social world (Plummer 2000). However, as Lee (1990: 389) has noticed, symbolic interactionists "view the self not as a dependent variable, but as a most important variable intervening between the antecedent events of the social world and the consequent actions of the individual."

In essence, an interpretive rather than positivist approach captures the research position of symbolic interactionism. However, both of these approaches have been deployed by different schools of thought in the field (Herman-Kinney & Verschaeve 2003: 222; Hudson & Ozanne 1988: 517–518), and SI has deployed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach, which is involved with empirical investigation of any aspect of the social world (Plummer 2000). In particular, Blumer (1969) highlights that the procedures of research should be assessed in terms of whether they respect the nature of the empirical world under study. Traditionally, symbolic interactionism has been viewed as a perspective that underpins qualitative research. However its assumptions are compatible with quantitative inquiry as well, and allow for multi-method research (Herman-Kinney & Verschaeve 2003). Regardless of the type of data collected, the focus is on understanding the connection between the shared meanings and human behavior with an emphasis on sensitivity to the lives and circumstances of individuals in their social settings (Benzies & Allen 2001). In essence, interactionists do not prefer theories which ignore the biographies and the lived experiences of the individuals (Denzin 1995: 44).

According to Blumer, the unit of analysis in SI is the individual (actor) and his focus of understanding is on that individual's meanings and perceptions (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). Over the years, research in symbolic interaction has primarily considered interpretation as a subjective and/or cognitive process. Consequently, among the limitations of a symbolic interactionist perspective is that emotional and unconscious elements in human behavior are under-emphasized (see Meltzer, Petras & Reynolds 1975, in Benzies & Allen 2001) as it relies on respondents' cognitions. Moreover, symbolic interactionism does not stress social structure as it focuses on individual- rather than group-level analyses. Hence, the analyses of processes of participants' interpretation of social situations and interaction in social settings have been somewhat downplayed topics (SSSI 2011). In this present study, the primary interest is on how consumers perceive and reflect the media content-related messages and ideas in terms of their self-identification, rather than examine the concrete actions of identity construction or consumers' interaction in social settings. In other words, the research approach of this study is cognitive and psychological rather than behavioral or cultural. In line with Uusitalo (1995:

9–10) I note that analyzing the mental aspects of consumption (socio-semiotic meanings) helps to understand and classify consumers more profoundly in their social contexts than investigating consumption behaviors that are prone to change over time.

Denzin (1995: 57) sees that SI “offers a generic theory of action, meaning, motives, emotion, gender, the person, and social structure.” Similarly, SI is chosen for this study as the generic research approach for understanding identity construction and symbolic consumption of media contents. Accordingly, *as the second premise of this study, I state that the meanings and interpretations of mass media in terms of identity construction arise reflectively in social interactions and as a result of lived experiences of individuals.* Next, Section 1.2 explains how identity and identity construction can be understood, before Section 1.3 which continues towards elaboration of the very role of media consumption in identity construction.

1.2 Conceptions of identity within the field of consumer research

Who am I? If I say, “My name is...” or “I am a college professor”, does it really define who I am? Or may be I should ask *what* am I? I could say, I am a human, a person; but then I wonder, what is this person, where is this person? “Is it in the 5’9”, 190 lbs., freshly tanned body we see here? Or is it the mind that resides in this body that is *I*? Am I not also the values I hold and the motivations and feelings I have? And what about the clothes I am wearing? Are those also I? And am I also the food I eat, and the car I drive, and the friends I hang out with? (Mittal 2006: 552).

Mittal (2006) insightfully poses questions that have occupied philosophers, psychologists, and consumer researchers for a long time. Mittal (Ibid: 552) asserts that the concept of ‘I’ can include six main components concerning what can make up one’s sense of self: 1) our bodies, 2) our values and character, 3) our success and competence, 4) our social roles, 5) our traits, and 6) our possessions. Consumer researchers have especially tapped into the last category by examining the role of consumption and possessions in defining who one is. For example clothes and cars have been called ‘symbolic goods’, use of which helps to constitute a consumer’s identity and communicate the kinds of commitments that people have (Dolfsma 2004). Consumer researchers suggest that the consumption of symbolically meaningful product categories and brands enable the individual to construct identity and perform identification. Shankar and Fitchett (2002: 512)

argue that objects of consumption that consumers have and seek to acquire should be valued by the extent to which they allow, enable or facilitate a positive sense of being and identification. Indeed, the basic states of our human existence can be understood by considering the everyday phenomena related to *having*, *doing*, and *being* (Belk 1988). These modes of existence are relevant to the question of who we are, and also make a bridge between acts and objects of consumption and the identity of an individual.

Sidney Levy's (1959) pioneering work on symbolic consumption put forward consumer researchers' ideas on the role of consumption in defining the sense of self. He (Ibid: 117) recognized that "modern goods are essentially psychological things which are symbolic of personal attributes and psychological goals." Also Grubb and Grathwohl (1967: 25) studied the relationship between the psychological characteristics of a consumer and his purchase behavior concluding that goods serve the individual's needs for self-enhancement in the eyes of significant others, such as parents, teachers and peers. On this basis, they (Ibid: 26) argued that consumers would strive for furthering and enhancing their own concept of self through the consumption of goods as symbolic communication devices. Solomon (1983: 319) further stressed the importance of product symbolism as a mediator of self-definition and role performance, stating that the consumption of many products greatly contributes to the consumer's structuring of social reality and self-concept. Following the tracks of Levy and Solomon, Russell W. Belk (1988) contributed to the discussion of symbolic consumption by positing a theory of extended self which focuses on the role of possessions in consumer's identity.

Discussions related to self-concept and symbolic consumption come under the wider research tradition of Consumer Culture Theory (hereafter CTT) (Larsen, Lawson & Todd 2009). CCT has been an important field of research when emphasizing the social and cultural roles that products play in the everyday lives of consumers (Arnould and Thompson 2005). One of the research programs of the CCT approach is to examine consumers' identity projects. In this work, consumers are conceived of as identity seekers and makers, and that consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals (Ibid: 871). Following the line of thought of symbolic consumption theorists, the third premise of this study can now be posed: *Consumers are identity seekers and makers. That is why identities are open to change and construction.* In the era of postmodernity, identity is conceptualized not as a given product of a social system, nor as a fixed entity which the individual can simply adopt. It is something the person actively creates, partly through consumption (Giddens 1991, Woodruffe-Burton & Elliott 2005).

In the next Sections 1.2.1–1.2.4, I want to underline some important features of identity development and construction. There is a need to clarify the identity-related literature in the field of consumer behavior because of its fairly incoherent and diffuse nature (Sirgy 1982).

1.2.1 *Different scopes of identity –from personality traits to social identity*

As a base for identity, *self* denotes the totality of what an individual is. The self can be understood narrowly or broadly as: *individual personality* (unique capacities, creativity and ways of performing the self); *social identities* or *subjectivity* (self, gender, family, age, class, nationality, ethnicity); or *humanity* with global characteristics common to or relevant to the species (language, law, learning) (Hartley 1999). As a result, there are also various conceptions as to how to define what *identity* is about. In this respect, we may distinguish between the key scholars of identity research, respectively, psychology, social psychology, and sociology. Psychological research concentrates on constructs such as self-concept and the personality of individuals, whereas sociological studies tend to focus on large group identities and the organization of culture and society. Socio-psychological line of thought is situated somewhere between the two streams when emphasizing the social aspects of an individual's identity, and acts of self-definition in a social environment. The boundaries of these streams of research are by no means clear, and not even determinant. More important is to understand the different levels of analysis of identity in order to define and operationalize one's own research task purposefully. The underlying idea for this discussion is that identity is a researchable phenomenon as it is a part of the totality of self, which an individual is aware of: It is a 'sense of self'. In other words, we may talk about *self-identification*, which refers to this process of sense-making regarding *who one is*.

With regard to different conceptualizations of identity and self-identification, Deaux (1992) insightfully reviews the distinctions made between *personal* and *social identity* in earlier literature. According to a common description, personal identity anchors one end of the dimension and social identity anchors the other, so constituting a kind of continuum. Alternatively, the distinction between the two concepts is referred to as the level of abstraction in the situation-specific perception of self and others. This conceptualization emphasizes that the question is *when* one or the other level is salient, thus the distinction is temporal rather than structural by nature. Yet some authors (especially representatives of the social identity approach, such as Hogg and Abrams (1988) emphasize that there is a structural basis for distinguishing between personal and social identities, since social identity is derived from one's perceived group membership in certain social

categories (such as nationality, sex and occupation), whereas personal identity contains self-specific attributes of the individual. Having said that, there are many researchers who argue that a clear distinction between social and personal identity cannot be made, but rather that personal identity is always social, and social identity, such as group membership, is always interpreted and perceived subjectively by an individual. This is also the view of this study. This presumption is however debatable, so I hope to attest to its validity in this study (especially in Section 6.2.3 when analyzing self-identification statements).

According to contemporary views, each individual has various dynamic and context-dependent identities which are likely to change over time due to different life tasks and projects. Deaux (1992) suggests that the dichotomy of the personal and the social begs for analytical integration rather than separation. In this spirit, *identity is handled in this present study as a form of continuum of different levels of personal and social orientation*. This continuum is presented in Figure 1. We may further suggest that the individual is always social, yet the orientation of self can be relatively independent or interdependent as regards one's social environment, or somewhere in-between, manifesting a reflective type of self-identification. Reflective self coincides with the idea of 'looking-glass self' that symbolic interactionism has stressed as an important tenet of an individual's identity construction.

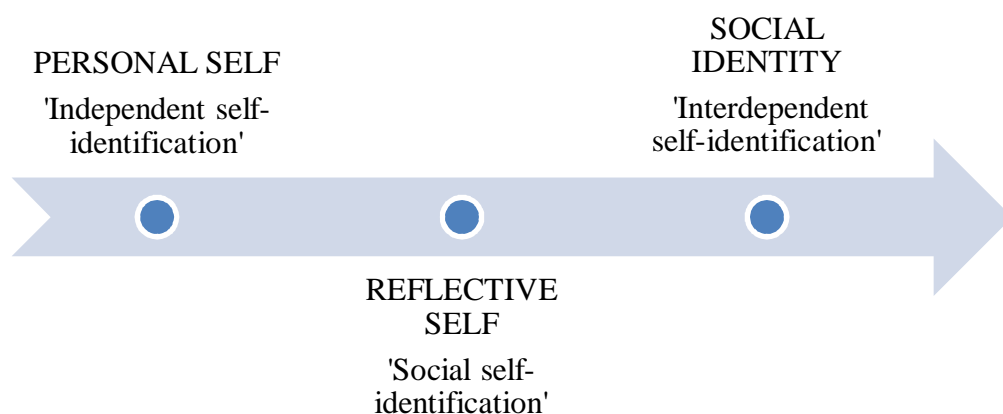


Figure 1. A continuum of different orientations in self-identification.

To summarize, research within psychology that takes into account the social aspects of self and identity construction is of relevance to the present work. The social dimension of the self has been emphasized by the school of symbolic interactionism (see Section 1.3.3), among other schools of thought. Where individual

identity may be said to demonstrate “me”, affiliative identity establishes “we” (Schau & Gilly 2003: 387). It has been recognized that the need for affiliation is linked with ideas of identity and cultural identity emphasizing that identity construction is possible only in interaction with other people (Stevenson 1999 in Uusitalo 2002). According to *social identity theory* (e.g., Tajfel & Turner 1986) we categorize others and ourselves as members of various groups for the purposes of comparison, social enhancement, and a sense of self-worth. Its core tenet is that people derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups and categories they belong to. Mastro (2003) suggests that social identity theory provides a good conceptual frame that can be employed to understand the media’s role in the development of social identities and how stereotyping occurs as a result of categorization. Harwood and Roy (2005: 202) point out that “media serve as the locus for group identifications” since for example the act of viewing the same TV program can create a shared identity. In his *social cognitive theory* Bandura (2001) points out individuals’ strive for psychological matching processes through which they gain valuable outcomes such as interpersonal connections and enhanced self-esteem. Similarly, *self-expansion theory* (e.g., Aron et al. 2005; Park et al. 2010) posits that people possess an inherent motivation for self-expansion, or a desire to incorporate others into their conception of self. It is also acknowledged that subcultures, such as fan communities, provide meanings and practices that structure a consumer’s identity (Kozinetz 2001).

1.2.2 *Narrative construction of identity*

An important contribution to the discussion of identity construction is provided by narrative identity theorists. Narrative identity theory (see e.g., Ricoeur 1991) suggests that we make sense of ourselves and our lives by the stories we can (or cannot) tell. According to this theory, identity exists only narratively, in articulation, and it has a temporal dimension. Narratives configure lived experiences of past, present, and anticipated future into a coherent whole and provide a sense of self-continuity. The temporal nature of self-understanding has also been recognized in the work of a number of symbolic interactionists and sociologists (Giddens 1991; Ezzy 1998). Among consumer researchers it has become common to view a consumer’s identity as structured across time in terms of a narrative (e.g., Kleine & Kleine 2000; Escalas 2004). The story line of identity embraces memories from the past, reflections of one’s present state, and directions for one’s imagined future. These lines are reflectively connected together to make a sense of self.

It is stated that individuals have not just one, but many identity projects that relate to their specific life stages. In the spirit of changing narratives of identity, it has been acknowledged that possessions may play a role in creating, maintaining, and preserving identity (cf. Solomon 1983; Dittmar 1992; Gentry, Baker & Menzel 1995). Prior research on narrative identity and narrative thought has explored how consumers make sense of their experiences with consumer goods and construct a coherent story of their life span (e.g., Escalas & Bettman 2000). In fact, Ahuvia (2005) remarks that the conceptualization of identity as narrative, and a concern with the complexity of identity projects, are the two major developments in consumer research on identity in recent decades. Accordingly, these ideas will be taken into account in this present study (see e.g., Table 6).

1.2.3 Goal-oriented identity projects

Markus and Nurius (1986: 954) have introduced the concept of *possible selves*, which refers to “individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming.” We can further argue that possible selves represent cognitive components of individually significant hopes, fears, goals and threats. Possible selves represent the ideal selves that we would like to become, such as the successful self, the creative self, or the rich self. They are also the selves that we could become and the selves we are afraid of becoming, such as the alone self, the depressed self or the unemployed self (Yannopoulou & Elliott 2008: 10). Possible selves are important because they provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self. Moreover, they function as incentives for future behavior, thus possible selves provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation (Markus & Nurius 1986).

A common view in consumer behavior is that the consumer is often motivated and goal-oriented in the sense that goals at lower levels, such as purchasing a particular product, are designed to achieve the realization of higher-level goals such as an ideal self. In this spirit, Huffman, Ratneshwar and Mick (2000) have constituted a hierarchical model of consumer goals manifesting six discrete levels: Higher-level goals 1) *life themes and values*, and 2) *life projects* are more abstract, inclusive and less mutable when compared to lower-level goals 3) *current concerns*, 4) *consumption intentions*, 5) *benefits sought*, and 6) *feature preferences* (see Figure 2). Moreover, Huffman et al. (2000) divide these goals into three entities that relate to different phenomenological states of human existence according to the ontological ideas of philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1943). They propose that life themes and values are *being-level goals*, whereas life projects are at the interface of being and doing-level goals. Current concerns are primarily

doing-level goals, but consumption intentions are at the interface of *doing-level* and *having-level goals*. Finally, the levels of benefits sought and feature preferences represent *having-level goals* in relation to the states of human existence. As a whole, these goals represent certain kinds of means-end chains in acquiring, performing and realizing the ideal end-states of being. Together these three levels of consumption goals can be employed in order to manage the abstract and complex phenomenon of identity construction as they can provide a linkage between motivation, cognition and behavior in consumption.

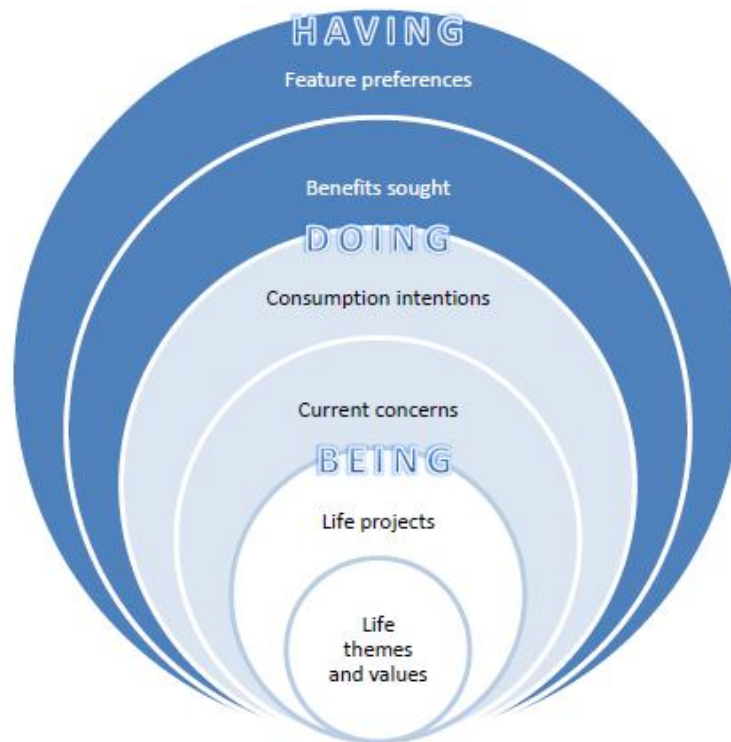


Figure 2. A hierarchical model of consumer goals (Huffman et al. 2000)

Ligas (2000) supports the idea of structural levels in consumer goals. He states that there is a link between symbolic product meanings and consumers' doing-level and being-level goals. In his interview-based study, he investigated symbolic meanings related to purchases such as furniture, cars, washing machines, computers, trips abroad, and cruises, but no media-related purchases were involved in the study. Travelling, in particular, was found to be something that can alter the mental or physical state of the individual and so be positioned at the goal-level of being, whereas furniture, washing machines, and computers primarily manifested

such product meanings and goals that refer to having and doing. In this present study I am first and foremost interested in relating media consumption to the consumer's being- and doing-level goals. Accordingly, I suggest that different life projects can be nurtured by the contents of media, such as television programs. It seems reasonable to focus on these levels of analysis when aiming to investigate identity-related consumption of television programs. Yet it has to be remembered that different levels of goals are in interaction with each other, which means that clear isolation of being-, doing- and having-level goals is difficult if not impossible.

Life themes and values represent profound existential concerns that the individual addresses, whether consciously or not, in the course of daily events (Mick & Buhl 1992: 318). Previous research suggests that life themes are individually limited in number and relatively invariant once developed (Holland 1973; Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie 1979). Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) define life theme as "an affective and cognitive representation of existential problems which a person wishes to resolve." Furthermore, they suggest that a life theme is the fundamental basis for an individual's interpretation of reality and way of coping with it. Values are not typically linked to particular life events in the way life themes are. However, both life themes and values guide the selection, implementation, maintenance, and disposal of many life projects.

Life projects are in constant flux in accordance with changes in circumstances and life cycle. Life projects can also be termed *identity projects* as they refer to the construction and maintenance of an individual's key life roles and identities, such as being a responsible mother, a successful teacher, or a loyal employee (Huffman et. al. 2000: 18). In a similar vein, Rom Harré (1983) has used the term 'identity projects' to refer to efforts to achieve self-directed development and expression of self. Stevens and Wetherell (1996: 345) state that such life-/identity projects may take the form of the pursuit of fame or status or recognition of some kind. They may also be concerned with more personal aspects of ourselves and the way we think about ourselves irrespective of others' opinions. It is suggested that individuals can actively and voluntarily define, plan and coordinate their lives. Life projects, as defined in previous research (e.g., Belk 1988; Mick & Buhl 1992), are subsets of life themes that consist of four categories, community, family, national, and self (in Parker 1998). In other words, the initiation and management of life projects reveal each person's specialized orientations in life.

McCracken (1987) has characterized life projects as each person's development, refinement, and disposal of specific concepts, such as manliness and Americanism, from culturally established alternatives. He (Ibid: 122) has proposed that

consumers look at advertising for “symbolic resources, new ideas and better concrete versions of old ideas with which to advance their projects.” Indeed, a cultural resource-based theory of the consumer emphasizes that it is important to know how consumers utilize their own and firm-supplied resources to pursue their life projects and goals (Arnould and Price 2000; Arnould, Price & Malshe 2006).

Current concerns and consumption intentions relate to the definition of self on a practical level in one’s daily actions. Consumers have different kinds of motives for using media depending on their way of life. Indeed, Giddens (1991: 14) reminds us that the question: ‘How shall I live?’ has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat and many other things, including media consumption. When thinking of possible concerns and intentions for media consumption, an individual may for example have to write an essay for school and be in need of information that media vehicles could provide. Alternatively, he/she may want to buy a new car, and tries to find the best option by following different discussions on different media vehicles.

Benefits sought and feature preferences are goals at the having-level. They are explicit and concrete manifestations of consumption goals, and preferred attributes of the objects of consumption. Benefits sought refer to preferred consequences of the consumption (ownership, usage, or disposal of the product). Product-specific preferences, for one, refer to choice between different products available. Preferences are based on psychographic as well as demographic differences between consumers. The surrounding consumption culture and market environment also affect daily consumption choices since consumers have to choose from the alternatives that are available. Benefits sought and feature preferences vary individually and situation-specifically. Accordingly, consumers may gain same kind of benefit sought from the media, for example to seek relaxation, entertainment or information, but they have different ways to obtain it. When one prefers to sit on a couch and watch TV for relaxation, another may prefer listening to music on the radio. Moreover, where one enjoys a comedy series for entertainment, another could well prefer a crime series for the same purpose.

When moving from the level of being to the levels of doing and having, we come across differences in taste. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) approach to *taste* suggests that personal taste can reflect an expression of identity because taste involves classifying practices through which cultural diversity becomes meaningful and distinctive. Bourdieu believes that class distinction and preferences are most marked in everyday choices, such as furniture, clothing, or cooking. Accordingly, tastes should be analyzed not simply as what people consume but also what meanings people attach to consumer objects. Similarly Starr (2004: 291) asserts

that the concept of identity is useful for conceptualizing interrelations between tastes, social and institutional factors, and consumption.

1.2.4 *Connections of identity, lifestyle, and taste*

In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. Lifestyle basically means *how one lives*, but more detailed examinations of lifestyle have typically included dimensions of activities, interests, opinions, and/or values. Roos (1986: 28) suggests that lifestyle can be seen as a synonym for ‘way of life’ or as an expression of everyday activities, especially consumption. Consumption, by definition, has been considered to be the activity that best captures what is meant by lifestyle (Sobel 1981; Jagose 2003). Roos (1986) defines that we structure our lifestyle by consuming, dressing and liking, whereas ‘way of life’ could be defined through functions and appreciations.

Lifestyle is important to the way in which identities are mediated, produced and lived (Bell & Hollows 2005: 2). Johansson and Miegel (1992) have analyzed the connection between the concepts lifestyle and identity. They (Ibid: 23) suggest that at an individual-level analysis, “lifestyles are expressions of individuals’ ambitions to create their own specific, personal, cultural and social identities within the historically determined structural and positional framework of their society.” They (Ibid: 303-304) argue that the identity of the individual strongly influences the way the individual develops his or her own lifestyle.

Miles (2000: 147) suggests that identities cannot be discussed without reference to the construction of identities. The reason for this is that the way (young) people engage with lifestyles is through the construction of their identities and the negotiation of the relationship between structure and agency. Giddens’ (1991: 81) definition of lifestyle is particularly insightful and helps to explain the relationship between the constructs of lifestyle and identity: “A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular form of self-identity.” Thus lifestyle can be understood as a manifestation of self-identity.

According to Giddens, the process of constructing identity operates through playing with lifestyles, which are adopted by consumers rather than handed-down to them. Lifestyle is no longer associated with traditional groupings such as class and gender, but rather “connotes individuality, self-expression and a stylistic self-consciousness.” (Bell & Hollows 2005: 4) Roos (1986: 39–40) sees that lifestyle (way of life) has gained interest because lifestyle has become something one can

change and communicate, and it is something that we are not tightly tied to for the rest of our life. Moreover, each individual may have a plurality of “social worlds” or “roles” which are connected to some leisure or cultural taste groupings (Uusitalo 1995: 9). With sociological glasses on, we can recognize a double role of symbolic consumption. Many processes that serve self-construction purposes at the individual level can also socially integrate consumers at the aggregate level (Ibid: 15, 17). Uusitalo sees that consumers will always be interdependent in the sense that they note what their fellow consumers do, and consciously or unconsciously adopt ideas from others and from the media into their own consumption and self-reflection. In fact, nowadays, when traditional identities based on nationalities, social classes and traditions are weakening, it is good to have the feeling of togetherness that can be grounded in shared hobbies and cultural tastes (Uusitalo 2002). The internet and internet-based communication are also likely to help create these kinds of lifestyle- and taste-related communities.

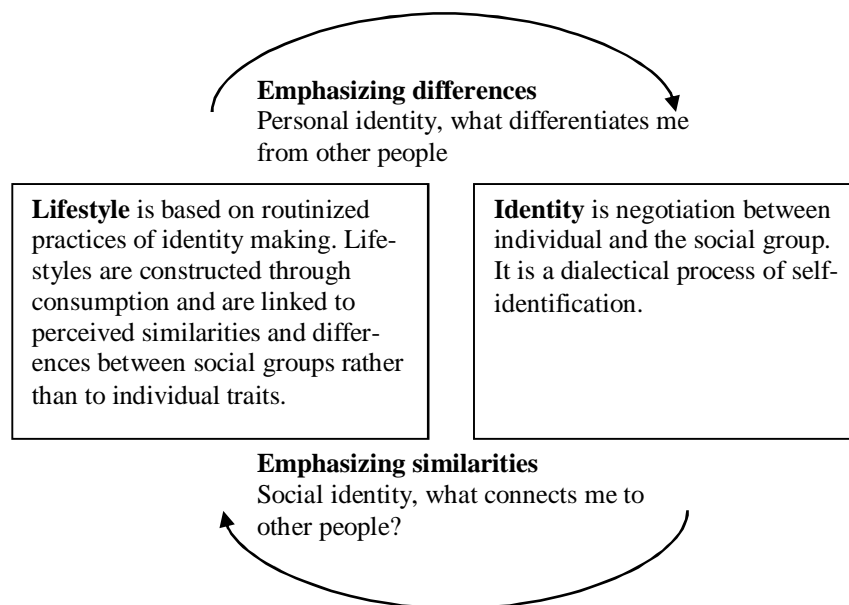


Figure 3. Recognizing the connection of identity and lifestyle

Holt (1997) describes lifestyles as constructed by symbolic boundaries between consumption patterns and expressions of collectivities rather than individuals' personality traits or values. Holt's approach to the concept of lifestyle is in common with the theory of social identity by Jenkins (2004: 4), who states that the

notion of identity involves two comparisons between persons or things: *similarity* and *difference*. He goes on to argue that all human identities are necessarily social identities. The key idea presented by Jenkins (2004: 20) is that people identify themselves in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image. Individuals identify others and are identified by them in turn. Jenkins (Ibid: 102–103) also writes that identity is about boundary processes rather than boundaries per se: it is a matter of processes of identification. Accordingly, we may outline the connection between lifestyle and identity based on differences and similarities between individual and the social group (see Figure 3).

Along with the discussion above on identity, I suggest *the fourth premise of this study: Identity is constructed multi-dimensionally. 1) It contains both personal and social orientations; 2) it develops dynamically during the lifetime, so that some parts of identity are stable, whereas others may change in line with different kinds of life projects of the individual; and 3) it relates to lifestyle and taste as those are concrete manifestations of how identity is expressed and defined.* In the next Section 1.3, I will turn to discussing how media consumption, especially that of television programs, is an inherent part of lifestyle and identity construction for many of us in contemporary society. I bring out the aspects of consumption, production and media environment that together constitute the main elements of consumption culture. As a result I wish to provide arguments for explaining why media consumption matters in identity construction.

1.3 Construction of identities through media consumption

Calder and Malthouse (2005) remind marketers that media should not be viewed merely as the passive vehicles through which consumers are exposed to advertisements. Advertisements are primarily encountered in the course of consuming media products, such as television programs. Thus advertisements and the surrounding media content together form the media context of consumption. In fact, Hirschman and Thompson (1997) emphasize that consumers' relationships to non-advertising forms of mass media are an essential aspect of the meanings they come up with advertisements and how they response to them. By definition, mass media contents, such as television programs, are not objects of consumption in a traditional sense. However, they surely are products with symbolic and social meanings providing more and more material for the construction of identities. Whether these materials are adopted, altered, or discarded, is up to the consumer.

Thompson (1995: 40–41) reminds us that consumption of television programs is somewhat different from consumption of material objects such as cars and clothes. To acquire is simply to take something into one's possession, whereas the reception of a media product involves more than this: It requires some degree of attention and interpretative activity on the part of the recipient. Morley (1995: 314) further recognizes that "the position of television, considered as an object of consumption, is already a complex one, which needs to be considered as operating, simultaneously, along a number of different dimensions. In the first place, the TV set (along with all the other technologies in the household) is already a symbolic object *qua* item of household furnishing, a choice (of design, style, etc.) which expresses something about its owner's (or renter's) tastes, and communicates that choice, as displayed by its position in the household." (cf. Bourdieu 1984)

Television not only mediates the ideas about different identities and lifestyles, but also plays a role in our lifestyles. For some, life can even be arranged around watching television or consuming other media. This choice of lifestyle especially concerns leisure time at home, where television is often omnipresent. O'Sullivan (2005: 24–25) suggests that "what we regularly choose to watch on television, where, how, with whom and when, provides a significant set of indicators concerning our position with regard to lifestyle culture." However, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that mass media are not the only, or even the principal, resource for identity construction. Individuals also draw extensively on the symbolic materials exchanged through face-to-face interaction with members of the family, friends and others they encounter in the course of their day-to-day lives (Thompson 1995: 218).

Bonner (2003: 214) stresses that a person's lifestyle is a concrete expression of self-identity, not a trivial addition, and the components of that lifestyle are substantially what ordinary television is concerned with. Uusitalo (1995: 23) recognizes that television programs with their product surroundings simulate different kinds of lifestyles and life settings as 'totems' or signifiers to consumers. Tastes, practices and possessions are all seen to manifest the self, and television programs provide guidance in what these mean and how they may be modified. Heiskanen (1986: 94) has distinguished three different aspects of how television relates to lifestyle: 1) television as a part of lifestyle; 2) television as a reflector of lifestyle; and 3) television as a constructor of lifestyle. The first aspect leads us to consider everyday routines and practices in which watching television plays an important role. The second point of view takes us deeper to the consumption phenomena, to the contents and messages of the media when suggesting that people symbolically interpret the lifestyle messages that television contents carry. The third view

acknowledges that television contents can be models or ideals that people tend to follow and imitate. In this regard, television contents become specific instruments that consumers can use when constructing their lifestyles. Similarly, when comparing women's magazines and shopping centers it has been noticed that they both reinforce the link between consumption and pleasurable recreation. Like shopping centers, magazines can stimulate, nurture and capture the aspirations and fantasies of the consumers with new consumption spaces and goods. With regard to shopping, magazines can act as a source book for desirable consumer goods that may be imagined as a key to a better, fuller and more pleasant life (Stevens & Maclaran 2005).

The recent rapid expansion of 'lifestyle media' on television schedules and their dominance at the top of publishing's bestseller lists has not yet notably aroused academic interest. However, Bell and Hollows (2005: 1) strongly argue that the phenomenon of lifestyle media demands our serious attention because "watching the makeover television or cooking from a celebrity chef's book are significant social and cultural practices, through which we work on our ideas about taste, status and identity." Also reality-TV can be seen as a stage on which especially national identities are represented and shared (Aslama & Pantti 2007). In addition to lifestyle contents described above, the media also intrude into "non-lifestyle" contents by reminding and promoting different kinds of products (McQuail 2002). Typically this has to do with product placement or sponsoring in television programs and movies.

Steele and Brown (1995) suggest that media has an especially significant role in the lives of the young. The authors argue that young people are very active and sophisticated in their use of the media. Accordingly, the sense of who they are plays a central role in their use of media, but also the media affect their sense of self. Also Miles (2000) sees that media is one of the most prevalent and important arenas in which young people construct and interpret their lifestyles.

Based on the discussion above, the fifth premise of this study can be formulated as follows: *Television is an important and many-sided object of consumption that provides resources for the construction of identity and lifestyle, especially for young people. However, television programs are only one of the possible resources for one's identity construction.*

1.3.1 Consumption of television programs

Switching on the TV, reading a newspaper, listening to a local radio channel, and surfing the web may feel like obvious routines of everyday life. However, to be

accurate, these everyday activities are a matter of making consumption choices. Consumption of different media often means making choices of how to spend free time and choosing between certain media vehicles and their contents based on one's own preferences. The central questions for examining consumption include *what, where, when, how, and for what purpose* media is consumed. In terms of these questions, this section aims to clarify the nature of consumption of television in general, and the statistics of TV consumption in Finland in particular.

The nature of consuming media products is somewhat different when compared to material objects of consumption. Thompson (1995: 40) reminds us that the reception of media products is fundamentally a hermeneutic process. By this he means that individuals are generally involved in a process of interpretation through which they make sense of media products. However, in some instances the acquisition of media products does not necessarily involve a process of interpretation. "A book can be purchased and never read, just as a television set can be left on while no one is watching." Still, many of the audience measurements focus on ratings of viewing frequency and size of audience segments instead of exploring the nature of consumer-media relationships. Holistic understanding of the media as an object of consumption entails taking into account the consumer research approach as well as other traditional approaches used in media audience studies, such as uses and gratifications -research. I prefer to use the term consumption of TV rather than watching TV to point out the nature of this study. The term 'consumption' also allows for wider views on the use of television, taking into account pre- and post- usage considerations as well as different affective, cognitive and behavioral ties that a consumer might have with the media product as an object of consumption.

Studies within the media uses and gratifications -tradition have shown how different needs might be satisfied by television viewing, such as reality exploration, excitement, entertainment, escapism, and companionship (see e.g., Fiske & Hartley 1978; Lull 1980). Consumers differ in their expectations towards use and value of a program. For some, a particular program can be a way of relaxing for a moment, but for others it may well be an important manifestation of their lifestyle and ideology. There are studies according to which television viewing is primarily tied to relaxation, to weaker cognitive investments, and to lower feelings of potency when compared to other activities. For example, Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey (1981) suggest that television may frequently be chosen for the very reason that it is unchallenging, relaxing, and relatively uninvolved. However, Panula (1997; Levy & Windahl 1985, 112-113) reminds us that consumers can be active before, during, and after television viewing. There are also different kinds of ways being active. Consumers can be active in making choices as to what to

watch, how to watch and what to remember about the program. Consumers' *level of involvement* with the program choice (e.g., Lord & Burnkrant 1993; Rubin 1993), interpretations, and self-reflections may also vary. As opposed to the concept the active consumer, Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988: 123) argue that watching television can be a passive activity in two senses. First, it may involve little physical, emotional, intellectual or financial effort or investment. Second, TV viewing appears to be something that most of the time is something that is done to fill time when there is nothing better or more important to do.

In this study, we are interested in *active* and *high-involved* consumers of television programs, as our main interest here is to shed light on how consumers draw meanings from media contents for their identity construction. Thompson (1995: 209) sees that consumers cope with the influx of mediated symbolic materials in their day-to-day lives by being selective. They focus on those things that are of particular interest to them and ignore or filter out others. It can be a struggle to make sense of the mediated experiences and to relate them to the contexts and conditions of their own lives. Uusitalo (1995: 16–17) reminds us that the idea of the “all-empowered active consumer” should be seen only as part of the truth. Consumers may play with market signs and construct their own meanings, but not for every single product or activity.

It has been recognized that the new era of the Internet has transformed people into being more active than before in their media consumption (Tiilikainen 2010; RISC Monitor 2010). Basically, being active means that people know what they want and are willing to search for information or programs they want. For example, 78 % of the respondents report that they choose television programs beforehand, rather than watch whatever program happens to be broadcast on TV. In this spirit, people are also interested in the possibility of recording programs in order to watch those they like most at the time they prefer. According to the study of IROResearch Oy (2010), traditional TV viewing from the TV set has diminished, whereas TV viewing from the internet has increased. Moreover, television programs are mainly viewed at television broadcasting times (86 % of the respondents), but more than half of the respondents (57 %) also view programs time-shifted with the help of a digital television adapter.

Television in particular appears to be an important object of consumption in terms of time spent in front of it. According to the study conducted by TNS Gallup (Tiilikainen 2010), the Finns prefer to spend their free time at home, and television is one of the important entertainment media vehicles that helps one to enjoy at home. According to results from the yearly TV audience measurements (Finnpanel 2011), Finns watched television for nearly three hours (178 minutes) a

day on average in 2010. The amount of consumption has somewhat increased over the years. In general, media preferences have been in a state of continuous change. Consumers are now more likely to choose media they pay for directly, like DVDs, pay-tv, and videogames (e.g., Yhteishyva.fi 2010). Moreover, the study of KMT (2009) suggests that 78 % of Finns prefer to skip TV commercials if it is possible. What worries marketers then, is that the new media may not carry any traditional advertising, and the way we use the old ones is discarded as well. Therefore companies face the need to rethink their marketing communication mix and engage with consumers through another kind of interaction (Gambetti & Graffigna 2010).

Finally, the study of IROResearch (2010: 15) on Finnish television consumption shows that people view several different program types every week. Most typically, people watch television news. Out of the sample of 3721 people, 90 % of the respondents watched television news at least once a week. Also series gather a number of viewers in front of the television every week. According to the survey, 80 % of the respondents watch series weekly. Current affairs programs and documentaries are also popular, with a 67 % and 63 % share of weekly viewers respectively.

Based on the discussion above on consumption of media contents, we can formulate the sixth premise of this study: *There is a great variation in the practices of media consumption, the contents that are consumed, and the motivations for consuming those.* Next we turn to discuss the current situation of Finnish television markets since “we cannot consume what we do not produce” as Silverstone (1994) points out.

1.3.2 *Media environment and the production of television programs*

The value of the Finnish mass media market in 2009 was approximately €4.2 billion, of which the share of television as a single medium was the largest, with €444 million (23 %) (Statistics Finland 2010). Moreover, the share of television advertising was 18.8 % (€237 million) of the total amount of media advertising (€1.26 billion) in 2009 (Mainonnan neuvottelukunta 2010).

The media institutions have grown and diversified in their aims and activities. In many ways the media have become commercialized, meaning that many of the activities relate to selling and marketing their own services or the products of others either directly or indirectly. In addition, media are engaged in constructing and responding to segments of audience members (McQuail 2002: 427). Bonner (2003: 106) recognizes that individuality is a complicated matter for broadcast

television because it “cannot address an individual and is not interested in individuals until enough of them can be aggregated in to a market with shared preferences.” Television differs from most other industries in the sheer number of new ‘products’ (i.e., programs) that have to be developed (Barwise & Ehrenberg 1988: 101). This is inherently risky and the appropriate predictive market research is difficult. However, while new television programs are costly, they are less expensive and risky to develop and trial than are new products in many other industries. Barwise and Ehrenberg (Ibid: 160) remark that one of the extraordinary features of television is that it is quite widely accepted that it should be free, or at least very inexpensive, to watch. The Finnish public service broadcasting company, YLE, has struggled with this issue, and tried to develop programming that would create a willingness to pay for its consumption. So far there has been an annual license fee (€244.90 in 2011) to pay for every household that has one or more TV set in Finland.

The Finnish government has remarkably increased the number of licenses available for TV operators in order to ensure diversity in programming. In 2009 there were ten nationwide, free-to-air TV channels in Finland (Lehtinen 2010). Public service broadcasters offered three full-service channels (TV1, TV2, and FST5) and one specialized channel (Teema) with an emphasis on culture, education and science. The commercial players in the Finnish TV market in 2009 were MTV3 and Nelonen, Subtv, JIM, Urheilukanava, and TV Voice/TV Viisi. In addition to these channels, there are many pay-tv channels (typically purchased in bunches of several channels) available in Finland. In 2009, the share of pay-tv channels of total TV viewing was around 7 % (Lehtinen 2010: 23).

According to Finnpanel’s results from 2010 (Finnpanel 2011), the most watched single channel in Finland is YLE TV1 with average television viewing of 40 minutes per day. Also at the company level, Finland’s national public service broadcasting company, YLE, dominates with a total of 81 minutes per day. However, the share of commercial and more entertainment-focused channels, such as MTV3 and Nelonen has remarkably strengthened in recent years.

The Finnish television system consists of both generalist and specialized channels. When compared to other media, especially print media, television markets are not clearly segmented, but in many cases we may talk about ‘ordinary television’, which is aimed at everyone. However, a clear trend towards more focused segmentation of the television audiences can be noticed. There are new specialized players in the TV markets, such as the LIV channel, which is aimed at women, and which focuses on themes such as family, relationships, home, style, beauty, and health. In fact, LIV titles itself “the first lifestyle channel in Finland”

(Sanoma Entertainment 2009). Interestingly, Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988: 4) predicted in 1988 that “by at least the year 2020, the patterns of distribution, production, and consumption of television or video will be much the same as those of the print media today.” Indeed, TV business is nowadays widely integrated with other media functions of big media consortia, and adopts the logic of multimedia-platforms in its operations. As a result, many television programs have their own home pages with online discussion forums; they are discussed on the radio channels, and written about in the papers of their joint media consortia.

1.3.3 *Reciprocal interactionism in consumer behavior*

In order to understand the interplay between media consumers and media environment (in other words supply and demand), we may consider how consumer behavior has generally been approached in the wider previous literature. In essence, there are different perspectives on how the determinants and nature of human behavior should be understood in the first place. *Radical behaviorists* would suggest that human behavior is determined by environmental factors. In other words, people are considered to act based on external stimuli rather than based on their own free will and intentions. *Humanists* and *existentialists* advocate that personal factors and motivation determine human behavior. According to this view people are always free to make up their mind how to act and behave. Thirdly, the theory of *reciprocal determinism* suggests that human behavior is not only determined by environmental factors, nor does it support the idea of pure freedom of choice for individuals (Bandura 1978: 344). Instead, Bandura argues for triadic reciprocal interactions between environmental, internal (cognitive), and behavioral influences. In this regard, Bandura supports the research approach of symbolic interactionism, and underlines the capacity of humans to use symbols and to engage in reflective thought in their behavior.

Based on Bandura’s ideas, consumer researchers Peter and Olson (1987) identify that there are three major elements in consumer behavior: *cognition*, *behavior*, and *environment*. Cognition refers to mental processes and states of consumers, “everything that goes on inside consumers’ minds, including rational, emotional, and subconscious processes”, whereas behavior refers to “actions of consumers that can be directly observed” (Ibid: 18–19). Thirdly, the element of environment refers to “the complex of physical and social stimuli in the external world of consumers” (Ibid: 21). The authors argue that it is more useful to view the three elements as a dynamic set of interactions, rather than focus solely on the causal impact of one element on another. This means that “each element in the framework

of consumer behavior causes the other elements and in turn, is caused by them” (Ibid: 23–24).

Bandura (1978: 346) provides an everyday example of reciprocal interactions in television-viewing behavior. Basically, personal preference for viewing particular television programs represents the cognitions of the individual, TV viewing is a matter of behavior, and the availability of different programs concerns the influence of the television environment. We may discover that personal preferences are linked to the choices of what to watch on television. However, preferences are affected by the alternative programs available. Furthermore, the viewing behavior of consumers guides the future televised environment since commercial requirements partly determine what should be broadcast. In this example, viewer preferences, viewing behavior, and televised offerings evidently affect each other.

In agreement with Peter and Olson (1987), Rajaniemi and Laaksonen (1989) have further developed Bandura’s (1978) ideas for the purposes of consumer research and suggest a holistic framework for better understanding the nature of consumer behavior. According to the ideas of Bandura they suggest that there is a triadic reciprocal interaction system in consumer behavior, consisting of the three elements: personal, behavioral and environmental. However, they identify three levels of abstraction in each element following the ideas of Berry (1980), who stresses that different scopes of environmental contexts can be identified in human behavior. Accordingly, when moving from a specific experimental context (processing situation) to a wider ecological context of behavior (cultural context), the domain of the behavioral context expands and the time-span of the behavioral effects extends. As a result of identifying these different abstraction levels, Rajaniemi and Laaksonen suggest that there are in fact three subsystems of consumer behavior (in Figure 4). First of all, there is a *performance system*, (innermost triangle), which describes mood, reactions, and choice sets of a consumer in a specific consumption situation. Second, *usage system* (middle triangle), taps into consumers’ experiences and evaluations of the functional and psycho-social consequences of the use product or product class in the longer term. Third, the highest level of abstraction is labeled as *possession system* (outermost triangle) that controls and frames the realization of lower-level systems as it concerns how a consumer relates to his/her cultural environment and behaves in it. This system involves personal values, possession related activities, and the cultural context.

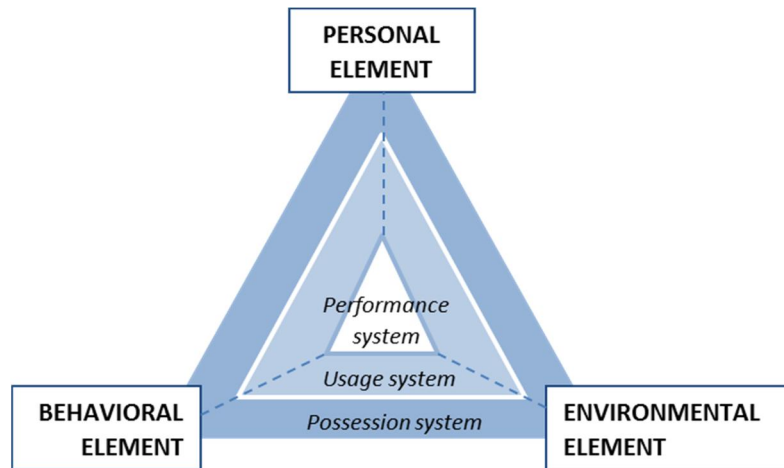


Figure 4. Main elements and subsystems in consumer behavior according to Rajaniemi and Laaksonen (1989)

Based on their framework, Rajaniemi and Laaksonen (1989) argue that we can, and we need, to study 1) the content of the three main elements that form the structure of consumer behavior, 2) the relationships within each element on their different levels of abstraction (marked with dash lines in Figure 4), 3) the relationships between the elements, and 4) the connections between the subsystems of interaction. Accordingly, they highlight the importance of studying dynamic consumer behavior as a consequence of interrelated elements and systems in consumer behavior, instead of studying separate consumption choices. However, it would be impossible to include all of the elements and subsystems in a single study. Instead, it is purposeful focus on one main research question thoroughly, but take into account the underlying dynamics of consumer behavior when making conclusions about the findings.

A range of advantages, but also challenges, can be identified in different research approaches for studying media consumption. It is not the case that one truth replaces the other. No single approach can reveal media consumption in its entirety. However, instead of finding the absolute truth, the central question is whether the aim is to describe the “gritty reality” of people’s lives (realism) or to access the stories or narratives through which people describe and make sense of their worlds (constructionism) (Silverman 2000). Furthermore, we should ask whether it is the attitude towards media consumption or the realized consumption that we are interested in (Uusitalo 2004). Accordingly, when deciding the methods of data gathering, it is a question of what is the best way to find answers to research questions being posed.

1.3.4 Reciprocal interactionism in the field of media consumption

The focus of this study in the field of consumer behavior can be addressed with the help of the framework provided by Rajaniemi and Laaksonen (1989). Accordingly, there is a modified framework developed for the specific context of media consumption in Figure 5. Three different levels of personal element are identified respectively as 1) *situational self*, 2) *identity projects* and 3) *consumer's life themes, goals and values*. The three levels of consumer behavior within the field of media consumption are 1) *reception*, 2) *usage* (both *overt* and *covert* usage referring to the amount of usage as well as the symbolic nature of media consumption), and 3) *consumer lifestyle*, which refers to the role of media in consumers' life and the routines of long-term media consumption. Finally, the three levels of the environmental element are *situational environment*, *social context & TV markets*, and *cultural & media environment*. Altogether, this results in nine main elements that are illustrated with bold letters in Figure 5.

Interactions between the elements are described along the sides of the triangle (*in italics*). I suggest that these interactions result when a consumer reflects the three elements in different levels of abstraction. First, on the left-hand side of the triangle, there are reflections concerning one's identity and object of consumption. Here an object of consumption is a television program. This reflection is manifested as *uses and gratifications* of a media product in a situation-specific context, as *consumer-program relationships* with regard to usage of a TV contents, and as *consumption ideologies and life tasks* at the highest level of abstraction.

Secondly, a consumer reflects his/her personal identity and environmental stimuli, which can be divided into social context and the specific market-dominant context. This reflection is manifested on the right-hand side of the triangle as (*subject*) *positions* in a situational environment in terms of the innermost system in consumer behavior. At the intermediate level, interaction between personal identity and environmental stimuli become realized as *social identities and roles* in terms of social and market environment. Finally, at the outermost level, personal identity and environmental stimuli are in interaction as *appreciations and norms*. This refers to the fit between the consumer's life themes, goals, and values and the constraints of cultural and media environments.

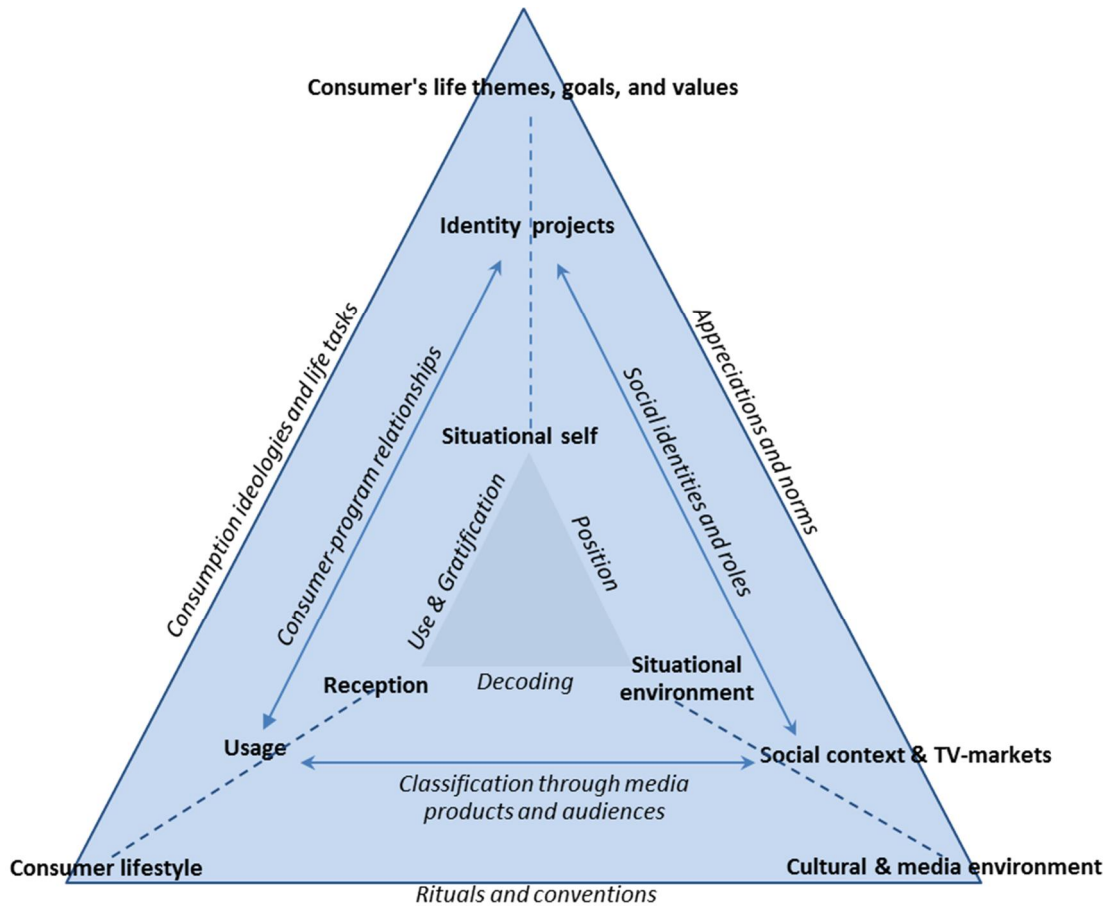


Figure 5. A structure of reciprocal interactions in media consumption

As a third type of reflection, a consumer makes sense of his/her consumer behavior and object of consumption in relation to environmental stimuli (at the bottom side of the triangle). With regard to this reflection, consumers may respond to the media texts differently (that is, negotiate and realize its underlying discourse in its reading) as they have different interpretive repertoires. In other words, at the innermost level, the consumer *decodes* the media product in his/her situational environment. Following Stuart Hall's (1973) assertions, the meaning of a television program is never simply fixed or determined by the sender (encoder), nor is the audience member (decoder) a passive recipient of meaning. When moving on to the next abstraction level and considering the usage system, the consumer *classifies through media products and audiences*, as there is a need to make sense of how self and others are situated in a social reality. Finally, we may suggest that the consumer identifies *rituals and conventions* in consumption with regard to his/her own lifestyle and the wider frame of his/her cultural environment.

In this study, the main interest is in investigating the relationship between an individual's identity projects and his/her usage of television programs. We may name this interaction the *consumer-program relationship*, which is actualized at the intermediate level of abstraction between the personal and behavioral elements. In other words, the innermost triangle is beyond the scope of this present study as it would only tap into short-term, situation-specific concerns of the individual that reception of media can gratify. Nor is the purpose of this study to stress the elements and interactions manifested along the outer triangle. That represents the highest level of abstraction of the elements in consumer behavior; the consumers' life themes and goals, cultural and media environment, and their lifestyle. The main reason for de-emphasizing these elements stems from the specific research approach adopted in this study as well as from the fact that this study aims to contribute to the field of marketing instead of media studies or sociology.

Here, the starting point for analyzing consumption of television programs is predominantly cognitive and individual-based, rather than behavioral or environmental (cultural). Basically, I will investigate how consumers reflect the consumption of television programs in their identity projects, and how they situate and identify themselves in relation to their social context (reference groups and TV audiences). In a related thread, I will examine how consumers classify themselves through media products and their audiences. In other words, classification concerns, how consumers relate to different genres of television programs, and how they make sense of what other audience members are like. In this way I wish to achieve conclusions about the nature of the relationships between consumers, media consumption, and media environment in general and identity-related consumption of television programs in particular. Consequently, the seventh premise of this study can be formulated as follows: *Symbolic consumption of television programs is a matter of personal cognitions and motivations, viewing behaviors, and environmental influences. These three elements interact reciprocally and should be studied accordingly.*

1.4 Outlines for the study of identity-related media consumption

This study has started with the clarification of the two research interests: identity and media consumption. It moved on to integrate those concepts by discussing the construction of identity through media consumption. Along with this discussion we have come up with the basic premises of this study. These are collated in Table 1.

Table 1. A summary of the main premises and their implications in the study

Premise	Implication of the premise in the study
1 Investigating symbolic consumption is necessary in order to understand what drives consumers' engagement with products, brands, and companies.	The research focuses on lived meanings of media consumption and consumer-media relationships, instead of plain attitudes towards the program or audience ratings, which is likely to enhance the understanding of how people engage with media products.
2 The meanings and interpretations of mass media in terms of identity construction arise reflectively in social interactions and as a result of lived experiences of individuals.	The research is conducted following the research approach of symbolic interactionism, which is primarily concerned with the manner in which individuals go about the task of assembling meaning with an emphasis on sensitivity to the social settings of individuals.
3 Consumers are identity seekers and makers. That is why identities are open to change and construction.	The research on symbolic media consumption gives insights into how identities are constructed and realized by media consumers.
4 Identity is constructed multi-dimensionally. 1) It contains both personal and social orientations; 2) it develops dynamically during the lifetime, so that some parts of identity are stable, whereas others may change in line with different kinds of life projects of the individual; and 3) it relates to lifestyle and taste as those are concrete manifestations of how identity is expressed and defined.	The research setting takes into account the past, present and future self, as well as inner and outer-orientation in self-identification. It is also assumed that lifestyle choices and taste preferences help consumers to make sense of their identity issues.
5 Television is an important and many-sided object of consumption that provides resources for the construction of identity and lifestyle, especially for young people. However, television programs are only one of the possible resources for one's identity construction.	A holistic understanding of the television as an object of consumption calls for taking into account the consumer research approach as well as other traditional approaches, for example media Uses and gratifications. It is expected that there is great variance in the role of television programs in identity construction as regards consumers' backgrounds and different program types.
6 There is a great variation in the practices of media consumption, the contents that are consumed, and the motivations for consuming those.	The focus of the research is on active and meaningful media consumption, since unselective and insignificant media use is not likely to manifest a strong identity-bond with a media product. Instead, the things we love or hate are more likely to be self-relevant as well as the consumption practices that are firmly present in our everyday lives.
7 Symbolic consumption of television programs is a matter of personal cognitions and motivations, viewing behaviors, and environmental influences. These three elements interact reciprocally and should be studied accordingly.	The aims of this research tap into not only a consumer's relationship with a television program, but also into consumers' relationships with the social and media environment.

The seven premises each have a specific implication in this study. In other words, they will guide how investigation of identity-related media consumption should be appropriately approached in this study. Basically, I have begun by stressing the importance of studying media engagement to understand the role and meaning of media products in consumers' lives. Therefore, I argue for investigating consumer-media relationships, in other words, what kinds of relationships consumers have with the media products, rather than studying plain attitudes towards media products or amounts of media usage. I also argue that research on the symbolic nature of media consumption would bring clarity to how identities are constructed and realized in these consumer-media relationships. Research should be sophisticated and well-grounded when it comes to the conceptual nature and dynamics of identity construction as well as media consumption. However, this study is limited in scope, as its main interest is on active and meaningful media consumption. There is great variation in the practices of media consumption, the contents that are consumed, and the motivations for consuming those. Therefore, it is essential to identify and investigate the kind of media consumption that is likely to be associated with identity construction, rather than study media consumption in its entirety.

As the phenomenon of identity-related media consumption is a somewhat underdeveloped field in consumer studies, clarification of the phenomenon itself is needed with regard to its conceptual properties. McKennell's (1974) ideas about concept clarification provide a good starting point for developing the logic of conceptualization of identity-related media consumption. McKennell (Ibid: 9–11) has distinguished three aspects in concept clarification; *content*, *structure* and *context*, which are illustrated in Figure 6 as they relate to the research aims of the present study. Here, concept clarification means 1) placing *content* into the domain of identity-related consumption of media, 2) finding its operational definition, and conceptual *structure* (that is, its dimensional properties), and 3) explicating the meaning of identity-related consumption of media within its theoretical and empirical *context*. Altogether, this is a cumulative research process in which theoretical and empirical investigations occur alternately. This kind of process is valuable particularly in the cases where hypothetical, second-order constructs are investigated. Identity-related consumption of media products is expected to be this kind of construct with a multifaceted conceptual nature. In other words, it is assumed that identity-related consumption can be indirectly rather than directly observed.

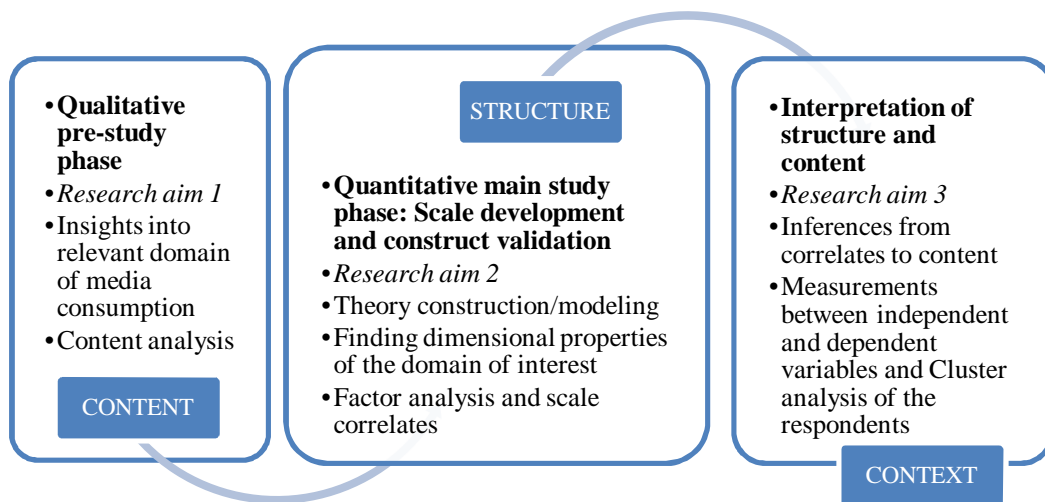


Figure 6. Logic for studying the phenomenon of identity-related media consumption (modified from McKennell 1974: 9–11)

In the first stage, (the qualitative pre-study phase), it is necessary to understand the common conceptual arena that consumers possess in relation to the studied phenomenon. Often this investigation is conducted in a qualitative manner. Following this logic, a pre-study phase will be a qualitative exploration of the symbolic nature of media consumption. Chapter 2 taps into this area by describing and arguing for the logic and methodology for studying identity-related media consumption in two distinct research phases. Section 2.1 introduces the research design and qualitative research methods applied in the pre-study phase. Finally, findings of the pre-study research are discussed in Sections 2.2–2.4, and summarized in Section 2.5.

The second stage (the quantitative main study phase) concerns the analysis of the specific structure of identity-related consumption of television programs. This stage requires scale development and validation of constructs under examination. Here, the structure of the phenomenon is analyzed quantitatively on the basis of the organization of its inherent elements by means of multivariate techniques for data analysis. Thirdly, structure and content are interpreted in a specific context; a sample of respondents and television programs. This stage refers to a relational and comparative analysis, in which causal relations and both respondent, and TV program profiles are examined.

The thesis is organized into seven chapters as illustrated in Figure 7. The first two chapters aim to ‘set the stage’, that is, to familiarize the reader with the phenome-

non of the symbolic consumption of media products. Moreover these chapters give grounding and generate preliminary ideas for the consequent discussions on the conceptual nature of identity-related media consumption. A literature review and theoretical discussion will be provided in Chapter 3, and preparation for the empirical study phase is discussed in Chapter 4. Together these two chapters aim at concept development and operationalization. Chapters 5 to 6 tap into findings of the main study. Conceptual ideas on identity-related consumption of TV programs are validated in Chapter 5 by means of structural equation modeling. Validation of the ideas regarding the nature of self-identification (i.e. different orientations of identity) is provided in Chapter 6 together with comparisons of different TV viewers and program genres in order to provide respondent profiles and so discuss how consumer-program relationships appear in a substantive domain. Finally, Chapter 7 brings us to the conclusions and implications of this study.

Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 7, we may note that the study develops three domains: *methodological*, *conceptual*, and *substantive domains*. Accordingly, in conclusion, the contribution of the study can be summarized as three main implications (in Chapter 7): *methodological*, *theoretical*, and *practical implications*. Based on the three domains, Brinberg and McGrath (1985) have identified several different styles of conducting research. With regard to their terminology, (Ibid: 27, 60) this study follows a *theoretical path* involving a *basic research orientation*, as the primary interest is on investigating certain elements and relations from the *conceptual domains* of symbolic consumption and identity construction. In essence, the idea of conceptual domain refers to elaboration of conceptual properties and relations of substantive phenomena. In the second step, the *substantive domain* of media consumption is elaborated in order to fit the concepts and relations selected for the study (i.e., identity-related media consumption). The substantive domain involves analysis of elements and patterns or real world phenomena. Finally, this study brings together materials from the conceptual and substantive domains in order to form a set of propositions and to test them. The *methodological domain* focuses on finding an appropriate set of techniques for gathering and analyzing data. As a result, conceptual ideas about identity-related consumption of television programs will be operationalized and empirically tested, and empirical findings regarding the key facets of identity construction in consumer-program relationships will be discussed. In essence, the substantive and conceptual domains have been given a relatively high priority. Along with this research, preliminary and abstract ideas regarding symbolic consumption of media products become modeled as more concrete concepts and relations between the concepts.

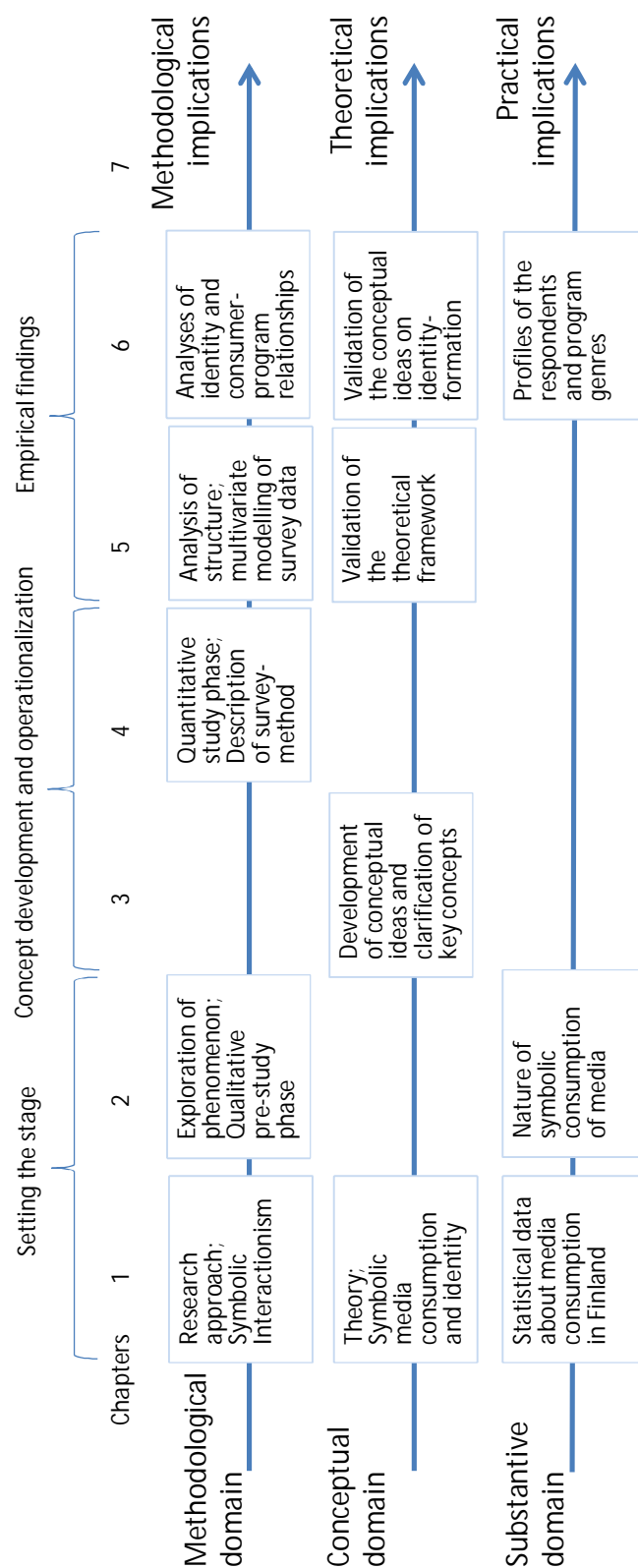


Figure 7. Structure of the thesis

Aspects of *validity* are intertwined in the research process, and validity gets somewhat different criteria with regard to the three domains described above. For example, criteria of validity in the conceptual domain are concerned with parsimony, scope, and differentiation of construct, whereas criteria of validity in the methodological domain are concerned with generalizability, precision, and realism of the findings. Aspects of validity will be discussed on three distinct occasions: When introducing findings from the qualitative pre-study phase, when formulating and testing conceptual framework, and when analyzing the results obtained in the main study phase.

To summarize, the research design of this study is divided into two distinct phases; a qualitative pre-study phase (preliminary study) and quantitative study phase (main study). The first research question posed in this study, *‘What kinds of meanings and interpretations do media products yield in terms of consumers’ identity construction?’* is intended to be answered alongside the pre-study phase that enriches understanding of the symbolic meanings related to different media consumption practices and styles. The second research question, *‘How is a consumer’s relationship with a television program structured in terms of identity-related consumption, and how can it be measured?’* concerns concept development and validation, which are handled in Chapters 3 and 5. The third research question, *‘How does identity-related consumption of television programs become evident among television viewers?’* will be discussed in Chapter 6 when introducing findings from the main study phase.

2 QUALITATIVE PRE-STUDY PHASE – EXPLORING THE SYMBOLIC NATURE OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Panula (1997) has elaborated three distinct research perspectives to understand and study relationships between mass media and audience members. These perspectives highlight *effects*, *uses* or *meanings* respectively. The effects-perspective views relationships from a mass communicator's perspective as a transfer of ideas from encoder to decoder. This perspective sees audience members as targets of persuasion. The uses-perspective looks at the relationship from an audience member's perspective. According to this view, the audience member is a motivated actor who can explain his/her behavior. However, Panula (1997: 143) remarks that these explanations (for example needs and wants) are not self-evident, but rather they are interpreted. Furthermore, an important notion is that there are many uses for each of the media products. In other words, media products serve various needs. For example, even a news broadcast can be watched for the purposes of seeking information or entertainment. As a third perspective, Panula (1997) distinguishes the meanings-relationship. This perspective highlights the production and reproduction of meanings in a relationship between media and audience member. The core of this perspective is in semiotics, which is a field of study concerned with signs and the meanings carried by them in a social interaction. In the light of this perspective, we can assume that television programs are full of signs that carry cultural meanings ready to be interpreted by the consumer. What has to be noted here is that there are no definite (end) meanings of symbols, but they can be interpreted in various ways by different parties. There are both commonly shared meanings in a culture, and subjectively interpreted meanings by individuals in their particular life contexts.

Panula (1997: 46) also recognizes that the three research perspectives described above differ in terms of their underlying research approaches (philosophical foundations). Effects-research attaches to behaviorism, uses-research to functionalism, and meanings-research to symbolic interactionism. As symbolic interactionism is the research approach chosen for this study, the symbolic nature of media consumption is the main focus of this Chapter 2 that introduces the qualitative pre-study phase.

2.1 Methods of data gathering and analysis in the pre-study phase

The pre-study phase of this study resembles the field studies often implemented in ethnographic approaches. The aim of this phase is to have a more holistic understanding of the phenomena around media consumption and to specify research interests before moving on to the main study phase. This avoids a waste of effort by the researcher and the informants. Typically the number of informants in field studies is limited and purposefully selected. This was also the case in this study. University students were chosen for the informants in the pre-study phase. The development of one's identity is noticeable especially in young adulthood. That is why the choice of university students for the empirical study is well justified. Data for the pre-study phase were collected in the turn of the year 2006/7. Data consist of 53 media-consumption related narratives, nine media consumption diaries and nine themed interviews including projective techniques. Together these methods open up a variety of cognitions, behaviors and emotions with regard to media consumption.

Research tasks addressed in the pre-study phase tap into different sides of a triangle that represents the main elements and reciprocal interactions concerning usage system of media consumption, Figure 8. (the detailed elaboration of the three different systems, including usage system, can be found in Chapter 1.3.4). First, there are two data sources addressed to investigate the interaction between consumers' identity projects and usage of media products (illustrated on the left hand side of the triangle). Analysis of written narratives by the informants about their own media consumption as well as discussions regarding informants' realized self-associations with media products can identify what kinds of identity bonds, if any, occur in consumer-media relationships. Secondly, interaction between the usage of media and the social context and media markets is approached with two data sources (illustrated at the bottom of the triangle). Analysis of narratives written about other people's media consumption and analysis of the discussions regarding media consumption vignettes (that is, scenarios of media consumption of another person) bring clarification to how consumers are classified through media products and audiences. Thirdly, on the right hand side of the triangle, we can analyze the interaction between consumers' identity projects and social context and media markets. This analysis touches upon discussions with the interviewees on the topic of 'what makes an average/good/bad media consumer.'

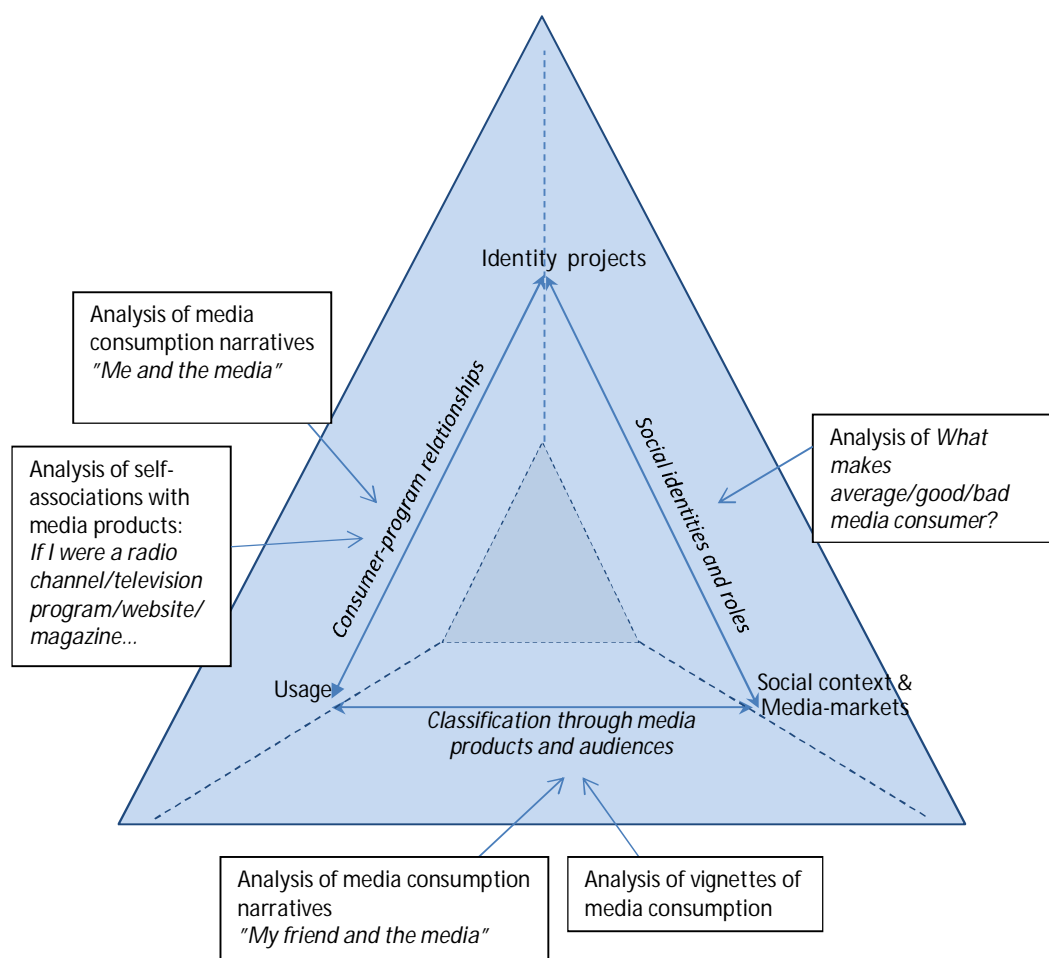


Figure 8. Research tasks in the pre-study phase

A summary of the data sources in the pre-study phase is provided in Table 2. Altogether, there are three qualitative data sources; 1) narratives, 2) diaries, and 3) theme interviews. Each of the research methods has a specific role in the research setting. First, written narratives provide information about the importance of media consumption to young adults, attitudes towards media consumption, and motives for it. Further, the data sheds light on the styles of media consumption, and can reveal explicit and implicit norms of media consumption. Basically, narratives can reveal how people make sense of media consumption and reflect their social environment with it (in line with narrative identity theory, see 1.2.2). Diaries, for one, provide information about the actual consumption practices, contexts, and situations that serve as a good ground for further discussions with the informants. Theme interviews explicate and deepen narrative and diary data when respondents can freely talk through their own media consumption style and analyze the consumption style of others. Interviews also provide valuable infor-

mation about the life-/identity projects of the respondents that are likely to affect their views on media consumption.

Table 2. Summary of the data sources in the pre-study phase

Research project/phase	Description of the participants	Type and amount of data	Mode and frame of analysis	Reported in
NARRATIVES/ESSAYS -year 2006	University students attending a Consumer Behavior course wrote on the topics: <i>Me and the Media</i> OR <i>My Friend and the Media</i>	-Handwritten or typed narratives/essays. Length: approximately 100 to 500 words -53 narratives	Theory-bound qualitative content analysis of narrative Goals of having, doing and being (Huffman et al. 2000)	Sections 2.1.1 and 2.2
SEMI-STRUCTURED DIARIES -year 2006	Nine university students from the Consumer Behavior course who were willing to participate in further studies on the topic	-Handwritten or typed semi-structured diaries -one week period -nine diaries	Data were used as background information for the consequent interview study	Section 2.1.2 and touched upon in Section 2.3
THEME INTERVIEWS -explorative study -year 2007	Nine university students from the Consumer Behavior course who were willing to participate in further studies and who kept a diary about their media consumption for a one week period	-Qualitative theme interviews including projective techniques and vignettes -Nine interviews, duration approx. 45-60min -Tape-recorded and transcribed	Qualitative content analysis	Sections 2.1.3, 2.3, and 2.4

A sample of 53 essays written by students of the University of Vaasa in Finland was collected in 2006. Altogether 30 women and 23 men participated in the study. For the purposes of analysis, the informants were given an identification code: woman 1–30 or man 1–23. However, all names of the informants have been either changed or removed in order to ensure anonymity. All of the writers were students taking part in a course on consumer behavior, and the writing of the narratives was one of their course assignments (although without evaluation, and anonymity was ensured). The narratives were written on the theme of media consumption (consumption of television, radio, magazines, newspapers and the Inter-

net). There were two kinds of data collected: 36 students wrote about their own media consumption and 17 students wrote a narrative about the media consumption of a friend, relative or spouse. The length of the essays varied between 106 and 493 words. Most of the narratives were handwritten in a classroom situation, but some of the students wrote their essay at home and delivered it to the researcher via e-mail. The task of essay writing was only loosely guided, which meant that the students were given some questions that would help them to write about their media use. Students were posed questions such as which medium they consumed, for what purposes they consumed the media, when did they consume these media, which media contents were their favorites, which ones did they hate, and what kind of media consumer did they think they were. Those who wrote about their friend's media consumption were provided corresponding questions. The students were not asked to follow any specific structure in their writing or to answer all of the questions provided. The Finnish-language guidelines that students were given for their writing task can be found in Appendix 1.

As a second data source (see Appendix 2), nine university students voluntarily agreed to keep a diary about their consumption of television, radio, Internet, magazines and newspapers over a period of a week. Students were also asked to write about the contextual factors concerning their media consumption activities, such as what else did they simultaneously do, and with whom did they consume media. In practice, some of the students printed out the pages of their diary and handwrote their diary notes, whereas some of the students kept their diary electronically.

As a third data source, individual theme interviews were conducted with the nine students who had written narratives and kept media consumption diaries (see Appendix 3). The purpose of these interviews was to expand previously collected data and develop further ideas regarding the symbolic nature of media consumption. In practice, the interviews were conducted in the researcher's office and they lasted approximately 45–60 minutes each. Interviews were tape-recorded and the anonymity of interviewees was promised. Interviews began with easy background questions and were followed by questions about student's hobbies, interests and priorities in life. After these general questions it was time to discuss the diaries of the interviewees. Concerning the diaries, they were asked what it was like to keep the diary, and if media consumption somehow differed in that particular period. Related to this, interviewees were asked what their regular media consumption was like, and what would be an exceptional kind of media consumption for them. The third theme of the interview was about identity and lifestyle reflections. Basically, the interviewees were asked to interpret vignettes of media consumption, after which to associate different media contents with their own self-image. Final-

ly, attitudes, norms, and motives towards media consumption were discussed with the interviewees referring to the narratives they had written (approximately two months back in time). For example, interviewees were asked how they perceived themselves as media consumers, what would be the average kind of media consumer, and what kind of consumption could, in their opinion, be considered as good or bad. These tasks are described in more detail in Section 2.1.3.

The research methods described above will be elaborated next with regard to their purpose and method of analysis in this study. As a result I wish to provide the reasoning behind the choice of these methods for the purposes of pre-study phase.

2.1.1 Narratives of media consumption

Researchers rarely have direct access to people's experiences, so it might be of use to use people's own representations of their lives. In fact, one of the strengths of narratives is that people are natural story-tellers (Bloor & Wood 2006: 119). Escalas and Bettman (2000) note that we can gain an understanding of the role that acts and objects of consumption play in our lives by analyzing stories that consumers tell. This idea of narrative thought suggests that narratives provide people with a cognitive vehicle to achieve a sense of self and to understand what they and other people do. Narratives are able to give reasons for particular consumer behaviors and attach meanings to one's likes and dislikes. This is why the authors encourage the use of narratives as research data to gain insights into consumers' goals and motivations in general and self-identity -related goals in particular.

In essence, narrative is a way to structure and understand reality (Hänninen 1999: 15). Most narratives do not simply report events, but rather give a teller's perspective on their meaning, relevance and importance (Cortazzi 2001: 384). Truth can become a secondary concern to the narrative researcher, when the primary interest actually is on how the writer sees and presents him or herself. Narratives should not be looked upon as separate to real life, but as forming meaningful connections to that life (Webster & Mertova 2007: 2). Moreover, Baumeister and Newman (1994) point out the specific needs and tenets that guide narrative thought and are worth taking into account when analyzing narratives. First, people interpret their experiences relative to their intentions. Second, people tend to make stories that depict their behavior and intentions as right and good. Third, people seek to portray a feeling of control and efficacy in their accounts. They also want to represent them in a favorable light, as attractive and competent.

Typically narratives are described as coherent accounts of particular experiences, temporally structured, and context sensitive (Baumeister & Newman 1994). However, the narratives of this study do not account for the change in media consumption over time, but were written in the form of essays without a temporal structure. That is why *contents of narratives are analyzed instead of their structure*.

Analysis of the narratives will be theory-bound, which means that the contents of narratives are analyzed in the light of the analytical framework of consumer goal structures developed by Huffman, Ratneshwar and Mick (2000), and discussed in Section 1.2.3 of this study. As a starting point for the framework, the authors follow a common view that the consumer is often motivated and goal-oriented in the sense that goals at lower levels, such as purchasing a particular product, are designed to achieve the realization of higher-level goals such as an ideal self. In this spirit, Huffman et al. (2000) have constituted a hierarchical model of consumer goals manifesting six discrete levels (illustrated in Figure 2). Moreover, Huffman et al. (2000) group the goals into three entities that relate to different phenomenological states of human existence. They theorize that life themes and values are being-level goals, whereas life projects are at the interface of being and doing-level goals. Current concerns are goals at the doing-level, whereas consumption intentions are at the interface of doing- and having-level goals. Finally, benefits sought and feature preferences represent goals at the having-level in relation to the states of human existence. Different levels of goals are in interaction with each other, which means that clear distinctions between being-level, doing-level and having-level goals can be rather difficult to make. As an example, one may have a life project of being a successful student. This goal involves actions consuming time and effort by the student at the doing-level and maybe also some reasonable choices of equipment (manifesting the having-level) to ensure efficient and comfortable studying (Huffman et al. 2000: 20).

2.1.2 *Diaries as background data for interviews and vignettes*

Diaries are recordings of activities and experiences, usually in a written format within specific episodes of time. Diaries can be strictly guided by a researcher in advance or in free format letting informants decide the style and content of the diary. Thus diaries are unstructured or structured accounts of the activities or experiences of an individual. Diaries can be used as a stand-alone data source or together with some other method, such as interview. In the latter case, the diary then becomes an aide-mémoire for both the respondent and the researcher. (Bloor & Wood 2006: 50–52.) A clear advantage of this method is its ability to help re-

spondents to reflect their own actions and steer them away from third-person bias. For example, Seo et al. (2006) have noticed that self-monitoring of media use leads respondents to a realization that they actually consume more than they think they do. Diary keeping also helps in preparation for the subsequent interview. However, the time between diary and interview should not be too long, and the lack of sufficient guidance in diary method can lead to major problems when analyzing and drawing conclusions about the diaries. This risk was reduced by giving students the ability to contact the researcher for possible enquiries. Another advantage of diary method was gained in this study when information from the diaries was used when preparing interviews, especially the constitution of media consumption vignettes (which will be discussed in the next Section 2.1.3).

The main disadvantages of the diary method are that people are not necessarily committed or willing to report their behavior and/or they are not able to remember it. They may even change their behavior because of the act of reporting it (Bloor & Wood 2006: 52). Well-planned prior guidance also plays an important role for the success of diary method. In the preliminary phase it was noticed that the styles of the diaries varied a lot, even though the guidance was same for everyone. This implies that the guidance might have been too general or that people just differ in terms of their presentation styles and involvement in diary keeping and in media consumption practices. The experiences of diary keeping were discussed in the interviews. Since the diary method together with taking part in the interview was assumed to be rather burdensome for the informants, they were given a small gift worth approximately €15 (they could choose between a USB-memory stick and lunch coupons for the student restaurant). Design of the diary task is provided in Appendix 2.

2.1.3 *Theme interviews with projective techniques*

Using theme interviews is a typical data gathering method in the field of consumer research when the aim of the research is to find out what informants think, feel or have experienced about a specific topic (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008). This semi-structured interview-technique was considered suitable for eliciting and exploring ideas about what symbolic consumption of media products means in the field of media, and how it is present in the lives of the consumers. Theme interviews can be very good at cataloging explicit values, rational structures and top-of-mind associations, but not what lies below the surface. For example, Dumas (2007) recognizes that it is difficult to get under the surface even though an interview was conducted in someone's home. This can be seen not only as a disadvantage of the method, but also as a strength (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen: 2005).

The way people talk about their media consumption styles and preferences is valuable as a reflection of culture and society (Alasuutari 1991: 278). Despite the inability of interviews to describe the 'gritty reality' or people's lives, cultural talk is precious, because it can be analyzed to gain cultural knowledge about the marketplace. Interviewees are understood as being actively involved in using the available cultural resources and discursive practices to construct a meaningful account of social reality. This view of interviewing therefore rejects the assumption that the respondent is a 'passive vessel of answers' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003: 31). Moreover, the interview itself is based on interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Hirsjärvi 1988). It is a particular form of social interaction, guided and constrained not only by the cultural discourses that are relevant for the topic and context of the interview, but also by particular cultural conventions about how interviews are to be performed both by the interviewee and the interviewer (Moisander & Valtonen 2006: 71).

Moisander and Valtonen (2006: 71) and Alasuutari (1991: 280) assert that the interview is not so much a method of gathering facts and information, but rather a vehicle for producing cultural talk. For example, it has been noticed in previous studies that people tend to watch more television than they report (Alasuutari 1995). When people report their media consumption, they often feel pressure to give rational reasons for their actions. Only news viewing is something that needs no further explanation (Alasuutari 1991: 232). Thus it has been noticed that interview method brings out norms of behavior better than the actual behavior itself (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 83). Projective techniques can be applied in the interview for the purposes of breaking the ice and getting deeper into consumers' minds. Webb (1992) argues that projective techniques are of use when a researcher wants to uncover feelings, beliefs, attitudes and motivations which consumers may find difficult to articulate. Projective techniques are particularly useful in the exploratory stages of a research project, because they help in creating ideas and hypotheses about the topic of research. Donoghue (2000) reminds us that as there are no right or wrong answers, respondents will project their own frame of reference in their answers.

The whole interview design is provided in Appendix 3. However, only some important parts of the interviews will be analyzed in this study. This is because of a decision to focus on the most fruitful data in terms of the specific research questions. In practice, this means thorough content analyses of discussions on 1) vignettes, 2) associations of different media into self-concept, and 3) what makes an average/good/bad media consumer in the minds of the interviewees. In addition, the backgrounds of the interviewees are compared with the findings from the vignette analysis. Analysis of the interview data is abductive in nature, which

means that the previous theory of connection between consumption and identity construction loosely guides the analysis, and the findings are reflected in it.

One good way to get under the surface in interviews is a *vignette technique*. Vignettes provide sketches of fictional or fictionalized scenarios to which the respondent has to react. Vignette technique is used for example to examine beliefs about the future (Sumrall & West 1998). It can also be used as an aid for producing talk about the media consumption of others and reflecting it to one's own behavior. By talking about third parties' consumption, respondents will 'project' their own feelings on to the third party (Webb 1992: 125). Once these feelings are brought out, they can be discussed. This way, vignettes act as a stimulus for extended discussion of the scenario in question (Bloor & Wood 2006: 183).

The underlying idea for the vignette task in the interview was that the respondents construct the meaning of media consumption when they describe and explain their thoughts about the vignette. Vignettes were constituted from real data gathered from the diaries and narratives written by the same nine students that participated in the interview phase (women 1–4 and men 1–5). Media contents consumed by each informant during one week period were collated into the vignette. In addition to this, the narratives provided some additional data for the vignettes about informants' likes and dislikes. This way, it was possible to reach both real life accounts on media consumption and the profiles of the people behind those accounts. In addition to media contents, the A4-sized vignette paper was enlivened with pictures and words that would open up and describe the situations of media consumption better than a plain list of different media contents consumed.

The basic task for the interviewees was to look at the vignettes and picture the person behind each one based on the given descriptions of their media consumption. Each interviewee analyzed four different vignettes. Naturally, no-one analyzed his/her own media consumption. Moreover, the interviewees did not know that the vignettes described their fellow students' media consumption. The interviewees were guided with some questions if they had difficulties in expressing their thoughts about the vignettes. For example, they were asked whether there was a man or a woman described in the vignette, how old the person could be, what the person could do, and what the hobbies of the person described in the vignette could be like. Interviewees were also asked their opinion on which media contents the person would probably not consume at all. This question was posed in order to bring out the opposite media consumption to that described in the vignette.

Sumrall and West (1998) suggest that vignette technique should be used with group sizes large enough for accurate comparisons and to combine it with other

research techniques such as survey or interview. The scenarios must also carry sufficient detail to allow the respondent to visualize the scenario as an actual event (Bloor & Wood 2006: 183). This is why I added some pictures to the vignettes. The problem is that the interviewees can actually pay too much attention to the pictures and make some conclusions based on them, not on the media consumption described. It may also be that more exact questions about vignettes are needed when an interviewee feels that it is difficult to describe the person behind media consumption.

In the same way as narratives, media consumption vignettes are analyzed in terms of Huffman's et al. (2000) framework on consumer goals. Thus, the purpose is to investigate the levels of doing, having, and being that interviewees bring out when describing people behind the vignettes. This way vignette data adds to the analysis of narrative data. Moreover, vignette descriptions are compared with the real accounts (gender, age, job, hobbies, and life themes) of the people behind each vignette in order to reveal how valid conclusions made about the consumer's identity really are when based on their media consumption. In this respect, we can gain insights into the phenomenon of the construction of social identities in the context of media consumption.

In addition to vignette technique, incorporation of media products into self-concept was investigated in the interview by applying a projective technique, namely a task of making associations that connect the research object with thoughts related to actual and/or ideal self. These kinds of associations can be linked to a specific group of metaphor-based research techniques that use personification. In other words, the task of personification of media products (or brands or firms, and so on) means that media products are assumed to possess some human characteristics to which a person can relate (Hofstede et al. 2007). It is interesting to analyze what kind of analogy principle respondents use when making associations. They may, for example, point out their taste preferences, interests, life-/identity projects and life themes, and/or stereotypes of media consumers in this personification task. Incorporation of media product into self-concept happens when consumers appropriate the meanings of media product into their identity construction, referring to the line of thought of self-brand connections (e.g., Escalas & Bettman 2000). According to Escalas and Bettman (2005: 379), objects of consumption become linked to self when they can help achieve self-motivated goals of the consumer, such as needs for expression of individuality, social integration, higher self-esteem, or personal accomplishment. Consumption meanings, then, function as symbolic vehicles for pursuing a desired future life or conception of ideal self, and avoiding undesired identity (Thompson 1997).

In practice, the interviewees were asked to imagine that they were a certain magazine or newspaper and to describe and explain their choice of media product. Television programs, websites, and radio channels were also named and discussed in the same way. In addition, actual versus ideal association between the self and media products was discussed with some of the respondents. Not all of the themes were discussed with all of the interviewees since it was found that it was easier for some of the interviewees than others to associate themselves with media products. That is why the interviewer did not want to force some of the interviewees to give answers, but instead to carry on the interview with other topics.

Incorporation of media products into self-concept will be analyzed by elaborating different aspects of individual self-identification, such as different scopes of identity (see Section 1.2.1), dynamic and narrative construction of identity (see Section 1.2.2), and connections of identity, lifestyle and taste (see Section 1.2.3). Moreover, the thematic difference between actual and ideal self is under examination. It is interesting in particular to reveal the rationales behind associations and judgments about the incorporation of media products into self-concept. In this respect, we may suggest that a consumer's cognitions (opinions on different media products), behaviors (media consumption practices), and affections (feelings about different media products) become relevant. Judgment principles are of interest when making conclusions about the conceptual properties of identity-related consumption of media. Findings regarding the incorporation of media products into self-concept are discussed in Section 2.4.1.

Finally, related to the incorporation of media products into self-concept, interviewees were also asked to widen their perspective by giving a definition for average, good and bad media consumers. This task was designed to tap into social identities of media consumers, in other words, what media consumers were expected to be like in the eyes of the university students. Accordingly, questions such as what kind of media consumption is desirable and what kind is not are addressed in Section 2.4.2. Analysis of this section follows the basic procedure of qualitative content analysis, which means that findings are described and analyzed by focusing on typical characteristics and themes found in the data.

2.2 Findings from the narratives of media consumption

The primary concern of this analysis is not simply to compile a list of university students' favorite media, but to gain insights into identity-related media consumption. Therefore, the general description of findings will be short, elaborating only three main notions. First of all, it was found out that students saw that mass media

consumption constituted an important part of their lives. Particularly the significance of the Internet as the most important media vehicle came up in many of the narratives. For example, woman 20 wrote that:

“The Internet is necessary as a help for school work and as entertainment. There’s no way I could manage without it. It is my primary source of information, and among other things I read the newspaper on the web every day. Through the Internet I also keep in touch with my friends. Messenger is open nearly all the time when I’m at home”.

Television, too, seems to play an important role in the lives of the young adults, mainly because it has entertainment value and therefore suits their relaxation needs well. Moreover, without television, one would feel a bit odd, as watching television feels like a necessary leisure activity. For example, woman 2 wrote that “a while ago when my television was broken for two days I felt like some important part was missing. It was too quiet at home, and I did not know what to do.” Moreover television has an important role in a student’s life for enabling relaxation as woman 7 described: “I need one night in a week when I can relax by laying on a sofa and watching television.”

Magazines and newspapers were primarily considered as something extra and a luxury that only a few students could afford. In this spirit, woman 3 said that “I would like to read more magazines. However, as a student I don’t feel like spending money on those.” Finally, radio was mainly considered as a good background noise that is quite meaningless, but almost a necessity when travelling by car. Woman 9 wrote that “only when travelling by car I may listen to radio... At work (I work as a part-time cashier along with studying) I am sometimes ‘forced’ to listen to Nova-channel.” To sum up, the Internet and television were considered as inherent to the lives of young adults, whereas radio and magazines/newspapers divided opinions as regards their presence and importance.

A second general notion concerns the style of the essays. The essays were evaluative and reflected the importance of social comparison when making sense of one’s own media consumption. Essays that were written about other people’s media consumption showed that media consumption provides symbolic resources which are utilized in making sense of what other people do and what they are like. For example, man 19 wrote of his brother that “Media support his engagement with own favorite team” and man 18 concluded about his friend that “the mass consumption of certain media tells me that, because Reino is not on drugs, uses alcohol only a little, and does not smoke at all, this has to be his addiction. It is his weak point, the Achilles heel.”

Personal media consumption was typically described as average when compared to other young consumers. Being an average media consumer was mainly judged by the amount of consumption, not the particular nature of it. For example, woman 18 described that “I think that I am average; I use media daily, but not for hours at a time.” However, it was noticeable that many of the writers compared themselves in terms of their media literacy skills as well. Typically, students considered that they have better media literacy skills than average consumers. University students were conscious of what they should be like as media consumers. They should possess characteristics such as sophistication and critical awareness. For instance, woman 1 said that “when I am searching for information, I am extremely critical because when surfing the web, one can run into all kinds of pages.” Essentially, all this highlights the phenomenon of looking-glass self, when self is viewed reflectively through interaction with others.

As a third general notion, it was found out that explicit referral to identity construction was rare, but it appeared implicitly in the essays on media consumption. Findings tell us that, in general, university students are active in their media use and in giving meanings to it. In other words, students appear to be high-involved media consumers, for whom media consumption is an essential part of life. However, it was not typical to express media consumption in terms of life themes or identity projects, but instead to give descriptions about the preferences and styles of media consumption. On a closer look however, the three levels of having, doing, and being goals can be identified in almost all of the narratives on media consumption. Sections 2.2.1–2.2.3 below discuss the findings of the narratives in the theoretical framework of the having-, doing- and being -level goals of Huffman et al. (2000). Accordingly, the aim is to yield illuminating findings about the goals of media consumption with regard to identity formation.

2.2.1 *Having: Media consumption as different taste preferences*

Based on the ideas of Huffman et al. (2000), it was assumed that students would vary in their preferences for different media vehicles and their contents. Indeed, the greatest variation concerned the consumption of radio and newspapers, whereas Internet and television showed more consistent importance to the writers. Many of the students lived alone, so television and radio were often considered as a company that provides background noise in the apartment. Television also meant well-deserved relaxation after hard days of studying. Newspapers and magazines in their traditional paper formats were mainly considered as being more or less unnecessary to subscribe to (and to pay for).

Students recognized many uses for media contents and sources of gratification in consuming them. Relaxation, information seeking, entertainment, communication, company, stimulation, ideas, experiences, music, killing time, keeping up to date, managing everyday life, shopping, and bank services were among the most frequently described uses for media. In general, the Internet was considered as the most useful vehicle for pursuing these tasks. It became evident that one of the important ways of using the Internet was communication with friends. Woman 10 described that “I feel that I’m a versatile media consumer, because by using different media students can get information for school work...During my free time I am not a large-scale consumer of the Internet, and I use it mostly to take care of my social relations.”

Students appeared to be very conscious about their likes and dislikes with regard to specific media contents. Hardly anyone had difficulties in describing what their favorite media contents are. Even more easily, they could identify the media contents that annoy them most. However, typically students spoke about their preferences by program types rather than naming specific programs. Furthermore, it was recognized among the writers that young consumers constitute a particular segment of the population when it comes to preference for media products. For example, woman 26 wrote about her friend that “papers that she is interested in include local newspaper and magazines that are meant for young adults, such as *Trendi* magazine, of which target group she belongs to (at age 22).” When students told of their specific favorites and dislikes in media, it was apparent that not all media products gained equal appreciation, but that gossip magazines, soap operas, chat forums, and TV game shows were typically considered as a waste of time and/or money among the students. Woman 2 evaluated a program that she disliked by arguing that “probably watchers of this program (TV game show called *Voittopotti*) are seen as real dummies.” Moreover, there were some TV programs that the students were a bit ashamed of watching. For example, woman 3 expressed that “I admit also watching the Finnish version of *Big Brother*.”

2.2.2 *Doing: Media consumption as indicator of different lifestyles*

“His media consumption tells me that he has no life...without media he might even go out sometimes” (man 15 talking of his friend). In general, media were considered as tools for enacting a preferred way of life and handling one’s duties effectively. Media relates to university students’ current concerns and consumption intentions in many ways, and is an alternative way of spending leisure time as woman 2 noticed: “...a lot of things may be discarded because of different media. For example if you do not have a television, you could end up jogging or

meeting friends.” As a whole, different media were considered as varied resources for the purposes of studying and spending leisure time. Accordingly, on the one hand media helps in reasoning and configuring one’s own world view, on the other it helps to clear your head.

It was a common conception among the students that young adults are mixed and active users of different media vehicles. However, there were a variety of different, even opposing, ways of consuming media recognized in the writings. Five dichotomies of media consumption styles were identified, and are presented in Figure 9. In addition, citations for different media consumption styles are provided in Appendix 4. Consumption styles are organized so that usual and preferred styles of consumption are on the left hand side of the figure, whereas styles that were rather rare or even avoided by many are illustrated on the right hand side.



Figure 9. Poles of media consumption styles

Different practices of media consumption were part of the daily routines of many, but some students appeared to be high-involved in their media use as they considered it to be relevant with regard to their hobbies and social relations. Woman 23 told that “I could describe myself a large-scale consumer of media...the media are such a relevant part of my life that I cannot really imagine my day without them.” The importance of different media becomes easily evident to friends and colleagues too as, for example, man 20 talked about his friend’s hobby: “He follows media pretty much, but he is only interested in sports-related news and topics. Text-TV is his biggest object of desire, and it is pretty much open always when he is at home. The magazines he has subscribed to relate without exception to sports (*Hockey magazine* and so forth). Every media has a role in his hobby (betting).” Similarly, man 15 noted “my friend is probably the biggest media consumer I know. Now the Internet is quick and cheap, he spends around 8 hours per day on the web. Additionally, in my opinion, he has every possible TV-channel that a man can have.”

2.2.3 *Being: Media consumption as realization of different life themes and life-/identity projects*

When moving on to more abstract level ideas related to media consumption, it was found that media consumption contributes to basic questions in life, such as what the priorities and necessities in life are, what to believe in, how to manage in life, and what to respect. Five distinct identity projects and life themes of university students can be distinguished based on the narratives.

The first of the identity projects is labeled here as ‘*to be a global citizen*’, which relates to the life theme of ‘*sophistication*’. Under this life theme it is important to be up-to-date, to be active in media use and to make sense of reality by following domestic and foreign news and current affairs. In this spirit, woman 25 said of her boyfriend:

“I would describe Andy as a world citizen. He has travelled a lot and has good friends in different countries and continents. Andy has language skills and he is interested in foreign cultures. The Internet feeds these characteristics of his, and it is a means for him to keep in touch with friends. It is also a good channel to keep dreams and plans alive and to feed one’s imagination.”

The second identity project can be labeled as ‘*being a student and acting accordingly*’. This project attaches to the life theme of ‘*key life tasks*’. Related to this theme, a student needs to consider what is useful and of quality. Critical reading of media and the use only of trustworthy media sources is considered important.

One of the writers, man 2, noticed that “since I study economics, I am used to thinking about almost everything in terms of its monetary value, meaning ‘what do things cost’. This has an effect on how I interpret media messages.” There are also other expectations that concern students, as comes out when man 14 described his friend as being: “a typical student who wants to keep up-to-date in an ever changing world. Tom is busy, social, talkative and the trendiest one in our school. Thus, the media are a very important part of Tom’s life.”

The third identity project that was identified from the data can be labeled as ‘*to be young and enjoy*’. This project relates to the theme of seeking ‘*meaningful content of life*’. Most of the students are in their twenties, so they feel they should enjoy life, have a little luxury, relax, and keep in touch with their friends. For example, woman 13 said “I would certainly manage without the Internet at home and subscribed magazines, but I feel that those raise my quality of life, and with the help of those I can better enjoy and relax when I am at home.” Woman 20, for one, was afraid that “without media she would be at a loose end and she would feel a lot lonelier”.

The fourth identity project highlights that it is important ‘*to engage in something*’. This project reflects the theme of ‘*priorities in life*’. There were several modes of engagement expressed in the narratives. For some of the students media consumption was just a way of spending some spare time, but for others it was tightly entwined with their hobbies, interests, and value judgments of good and bad. Woman 24 argues that media consumption should not be among the priorities in life and sees that her mother is on the right track when “television is not a necessity to her, but she could manage perfectly without it. To me, this kind of media consumption tells me that she has the right kinds of priorities in her life, when she has included things other than watching TV in her leisure time.” On the other hand, man 14 recognizes his friend’s devotion to media consumption: “He owns every possible media gadget and he is more up to date than STT [news agency]. He has not spent a day without the Internet from the day he got it.”

The fifth identity project is labeled as ‘*managing daily challenges*’ and it relates to the theme of ‘*balance of life*’. There were various challenges in media consumption that concerned students. It seemed important to keep within the limits of reasonability and ‘average’, but there were a few examples of ‘addiction’ to media consumption, such as man 8 describing his use of the Internet:

“I have noticed my addiction when I have had technical problems with the Internet connection. For example, if the connection crashed on Friday night when I could not get help before Monday, it meant that the weekend is doomed to be a catastrophe. Thus, the computer and internet connection

constitute an unquestionable ground for my life, all of my interests and hobbies. Without this media I feel powerless and purposeless.”

Also man 3 describes how he struggles with his extensive use of media: “I have tried to diminish my internet use. Sometimes I could spend five hours at a time, but now I strive to concentrate on studying and sports. I try to keep the Internet and television as ‘rewards’.” Also man 7 sums up well the role of media consumption in the lives of many by stating that the “media’s influence is two-fold for me. On one hand I cannot be without it, but an over dose of it makes me feel unwell.”

As a whole, it appears that consumption of media can relate all the way from daily media choices to values in life. Even though narratives mainly concerned media preferences and the daily routines of media consumption, it was possible to address the connection between taste preferences and life themes and tasks. Different motivations for media use came up in the narratives as well as opinions about the value of different media and their contents. Hence we may conclude that it is rather easy for a consumer to describe lower-level concrete goals and specific preferences for media consumption. However, higher-level goals in life and identity issues are not that salient when talking about media consumption. Interestingly, it was found out that identity issues crystallize in social reflection. In other words, those students who wrote about their own media consumption referred to media consumption as practices and routines, whereas those who wrote about the media consumption of another person addressed different kinds of media preferences, life situations and choices of lifestyle (for instance hobbies) more clearly. This finding demonstrates that symbolic meanings of media consumption arise in social interactions just like the research approach of symbolic interactionism suggests.

2.3 Findings from the vignettes

All nine interviewees had a specific vignette task during their interviews. In other words, nine vignettes were prepared in advance based on information about each participant’s weekly media consumption. All of the informants were asked to look at four different vignettes when they were interviewed. As a result, each vignette was discussed with four of the interviewees. Backgrounds of the informants are illustrated in Appendix 5 in order to ease comparisons between informants’ situations in real life and interpretations of those based on their media consumption. The nine informants all have rather similar backgrounds as they are in their mid-twenties and they all study at the University of Vaasa. However, they differ somewhat in terms of their relationship status, place of residence, and hobbies. In

addition there are some minor differences in their priorities in life so that for some studies and career seem to be more important than for others.

Next, four out of nine vignettes will be elaborated in more detail to illustrate what kinds of interpretations interviewees made based on getting information about media consumption. The interest is particularly on how well the interviewees can describe the person behind the vignette, what are the key clues for them in this task, and whether the vignettes can reveal some symbolic meanings attached to media consumption.

2.3.1 *Andrew's vignette*

First of the four vignettes discussed here is Andrew's. At the interview with Andrew, it was discovered that Andrew's real age is 24 and he comes from Tampere. He lives with his girlfriend in Tampere, but has also rented an apartment in Vaasa. He studies management at the University of Vaasa, and is about to finish his master's thesis and graduate. He likes to see his friends, and he is interested in football and politics.

The photo of the actual vignette based on Andrew's media consumption is in Figure 10. The vignette is organized so that there are morning routines at the top of the page, and evening time is presented at the bottom of the page. In the lower-right corner there are a few programs crossed out, which means that Andrew has said that he dislikes these media contents in his written narrative on media consumption.



Figure 10. A vignette describing Andrew's week of media consumption

The four interviewees who analyzed Andrew's vignette took notice of the media contents that were consumed. Nearly all of the media contents presented in the vignette were interpreted somehow. There were no comments on *mtv3.fi* and *il-talehti.fi* websites. Neither did the Swedish language TV programs *BUU-klubben* and *TV-nytt* evoke any comments. Figure 11 provides the main comments given in the form of different hierarchical levels of consumer goals (Huffman et al. 2000).

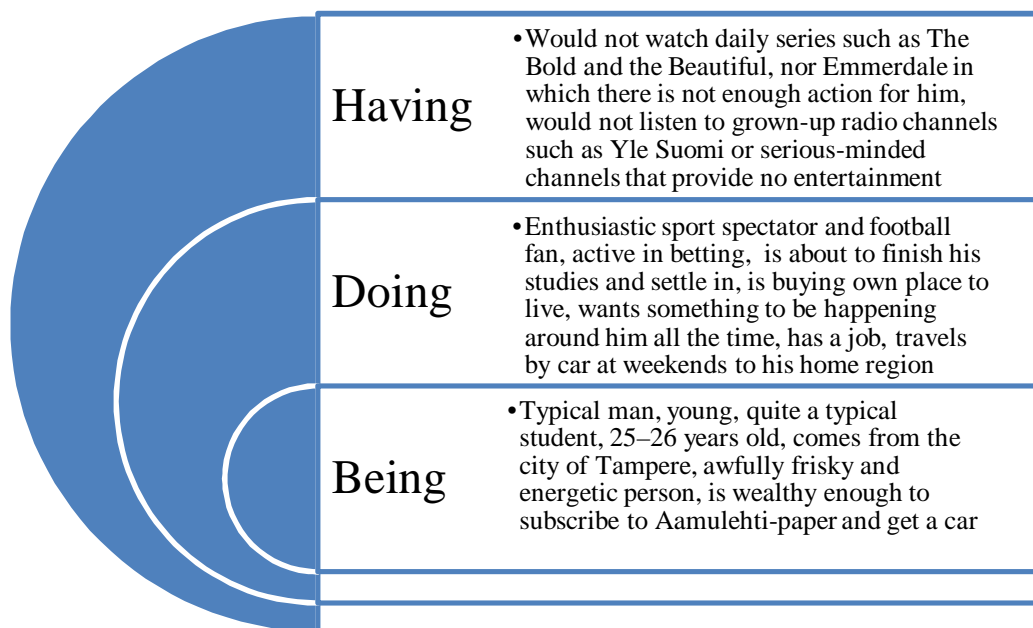


Figure 11. Andrew's levels of having, doing and being according to what others think of him based on his media consumption

It appears that the four interviewees who analyzed Andrew's vignette managed to get very close to his current life projects and lifestyle in reality. As illustrated in Figure 11, the interviewees thought that the person behind the vignette is a man aged 25–26 years. Andrew's subscribing to *Aamulehti*-newspaper was associated with being wealthy (Kathy) and the place of domicile (Thomas). Based on his reading of *Asunto-ovi.com* magazine, Thomas and Jack concluded that he is looking for an apartment and about to graduate. Choices of radio channels made him young and an 'awfully frisky and energetic person' (Ann). Choices of TV programs, made him an 'enthusiastic sports spectator' (Jack, Thomas). Furthermore, Internet sites he visited, such as *veikkausliiga.com*, made him a 'football fan'

(Thomas). Because he does not like the *Salatut elämät* program Ann concluded that he would not watch other daily series, such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* or *Emmerdale* that would not provide him with enough action.

2.3.2 *Kathy's vignette*

The second vignette discussed here is Kathy's. At the interview with Kathy, it was discovered that she is 24 years old and comes originally from Tampere. She has a boyfriend who lives in another city. She studies marketing at the University of Vaasa and works in a bank. She likes to listen to music, read books, go to gymnastics, and go out with friends to have coffee or to go for a walk. Studying, friends, and family are among the most important things in her life at the moment. In Appendix 6 there is a vignette, which was collated based on what she reported in her media consumption diary and narrative.

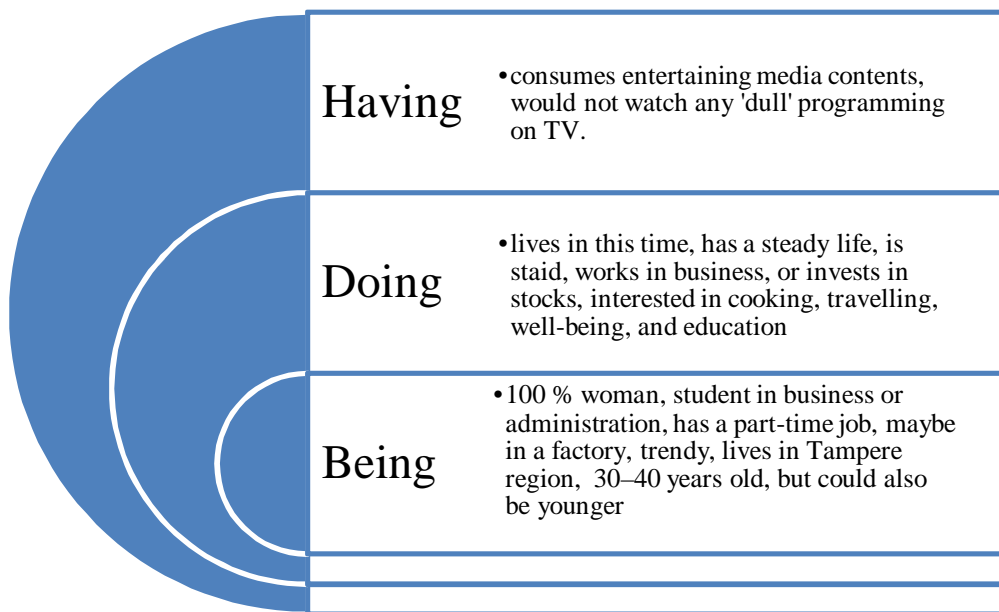


Figure 12. Kathy's levels of having, doing and being according to what others think of her based on her media consumption

The four interviewees who got Kathy's vignette to look at paid special attention to *Finnmatkat.fi* website, *Kangasalan Sanomat* (local newspaper), and *Täydelliset Naiset* (*Desperate Housewives*) TV series.

In the case of Kathy as well, interviewees interpreted well the messages of her media consumption (Figure 12). Thomas, Mary Jo, and Jonathan concluded that Kathy comes from Tampere region as she reads *Kangasalan Sanomat* newspaper. They were also certain that the person behind this media consumption vignette is a woman as there are so many women's magazines consumed. Also some of the choices of television programs, such as *Kauniit ja rohkeat* (*The Bold and the Beautiful*), *Täydelliset Naiset* (*Desperate Housewives*), and *Maajussille morsian* validated this conception according to Thomas. He also thought that the person must be quite staid in order to watch soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Salatut elämät*. Moreover, Thomas believed that Kathy is a student or at least study-oriented as she reads *Tieteen kuvalehti*, watches *TV-news*, and visits the website *Kauppalehti.fi*. The fact that Kathy had visited the site of *Finnmatkat.fi*, which is a Finnish travel agent, provided a strong message for the interviewees, as based on that, Tommy, Thomas, and Mary Jo all thought that Kathy likes to travel. Consumption of magazines gave interviewees hints about Kathy's hobbies. Tommy concluded that she would be trendy, Mary Jo believed that the person is interested in cooking as she reads *Maku*-magazine, and Jonathan felt that the person would be interested in well-being and education.

Surprisingly, the interviewees went wrong when guessing the age of Kathy. Mary Jo and Jonathan believed that the person described in the vignette would be aged from 30 to 40 years. The hints for this included listening to *Iskelmäradio* radio channel, which was considered something that more mature people would listen to (Jonathan). Jonathan also thought that the daily routine of the woman is stable. However, because she watches series aimed at younger people, such as *Pako* (*Prison Break*) and *Täydelliset Naiset* (*Desperate Housewives*), Mary Jo concluded that she could be 30 to 40 years old at the most. Also listening to *radio Energy* and reading *Metro*-magazine made this woman seem a bit younger. Her reading of a *Aku Ankka* (*Donald Duck*) comic book was something that surprised Jonathan, Mary Jo, and Thomas, and conflicted with their first impression that the person was a mature woman, yet they stood behind their first impression.

2.3.3 Thomas' vignette

The second vignette, presented in Appendix 6, belongs to Thomas who is a 22 year old student at the University of Vaasa. He studies economic sciences, with management as his major. He likes surfing the Internet, watching TV, jogging, and going to the gym. He comes originally from Laitila city, where his girlfriend also currently lives. In Vaasa, Thomas lives in a shared apartment with two other students. He often hangs around with his flat mates. He thinks that he is not that

keen on making future plans, and he could take more responsibility when it comes to studies. Being healthy and able to choose whatever he likes to do are among the important things in his life.

There was no single thing that especially caught the eye of all four interviewees who interpreted this vignette. Kathy noticed that Thomas watches very masculine TV programs and listens to similar-spirited radio channels. In addition to this Tommy noticed the specific programs broadcast on Finland's Independence Day. Evelyn and Jack took notice of *Laitilan Sanomat*, a local paper, and the amount of different media that were consumed. However, there were no comments on websites *Iltasanomat.fi* and *Susi1.net*. A reason for the lack of comments may be that *Iltasanomat.fi* is so popular amongst Finns that it is not worth mentioning, whereas at the other end of the scale, hardly anyone knows what *Susi1.net* is about.

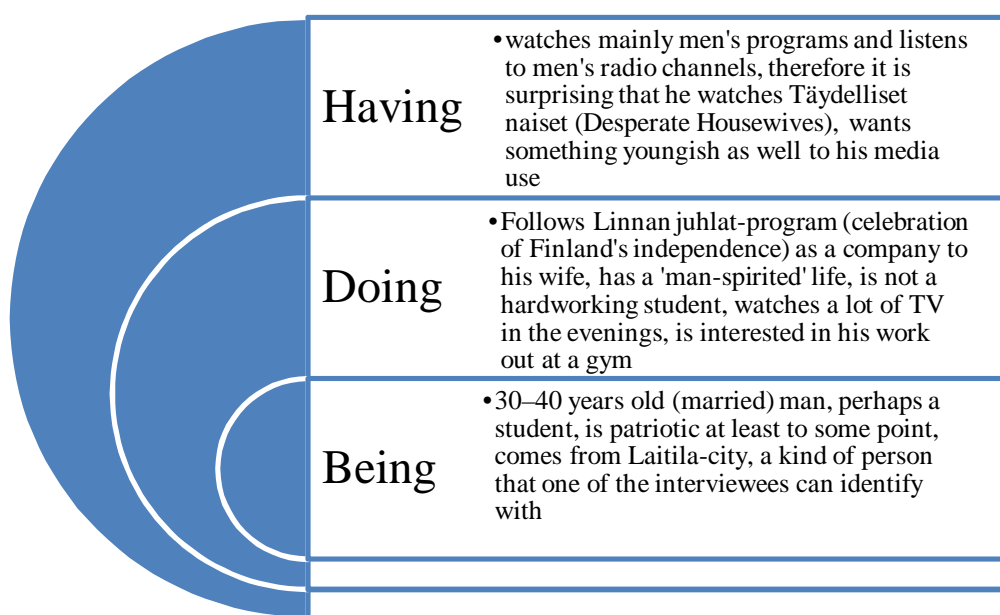


Figure 13. Thomas' levels of having, doing, and being according to what others think of him based on his media consumption

There are characteristics of Thomas based on his media consumption in Figure 13. The respondents who analyzed Thomas' vignette were right about his gender, home domicile, interest in watching TV and working out at the gym. Moreover, the idea of him as not being a very hard-working student was supported by

Thomas' own report. However, the respondents went wrong when they guessed that Thomas would be somewhat older and a married man.

2.3.4 Ann's vignette

The third vignette in Appendix 6 belongs to Ann who is a 22 year old single woman. Ann studies economic sciences, with marketing as her major. She likes to surf the Internet, talk with friends online, and watch TV programs. She also likes jogging and hanging around in the city center. She values education, family, and friends. Ann thinks that it is important to invest in the future.

The four interviewees who interpreted Ann's vignette acknowledged especially her use of *IRC-gallery* (web-based community), which made her seem a rather young person. Also *Kauppalehti*-magazine, which specializes in news about business life, was eye-catching in this vignette, as three out of four interviewees interpreted, based on this magazine, that the person would be a student of economics or at least business-minded.

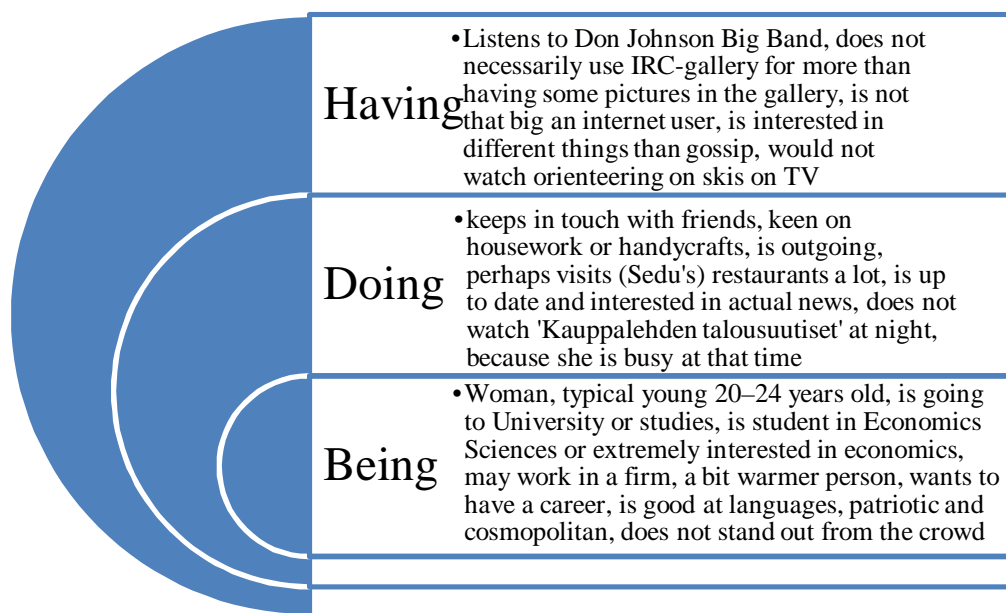


Figure 14. Ann's levels of having, doing and being according to what others think of her based on her media consumption

Figure 14 shows that the respondents correctly guessed Ann's gender, age, and education, career-orientation, and the importance of friends to her. However, they interpreted Ann's media consumption in some unintended ways as well. For example, Thomas interpreted that she would not be a big user of the Internet, whereas Ann herself said that she likes surfing the web. Moreover, interpretations were rather straightforward in some cases. For example, Thomas concluded that she would be keen on housework and handcrafts and would be a warmer person because she reads *Yhteishyvä*-magazine. However, Ann herself did not mention things like that in her interview. Moreover, the reason, why Ann does not watch '*Kauppalahden talousuutiset*' on TV was not because she is busy at that time as one of the interviewees interpreted, but because she actually finds the program boring.

As a whole, all nine vignettes succeeded in evoking thoughts about what media consumption can tell about a person. Regarding each vignette it was possible to recognize the levels of having, doing, and being. In other words, the four vignettes discussed above in Sections 2.3.1–2.3.4 were not exceptional in terms of the resulting interpretations, but it was shown that media consumption can be analyzed as an indicator of specific 1) taste preferences in terms of media contents and vehicles, 2) lifestyle (such as activities, interests and opinions), and 3) demographic and psychographic characteristics that denote more profound statements of identity. Thus, along with the vignette task, it appeared that media consumption can hold both *denotative* (concrete and publicly shared meanings) and *connotative* meanings (illusions and own comprehensions) with which we interpret the lives and identities of people around us.

2.4 Additional findings from the interview data

In the previous literature, it has been suggested that media products are many-sided objects of consumption. As a consequence, there should also be several possibilities as to how they can become important in people's lives. In addition to this, previous literature has pointed out that conceptions of past, present, future (ideal) selves as well as avoidance of undesired identity direct consumer's identity construction. Accordingly, media consumption can attach to any of these conceptions. This section aims to take into account these two notions by examining 1) on what bases media products can be incorporated into self-concept and 2) what the relationship is between ideal and avoided media consumer's identity. Both questions are addressed with the help of data based on interviews with the nine university students.

2.4.1 Analysis of self-associations with media products

After the vignette task, interviewees turned to analyze their own relationship with media contents. Resulting findings are listed in Table 3. There are four different media vehicles at the top of the table under which there are self-associations by each respondent. Over all, it was found out that most of the respondents were able to personify media products, that is, to find connections between their self-concept and a media product. Again, this finding tells us that the phenomenon of symbolic consumption of media exists. The easiest task for the respondents was to associate themselves with magazines and to give reasons for that choice. This may be due to advanced segmentation of the papers when compared to TV programs, for example. Also naming a radio channel that would best fit with their self-identity was an easy task for the respondents, as they could give answers based on their music preferences. The most difficult task for the interviewees proved to be naming a website that could be associated with the self. The reason for this may be that the Internet is too various when it comes to what it offers. For example, one of the respondents said that he would need a list of different sites from which to choose.

Table 3. Identifications with different media products

Name	Magazine/newspaper	TV program	Website	Radio channel
Andrew	Mixed version of Kauppalehti and Veikkaaja as those describe well his interests in economics and betting -If a choice has to be made between the two, then it is Kauppalehti	Documentary about sports business and sports -Sports broadcast, Football game, or News	Veikkausliiga.com	Suomipop -reasons: good music and humour
Tommy	Aamulehti, because it is familiar, and he is from Pirkanmaa-region. Likewise Aamulehti -Ideally he would be Iltalehti, because even though it is rather superficial and useless, it is often somehow interesting and energetic	Shield, because he watches it. It is acted and scripted rather realistically. It is easy to watch, it is like a documentary, yet entertaining -Shield would also be the object of his ideal identification	Google.fi Because it refers to the reason why he uses the Internet currently: to search for something. -Ideally he would be the Internet site of TV four, because it is good and versatile	Radio Rock, because it is rock-spirited -ideally Radio Rock, because it has its own opinions. Not everyone likes those opinions, but anyway...
Jack	-ideally Kauppalehti, which is accurate and has facts right at once. It is precise.	Lost, but it is difficult to explain it. It just came first to his mind.	(Not discussed)	Ylex comes first to mind. It has the best music in his opinion

Table 3 continues

Name	Magazine/newspaper	TV program	Website	Radio channel
Thomas	City-paper, because it is a free paper, and there is always something interesting in it, not too serious. -Also ideally he would be this City-paper, because he likes it so much, and it is so great to get it free.	The Simpsons, because he can identify with the Homer-character -this would be also the ideal program for him to identify with	Cannot say	Radio Rock
Jonathan	Sports magazine, because his idols come from sports	Sports news or Elixir. Not Salatut Elämät, because he wouldn't like to identify with any of the characters even though he watches it regularly.	Aviation or sports-related site	A mix of Ylex, Yle Suomi and Rock
Mary Jo	A mix of Suomen kuvalehti or Time (serious magazine) and Cosmopolitan or Anna. The magazine would include both personal topics(e.g., related to fashion) and facts.	Everwood, because it is idyllic and peaceful. It would be an ideal situation to be in balance.	MTV3.fi, because it is versatile and interesting	YleX, because she prefers to listen it. She thinks that it has the best presenters and music. Yet she feels that this channel probably does not describe her as a person. In any case, she would not like to identify with Kiss FM, because it is too 'pop' for her, nor with Nova, because it would make her a rather boring person.
Kathy	Me Naiset, which is currently her favorite magazine. It is a basic magazine with good articles and featuring interesting people.	(not discussed)	Cannot say	A mix of Nova, Suomipop and Kiss FM. KissFM plays newest pop-songs, Suomipop plays good Finnish songs, and Nova is more grown-up and is versatile
Evelyn	Women's magazines, such as Me Naiset	English comedy series	Homepage of Me Naiset –magazine or English comedy series	Radio Energy, because she listens to it most.

Table 3 continues

Ann *	Apu-magazine describes her, because it is not superficial, but goes deeper. -She would like to identify with Kauneus & Terveys –magazine which has half factual and other half nonsense	Kumman kaa describes her, because it is predictable, but can sometimes surprise in good and bad ways. -She would be Lost, because it is exciting and surprising. The story develops, but the characters are ‘lost’. They do not know about the future, but they have pasts that affect their present life.	Cdon.com, because it has lots of information and alternatives from which to choose, but it is really fuzzy and somewhat difficult to use. However, when you get used to it, it works surprisingly well. -She would like to be Google, because it knows where to look for, but it does not contain any information by itself. Without it hardly anybody could manage nowadays.	Yle Suomi, because the music is old and not so good, and the stories are rather boring. Yet it is a factual channel and you can trust the information it relays. -She would like to be Radio Energy, because it is youngish, energetic, and plays rather versatile music. It plays both new music and old hits in the right proportions. It is entertaining, easy to listen to, and enjoyable.
*Ann gave her responses in a written form after the interview, since the time for the interview over-ran.				

When having a look at Table 3, it appears that the respondents used a very versatile set of analogy principles when making associations. However, there are not many explanations provided for the choice of particular media products. Perhaps, if the respondents had been given more time to think of their choices, rather than respond spontaneously, they could have been able to provide explanations for these choices more readily.

Most typically the choice of a media product that would best describe the self was based on one's taste preferences, and the most consumed contents with regard to the particular type of media in question. For example, Evelyn said *radio Energy* was her choice, because she listens to it most. Also Jack and Andrew argued for their choice of radio channel based on their taste preferences. Similarly, Kathy chose *Me Naiset* magazine, which is currently her favorite magazine. This finding highlights that favorite objects of consumption attach to consumers identity. However, inverse identification with favorite programs is also possible as Jonathan brought out when discussing the TV program that he could identify with. Jonathan said that he would not want to identify with any of the characters of one

of his favorite TV programs, *Salatut elämät*. Similarly, Mary Jo wondered whether the radio channels that she listens to most can really describe her as a person (*YleX*), or could even give a wrong picture about her (*Radio Kiss FM* and *Nova*).

It was quite common for the interviewees to argue that no single content of media can describe a person well. Andrew, for example, did not name just one choice of magazine, but produced a mixed version of two different kinds of papers; one related to business and another one to sports. Andrew's choice of TV program that would describe him best united his two interests, namely sports and actual news. Also Jonathan brought out that his interests and hobbies guide the choice of media product that he could identify with. For example, Jonathan explained that *Urheilulehti*-sports magazine is his choice, because his idols, such as the football player David Beckham, come from sports. In addition he chose a sports-related website, as did Andrew.

Mary Jo recognized two sides in her that would best come out when combining a factual, serious-minded magazine, and women's magazines that would describe more her personal characteristics. Kathy, for one, saw that a mix of *Nova*, *Suomipop* and *Kiss FM* radio channels would describe her best, as they each provide different kinds of music that suit her equally well. This finding suggests that very narrowly segmented media products may not be able to cover all facets of a consumer's many-sided identity.

Tommy's choice of newspaper referred to his attachment to his home region, as his newspaper choice is published in the region where his roots are. However, he said that ideally he would be *Iltalehti*, because it has the characteristics he likes. This addresses the fact that identity is a complex and dynamic construction and discrepancies between actual and ideal selves occur. However, there were also examples where there was no apparent conflict between actual and ideal self. Thomas mentioned the same program, *The Simpsons*, when he thought of a TV program that could best describe him, and what program he could ideally identify with. As a main reason for his choice, he explained that he can identify with one of the main characters in this program. Tommy, too, chose one program to describe both his actual and ideal self. He said that *Shield* is the program he likes to watch, and chose it for that reason. This finding suggests that people strive towards their ideal self, and tend to view themselves in a positive rather than in a negative light. However, this is not a rule without exception. Ann, for example, did not provide a very self-enhancing picture of herself since she stated that *Yle Suomi* channel would best apply to her "because the music is old, and the stories are rather boring. Yet, it is a factual channel and you can trust the information relayed." Over all, Ann's responses reveal that she reflected what her life is like

as a student and young adult. In this spirit, when choosing a television program she explained that she would be the series *Lost*, because it is exciting and surprising. "The story develops, but the characters are 'lost'. They do not know about the future, but they have pasts that affect their present life." Also her choice of websites (*cdon.com* and *Google*) related to her life as a student as she chose internet sites that are somewhat messy and unmanageable nowadays, but show great potential and help in whatever life projects lie ahead.

Jack's choice of the newspaper that would ideally describe him reflects his identity project of being a successful university student, as he states that he would ideally be *Kauppalehti* that "has facts right at once." Tommy also referred to the primary tasks of students when choosing an Internet site that would best describe him. He stated that *Google.fi* captures the reason why he uses the Internet in the first place: to search for information. Mary Jo went even further when thinking of her choice of the TV program that could ideally describe her. She explained that the series, *Everwood*, describes life in a small rural village reflects the ideal situation where one has balance and peace in life. We may notice that Mary Jo's explanation nicely connects with one of the life themes (finding balance in life) that concern students (based on narrative data).

Tommy stressed individuality when choosing a suitable radio channel that would describe him. He explained that *Radio Rock* is rock-spirited and it has its own opinions regardless what others would think of them. Thomas, for one, based his choice of newspaper on which paper would represent good value. Thomas recognized that even though *City*-paper is free, it always provides something interesting to reading. Another good quality of media products was versatility, which justified the choice of website for both Mary Jo and Tommy. Social identification was also evident in the discussions about the choices of media contents as, for example, Ann preferred to identify with *Radio Energy* which is youngish and energetic, and Evelyn said that she would choose some women's magazine to best describe her.

The notion that students often associated themselves with their favorite programs gives support to the idea that identity-bond grows up with those media contents towards which a person has a positive attitude. This finding will guide the collection of data in the empirical study phase so that respondents are asked to reflect their favorite program in their answers. Along with the analysis of projections of media products into self-identity, it was found that media consumption can hold meanings with which we can interpret and express our own lives and identities.

2.4.2 *What makes an average, good, or bad media consumer?*

In this section, we address the question ‘what makes an average media consumer?’ Interviewees were asked if they view themselves as ordinary or average media consumers. However, interviewees were not given any definitions about what an ‘average’ media consumer is like (in other words what ordinariness in media consumption means), but instead interviewees were asked to determine it by themselves. Interviewees were also asked to define ‘good’ and ‘bad’ media consumers. These discussions are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Interviewees’ conceptions of average, good and bad media consumer.

Respondent	‘Average media consumer’	‘Good media consumer’	‘Bad media consumer’
Jonathan	Jonathan thinks that he is an average consumer as he consumes different medium ‘effectively’ around three hours per day.	Consumes media within reasonable limits, and is critical.	Illiterate and deaf person....or a person who devours media contents chaotically.
Kathy	Kathy thinks that she consumes less media contents than average consumer due to her current life situation.	Gets information that he/she needs quite easily, is critical, and becomes more sophisticated with the help of medium.	The person who does not consume media at all, or does it just for the sake of fun and entertainment.
Thomas	Thomas thinks that he is average user in general. However, he differs what comes to the traditional roles of television and the Internet, as for him computer has largely supplanted TV.	Person who plans and organizes carefully what to consume and when. Furthermore, he/she does not miss anything that he/she would like to consume.	The person who watches only occasionally and without any specific interests or purposes for media use.
Andy	Andy thinks that he differs from average TV viewer as he consumes less than three and half hours of television per day.	Critical	Believes in everything what is stated in the media.
Jack	Jack thinks that he is an average media consumer as he is not hooked on watching any particular program.	Person who understands that the media vehicles such as television and the internet are not the most important things in life.	Person who cannot manage without Internet on his/her leisure time.
Ann	Ann thinks that she is an average media consumer as she follows the kinds of TV series that are popular among young people.	Person who watches both actual/documentary programs and entertaining series in good balance.	Person who watches only trifling television programs, or reads only gossip-magazines. Does not follow what happens in the world.

<i>Table 4 continues</i>			
Evelyn	Evelyn thinks that she is average media consumer what comes to the amount of media use. When compared to other students alike, she thinks that she consumes less magazines than students on average.	Who focuses on consuming certain media contents regularly, and consumes a lot, however within the limits of reason. It would be good to consume a little bit of all mediums.	Person who does not watch TV at all.
Tommy	Tommy thinks that he is average media consumer what comes to the amount of media use. However, he differs in terms of media contents that he consumes.	Person who is versatile in his/her media consumption. Consumes many medium and different kinds of contents, even at the same time.	Person who does not follow any medium, or consumes very little and narrowly no matter what media.
Mary Jo	Mary Jo thinks that it is difficult to define average media consumer. What comes to the amount of media consumption, she believes she is quite average Finn. Mary Jo also thinks that she is quite typical young as she uses a lot of Internet.	Person who is critical and understands that medium represent subjective ideas rather than absolute truths. A person should also have more than just TV in his/her life.	Person who cannot see the contextual factors behind the production of media contents.

When analyzing the interviewees' conceptions of what makes average, good, and bad media consumers, it appears that the three concepts do not necessarily have the same kind of judgment criteria. To exemplify, an average media consumer is mainly judged based on the amount of consumption, whereas a good media consumer is judged based on the style of media consumption and a bad media consumer often gets criticism because of the media content that he/she consumes.

In summary *an average media consumer* is judged based on 1) amount of consumption, 2) media vehicles that are used and 3) specific media contents of consumption. It became evident that the interviewees compared their own media consumption to that of other young adults in Finland when making conclusions about the profile of an average media consumer. This phenomenon is natural and expected since consumers are likely to consider their own reference groups as important. The research tradition of symbolic interactionism highlights this type of social interaction in sense making.

Based on the interview data, *a good media consumer* appears to 1) be critical, 2) masters his/her media consumption selectively and purposefully, 3) is versatile, and 4) has a sense of proportion. These characteristics go analogously in line with what is generally expected from a university student when conducting his/her

studies. Accordingly, it appears that students are quite a homogeneous group of respondents sharing similar ideals with regard to media consumption. It also becomes clear that interviewees consider different media as good tools for them in life rather than something to be avoided.

Finally, according to university students, *a bad media consumer* 1) consumes too much or too little, 2) is too devoted to the Internet, (e.g., cannot be without it for a moment), 3) is not critical about the contents of consumption, 4) consumes only light media contents (fiction and entertainment), and 5) the style of media consumption seems to be 'chaotic.' These characteristics reveal that there are also certain problems with regard to media consumption. Students in particular were worried about how to have control over media consumption when it comes to the amount of their consumption. Previous literature has also brought out that there can be feelings of embarrassment of personal TV viewing habits (e.g., Whetmore & Kielwasser 1983) and undervaluation of certain media contents compared to others (e.g., Brunsdon 1989). It has been argued that people can even routinely lie about how much television they watch or which programs they prefer (Harrington & Bielby 1996: 4).

As a whole, the interviewees' conceptions presented in this chapter reveal that university students can tell the difference between good, average and bad media consumption, but people may have somewhat distinct conceptions of these. Furthermore, media consumption is by no means insignificant or meaningless in the lives of the students. Instead, they possess a rather wide and versatile view about media consumption with all its advantages and disadvantages.

2.5 Summary of the pre-study on symbolic meanings attached to media consumption

This chapter started by discussing the ideas represented by Panula (1997) on possible research perspectives when studying relationships between media and media consumers. The three research perspectives; *effects-research*, *uses-research*, and *meanings-research* differ in terms of their objects of interest and underlying philosophical foundations, so that the effects-perspective attaches to behaviorism, the uses-perspective to functionalism, and the meanings-perspective to symbolic interactionism. All these three possible research avenues get support from the pre-study phase of this present research. We were able to recognize that students are concerned with the effects of media, for example how they should be skeptical of media messages and avoid being addicted to media use. It also became clear that students have various uses for media products (e.g., for seeking information and

entertainment). Third, the pre-study phase, in the findings regarding the interpretations of vignettes and self/media product -associations, indicated that media products can also carry meanings that direct both *personal* and *social* identity construction (i.e., a consumer's self- and social identification).

As symbolic interactionism is the research approach chosen for this study, the symbolic nature of media consumption was the main focus when analyzing qualitative pre-study data. Next, different contributions achieved by the narrative data, vignette data and theme interviews are assessed in the light of the first aim of the research, which was to understand the phenomenon of symbolic consumption of media products. Hence discussion below aims to address the question: *What kinds of meanings and interpretations do media products yield in terms of consumers' identity construction?* In addition, the validity and limitations of this pre-study phase are discussed.

Denzin (1984: 9) provides criteria for interpretive research (i.e. meanings-based research) such as the pre-study phase of this study. He points out questions 1) how well interpretations illuminate, disclose, and reveal the lived experience, 2) how thickly interpretation is contextualized and described (such as historically embedded and temporally grounded), 3) does the interpretation reflect the phenomenon as a process that is relational and interactive, 4) does the interpretation engulf and incorporate into what is already known about the phenomenon, and 5) does the interpretation cohere into a meaningful whole. This study has responded to these requests by exemplifying qualitative data with citations that reveal both individual and social meanings of media consumption as interpreted by the respondents. The specific context of the study was the life of Finnish young adults who are university students. This context was especially taken into account in the analysis of narratives and vignettes. Also the changing nature of media consumption across time and different situations was recognized. Findings regarding social comparisons, self-reflections and conceptions about average/good and bad media consumer were able to shed light on both the aspects of self-symbolism and social symbolism. It was also concluded that the pre-study findings support prior understanding on different research perspectives to media consumption. Next different contributions achieved by the narrative data, vignette data and theme interviews are assessed in the following Sections 2.5.1–2.5.3.

2.5.1 Value of the narrative data

One typical feature of narratives is that they describe long-term and large-scale sequences of actions better than short-term elementary experiences and actions (Carr 1986). This was also noticed in the narrative data, which resulted in rather

general descriptions of media consumption instead of going very deep into media consumption practices or the nature of the relationships that students have with media products. However, narratives helped to achieve a good picture of overall media consumption styles and preferences among university students. Narratives did not specifically point out the theme of identity, as it was considered to be too constricting and even confusing when exploring the symbolic nature of media consumption. However, a presumption was that university students would constitute a rather distinctive and homogeneous group of informants that share common life themes and identity projects. Against this background, we cannot generalize about the consumption styles found, but we can clarify the nature of symbolic consumption of media, and the meanings involved in it.

Narratives are always addressed to some particular audience (to the future self, to a researcher, etc.), and the meaning of a narrative will depend on the social context in which it is produced and to whom it is addressed (Elliott 2005: 11). These factors affect what sorts of narratives are produced. That is why a narrative told on one occasion to one researcher may not mirror the same story told on a different occasion to a different party (Bloor & Wood 2006: 121). Indeed, in this study narratives were written in a class room situation and were guided by the researcher, so the style of the narratives often recalled the type of answers given in school exercises. Students stuck to the given directions rather strictly, and did not write very intimate narratives. Rather the style of narratives was descriptive, analytic, and evaluative. This, however, suits well the research approach adopted in this study. Symbolic interactionism stresses interpretations and cognitions of the individuals instead of the very experiences or feelings referred to themselves. Symbolic interactionists value the stories that the people tell themselves about their lives and the worlds they live in, and so symbolic interactionists prefer to study how, for example, narratives or discourses represent experience (Denzin 2004: 85).

When analyzing the narrative data, it was found out that mass media consumption becomes relevant for identity construction at the levels of having, doing and being. In other words, we can distinguish that media consumption relates to concrete taste preferences and lifestyle choices but also to identity issues and values at the highest level of abstraction in consumer goals. However, not one of the writers explicitly talked about 'identity construction', but they did refer to it implicitly when telling of their motivations for media use and the role of media in their life, and when they commented on the style of media use of their closest ones. This finding shows that identity construction is many-sided and also a latent phenomenon/construct that is difficult to observe directly, but needs specific research techniques and sub-concepts with which to explore it.

One important notion that arose when analyzing the narrative data was that there is a great variation in media consumption practices. Not everyone considers television, Internet, radio and magazines as equally important, but there are individual-level differences. This notion highlights that when aiming to study active and meaningful media consumption, especially when it is identity-related, there is no point in focusing on consumers who are only low-involved with the particular media vehicle and its contents under investigation. This is worth taking into account in the empirical study phase.

2.5.2 *Value of the vignette data*

Vignettes have not (to my knowledge) been used in previous media consumption studies. However, they turned out to be a very fruitful data gathering method. Interviewees had a chance to reflect on their own lived experiences with media and utilize their preconceptions about the media markets and audience segments when drawing conclusions about the persons behind the vignettes. With the vignette data it became apparent that meanings and interpretations of mass media arise reflectively in social interactions, and that symbolic consumption of media is a matter of reciprocal interactions between a consumer's own cognitions/experiences, behavior and social environment/consumer culture. Together these three elements affected how media consumption vignettes were interpreted by the interviewees.

In many cases, interviewees were accurate with their interpretations of the vignettes. On the one hand this finding tells that there are culturally shared symbolic properties in media consumption, on the other, there may be a small bias due to all the respondents being students and the specific research technique used. First, as students are quite a homogeneous group of respondents, it is likely to be easy for them to analyze the sort of media consumption which is quite close to their own. Second, since picture paints a thousand words, it was soon realized that the pictures placed on the vignettes affected the answers and associations that the interviewees come up with. For example, one of the respondents, Tommy, said that he interpreted both picture and media contents: "Well, I took a hint from the picture, but I can see that these programs give some hint as well, so one can make conclusions based on them." Even though the role of pictures is noticeable, it was reduced greatly by asking interviewees to give reasons for their interpretations. That way, the role of media contents in interpretations was stressed, whereas interpretations that were solely based on pictures were discarded from further analysis. These limitations of the vignette technique do not invalidate the conclusion that media consumption clearly provides clues for self- and social identification.

Thus, media consumption seems to possess instrumental value for self-expressive purposes. This finding highlights that the field of media consumption is indeed a relevant area of identity research.

It would be possible to develop the vignette technique in future studies. For example, one possibility would be to utilize vignettes the other way round, that is to show a picture of someone and ask what kind of media she/he would probably consume and why. The number of pictures in a vignette could be reduced, or they could be removed altogether. However, it would probably be tiresome for the respondents to look at long lists of media contents, so it is important to bear in mind the vignette task should bring some enjoyment for the respondents.

2.5.3 *Value of the interview data*

In addition to vignette data, interviews provided interesting findings about the incorporation of media products into self-concept among university students, and how students define an average, good, and bad media consumer. These data sources brought out that identities are constructed multi-dimensionally across time, so that students' identities proved to be open to change and active construction towards ideal identities. University students were able to differentiate their true and ideal selves, and how different media would suit those two identities. It appeared that most typically interviewees based their choice of media content on their actual taste preferences and their most consumed media contents. This finding supports the idea that the things we use to create an identity-bond are concretely present in our daily lives as our favorite and most consumed media contents. Accordingly, the incorporation of mass media into self-concept concerns factors of cognition, affection and behavior, not just one of these factors. Therefore a holistic understanding of identity construction through media consumption is needed.

Not every media vehicle and/or content was easy for the students to associate with their own self-concept, but rather it was difficult to choose a single piece of media content that would be best suited for this purpose. Moreover, even though students considered the Internet to be a very important media vehicle for them, it was difficult for them to name a website that they associated with themselves. On the contrary, it was relatively easy to do the same with a TV program or a radio channel. This finding indicates that a study of identity bonds with TV programs or radio channels would be more justified than a study of consumers' identity bonds with websites.

Regarding social identification among media consumers, the questions about average, good and bad media consumption turned out to be fruitful. It appeared that there are somewhat different bases for assessing these three concepts. An average media consumer was mainly judged by the *amount of consumption*, whereas a good media consumer was judged by the *style of media consumption*, and a bad media consumer was criticized because of the poor *media contents consumed*. Again, we can note the rich nature of media consumption. With regard to assessing the social identities of media consumers, individuals take into account the amount, style, and contents of media consumption, and so no single facet is sufficient to make conclusions about how media consumption attaches to identity construction.

As a whole, the nine interviews in this pre-study phase turned out to be comfortable situations for both parties. Theme interviews were planned well in advance, and the interviewer (aged 25) was a similar age to the interviewees (20–27 year-olds). There were thus no difficulties in finding understanding between the parties. The interview data helped create a rich and deep understanding of symbolic consumption of media products that would have not been attained solely with narrative and diary methods. Triangulation of research methods managed to tap into different aspects of symbolic media consumption at the usage-level (as was outlined in Figure 8). Thus, *cognitions* and *evaluations* (from the narratives and interviews), *behaviors* (from the diaries), and *affections* and *meanings* (from the interview data) shed light on the phenomenon of identity construction in consumer-program relationships. In addition, social aspect of identity construction was highlighted when the respondents showed their ability to classify media products and audiences as well as to reflect social identities and roles in media consumption styles.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTITY-RELATED CONSUMPTION OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS

The field of media studies is vast and diversified. Some studies concentrate on *production*, some on *contents*, and some on *audiences* (Hartley 1999: 17). Morley (1995) recognizes two opposite poles in the field of media studies. *Power and effects* studies on the one hand, and *interpretation and use* studies on the other. As an interesting distinction, the consumer is seen as a rather passive receiver of media messages in the first stream and as active processor of media messages and a maker of choices in the second. Let us first take a look at how *power and effect* studies have contributed to the discussion on identity-related media consumption.

The tradition of studying the relationship between television exposure and its effects is most established in mass communication research. Clearly, we can see that television causes people to sit and watch, and for longer today than ever before. It has also enlivened our living rooms (perhaps both in good and bad ways). These are some of the obvious effects television has on our lives, but media effect researchers are also interested in some less evident influences of television. Television can affect how we perceive the world around us. *Cultivation theory*, developed by George Gerbner in the 1960's, hypothesizes that those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the pervasive messages of the world of fictional television (Morgan & Shanahan 2010). Thus, it is suggested that meanings of television reality are often adopted into real life beliefs, norms and values. For example, it has been found that watching more television leads to believing that the world is a more affluent place (O'Guinn & Shrum 1997). Secondly, television can affect how consumers see themselves as they are obviously influenced by perceptions of what other consumers have and do. O'Guinn and Shrum (Ibid: 291) see that television programming is a significant source of consumption-related social perceptions. Thus, television provides indirect experiences about how other people live and consume, and in that way directs consumers' expectations, satisfaction, motivation, and desire. As an example of the recent cultivation studies, Kubic and Chory (2007) have investigated how exposure to television makeover programs affects viewers' perceptions of themselves. The findings of their study (Ibid: 283) suggest that frequency of exposure to makeover programs is negatively related to self-esteem and positively related to body dissatisfaction.

Effect studies have also stressed the phenomenon of the *third-person media effect*, which is the individual's perception that others are more vulnerable to negative media effects than themselves (Davison 1983). Furthermore, the third-person ef-

fect appears to extend to how people perceive the consumption of television. This line of thought suggests that people tend to believe that television use by others is greater than their own. People tend to perceive others as more inclined toward undesirable viewing behaviors, such as watching television out of habit instead of planned and reasoned watching (Peiser & Peter 2000). This notion also came up in the findings of the pre-study, when comparing the style of narratives written about a person's own media consumption, and those written about a friend's or a relative's media consumption. There are various reasons that would explain the gaps in perception. Motivational explanation for third-person biases suggests that striving for self-enhancement makes people compare others negatively compared to themselves (e.g. Perloff 1999). Writing of ego-defense, Davison (1983: 14) speculates that it is "possible that we do not overestimate effects on others so much as we underestimate effects on ourselves". Third-person effects can also be regarded as cognitive errors that occur because we have more knowledge about ourselves than about others. In other words, insufficient information affects completion of a judgment task on media effects with regard to other people (e.g. Paek et al. 2005). In addition to the above-mentioned explanations, Reid et al. (2007) argue that self-categorization theory is consistent with third-person perceptions. Accordingly, in-group comparisons should yield smaller third-person perceptions than out-group comparisons, because people tend to see smaller differences between themselves and their in-group members.

While a researcher interested in *media effects* often looks at the mass media from the communicator's end, a researcher on *media consumption* takes the audience member as a point of departure focusing on audiences and their use and/or interpretation of different media and media contents (Windahl 1981: 176). Studies on *media use/usage*, among others, tend to be rather measurement oriented, investigating large data sets and producing statistics about media consumption. However, people do not only use media, they experience it. Accordingly, there is a subjective, meaningful, and qualitative side to their usage (Malthouse, Calder & Eadie 2003), which is the concern of the current research. Accordingly, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for understanding symbolic consumption of media in general, and identity-related consumption of television programs in particular.

Clearly we can also view media consumption from perspectives other than that of its effects. We can distinguish at least four different perspectives which can be labeled; *motivational*, *interpretive*, *practice* and *relationship*. These perspectives will be detailed in Sections 3.1–3.4. The specific research perspective adopted in this study will be justified and clarified in Section 3.5, after which a particular conceptual framework for studying identity-related consumption of television

programs will be outlined in Section 3.6. This framework will then guide the research design of the main study phase (see Chapter 4).

3.1 A motivational perspective on the consumption of TV programs

3.1.1 *Uses and gratifications research*

Uses and gratifications research (hereafter U&G research) investigates the consumption of media as a psychological and motivation-based activity. Consumers have a variety of needs that they want to fulfill through media consumption. Accordingly, it is assumed that consumers actively use media, and are aware of their reasons for using media. This approach emphasizes the consumer's point of view by examining what people *do* with the media rather than what the media *do* to the people (McQuail, Blumler & Brown 1972; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch 1973; Blumler & Katz 1974; Elliott & Quattlebaum 1979; McQuail 1984).

Jensen (1991: 137) has noticed that much of the work adopting the uses and gratifications approach is functionalist in theory, and quantitative in methodology. The underlying focal assumptions in this tradition relate to individualism, abstraction, and functionalism (Fiske & Hartley 1978). According to the assumption of individualism, television is a media that gratifies the psychological needs of an individual rather than takes into account the cultural determination of the needs of people. Abstraction, for one, refers to the universality of the basic needs of consumers regardless of their societal or cultural backgrounds. Thirdly, functionalism implies that television viewers are likely to be conscious about their needs and actively try to satisfy them.

The majority of uses and gratifications research has focused on developing typologies of media use motivation in a variety of different media, genres, types of motivation, demographic backgrounds, and/or countries. Results from existing U&G research suggest that people use media either for the content carried by a medium or for the simple experience of the media usage process. These two broad dimensions are characterized as *content gratifications* and *process gratifications*. (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade 2004; Cutler & Danowski 1980). Since, in the light of this study, the nature of television consumption is more interesting than the process of consumption; I will next focus on the content gratifications of television found in previous studies especially concerning identity-related needs.

Katz, Haas and Gurevitch (1973) have listed five basic needs to be fulfilled by mass media: 1) cognitive needs (e.g. acquiring information, knowledge and understanding), 2) affective needs (e.g. the need for emotional and aesthetic experiences), 3) personal integrative needs (e.g. a need for self-assurance), 4) social integrative needs (e.g. a need to strengthening contacts with family and friends), and 5) tension-release needs (e.g. the need for escape and diversion).

Katz et al. (1973) compared different media according to the classification of needs described above and noticed that television is the least specialized media serving many different needs. It was found that books are best for cultivating the inner self, films and television give pleasure more than other media, and newspapers are good at giving self-confidence and stability. In addition, when investigating interchangeability of the media vehicles in terms of fulfilling needs of the consumers, it was noticed that television and radio are highly interchangeable, whereas television and books are the least so. Of course, a lot has changed in the media environment since 1973. Yet, it is useful to remember these findings and criteria for needs when analyzing the empirical findings of this study.

Each major piece of U&G research has yielded its own classification of audience functions. That is mainly due to the different choices of media vehicles, media contents and contextual settings, which are likely to affect the findings. This variety of options generates a broad catalogue of needs and gratifications. Consequently, U&G research has suffered from a lack of relevant theory of social and psychological needs that could link particular needs with particular gratifications. Typologies do provide insightful descriptions of media use, but they do not constitute a useful theory (Sherry 2004: 100). In addition, U&G research has been criticized for addressing only the individualistic and cognitive points of view in its handling of social and cultural phenomena.

U&G research has typically focused on quantitative measures of media usage (Schrøder et al. 2003: 226). Thus, the analysis of uses and gratifications is often based on survey results but the surveys have sometimes been formulated with the help of qualitative pre-studies such as focus group interviews (e.g. Korgaonkar & Wolin 1999). In recent times it has been suggested that rather than relying on direct and standardized questionnaires, participant observations and semi-structured interviews could be useful for studying uses and gratifications in a more natural manner (e.g. Lull 1990: 31). For example, Rosenstein and Grant (1997) have criticized the validity of U&G studies because they rely on self-reported interpretations not on actual behavior.

It is apparent that the overall emphasis in the U&G approach has not been on media and media contents as the focus has been on the needs and motives of an indi-

vidual. It is also noticeable that the U&G approach has downplayed the nature of the text and the reception situation, while favoring the assessment of viewers' needs and motivation (Schaefer & Avery 1993). Therefore, U&G research is criticized for being too individualistic, and being unable to offer any societal conclusions about media use (Ross & Nightingale 2003: 29–30). There are, however, some streams of U&G studies that can at least partly respond to these criticisms. Section 3.1.2 will introduce those sub-branches of U&G studies.

3.1.2 *Social uses of mass media*

One significant branch of uses and gratifications studies is called *social uses of mass media*. James Lull (1980) was among the first authors to discuss the social uses of television in more depth. He noticed the significance of symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and constructivism for the study of social uses of television. Lull (1980) stated that mass media can be viewed as important and uniquely employed social resources in interpersonal communication systems. Lull (1990: 36) noticed for example that mass media are resources for solidarity, social learning and role enactment. Mass media can be seen to play central roles in the methods which families and other social units employ to interact normatively (Ibid: 29). In addition, Anderson and Meyer (1988) offer further insights into the social nature of media use when clarifying the social action of mediated communication. They argue that media use is embedded in (and a routine of) social action and that sense making is one of the basic characteristics of it. In other words, media and their texts are accommodated within the routines of everyday life, and that way are a method of managing the socially constituted reality (Ibid: 133).

Some authors such as O'Donohoe (1993) and Ritson and Elliott (1999) have focused on social uses of advertising. O'Donohoe has found both marketing uses and non-marketing uses of advertising, and concluded that advertising seems to share a lot of the uses and gratifications with other contents of mass media and this way is well integrated with mass media. Ritson and Elliott (1999) continued the work of O'Donohoe (1993) and explored the social uses of advertising in a more context-oriented way. Ritson and Elliott (1999) expanded the typology of social uses of advertising from the base of their ethnographic study, and suggest that social uses of advertising relate to textual experience, interpretation, evaluation, ritual use, and metaphor.

The research on social uses of mass media and advertising has continued to develop up until the present day. For example Mitchell, Macklin and Paxman (2007) have focused on developing the research methods for the studies on social uses of advertising. Their research frame included the combination of unstructured diaries

and semi-structured interviews. Their study supports the earlier findings adding only one new theme, individual use, which means the use of advertising for fun or to add interest to usually mundane tasks while alone (Mitchell et al. 2007: 213). They draw conclusions that social use of an advert may be seen as a valuable reinforcement and extension to an advertising campaign (Ibid: 218).

One emerging branch of the social uses of media has been related to new media. For example Petrič (2006) studied the social uses of the Internet. He offered typology of three communicative and three strategic social uses of the Internet. Also Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) have studied uses and gratifications for the Internet. They were able to distinguish three different types of gratifications relating to 1) the process, 2) the content and 3) sociality and interaction. Kaye (2005) advanced the study of Internet uses and gratifications by studying motives for using Weblogs. In her study, Kaye found that expressing personal viewpoints and affiliation with like-minded individuals are among the primary uses of Weblogs.

One subset of social uses of mass media identified and suggested by Harwood (1997) is called *social identity gratifications* approach. It is argued that people seek support or reinforcement for their social identities when consuming media. The rewards from such media consumption choices can be described as social identity gratifications (Harwood 1999). The underlying assumption is that viewers select media contents that meet their social identity needs (Abrams & Giles 2007). Harwood (1997: 204) suggests that individuals seek out particular messages which support their social identities and avoid messages which do not support those identities. Furthermore, the social identity gratifications approach suggests that people prefer using media contents that portray their in-group members in a desired way (Barker 2005).

Harwood and Roy (2005) argue that group identification is central to the selection and cognitive processing of messages by media consumers. They also argue that it is clear that media have the power to influence group identities, attitudes, perceptions of diversity and perceptions of alternatives to the current intergroup status quo (Ibid: 194, 199). The act of viewing the same television show, visiting the same websites or listening to the same band can create a shared identity that can influence existing intergroup dynamics and tensions (Ibid: 202).

3.1.3 *Instrumental value of television programs for identity*

Thompson (1995) describes the self as a symbolic project, which the individual must actively construct out of the available symbolic materials. In this spirit Park,

MacInnis and Priester (2006) and Vlachos et al. (2010: 1478) suggest that people are most likely to develop attachments to offerings that provide means of *enabling*, *gratifying*, and *enriching* the self. This function of enabling the self denotes functional benefits of the object of consumption, which create a sense of an efficacious and capable self. Products may enable consumers to pursue their goals and tasks, thus the functional performance of the product can foster a sense of mastery (Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006: 12–15). Also the findings of the pre-study phase support the idea of using media products to enable the self, for example, to be an efficacious student. Gratifying the self, for one, refers to experiential and hedonic aspects of consumption. Such pleasure through aesthetic or hedonic elements can be delivered through any combination of sensory experiences (Ibid: 12–13). In addition, the role of media products in gratifying the self was evident in the pre-study data, for example when interviewees talked about reading women's magazines, or about watching a favorite football team on TV. Enriching the self refers to self-actualization and expression, discovering one's true preferences, and fulfilling one's emotional needs. Clearly, enriching one's self is a matter of identity construction, and identifying the lifestyle that would bring self-fulfillment. Products may be linked to the self if they can offer symbolic resources enabling brand-self connections by presenting one's past, current, future or ideal self (Ibid: 12–14). This enriching the self aspect of media consumption was pointed out also in the pre-study findings, for example when interviewees spoke about surfing the website of a travel agency for the purpose of dreaming about a luxury vacation, or when they identified their own specific taste with regard to radio channels and program types.

We can see that the uses and gratifications tradition connects to the concept of possible selves introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986) as this psychology-driven approach places emphasis on motives and goals, and bridges between motivation and cognition. Markus and Nurius (Ibid: 954) suggest that possible selves are important, because they drive future behavior, and because they function as an evaluative and interpretive context for the present view of self.

3.2 An interpretive perspective on the consumption of TV programs

As pointed out previously, the uses and gratifications school of thought emphasizes the idea that the audience also has power at least to be selective when satisfying its own needs with the television programming that is available. This idea led to the introduction of *reception studies* that focus on the interpretation of media texts rather than their actual use. In other words, researchers began to emphasize

the importance of analyzing audience member's decoding of media texts rather than merely analyzing the media contents. Thompson (1995) among others, highlights that the consumer receiving media products is involved in a process of interpretation to make sense of them. Naturally, the acquisition of media products does not necessarily involve a process of interpretation. For example, a book can be bought but never read, just as a television set can be left on while no one is watching. In response to the scholar of effect studies, reception analysis assumes that there can be no 'effect' without 'meaning' (Jensen 1991: 135). Here, the cultural forces such as social relations and past experiences are taken into account as important determinants on how messages are interpreted. Strelitz (2008: 63) emphasizes the dialectical relation between cultural forces by arguing that our media consumption choices and the meanings we take from the media are shaped by our experiences, but also the media we consume impacts on how we make sense of these experiences.

The common denominator for the perspective of reception analysis is the social production of meaning, which suggests that both the texts and audiences of mass media need to be viewed as socially specific, empirical objects of analysis. Thus, consumption of media contents is here conceived of as reception, which is a social act that serves to negotiate the definition of social reality (Jensen 1991: 137). Relating to this conception, there are different interpretive strategies that are applied by the audiences, also often called *interpretive communities*. Fish (1980: 14) defines interpretive communities as being made up of those who share interpretive strategies. The concept of interpretive communities essentially implies that readers, viewers, and other recipients of mass communication are characterized not simply by socioeconomic background variables, but simultaneously by their discursive modes of interpreting media content and other cultural forms (Jensen 1990). For interpretive researchers, the construct of interpretive communities is a way to understand the complexity and variability of audience responses to media messages. It also highlights the social character of reception and, in so doing, represents an effort to place individual readers or viewers within broader social and cultural contexts.

3.2.1 *Reception studies*

Pertti Alasuutari (1999) has analyzed the development of reception studies in recent years. He sees that the first generation of research originates in 1980s and specifically the Hall's theory of encoding and decoding (Hall 1980). The second generation, for one, is more ethnographically-oriented in research emphasizing social aspects of TV viewing and the paradigm of active viewer (e.g. Morley

1986). Finally, the third generation of audience research investigates cultural construction of audiences more holistically, which means that the meaning of media is analyzed in the frame of reciprocal environment encompassing both production and reception of media messages.

As one of the founding fathers of reception studies, Hall (1980) has proposed that interpretation of media contents is an intrinsically social and interactive process in which audiences are active producers of meanings rather than passive audiences of media messages. Texts may be said to have 'preferred meanings' that invite the reader to read them in line with dominant meaning systems. However, this invitation need not be taken up, but according to Hall the consumer may make three possible interpretations of media messages: 1) acceptance of the dominant message of the text as created by media, 2) negotiated interpretation of the text, and 3) oppositional interpretation of the text. For example, in the study of Hirschman and Thompson (1997: 54) it was found that consumers really do not want to be exactly like media icons but rather incorporate only certain characteristics and meanings into their own sense of individuality. Readers may negotiate the meanings and even ascribe meanings opposite to the preferred ones. The possible meanings that readers give texts are delimited by the contexts in which they are used. For example, the study by Yannopoulou and Elliott (2008) shows how differently people interpret advertisements. Findings of the study point out that there are meaningful differences in interpretation based on the social class and gender of the 'reader' of an advert.

Reader-response theory is increasingly applied in consumer research because it privileges the experiential realm of media consumption emphasizing the meanings that people draw from media texts such as advertisements. It acknowledges both collective and individual experiences that arise in media consumption (Stevens & Maclaran 2005). Interestingly, one branch of reader-response theory focuses on the relationship between self-concept, personal emotions, and text. It addresses that recognition of self in a text is central to interpretation and that the textual experience helps in creating or reinforcing identity (Scott 1994: 472). Furthermore, some of the sociological applications of reader-response theory have studied the ways that people use text to negotiate their lives. Text, then, becomes an important intermediary between imagination and actualization of one's lifestyle.

Scott (1994) builds bridge between textual theory and consumer research by applying reader-response theory to her study of consumer responses to advertising. She uses the term *consumer-response theory* when referring to this analytical frame. Here, consumers are conceived of as readers and media products as texts.

The focus is on interpretations that consumers apply to these texts. By analyzing the content and structure of consumers' interpretations of media contents, it is possible to attain rich understanding of how consumers manage both their unique personal experiences and culturally established frames of reference when making interpretations of different messages and images provided by media vehicles (Hirschman & Thompson 1997). Also Sørensen and Thomsen (2006) have noticed that lived meanings of mass media consumption can reside either in a public or in a more private domain. In this vein, media products can support the consumer's identity construction because of their *signal value* or because of their potential to provide the consumer with a certain *experience of self* (Sørensen & Thomsen 2006). In this light, media contents, such as television programs, can be resources for both individual and social-oriented identities. Therefore, both *autonomy* and *affiliation-seeking* self-identification should be recognized in the study of identity-related media consumption.

In essence, consumer-response theory looks for an understanding of the *lived meanings* of the consumers. For example Mick and Buhl (1992) and Parker (1998) have identified in their studies that life themes, life projects, and life experiences shape the interpretations and meanings of media contents. Meanings derived from media contents can be vehicles for the ongoing maintenance of identity as well as the acquisition of a new identity (see Sørensen & Thomsen 2006). Meline (1996) has also addressed the idea of lived meanings by proposing a model of two-stage meaning construction which consists of evaluation of *nature of the meaning* and *truth in the meaning*. Nature of the meaning can combine aspects of self-symbolism and social symbolism, whereas a consumer's evaluation about the truth in the mediated meaning can be based on different interpretive strategies and the fit of the particular meaning into the consumer's own life projects. The interpretation of media messages in the spirit of consumer-response theory is outlined in Figure 15.

If the ideas outlined by consumer-response theorists are considered plausible, we should take into account the backgrounds of the consumers affect how they 'read' television programs, and not assume that everyone's interpretation of a particular TV program would be the same. Moreover, the background of the consumer may affect the choice of preferred media vehicles as well as the choice of preferred media content. Consequently, when studying identity-related media consumption, acknowledgement of consumer backgrounds is essential, and the meaning of a media product to one's identity construction should be judged from the viewpoint of the individual consumer, not that of the producer of media content.

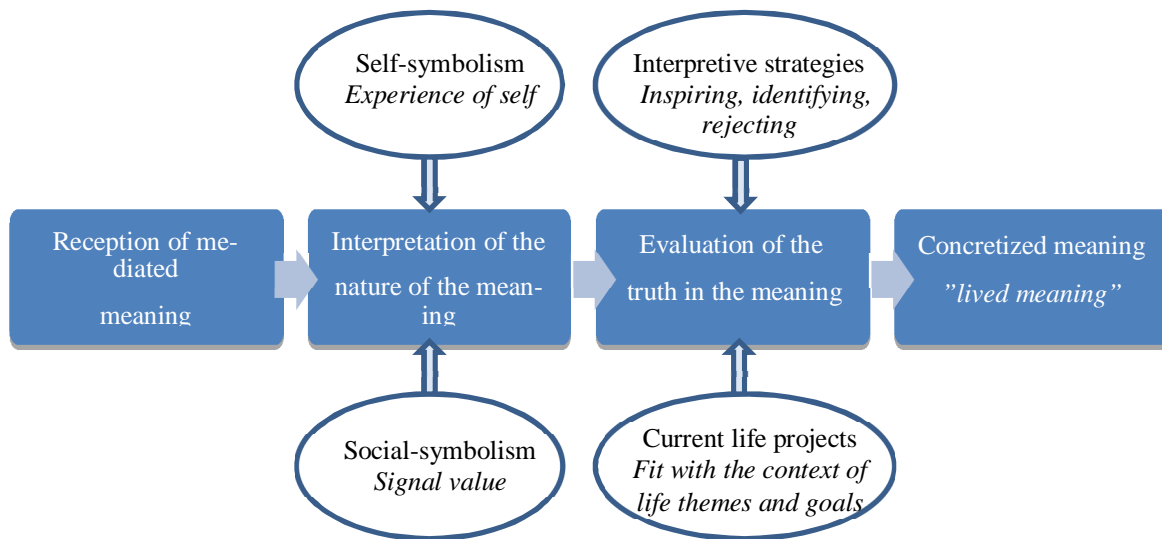


Figure 15. Interpretation of media messages in the spirit of consumer-response theory.

Some authors (e.g. Carragee 1990) have criticized interpretative studies stating that interpretive approaches neglect production processes that influence media content. In other words, they believe research should take into account the discursive power that media vehicles have as an institution. Even if individual viewers do negotiate the meanings of the television texts by themselves, they also are influenced by the pervasive discourses prevalent in media culture, because the construction of meaning is set within and, in part, determined by wider pressures and contexts. This notion has strengthened in recent years in the field of cultural studies on the media.

3.2.2 *Interpretive strategies consumers apply to form relationships with television programs*

Hirschman and Thompson (1997) have advanced the consumer-response theory by identifying a theoretical framework of interpretive relationships between consumers and mass media. They suggest that advertisements and other media content are inherently intertwined in the relationships between consumers and mass media vehicles. In other words, Hirschman and Thompson see that non-advertising forms of media play an important role in the meanings that consumers derive from advertisements. Hirschman, Scott and Wells (1998: 47) remind us that television programs differ from advertisements as cultural texts in three dis-

tinct ways: 1) the purpose of a program is not to change consumer behavior, 2) the focal point in its plot line is not a product for sale, and 3) it is not in the main interests of television programs to compare and differentiate between products or brands as is the case with advertisements.

Hirschman and Thompson (1997: 55–57) acknowledge the variety of possible interpretations of media messages with regard to the construction of identity. They suggest three interpretive relationships between consumers and mass media vehicles, which can be derived from the phenomenon of identity construction. First, consumers may use an *aspiring and inspiring strategy* to interpret media images with as worthwhile goals and motivating examples to emulate. Secondly, they may be critical interpreters when *deconstructing and rejecting* media images as realistic representations of reality or desirable life goals. The third interpretive strategy for consumers is *identifying and individualizing* which means that media vehicles are self-referentially interpreted in relation to affirming consumers' self-concepts and sense of their current life situations, personal history and relationships. This discussion brings us to consideration of alternative interpretations in terms of identity construction.

It was also revealed in the findings of the pre-study that there are many ways of identifying with media contents, and that favorite media contents do not necessarily connect with one's identity but can even address suppressed identities. Furthermore, we may distinguish that the chosen interpretive strategy depends on the situation. For example, when university students search for information for their course work, they are critical and selective, but when they want to relax at home, they might choose to enjoy all sorts of media content and not think too much, as they try to forget the worries of the day. When they are in the need of a treat, they can choose specific media content to match their individual desire on the occasion (e.g., a movie, specialized magazine, some favorite music).

It is apparent that all that we consume cannot be in line with our (ideal) identities, but there are situations in which consumption and identity conflict. Ahuvia (2005) has qualitatively investigated how consumers reconcile consumption activities and possessions that may conflict with their narrative of identity. He has found out that there are three alternative solutions for creating a coherent identity; *demarcating*, *compromising*, and *synthesizing*. Demarcating endorses only one attractive type of identity narrative, the compromising solution tries to create an intermediate identity, and synthesizing tries to create a novel resolution of identity by making use of the perceived advantages of different alternatives. Ahuvia concludes that consumers love brands that help them to resolve identity conflicts and understand who they are as people. Similarly, Thompson (1995: 210) argues that

“the individual weaves into a coherent account of, who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity”.

Finally, one more aspect of the interpretive perspective is to consider the connection between *symbolism in cultural texts*, such as television programs and advertising, and the *symbolism of consumer practices*. In this spirit, Hirschman, Scott and Wells (1998) have identified that product meanings are created, negotiated, and altered in a dynamic relationship between consumer practices and cultural texts. For example, Otnes and Scott (1995) have investigated the interplay between advertisement and consumer rituals like getting married. They argue that both advertising and rituals are powerful institutions in culture. On the one hand, there is ritual imagery that can be visible in advertisements, and on the other hand, advertising can affect consumption during rituals. This connection points out that it may be a mistake to distinguish between symbolic meanings and consumer practices. Therefore, next I want to discuss what the *practice* perspective has to offer research on identity-related consumption.

3.3 The practice perspective on the consumption of TV programs

The purpose of this section is to discuss the contribution of practice theory and research on identity-related discussions. Practice theory is a type of cultural theory advanced by sociologists such as Warde (2005), Schatzki (1996), and other writers. According to Reckwitz (2002), theorizations of practices differ from the other cultural theories in that they highlight that practices, rather than consumer mindsets or textual discourses, reveal what cultures are about. Primarily, the focus on practices emphasizes the routine, collective, and conventional nature of consumption (Warde 2002). Consequently, in practice research, individuals are not the focus of research, yet they are relevant as carriers of practices. Neither are the motivations of consumers of interest as consumption-related thoughts and feelings are considered to follow practices, not vice versa. However, in essence, practices involve procedures, understandings and engagements. In other words, in order to engage in practices, consumers must have (social) competences, some shared understandings about the ‘rules’ and conventions, as well as commitment to carry the practices (Schatzki 1996). For example, Schau, Muñiz and Arnould (2009) have studied how *brand community practices* create value, and identified, that practices within brand communities relate to social networking, impression management, community engagement, and brand use. These practices reveal and strengthen community-like qualities of consumption, and address the identity, meaning, and status-related concerns of the individuals involved.

Methodologically, the practice perspective on media consumption coincides with the ethnographic studies on media use, (i.e., media ethnography). The study of behavior in natural settings and the aim of understanding the symbolic world are typical of ethnographic studies (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott 2003). Ethnographic investigation focuses on media consumption as part of everyday life, and the major methodological tools are researcher's observations of and interaction with the informants (Schrøder et al. 2003: 58). Thus, this approach is mainly qualitatively based (Schrøder 1999: 38). It is challenging to define ethnography, because everyone does it differently. As Desai (2007: 691) has noticed: "Anything from hanging around a skateboard park, interviewing teenagers in their bedrooms, asking respondents to make video diaries, to interviewing their family and friends, or videoing them going shopping – it's all ethnography." The empirical data of ethnographic studies are often collected from many sources; generally the key methods have been different forms of observation, discussions and interviews (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 107).

Detailed ethnography can provide insights, a closer connection with the consumer or citizen that more conventional approaches cannot attain (Desai 2007). Questions such as how many, how often, when/where/what, with whom, for how long, in what sequence can be efficiently answered with traditional quantitative research methods. However, questions about emotion, unconscious motivation, identity, the why-questions, call for something different (Dumas 2007). Drotner (2000: 173, 181) sees that the diversified media audiences and media products can explain the recent and rapid increase in media ethnography. She sees that theoretical complexity, methodological processuality and epistemological reflexivity are the main strengths of media ethnography. Drotner (Ibid: 174) sees that "...main ambition of much media ethnography is to offer encompassing theoretical and empirical analyses of mediated meaning processes. As a result media ethnographers are often analytical octopuses reaching out to a range of disciplines and fields". In spite of the many positive aspects of ethnographic research, for example, Morley (2006: 107) has critically evaluated the state of contemporary, strongly ethnographic-oriented audience research accusing it of assuming that "more contextual information is always a good thing". Another cause for concern in ethnographic studies is the difficulty of generalizing the findings (Drotner 2000: 175; Morley 2006).

3.3.1 *Studies on fandom*

Fandom is something that coincides well with the idea of studying the practice of active and meaningful media consumption. The term "fan" originates from the

Latin word “*fanaticus*”, from which we derive the English word “*fanatic*” (Jenkins 1992: 12). Fandom relates to special kind of enthusiasm and engagement towards the object of that fanaticism. Kolamo (2002) argues that fandom can manifest quasi-religious characteristics, and describes fandom as the ‘culture of affection’ (*tunteen kulttuuri* in the original Finnish). Moreover, Heinonen (2000: 348) sees that fans’ relationships with the object of their devotion are intimate and identity-defining. For example, there are fans who get tattoos or change their names in order to express their devotion. Fans are also considered as addicts of a kind, as they tend to have a psychological dependency and a behavioral hook on following their object of interest. According to Herkman (2001: 197) fandom is about the production of meanings through consumption of culture so that one field of culture obtains a more significant position than others. Accordingly, Herkman asserts that average consumers and fans can be placed along a shared continuum, but at the different ends of it, as they have different degrees of involvement, sociability, and activities involved in consumption.

Ethnographic studies of *fan communities* (e.g. Jenkins 1992; Kozinets 2001) reveal that fans’ relationships with each other highlight the social and participative nature of fandom. According to Jenkins (1992) fan identity relates to absorption of collective identity and joining with other fans who share the same interests and advocate the same choices. Sex, age and geographical location are important factors when discovering the group of fans and fan identity (Nikunen 2005: 142). Kolamo (2002; 2004) has studied fandom in the context of supporters of football clubs. He sees that football fans are active participants in, or even producers of, the spectacle, rather than passive spectators sitting comfortably at home. They are enthusiasts, who desire to be together and to share their opinions and expertise with their counterparts. Moreover, fans constitute a community, or ‘a tribe’, of their own that has specific types of rituals, ways of life, and preferred styles of clothing. These specific subcultural characteristics distinguish them from other fan groups or ordinary (less enthusiastic) supporters. In essence, it takes more to be a fan than buying and using fan merchandise.

When considering *media fans* like fans of a TV program, Bielby, Harrington and Bielby (1999: 35), see that being a “fan” involves participation in range of activities that extend beyond the private act of viewing. Such activities may include joining fan clubs, purchasing fan magazines, writing letters to the production team, or conversing with other fans on chat forums. The Internet seems to have a particularly important role in creating and maintaining audience activity (Costello & Moore 2007). Fans are distinguished from “ordinary viewers” because their fandom-related activities are considered excessive and even productive. Tulloch and Jenkins (1995: 23) distinguish between audience members that identify them-

selves as fans of a particular TV program and those who can be called *followers* of the program. Fans are active participants within the fandom, so that they constitute a social, cultural and interpretive institution. Followers, on the other hand, regularly watch the program, but they claim no larger social identity based on the consumption of the program. However, the distinction between the two groups is somewhat fluid and arbitrary. For example, viewing fandom from another perspective, being a fan means making affective investments rather than participating in activities of the fan community. According to Grossberg 1992: 56–59) the notion of a fan assumes the close relationship between identity and caring. Moreover, Costello and Moore (2007) have noticed that fans characterize themselves as carefully choosing the few programs to which they become *loyal*. It has also been stated that individual identification with media images and characters does not require explicit acts or expressions of fandom, but can also occur implicitly in the form of quiet and private fandom (Harrington & Bielby 1996; Nikunen 2005). In effect, collective practices may be in conjunction with personal interpretations and meanings. In this spirit, a holistic model of identity-constructing practices is provided by Steele and Brown (1995). This model will be discussed next.

3.3.2 *The media practice model of identity construction*

Media ethnographers conceptualize being the audience for media as a lived experience and approach media consumption practices from the audience point of view (Moores 1993). In this research spirit, identity construction is considered something that is realized in concrete practices rather than in consumer's abstract thoughts.

Steele and Brown (1995) have provided a model that highlights the connections between adolescents' identities and media selection, interaction and application. As media researchers, the authors focus on media components rather than the elaboration of the identification. Furthermore, they have adopted the practice perspective which focuses on everyday activities and routines of media consumption rather than cognitive and evaluative aspects related to them. Yet, we can see that they insightfully recognize the entity of identity construction with different types of components.

Components of the model include *identity*, *selection*, *interaction* and *application*, as presented in Figure 16. Identity refers to both 'me as I am' and the 'me I am in the process of constructing'. Hence, the model sees identity as a dynamic construct as it is both the departure point and the end of this cyclical model introduced by Steele & Brown (1995). The selection-component is the act of choosing from the media-related alternatives. Thus it refers to the preferences and motiva-

tion that lies beneath the actual selection of media offerings. The interaction-component manifests the consumer's cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement with the media that produces cultural meanings. In this way the model asserts that meanings of consumption evolve from a consumer's evaluation and interpretation of media content. Finally, application refers to the concrete ways in which consumers use media. Steele and Brown distinguish two types of application, *appropriation* and *incorporation*. Appropriation means visible media-related activities, whereas incorporation refers to an associative use of media that often builds on cognitions and emotions such as attitudes and feelings.

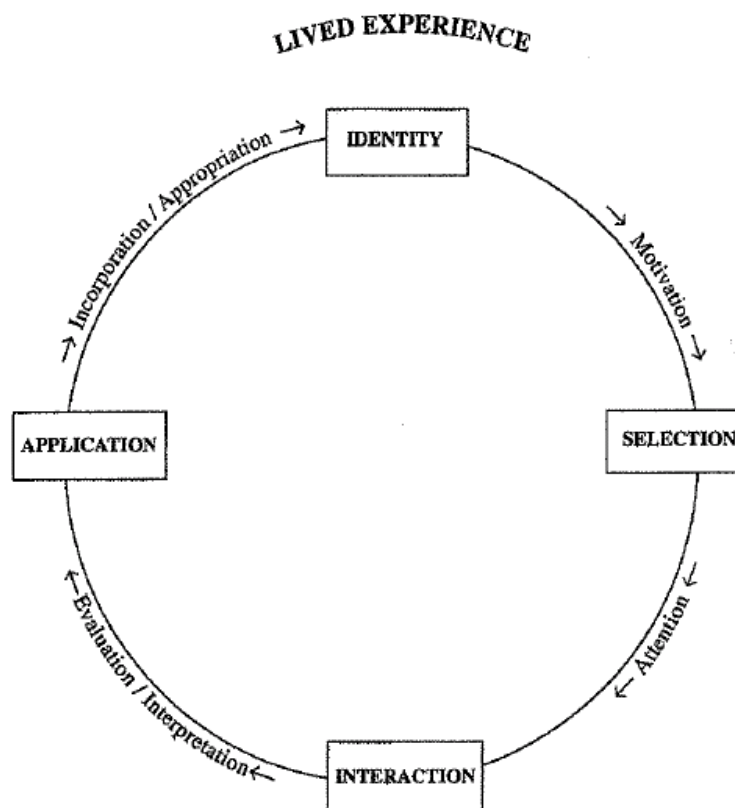


Figure 16. The media practice model of identity construction (Steele & Brown 1995)

We can observe that the interest in this present study is on the component of *interaction* as it was addressed in Section 1.3.3 when discussing the different abstraction levels of consumer behavior. Thus, this present study aims to elaborate on the symbolic nature of media consumption and evaluation/interpretation of it, instead of focusing on the situation-specific *selection* of media contents or *appli-*

cation of them in practice at the level lifestyles. In fact, when focusing on the interaction-component of the above model of identity construction, the *relationship perspective* seems worth considering as the basis for assessing identity-related consumption of media. This research perspective will be discussed next.

3.4 The relationship perspective on the consumption of TV programs

Berscheid and Peplau (1983: 12) note that there are a variety of definitions offered for the word *relationship*. Such terms as *love*, *trust*, *commitment*, *caring*, *stability*, *attachment*, *one-ness*, *meaningful*, and *significant*, all describe what the *closeness* of a relationship could embody. Hinde (1995: 5–7) has identified the focal properties of human relationships that a science of relationships is interested in, these are: *content of interactions*, *diversity of the types of interaction within a relationship*, *the qualities of interactions*, *the relative frequency and patterning of interactions*, *the reciprocal and complementary nature of interactions*, *power and autonomy in a relationship*, *feeling of intimacy in a relationship*, *interpersonal perceptions within a relationship*, *commitment to a relationship*, and *satisfaction with a relationship*. Smit, Bronner and Tolboom (2007: 627) summarize that three fundamentals characterize interpersonal relationships: interdependence, temporality and perceived commitment. We may notice that these properties should not only concern interpersonal relationships, but that people form close relationships with non-human objects as well. In fact, the new customer-centric logic in marketing stresses the importance of creating close relationships between customers, firms, brands and media (e.g. Bhattacharya, & Sen 2003; Gambetti & Graffigna 2010).

Relationship marketing was the first discipline to adopt interpersonal relationship theories in the field of marketing (see Sheth & Parvatiyar 1995; Garbarino & Johnson 1999). As a formative idea in relationship marketing, interdependency of the parties involved in a value chain reduces costs, improves quality and efficacy of actions. Questions that relate to the way in which customers behave in relation to a firm, such as why customers switch service providers, or what drives customer retention, benefit from considering aspects of the relationship between consumers and service providers (Bansal, Irving & Taylor 2004; Yim, Tse & Chan 2008).

Susan Fournier can be considered as the originator of the *relationship perspective in consumer research* as she encouraged the consideration of relationship marketing from the consumer's point of view (Fournier, Dobscha & Mick 1998). Four-

nier (1998) argued for the validity of the relationship-oriented view in the consumer-brand context and beyond into theories of symbolic consumption. She asserted that comprehensive understanding of the quality and types of *consumer-brand relationships* is needed to advance the theory in consumer research.

Fournier (1998: 359) suggests that consumers' identity issues within the framework of life projects, themes and concerns can be addressed in the development of brand relationships, and those relationships can in turn affect the development of one's concept of self. Moreover, Fournier (2009: 5) recognizes that all *relationships are purposive*, and involve at their core the provision of meanings to the persons who engage them. Also Lindberg-Repo (2005: 49) states that consumer-brand relationship is strongly self-oriented/self-driven and a subjective experience of the consumer. That is why information and understanding about the relationship cannot be fully captured by traditional customer relationship management (CRM) literature. When the brand relationship is strong, the consumer sees brand as able to produce perceived value, personal relevance and benefits. That is why consumer is also willing to make a commitment to stay in a relationship, develop it, and communicate about it to others (see also Smit, Bronner & Tolboom 2007).

Hinde (1995: 4) sees relationships as existing in a social context which means that "relationships both affect and are affected by the sociocultural structure – that is, the system of values, norms, stereotypes, myths, institutions and so on of the group". This is true also when thinking of consumers' relationships with the objects of consumption. However, the relationship perspective on consumer research is concerned with parasocial types of relationships (see Horton & Wohl 1956), which are unidirectional relationships between the consumer and the object since the object cannot love back nor initiate the relationship (see Shimp & Madden 1988).

Fournier (1998: 344) posits the following as the basic assertions for the relationship perspective "(1) brands can and do serve as relationship partners; (2) consumer-brand relationships are valid at the level of lived experience; and (3) consumer-brand relationships can be specified in many ways using a rich conceptual vocabulary that is both theoretically and managerially useful". Following this line of thought, I suggest that television programs can be considered brand-like products that can serve as viable relationship partners. Consequently, we may use the term consumer-program relationships when referring to consumption of television programs. Secondly, as consumer-program relationships are valid at the level of lived experience, the study of these relationships should bear consumer-orientation, rather than managerial one. Thirdly, following the purpose of this

study, we should recognize and focus on those specific dimensions of consumer-program relationships that are relevant to consumers' identity construction.

Hinde (1995: 2, 5) reminds us that every relationship exists over time and must be seen not as a fixed entity, but as a dynamic flux since a relationship involves series of interactions over time. Because relationships are complex and unstable in time, Hinde asserts that relationships can only be partially described by a researcher. Fournier (1998) has recognized several types of bonds that consumers form with brands. These bonds differ in their quality, depth, and strength. For instance, love for a brand is only one type of relationship. Fournier distinguishes it from self-connection, commitment, intimacy and overall satisfaction (brand partner quality). The aspect of *self-connection* in particular seems to merit further elaboration, as according to Fournier's definition it denotes "the degree to which the brand delivers on important identity concerns, tasks, or themes, thereby expressing a significant aspect of self" (Ibid: 364).

Also the stream of consumer research that taps into constructs of *extended self* and *attachment to material possessions* originates in the theory of human relationships. Belk (1988) was among the first researchers to suggest that consumers get attached to their material possessions and incorporate them into their self-concept. Consumers engage in consumption behavior in part to construct their self-concepts and to express their particular identity, in other words to extend their self. The construct of extended self refers that objects of consumption become linked to the self when they are able to satisfy consumers' psychological needs and self-motivated goals.

In the field of media consumption studies, the relationship perspective has not been widely discussed. However, the recognized areas, such as studies of fan communities, and addiction to mass media use, come close to the relationship perspective. Moreover, consumer researchers Russell and Puto (1999) have studied the intensity of the relationships that audiences have with television programs asserting that television programs can become essential parts of the daily lives of consumers, and they introduced the concept of *audience connectedness*.

The above-mentioned relationship-oriented constructs; self-connection, attachment, and audience connectedness will be discussed below in more detail in Sections 3.4.1–3.4.4. In the course of the discussion, this study aims to uncover the relevant dimensions of consumer-program relationships in terms of consumers' identity construction.

3.4.1 *The self-connection with a television program*

The first relevant concept regarding the relationship perspective on consumption of TV programs, the *self-connection* with a program, is derived from the discussions on consumer-brand relationships. Fournier (1998: 363–364) highlights the multifaceted nature that relationships have consisting of affections, behavioral ties, and cognitive beliefs. One of the facets of brand relationship quality is that of *self-connection*. Following the line of thought introduced by Fournier (1998), the self-connection is defined as a dimension of the consumer-brand relationship which indicates the amount that the brand contributes to one's identity concerns, tasks, or themes, thereby expressing significant aspects of self. Accordingly, it is stated that a brand becomes more meaningful the more closely it is linked to the self (Escalas 2004: 168). As a support, for example, Kressmann et al. (2006) show that self-image congruence with a brand positively correlates with brand loyalty.

Further, consumer researchers such as Escalas (2004), Escalas and Bettmann (2005), Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005), and Swaminathan et al. (2007) have extended some of the theory and findings regarding material possession attachment to the discussion of consumer-brand relationships. For instance, Swaminathan et al. (2007: 248) state that brand relationships can be viewed both as expressions of consumers' individual self-concepts and as wider social (group) identities, such as national identities. Self-brand connections as well as material possession attachments are found to range from past to current and future selves (Kleine et al. 1995; Fournier 1998). However, somewhat distinct measurement items and scales have been applied in the studies of self-brand connections compared to material possession attachments. Self-brand connections have previously been measured using only five to seven scale items (Escalas & Bettman 2003, 2005; Escalas 2004; Swaminathan et al. 2007), whereas material possession attachments have been measured in more diverse and multidimensional ways. (e.g., Schultz et al. 1989; Kleine et al. 1995). The explanation for differences in measurement styles could be that self-brand connection is based more in the construct of extended self than that of attachment (see e.g., Escalas 2004: 180).

The self-connection manifests as how individuals see a program as relating to their predominant self-needs and goals, such as striving for self-verification and self-enhancement. Similarly, an important distinction can be made between one's actual self and ideal self. The actual self refers to how a person perceives him/herself, whereas the ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive him/herself (Sirgy 1982). The conception of ideal self has also been referred to as 'wishful identification' in prior research (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005). The study

of Escalas and Bettman (2005) provides support for the notion that brands used by in-groups enhance consumers' self-brand connections, whereas brands used by out-groups detract from such connections. We may summarize the self-connection as referring to the *cognitive evaluation* of the television program quality in terms of one's goal-oriented self-identification.

The specific dimensions of the self-connection are outlined in Table 5. *Self-correspondence* of the favorite program with the viewer's own self-concept refers to a inner-oriented type of self-verification in the relationship. *Image fit* tells if viewers can recognize that the favorite program can mediate some aspects of the self-identity externally. *Self-expression* is a matter of presenting own identity to other people in a favorable manner. *Ideal self* represents the future self that is wished for.

Table 5. Dimensions of self-connection with television programs

Self-correspondence	Inner-oriented self-verification
Image fit	Outer-oriented self-verification
Ideal self	Future-oriented self-enhancement
Expressed self	Socially-oriented self-enhancement

With regard to discussions on consumer-brand relationships and emotional attachments to brands, I suggest that television programs could be considered as bearing a resemblance to brands. They are both good at telling stories and conveying meanings which consumers' can benefit from, and add to consumers' lives (cf. Escalas 2004). In fact, as Russell et al. (2004: 151) observe, program-triggered relationships bear even greater resemblance to interpersonal relationships than brands, since viewers may also relate to the human characters of TV programs. To conclude, the theoretical framework for assessing consumers' use of television programs for their self-identification would benefit from taking into account the notion of the self-connection from brand literature.

3.4.2 Attachment and emotional attachment to a television program

Several consumer researchers, sociologists and psychologists have suggested that possessions play a role in defining, maintaining, and supporting the consumer's sense of self (e.g. Belk 1988, 1989; Schultz, Kleine and Kernan, 1989; Giddens 1991; Dittmar 1992; Wattanasuwan 2005). The notion of the *extended self* has been examined in studies that aim to understand the relation between one's identi-

ty and external objects. Belk (1988: 141) was a pioneer in suggesting that “We may impose our identities on possessions and possessions may impose their identities on us”. However, discussion of extended selves is not limited to material possessions alone; we may sum up the major categories within the extended self as body, internal processes, ideas, experiences, and those people, places, and things to which one feels attached. The concept of the extended self refers to the definition of self that is created by external objects with which one surrounds oneself by suggesting that “we are what we have” (Belk 1988), whereas a closely related construct *attachment to material possessions* has been defined as the “degree of linkage perceived by an individual between him/herself and a particular possession” (Schultz et al. 1989: 360). Therefore, attachment can be characterized as a signifier of self-extension (Kleine, Kleine & Allen 1995). Belk too (1989: 130) recognizes a clear connection between the extended self and attachment, as we are more likely to be attached to things that are significant to our individual and group identity. Attachment and incorporation of objects (possessions, such as cars, pets, and music systems) into the extended self are treated as separate constructs in the literature, however, there are studies that suggest strong correlation and weak discrimination power between the two constructs (e.g. Sivadas & Venkatesh 1995).

Attachment theory began with John Bowlby’s ideas about the nature and function of human attachments. There is a wide array of areas into which attachment theory has been extended since Bowlby’s original ideas. One of those areas is consumer research. Previous discussions on identity (e.g. Ahuvia 2005) have emphasized the development of self as life stories and narratives. In this light, attachment should describe the degree of “me-ness” of the consumption object in relation to different temporal orientations of the self. In essence, this conception suggests that self-identity is developed when people integrate their remembered past, experienced present and anticipated future into a coherent whole (Baumgartner 2002). Belk (1988) has pointed out, a sense of past is essential to a sense of self as the former enriches the latter when defining who we are and where we are going. In addition, Giddens (1991) presents that self is reflexively understood in terms of one’s biography. Moreover, it has been stated that attachment develops over time (e.g., Park et al. 2010, 4). In this spirit, Kleine et al. 1995; Schultz et al. 1989) have identified temporal orientations of past, present, or future in attachments. Some attachments focus on current identity work (me now). Thirdly, mixed attachments portray both ‘we’ and ‘me’. Finally, a ‘not me’ attachment is used to remove an old, less desirable piece of the life story.

Furthermore, attachment can be related to the dimensions of autonomy (individuation) and/or affiliation (integration), which means that possessions can have sig-

nificance in terms of both self- and social symbolism. In other words, it has been observed that certain attachments to possessions can capture the 'we' facet of identity that is related to relationships running from the past into the present life story. Affiliative identity is important for situating the self within the social world and for communicating identity to the intended audience (peer group, government, descendants, etc.) Where individual identity may be said to demonstrate 'me', affiliative identity establishes 'we' (Schau & Gilly 2003: 387).

So far, attachment has been conceived of as a *cognitive* concept with regard to the narration of one's self and social identification. In other words, attachment seems to illustrate how a program is experienced and interpreted in relation to the sense of self. However, first attempts to study attachments to material objects by Wallendorf and Arnould (1988), Sivadas and Venkatesh (1995), and Ball and Tasaki (1992) emphasized the *emotional significance of attachments*, in other words, whether one is personally, sentimentally and intimately attached to objects. Furthermore, Fournier (1998: 363) argues that a rich affective grounding lies at the core of all strong brand relationships. It is likely that the things that are closer to our identities result in greater emotional attachment than things that are less relevant to our identities (Belk 1989). Ahuvia (2005) has further noticed that consumers use the things they love to construct a sense of self, especially in the face of identity conflicts. Loved objects are also connected to self-expression by making visible internal dispositions, preferences, and impulses.

Early studies on attachment have been criticized for treating attachments as one-dimensional constructs (Kleine & Baker 2004). However, recent studies on attachment can be criticized for neglecting the affective side of attachment. In fact, we may distinguish between attachment and emotional attachment since emotional attachment is not evaluative, but it is an emotion-laden, *affective* concept (see Ball & Tasaki 1992 for the measurement of emotional aspects in attachment). Further, emotional attachment does not imply a temporal orientation. As a reasoned argument for investigating emotional attachment for the purposes of shedding light on identity-related consumption of television programs, we may state that the people and the things we love have a strong influence on our sense of who we are.

Emotional attachments differ in degrees of strength, and stronger attachments have been associated with stronger feelings of connection, affection, love and passion (Thomson et al. 2005). Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) have studied the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to consumption objects. They construct a model of emotional attachment that includes dimensions of affection, passion, and connection. Affection reflects the warm feelings towards an object,

whereas the dimension of passion describes more intense and aroused positive feelings. Finally, the dimension of connection reflects a consumer's feelings of being connected to the object of consumption. Emotional attachment involves hot affects such as a frustration at the lack of product availability, fear over its potential loss and sadness over its actual loss (Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006: 10). However, the empirical findings of Thomson et al. (2005: 89) suggest that very strong emotional attachments are rather rare in a brand context.

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006: 79) have studied a closely related concept of emotional attachment called *brand love*. They define it as "satisfied consumers' passionate emotional attachment to particular brands." Their findings suggest that brand love is greater for product categories that are perceived as more hedonic and that offer more symbolic benefits. Brand love is conceptualized as a distinct mode of satisfaction, because it follows satisfaction, but not in every case. Thomson et al. (2005) have found out that the construct of emotional attachment explains variance beyond attitude, involvement, and satisfaction, although not as the only driver of them. Basically, satisfaction is about cognitive judgment whereas brand love has an affective focus. In the case of brand love, there is a willingness to declare love and integrate the brand into one's identity, but that is not a prerequisite for satisfaction. Based on previous studies (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006, Ahuvia 2005) consumers' love should be greater for objects that play a significant role in shaping their identity.

Interestingly, it has been stated that brand hate is not the opposite of brand love, but is typified by feeling no emotions towards the brand. Moreover, we should distinguish between the concepts of emotional attachment and consumption affection. Yim et al. (2008) do so on the grounds that consumption affects entail both positive and negative feelings, but strong emotional attachment entails only positive feelings towards the object of consumption. Park, MacInnis and Priester (2006) state that weak attachment is the opposite of strong attachment.

Table 6. Dimensions of attachment

Autonomy-seeking	A conception of how an object of consumption attaches to one's individual identity.
Affiliation-seeking	A conception of how an object of consumption attaches to one's social identity.
Temporal orientation	A conception of how an object of consumption attaches to past, present and future selves.
Emotional attachment	Intensity of the attachment to the object of consumption in terms of a variety of affections and intimacy of the relationship.

The dimensions of attachment are outlined in Table 6. *Past orientation* has been regarded as a common denominator of attachments to material possessions. *Present orientation* relates to how person sees him-/herself at the moment, and how the program relates to this conception. *Future orientation* is closely linked to the discussion on ideal selves described also in a previous chapter on self-identification. *Emotional attachment* describes how closely the viewer feels about his/her favorite television program. Six statements were posed to examine this kind of closeness of the program to one's personal self and related emotional responses.

As a construct designed to understand relationships, attachment can provide insights into higher-order exchange outcomes (such as identity construction) than what might be possible from non-relationship-based constructs such as attitude (Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006: 6). Park, MacInnis and Priester (2006) propose that the existence of different constructs representing a variety of responses to product offerings can be conceptualized along a hierarchy, with different levels of strength of attachment. In this spirit, preference and loyalty towards the product represent the lower levels of attachment, whereas commitment and willingness to sacrifice personal resources are examples of higher-order consumer behaviors driven by strong attachment. Moreover, according to the empirical findings of Vlachos et al. (2010), emotional attachment leads to positive word-of-mouth, repurchasing intentions and loyalty.

There has been some confusion regarding the conceptual properties and differences of the constructs of attachment and self-connection. For example, in their recent study of brand attachments, Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci (2010: 2) argue that a *brand-self-connection* is a core component of brand attachment because "it centrally reflects the definition of attachment as the bond connecting a person with the brand". They define brand attachment as the "strength of the cognitive and emotional bond connecting the brand with the self" (Ibid: 2). The measurement developed by Park et al. (Ibid: 6) for brand attachment concerns the idea of *evaluating the strength* of self-brand connection, rather than the actual *nature* of this connection as would measurement of attachment imply. This is why these two constructs are separated in this study.

3.4.3 Audience connectedness

The third relevant concept related to a consumer's relationship with a TV program would be *connectedness* that manifests how a television program becomes part of daily life. The concept of audience connectedness was first introduced by Russell and Puto (1999) who proposed that this concept can capture the extent to

which a program extends beyond the mere viewing experience, contributing to a viewer's self and social identity. The authors were seeking to extend the scope of audience measurement methods in order to further understanding of the consumption of television programming. Based on a series of qualitative studies they were to suggest a new construct of audience connectedness that "characterizes the intensity of the relationship(s) that viewers develop with television programs and their characters" (Russell, Norman & Heckler 2004: 152). Further, it was argued that a strong connectedness, referred to as fanaticism, is a relationship that extends beyond the television watching experience into one's life (Ibid: 150). In fact, in order for connectedness to develop, the television program needs to be experienced as something personally relevant. Such relevance can emerge from the viewer's identification with situations or with characters in the program. For example, finding similarities in age group, a professional situation, interests or family relations, can initiate the process of viewer's self-identification with the television program. Thus, it can also be stated that a television program can contribute to one's personal and social identity as an important reference point in the case of a strong sense of connectedness (Russell & Puto 1999: 397, 401). Connectedness with a program can vary from indifferent entertainment to high-involved fanaticism. High levels of connectedness develop if the program is considered to be personally relevant (Russell & Puto 1999).

Connectedness appears to be a *conative* concept since it taps into concrete and often visible acts of self-identification. Indeed, Russell and Puto (1999; Russell et al. 2004) identified several manifestations of audience relationships with television programs. Therefore, the construct is treated as multifaceted, consisting of six dimensions: escape, fashion, imitation, modeling, aspiration, and paraphernalia. These dimensions are described below in Table 7. When developing a valid measurement instrument for audience connectedness, Russell, Norman and Heckler (2004) adapted some themes of the uses and gratification studies and other television consumption literature, but above all, draw insights from focus group discussions with undergraduate students. Exploratory analysis yielded six factors, and after establishing the scale, subsequent data confirmed the factor structure of six first-order factors and a second-order factor of connectedness. Further, Russell, Norman and Heckler (2004: 157–159) were to discriminate the construct of connectedness from attitude towards a television program, involvement, and overall amount of television viewing. The results showed that connectedness is conceptually and empirically different from these three constructs, yet there is a need for further validity testing of this newly established construct.

Table 7. Different manifestations of audience connectedness with the TV program (modified from Russell et al. 2004)

1 ESCAPE	Cathartic element that connects a viewer to a TV program.
2 FASHION	Extent to which characters' appearances have caught viewer's fancy.
3 IMITATION	Viewer's inclination to imitate the characters.
4 MODELING	The degree to which viewers relate their own life to the lives of the characters.
5 ASPIRATION	Aspiration to be on the program or meet the characters.
6 PARAPHERNALIA	Collection of items, such as books, magazines and posters, to bring the TV program and characters into the viewer's real world.
+ 7 ONLINE ACTIVITY	Activity by the viewer in terms of interest in seeking information online and participating in online discussions regarding the program.
+ 8 CONSUMPTION CHOICES	Extent to which the viewer's consumption choices are influenced by his/her notions of the fashion/consumption style in this program.

Escape from daily worries has traditionally recognized as one of the major gratifications for watching television. *Fashion* is here conceived as clothing and hair-styles that can be seen in the television programs. *Modeling* means that the audience member relates the television program to his own life. *Imitation* takes the manifestation of modeling a step further by suggesting that viewers imitate characters' gestures and phrases in their social interactions. *Aspiration* is a manifestation of willingness to be part of the television program. *Paraphernalia* illustrates that viewers want to collect items and surround themselves with the items that relate to their favorite television program.

At the bottom of Table 7, I suggest two additional dimensions of audience connectedness, termed online activity and consumption choices. *Online activity* that relates to television programs is an interesting aspect of connectedness when illustrating whether television programs extend to viewers lives in online environments. Online activity can be seen as an essential manifestation of audience connectedness, as it extends the consumption of a TV program into the Internet environment and is one of the explicit modes of social uses of television contents. There are many Internet forums devoted to TV programs that gather audience members together. However, not everyone participates actively in the discussions, and many are passive onlookers making little effort to contribute. Therefore, it could be suggested that the more a viewer is interested in seeking information and having online discussions regarding the television program, the more that viewer is connected to the program. The other added dimension of *consumption choices* considers audience members as consumers who are interested in and inspired by the consumption styles seen in the program in question. Therefore, it is suggested here that, the more a viewer recognizes him/herself as making consumption choices based on the notions of fashion or the consumption style found in the

program, the more he/she is connected to it. Consumption choices are related to the manifestations of paraphernalia and fashion by suggesting that television programs affect the buying decisions that viewers make.

3.5 Choice of theoretical perspective

In the discussions above in Sections 3.1–3.4, I have identified possible routes to approach the identity-related consumption of media. Table 8 summarizes the four distinct perspectives from which we can distinguish different academic disciplines. In order to stress the differences between these perspectives, I have formulated metaphors for distinguishing how media consumption and identity construction are understood in each approach. On this basis, the *U&G approach* views consumers as motivated individuals who use media as resources for their identity projects. The *interpretive perspective* and *consumer-response theory* stress the lived meanings of media consumption. The *practice perspective* highlights routines and conventions of media consumption that build lifestyles and identities. Finally, the *relationship perspective* is focused on the intensity and nature of a consumer's affective, behavioral and cognitive ties with media products as objects of consumption.

Table 8. Summary of the research approaches to identity-related media consumption

Approach and Discipline	Perspective to identity construction	Metaphor for identity construction	Program as object of consumption	Nature of consumer	Main premise & quote concerning consumption
1. Uses and Gratifications Psychology, Media effects	Functionalism Consumption goals, instrumental value	Identity project	Resource	User	Motivation for identity construction drives consumption Do not ask 'what do media do to people?', but 'what people do with the media?' (Katz 1959: 2)
2.a Interpretive perspective Consumer culture theory	Symbolic consumption Extended self, lived meanings	Self-reflection	Message	Expresser	Meaning-based consumption constructs consumer's identity "People do not buy products just for what they do, but also for what the product means." (Levy 1959: 118)

Table 8 continues

2.b Consumer-response theory Literary theory	narrative identity, life themes Reading experience	Experience of identity	Text	Inter-preter	Consumers' life experiences influence their interpretation of media products. "Interpretation is a function of identity." (Holland 1975: 816)
3. Practice perspective Sociology, Media ethnography	Consumer behavior, Way of life/lifestyle Routine, ordinary, collective, and conventional nature of consumption	Self-realization	Lifestyle choice	Realizer	Daily acts of consumption construct consumer's identity "A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular form of self-identity... we all not only follow lifestyles but in an important sense are forced to do so – we have no choice but to choose." (Giddens 1991: 81)
4. Relationship perspective Social psychology	Consumer-object relationships Intensity of consumer engagement; affective, behavioral and cognitive ties	Self-identification	Relationship-partner	Interactor	Intense consumer-object relationships are related to consumer's identity. Relationship quality evolves through meaningful media and consumer actions, as per the reciprocity principle. "Consumers do not choose <i>brands</i> , they choose <i>lives</i> " (Fournier 1998: 367)

The different research traditions of studying the identity-related consumption of TV programs are outlined in Figure 17 to further illustrate the differences found in Table 8. Again, we can constitute a triangle shaped analysis that distinguishes between the focus and purpose of analysis. The three levels, or systems, in research on media consumption remain the same as in Figure 5. First, the *innermost level* of the triangle represents situation- and content-specific elaborations of interpretations, practices, and psychological antecedents and consequences of media consumption. Research streams at the innermost level include 1) interpretive studies 2) media ethnography, and 3) media psychology. These research streams aim to reveal the depth and richness of meanings, experiences, acts and feelings attached to media consumption. Usually this necessitates qualitative research meth-

ods and a very narrowly limited topic of research, such as a few carefully chosen TV programs, adverts or consumers.

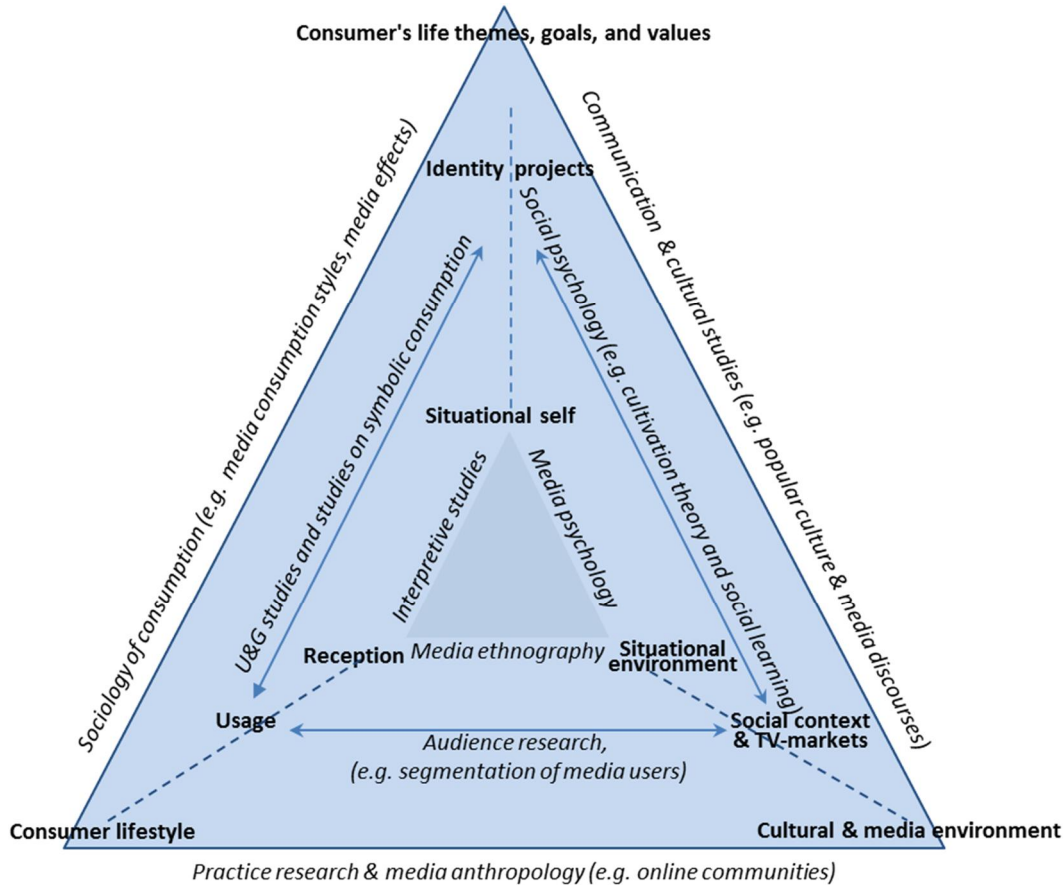


Figure 17. Identity-related media consumption in the frame of different research traditions

The *outer level* of the triangle in Figure 17 represents the most abstract level of analysis and therefore is beyond the scope of this study. This level includes research streams of 1) communication and cultural studies, 2) practice research and media anthropology, and 3) studies on the sociology of consumption. These research streams tap into the cultural nature of media consumption by investigating individuals, groups, behaviors, and texts as manifestations of the constitution of cultures.

Finally, the *intermediate level* of analysis (in Figure 17) concerns media consumption as socially symbolic ‘meaning-making’ that involves different kinds of

uses and gratifications for media, acknowledges different kinds of media consumers, and connects an individual consumer to his/her social context and media markets as an ‘audience member’. This is the level which is under investigation in this present study. Thus, this *study connects with the traditions of U&G studies, studies on symbolic consumption, audience research, and social psychology.*

I choose to rely on the *relationship perspective in consumer research* pioneered by Susan Fournier (1998) as a basic logic for approaching the identity-related consumption of television programs. It is able to encompass the different ways in which consumers make use of television programs to construct their identities as well as make sense of their selves, others and social relations in their everyday lives. This perspective provides valid arguments on how consumption objects become self-relevant. It also fits well with the research philosophy of symbolic interactionism adopted in this study. Fournier (2009: 5–23) has identified three basic tenets of consumers’ relationships: 1) Relationships are purposive, and involve provision of meanings to the persons who engage in them, 2) Relationships are multiplex phenomena, which range across several dimensions, 3) Relationships are dynamic phenomena as they evolve and change over a series of interactions and in response to contextual change. Accordingly, these three tenets should be taken into account in empirical investigations.

In the following sections, the key conceptual and theoretical choices of this study are clarified. First, the key concepts of this study are presented in Section 3.5.1, after which closely related concepts manifesting cognitive, behavioral, psychological and affective ties with consumption objects are discussed in Sections 3.5.2–3.5.4.

3.5.1 *Key concepts of the study*

In the same way that Fournier (1998: 363) highlights the multifaceted nature of consumer-brand relationships, I view relationships with television programs as involving affective and socio-emotive attachments, behavioral ties, and supportive cognitive beliefs. I thus aim to elaborate on these three kinds of bonds, as the key concepts of this study are *attachment*, *connectedness*, and *self-connection*. I suggest that these dimensions can capture a consumer’s identity-related relationship with a television program. By recognizing these conceptual dimensions, this study aims to provide a better understanding of the linkage between the consumption of television programs and identity construction. The substantive concepts of the study are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Key concepts of the study

Concept	Definition
Consumer	Consumer acts according to the need to satisfy his/her current life tasks, identity projects and life goals, even though she/he might not always be aware of the reasons behind own consumption. In the contemporary consumption culture, the consumer is seen as a social actor involved in making sense of the reality and environment based on a variety of consumption-related images and messages.
Media consumption	Consumption is here conceived of as the straightforward use of an object, but also as symbolic meaning-making that involves prior experiences, motivations and goals for the future. Media consumption is a constitution of acts, cognitions and affections that arise from direct or indirect experiences of media products, and the process of media usage. The reception of media products is fundamentally a hermeneutic process, which means that individuals are generally involved in a process of interpretation through which they make sense of the media products. Furthermore, consumption of media is here seen as purposive and selective when the consumer is high-involved in his/her media use.
Consumer-program relationship	<p>The consumer-program relationship is here conceptualized in the spirit of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998). Essentially, the consumer-program relationship involves affective, behavioral and cognitive ties that the consumer has with the television program. Consumer-program relationships may vary with respect to their intensity and emphasis of different dimensions. In this study, the specific dimensions of identity-related consumer-program relationships are identified as three-fold, involving concepts of attachment, connectedness and self-connection. See below, for the definitions of these concepts.</p> <p>The consumer-program relationship refers to a unidirectional and parasocial type of a relationship between consumer and object since the object cannot love back nor initiate the relationship (see Shimp & Madden 1988).</p>
Attachment	Attachment reveals and specifies the particular nature of the consumer-program relationship. It shows what the object of consumption means to an individual, psychologically and emotionally.
Connectedness	Connectedness brings forth the aspect of intensity of one's relationship with a television program. It reveals how a television program extends from a viewing situation into the life of the consumer.
Self-connection	The self-connection indicates the overall relationship quality, depth, and strength. It is the degree to which the brand delivers on important identity concerns, tasks, or themes, thereby expressing a significant aspect of self. (Fournier 1998: 364).
Identity	Identity is reflected in one's life narrative, or life story, capturing various roles including past, present, and anticipated future selves. A life narrative describes the path of one's identity development; it defines who I am, who I have been, who I am becoming, and/or who I no longer am. (Kleine et al.1995). Furthermore, There are two types of identity formation which are relevant here - self-identity and social identity. Self-identity refers to the sense of self as an individual, and social identity refers to the sense of oneself as the member of a social group. (Thompson 1995:186). Briefly, identity refers to the sense of self that can be expressed to other people.

Table 9 continues

Self-identification	Identity is discussed here in terms of self-identification, which refers to the ontological conception of how individuals make sense of their selves. Self-identification means internal-external negotiation and recognition of one's similarities and differences in relation to other people in the context of one's lived experiences and current life projects. Hence, also the surrounding consumption community exerts an influence when making sense of self. (Jenkins 2004, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). In addition, Giddens (1991) sees identity as a reflective project.
Identity Project (life project)	The term identity project is used here to emphasize the dynamic rather than the stable nature of identity, and that each individual advances many identity-related projects. It is suggested here that individuals can actively and voluntarily define, plan and coordinate their lives. An identity project refers to the efforts to achieve self-directed development and expression of self. In other words, it is a concrete manifestation of one's identity in daily life in terms of development, refinement, and disposal of specific concepts that are personally relevant such as manliness and Americanism, from culturally established alternatives. Briefly, identity projects are a set of personally relevant actions that concern meanings related to the self and extended self. Even though I refer to identity projects in this study (Section 1.2.1), I am not about to study the development of these projects longitudinally, but at the level of making the dynamics of identity construction recognizable to the reader.

The relationship perspective can also be connected to a wider conceptual frame of customer value creation. For example, Lindberg-Repo and Brooke (2004) have distinguished between inner and outer frames in consumer-brand relationships. They suggest that the inner frame of consumer-brand relationships consists of benefits (*hyödyt*), (perceived) value (*arvo*), and significance (*merkitys*) that the consumer realizes. *Benefits* are various and subjective as they depend on a consumer's situation in life. *Perceived value* means that a customer feels that the brand/company keeps its promise and therefore the consumer can be satisfied with it. Finally, *significance* means that a consumer sees and experiences the brand relationship as personally important. Together these three elements connect to a consumer's self-concept and brand relationship. They represent brand experiences that are characterized by an individual's cognitive, behavioral and affective responses to brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009). Lindberg-Repo and Brooke (2004) suggest that the outer frame represents a consumer's behaviors, cognitions, and feelings towards the brand, such as commitment, attachment, and engagement. We can interpret the inner frame of the relationship as relating to reasons for the development of a strong consumer-brand relationship, whereas the outer frame refers to the *manifestations* of the relationship. Moreover, we can distinguish between *antecedents* and *consequences* of the relationships, in the way that there are certain prerequisites for a strong consumer-program relationship to occur, and some likely outcomes that result from a strong

consumer-program relationship. In this study, we are first and foremost interested in the manifestations of consumer-program relationships, as is illustrated in Figure 18 by the red rings marking connectedness, the self-connection and attachment.

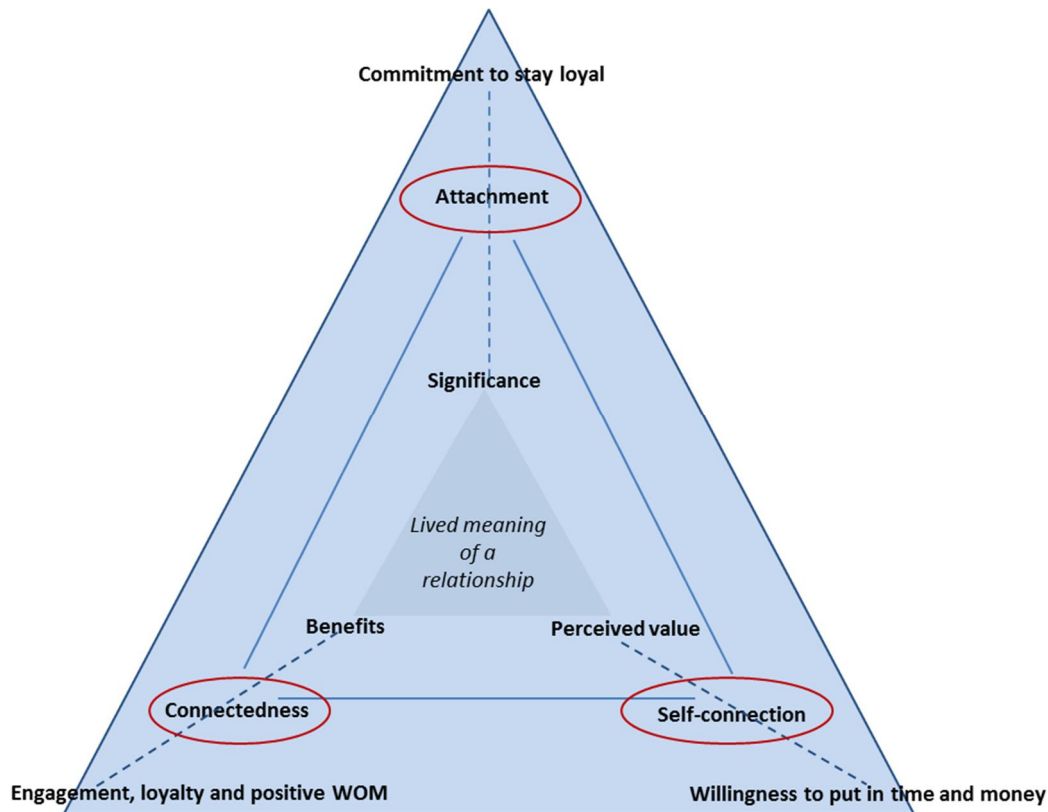


Figure 18. Behavioral, affective and cognitive concepts in consumer-object relationships.

The purpose of the following Sections 3.5.2–3.5.4 is to clarify and distinguish between various concepts linked to consumer-object relationships, yet which are beyond the scope of this present study. We can identify that *engagement*, *fandom*, and *‘being hooked’* are behavioral concepts that have points of resemblance to the concept of connectedness. In addition, the concepts of *involvement*, *satisfaction*, *liking*, and *positive attitude* represent cognitive beliefs and evaluative judgments that relate to the concepts of attachment and the self-connection, whereas *love*, *passion*, *loyalty*, and *commitment* are linked to emotional attachment. Consequently, I anticipate that the key concepts of this study: connectedness, attachment, and the self-connection, would correlate with the measures of these con-

cepts. However, elaborating their conceptual nature indicates that these constructs should also be empirically distinguishable from the constructs of attachment, connectedness and the self-connection since they are either antecedents or consequences of strong identity-related consumer-object relationships.

3.5.2 *Concepts related to cognitive beliefs and evaluative judgments*

Involvement A general cognitively-based definition of involvement sees that it refers to the perceived personal relevance of an object to an individual (Zaichkowsky 1985, Laaksonen 1994). The personal relevance of an object generally denotes the perceived psychological tie that embeds a consumer's values when purchasing or choosing a product. Typically, a high-involved consumer goes through a complex decision-making and information-processing, whereas a consumer with low-involvement does not. The reason for this is that a high-involved consumer sees that the product is important in some way (for example due to high functional or financial risk), and that the own values are engaged when purchasing the product (Muncy & Hunt 1984). In previous studies it has been found that the level of involvement varies greatly between individuals (e.g., Zaichkowsky 1985). Furthermore, a more direct link to personal values and stronger commitment to brands have been assumed in the high-involvement product classes than in the case of low-involvement products (Lastovicka & Gardner 1978). Frequently purchased, commodity-like goods such as toothpaste are typical examples of a low-involvement product class, whereas a car is a good example of a high-involvement product, which is less frequently purchased, and more brand-differentiated (Lastovicka 1979).

With a few exceptions (e.g., Mitchell 1979) the state of involvement is typically related to a product category-level rather than the specific product. For example, Traylor (1981: 51) defines involvement as "recognition that certain product classes may be more or less central to an individual's life, his attitudes about himself, his sense of identity, and his relationship to the rest of the world." In this way, we would be investigating involvement with television programs in general. A statement about involvement with television programs could be, for instance: Television programs interest me, and watching television is an important hobby of mine." (modified from Zaichkowski 1985: 345) By way of contrast, one could be highly involved in one's decision not to watch television for religious reasons.

Another view of involvement presented by Krugman (1965) gets very close to a conceptualization of consumer-object relationships. Krugman states that involvement with advertising means *connections* being made with any aspect of the person's life, not only those that are related to his/her values. It appears that these

connections are understood as consequences of involvement, so that they should be more numerous when the information is recognized as personally relevant and having goal-satisfaction value (which are antecedents of involvement) (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter 1990, Wright 1974). In this respect, we can see that involvement with advertisements, as Krugman sees it, conceptually differs from involvement with products or with purchase decisions, but is convergent with the focus of this present study (see e.g., Zaichkowsky 1985: 341). In line with Krugman, I am interested in the perceived meaning of an object of consumption (i.e., the relevance of the media content), rather than the perceived meaning of consuming it (i.e. the involvement in media consumption and choice of programs in general).

Andrews et al. (1990) elaborate the antecedents and consequences of involvement in order to specify the domain of the construct. It appears that the measurement of consequences and antecedents of involvement should be distinguished from the measurement of the state of involvement. They recognize that a greater number of personal connections and more elaborate encoding strategies are among the consequences of involvement. Consequently, we may conclude that an identity-related consumer-program relationship is one of the consequences of high involvement. Consumers who are attached to an object are likely to be involved with it. As Calder and Malthouse (2004: 123) posit, two people may read the same amount of newspaper articles, but it is their level of involvement that decides whether their reading is done merely to pass the time or constitutes active engagement with the newspaper.

Clearly, the term involvement refers to a 'consumer-program relationship', but it only emphasizes a cognitive base and the presence of values in a relationship (Thompson et al. 2005: 79), whereas the consumer-program relationship also takes into account behavioral and affective bonds. Moreover, involvement refers to the buying situation or choice of a product, whereas the consumer-program relationship denotes consumption longer term. Involvement also differs from love (emotional attachment) because people can be very involved with things they detest and can love things that they are not currently involved with, as in the case of a favorite book that has not been read in years (Ahuvia 2005).

Positive attitude and liking According to a general definition, attitude is "a generalized predisposition to behave toward an object" (Park & MacInnis 2006: 16). Park et al. (2006: 5–6) see that attitude is not a relationship-based concept, since it is more relevant to the domain of evaluation than the development of relationships. Also Fournier (1998: 363) asserts that "there is more to keeping a relationship alive than the pull of positive feelings." The experience concept in consumer

and marketing research is not relationship-based either, but only refers to sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by stimuli in the specific interaction situation. Moreover, an occurrence of experience does not presume any kind of motivational state or perceived personal relevance as relationship-based constructs would (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009).

Attitudes can be understood as simple evaluations assembled from cued cognitions and feelings rather than explained by stored evaluations that guide behavior. In essence, there is no quality or content in the domain of the construct of attitude; it can only be positive, neutral/indifferent or negative. However, there are different conceptions of the boundaries of the construct available. In fact, extremes of attitudes may be recognized as love (emotional attachment) or hate. Furthermore, the concept of attitude may be expanded with the myriad of cognitive, affective and behavioral domains and process mechanisms. This, however, can lead to a too complicated model of attitude formation and the loss of attitude-behavior linkages. Consequently, for example Park and MacInnis (2006) suggest that boundaries of the attitude construct should be sharply defined.

Thomson et al. (2005: 78–79) and Park and MacInnis (2006:17) recognize that consumers who are emotionally attached to an object are likely to have a favorable attitude towards it. However, attitudes reflect evaluative reactions to an object and can develop without any direct contact with the object, whereas emotional attachment is a relationship-based construct, which involves a rich set of schemas and affectively laden memories linked to the object (Park & MacInnis 2006: 17). Furthermore, objects of emotional attachment typically play a significant role in one's life, but a consumer may also have favorable attitudes towards those objects that are of little importance to their lives or identity. Finally, emotional attachment implies that the object is irreplaceable to the consumer, whereas positive attitude towards an object does not suggest that the object is unique, or that the consumer has made a commitment to stay with it. Moreover, Park et al. (2006: 20) recognize that "favorable attitudes may be a necessary condition for strong brand attachments, but they are neither redundant with nor sufficient for strong brand attachments." As a whole, attachment is a stronger state of connectedness between the consumer and the product than liking alone. Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci (2010) further discuss how attachment and attitude differ. They suggest that attachment and attitude have distinct behavioral implications, so that attachment has emotional and self-implications that serve as more powerful drivers of behavior when compared to the implications of a strong positive attitude.

Satisfaction An individual who is emotionally attached to a brand is likely to be satisfied with it (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park 2005: 79). However, satisfaction, similar to involvement, is a general condition rather than a direct cause for the development of an identity-related bond with the object (Sivadas & Venkates 1995). Moreover, satisfaction, like positive attitude, is an evaluative judgment that does not imply any emotional bond with an object of consumption. Satisfaction with product performance may not be a strong indicator of the strength of the relationship, because even if a consumer finds a product satisfying, he or she does not necessarily want to develop or continue a relationship with the product (Sung & Choi 2010). It should also be noticed that satisfaction may stem from only a few consumption experiences, whereas emotional attachment requires a personal history between the consumer and the object of consumption (Belk 1988 in Vlachos et al. 2010).

3.5.3 *Concepts related to behavioral ties*

Engagement is a new concept in the marketing literature, yet it has been defined in the academic literature on consumer behavior in different and sometimes contradictory ways (Gambetti & Graffigna 2010: 804). One obvious reason for this is that in the field of consumer behavior there are at least four distinct contexts where engagement is used, each in a slightly different manner: customer (or consumer) engagement; brand engagement; advertising engagement; and media engagement. Engagement has also been examined across other academic disciplines such as sociology, psychology, political science, and organizational behavior. As a result there is a lack of consensus regarding the specific dimensionality and operationalization of the construct. In the previous literature, engagement has been found to represent individual-level, motivational, and context-dependent variables. Furthermore, it has been outlined that engagement emerges from two-way interactions between subject and object, it may exist at different intensities, and it is a dynamic process that develops over time (Hollebeek 2011: 787).

Customer engagement has recently become a popular topic of CRM. Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, and Verhoef (2010: 253) present the theoretical foundations of customer engagement behavior. They conclude that “engagement is a behavioral manifestation toward a brand or a firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers.” Engaged consumers want to share their experiences and opinions with other people. Engagement activities include, for instance, word-of-mouth behavior, blogging, and writing reviews. Each of these activities emphasizes that customers have influence as co-creators of value and marketers of the product. Yet the abovementioned authors explicate that in addition to these

positive behavioral manifestations there can be also negative manifestations of engagement, such as organizing boycotts of a firm. In addition, Bowden (2009: 65) defines that customer engagement is a psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which loyalty forms for new customers as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers. Van Doorn et al. (2010: 256) recognize the linkage between engagement behavior and a customer's identity. They state that identity issues can be both customer-based antecedents to, and consequences of, engagement behavior. Accordingly, specific goals of a consumer are likely to direct engagement behavior, but also engagement behavior can become a determiner of a consumer's group identity for example through a strong sense belonging to a brand community.

We can clearly see that engagement is closely related to the consumer-program relationship. However, since it typically emphasizes a behavioral bond only, I prefer to use the term consumer-program relationship, which is a more holistic construct manifesting a meaning-based bond.

Media engagement The term 'engagement' has also been related to media consumption (Takahashi 2006, Calder & Malthouse 2008; Kilger & Romer 2007). A common feature of studies on media engagement is that they are actually investigations of uses and gratifications of media vehicles and products. This approach makes media engagement only a variant of U&G studies, which study motivations for media usage (see Section 2.1.2).

The modes of engagement distinguished by Takahashi (2006; 2007) include information-seeking activity, connectivity, 'world creation', parasocial interaction, utility, interpretation, and participation. The study of audience engagement by Takahashi resembles the investigations of U&G studies of media consumption in the social contexts of the audiences. Takahashi grounds his study on the *Joho Kodo* studies that relate to Japanese information society theory. The assumptions made are very similar to those employed in the uses and gratifications studies. Consequently, the concept of audience engagement opens up different types of uses of media vehicles and contents, but is only one facet of consumer-program relationships.

Kilger and Romer (2007) have also investigated media engagement. In their study, engagement includes five dimensions: inspirational; trustworthy; life enhancing; social involvement; and personal timeout. These dimensions can be studied across different media vehicles (television, magazines, and Internet). In addition, the authors see that television specifically involves the dimension of personal connection, which manifests as personal association with the characters and situations. Another television-specific dimension is entitled 'near and dear',

which means that the program is an essential part of one's daily schedule. We can see that the dimensions recognized by Kilger and Romer (2007) represent a mixture of uses of media contents, without an explicit theoretical underpinning. Yet these dimensions resemble the dimensions of connectedness. Interestingly, Kilger and Romer (Ibid: 323–325) find that there is a positive relationship between media engagement and advertising receptivity (i.e. product purchase likelihood) within that media.

Fandom According to Merriam-Webster (2012) fandom is the state or attitude of being a *fan*, which is usually understood as a person with a strong and habitual liking for something. A fan can be for example a spectator who is an enthusiastic devotee of a sport or admirer of a celebrity. Fandom can be seen as a concept closely related to connectedness. Nikunen (2005), who studied fandom in relation to television programs, notes that affection, fan activities, community/sociability, fan identity, connection to popular culture rather than high culture, and cultural conceptions about sexuality are central realms of the experience of fandom. She states that all of the elements are not equally present in all forms of fandom, but can have different emphases on a case by case basis. Nikunen's research (Ibid: 202) suggests that those who recognize themselves as fans of a particular television program base their conception on the fact that they tend to watch every episode of the program. However, there can be differences in the degree of fanaticism related to fandom. This means that not every fan wants to express or work on their relationship with the program, but rather they prefer to be less intensively engaged without too much effort (Nikunen 2005: 203).

Even though fandom is about an intense relationship that the viewer has developed with a program or its characters, I would make a distinction between fandom and connectedness. I suggest that fandom refers to strong celebrity worship, but not necessarily to identification with the celebrity. Furthermore, fandom emphasizes social community, and fan activity more than the concept of connectedness does. Bielby, Harrington, and Bielby (1996) note that to be a fan reflects an enhanced emotional involvement with a television narrative. In other words, fandom should produce stronger affections when compared to ordinary viewing.

Being hooked Escalas, Moore and Britton (2004: 105–106) have studied the concept of 'being hooked by the ad', and define it as when "a viewer's being drawn into, or pulled into an ad." Being hooked is closely related to a construct, 'experiential involvement', which addresses viewers' engagement with and sustained attention towards attentional objects such as adverts. In their study, Escalas et al. (2004) find a positive relationship between being hooked by the advert and affect intensity. In light of this we may expect that emotional attachment to a program

would have a particularly positive relationship with the level of being hooked on watching it.

3.5.4 *Concepts related to psychological and affective ties*

Brand engagement Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009) have introduced the construct of ‘brand engagement in self-concept’ (BESC). This concept captures brands in relation to self-concept. Sprott et al. (2009) derive their conceptualization of brand engagement from the literature on self-brand connections and attachment to possessions. The authors state that there are differences between consumers with respect to their general engagement with brands, and that consumers may integrate multiple brands into their self-concept. Consequently, the authors are interested in consumers’ general tendency to include brands in their self-concept, rather than focusing on engagement with specific brands or possessions. Distinct from the study of Sprott et al. (2009), I do not study the tendency to include television programs in the self-concept in general, but focus instead on how a relationship with a specific program is developed.

Perhaps the broadest definition of brand engagement is provided by Hollebeek (2011: 790), who defines customer brand engagement as “the level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions.”

Love Based on the relational paradigm and the notion that consumers may attribute human characteristics to brands or products, the concept of love has attracted increased interest (Albert, Merunka & Valette-Florence 2008). Findings of previous studies investigating the phenomenon of human attachment suggest that consumers are likely to develop strong affectionate ties in commercial relationships in the same way as in person-to-person relationships (see Chi Kin, Tse, & Chan 2008; Vlachos et al. 2010). The crucial question is whether the feeling of love for a program could be similar to a feeling of love for a person. According to some views (e.g., Shimp & Madden 1988), love is an applicable construct in consumer behavior, but for others the concept of love cannot be theorized or understood in its entirety.

Sternberg’s (1986) triangular theory of love postulates that there are different kinds of love made up of different configurations of intimacy, passion, and commitment. This theory shares some commonalities with the definition of emotional attachment, since they both emphasize emotional bonds between the person and

the object. However, commitment is considered as an outcome of emotional attachment, rather than an inherent dimension of it, as in the definition of love.

Recently Albert et al. (2008) have made an attempt to explore the concept of consumers' love for a brand. The authors found that there are cultural differences in declarations of love, and that the term attachment does not necessarily refer to the feeling of love. As a whole, love represents a rather complex phenomenon which appears to be too difficult to capture with a single theory. That is why, contrary to some views (e.g., Shimp & Madden 1988; Whang, Sahoury, & Zhang 2004), I do not suggest that consumer-object relationships appear in all forms of love, for instance altruistic or romantic love. Yet strong forms of emotional attachment are close to the idea of love. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006: 81) state that love for a brand is "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name."

Commitment and loyalty While commitment is among the key constructs of consumer-brand relationships, it is only an indirect focus of this study. Commitment represents an individual's long-standing orientation towards a relationship that predicts its stability and persistence. In other words, it denotes the intention to remain loyal. Crosby and Taylor (1983: 415) argue that a person may be involved with an issue without yet having taken a specific attitudinal position on it one way or the other. By this they imply that involvement precedes commitment rather than vice versa. More specifically, the authors define a person being committed when his or her values, self-image, and attitudes are cognitively linked to a specific position or choice. Clearly, commitment is closely related to attachment as it is here identified as an outcome of attachment. In other words, attachment leads to commitment, not the reverse (Park, MacInnis, & Priester 2006: 26–27). According to this conception, there may be other reasons for commitment that are unrelated to attachment.

Commitment is a more intense statement than brand loyalty because it refers to an attitude of staying loyal towards the brand, whereas loyalty is only a behavioral manifestation in the form of repeated purchases. Iwasaki and Havitz (1998: 259) suggest that involvement precedes psychological commitment, which in turn precedes behavioral loyalty. In other words, even though commitment implies loyalty, loyalty does not necessarily imply commitment (e.g., Bowden 2009: 70). Consequently, when 'the first choice' is not available in the market, brand-loyal consumers are likely to switch to an alternative brand, whereas committed consumers are not (Warrington & Shim 2000; Hess & Story 2005). For example, typifying the strongly negative end of commitment, one could state that "I would never watch soap operas." Iwasaki and Havitz (1998: 260) argue that antecedents of

involvement consist of two general factors: 1) individual characteristics (including values, attitudes, motivation, needs, goals, and so on) and 2) social-situational influences (such as social support from significant others, situational incentives, social and cultural norms, interpersonal and structural constraints). Moreover, Iwasaki and Havitz (Ibid: 264) see that a high level of involvement does not translate directly into a high degree of commitment, partly because individual characteristics and social-situational factors moderate the direct effects of involvement on commitment.

Dick and Basu (1994) remind us that loyalty is often measured and evaluated in behavioral terms even though we can view loyalty as the strength of the relationship between a person's relative attitude and repeat patronage. The authors distinguish cognitive, affective, and conative antecedents of loyalty. These antecedents include, among others, confidence, satisfaction, and switching costs. The authors also recognize that social norms and situational factors influence how loyalty results.

3.6 Development of theoretical framework and propositions

The theoretical framework for self-identification in consumer-program relationships can now be organized based on three key concepts (Figure 19). The concept of *connectedness* brings out the intensity of a relationship with a TV program by showing how that program is a part of the consumer's daily life. It is suggested here that a high level of connectedness to a program demonstrates its greater contribution to one's identity construction. The concept of *self-connection* is needed to indicate the overall relationship quality and depth. It shows the extent to which the TV program contributes to one's identity issues in terms of consistency in self-verification and self-enhancement. *Attachment* reveals and specifies the particular nature and orientation of the consumer-program relationship. Based on the literature review, it should involve dimensions of emotionality (i.e. affection-laden responses), autonomy seeking, and affiliation seeking.

As a whole, *self-identification with television programs* can be defined as the relevance of a particular television program to one's identity. What is noteworthy in the model I propose is that it suggests reciprocal rather than causal directions between the key concepts. Furthermore, the key concepts of connectedness, attachment, and self-connection are considered as higher-order constructs that cannot be observed directly, but are applied on the basis of observables. Operationalization of these key constructs will be discussed in Chapter 4.

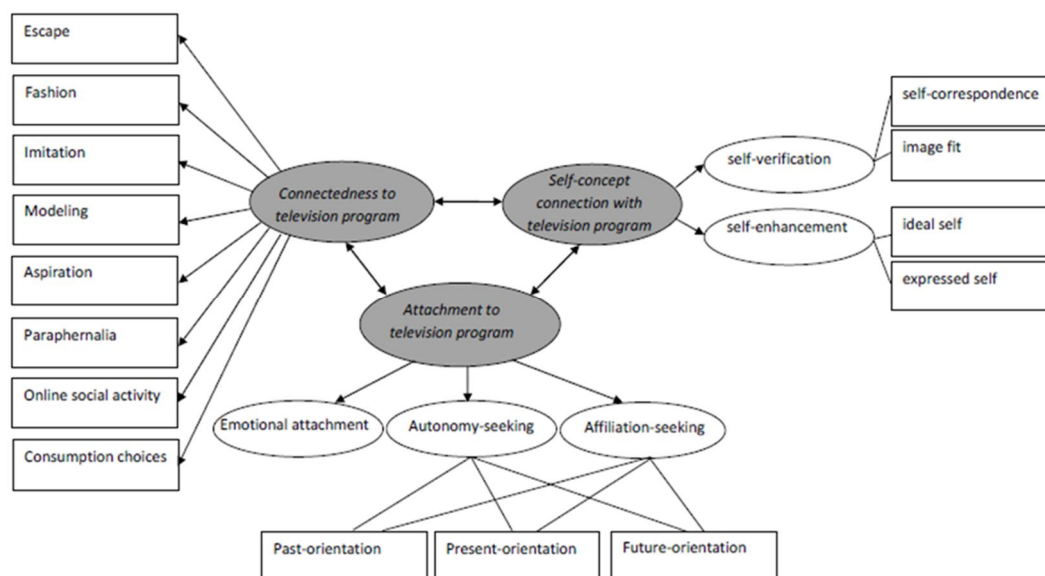


Figure 19. Theoretical framework for assessing consumers' use of television programs for self-identification.

Based on conceptual framework and literature review may pose six main propositions worth investigating in the main study phase. Zaltman, LeMasters and Heffring (1982: 92) define propositions as “functional relationships between or among concepts.” Propositions are elements of theory as they represent advancement beyond differentiation between concepts toward formation and testing of theoretical ideas. The propositions are also grounded on the basic *premises* of this study (see Section 1.4 for the summary of those). Basically, the propositions 1–4 coincide with the fourth premise about multi-dimensional nature of identity construction, whereas the propositions 5 and 6 relate to the premises 5–7 that point to the differences in consumer-program relationships because of differing personal, product-specific, and contextual drivers of media consumption.

The first proposition (P1) concerns the structure of the *conceptual dimensions* of identity-related consumption of television programs and that way links to answering the second research question posed for this study. It is proposed that the three key concepts are positively related to each other manifesting different dimensions of identity-bond with a TV program since each of them has been recognized as one kind of identity-bond in the previous literature. The rest of the propositions (P2-P6) tap into the third research question of this study concerning the analysis of *empirical nature* of consumer-program relationships.

The second proposition (P2) concerns the particular nature of the psychological bond with the TV program. It is proposed here that the concept of attachment includes aspects of emotional intensity and intimacy, different temporal orientations, and individual as well as affiliative characteristics. In the spirit of attachment, it is assumed that the media contents that are meaningful to the consumer and are close to his/her heart are likely to be self-relevant as well. The third proposition (P3) concerns the nature of the behavioral bond with the program. It is proposed that there are several aspects of connectedness, from escape to consumption choices. In the light of this, we can expect that the important daily activities related to media consumption construct one's lifestyle and that way manifest identity. The fourth proposition (P4) taps into the area of investigating the nature of a cognitive bond with a program. In this regard, it is proposed that self-connection with a program involves aspects of self-verification and self-enhancement. The idea of self-connection suggests that a recognized self-congruence with specific media content would create a state of high self-relevance.

P1 Self-identification with a television program is a multidimensional phenomenon that is made up of affective, cognitive and behavioral determinants.

- a) attachment and connectedness are positively correlated
- b) attachment and self-connection are positively correlated
- c) connectedness and self-connection are positively correlated

P2 A consumer becomes *attached* to his/her favorite television program, which means that there is a symbolic bond between the favorite program and the consumer's identity.

- a) in terms of the emotional intensity and intimacy of the relationship.
- b) in terms of different temporal orientations (past, present and future) of self.
- c) in terms of individuation and affiliation, which refers to self-identification that has both inner and outer determinants.

P3 A consumer becomes *connected* to his/her favorite program, which means that the favorite program can be seen in his/her personally relevant daily activities.

- a) seeking escape by watching his/her favorite program.
- b) favoring the fashion and style in his/her favorite program.
- c) tending to imitate the characters in his/her favorite program.
- d) wanting to get inspired by his/her favorite program.
- e) admiring the setting of his/her favorite program.
- f) enjoying collecting items that relate to his/her favorite program.
- g) being active online when it comes to his/her favorite program.

- h) being directly influenced by his/her favorite program when making consumption choices.

P4 A consumer realizes a strong *self-connection* with his/her favorite television program.

- a) in terms of self-verification: “this is who I am.”
- b) in terms of self-enhancement: “this is who I would like to be.”

Finally, there are two more propositions that concern the behavioral outcomes of a strong identity-bond with a TV program and contextual factors that may affect how the consumer-program relationship results. Accordingly, as a fifth proposition (P5), it is suggested that there is a positive relationship between identity-bond with a television program and ‘being hooked’ on watching this program. It can be assumed that positive attitude and behavior would go hand in hand in media consumption, so that we are engaged with those media contents that we prefer over others.

The sixth proposition (P6) takes into account the reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral and environmental elements of media consumption by suggesting that there are relevant differences between program genres, groups of audiences, and individual audience members with regard to the formation of identity-bonds with TV programs. Previous literature suggests that young audience members are more media-oriented than others. Symbolic consumption literature is based on the idea that consumer wants to extend and express his/her identity socially. Therefore we may expect that respondents with more outer-oriented self-construal would be more likely to form strong identity-bonds than respondents with very inner-oriented self-identification. Furthermore, according to symbolic interactionism, we may expect that looking glass self-phenomenon results in a way that similarity with other viewers would make identity-bond with a television program stronger. The study of Escalas and Bettman (2003) suggests that individuals are likely to develop a self-connection when there is a strong usage association between a reference group and the object of consumption and there is a strong connection between the reference group and the consumer’s self-concept.

P5 The level of being *hooked* on the favorite program positively correlates with self-identification.

- a) The level of being hooked and attachment are positively correlated.
- b) The level of being hooked and connectedness are positively correlated.
- c) The level of being hooked and self-connection with the program are positively correlated.

P6 Viewer characteristics, production of TV programs and other consumers influence how the consumer-program relationship results.

- a) Younger viewers have stronger identity-bonds with their favorite program than older viewers.
- b) There are differences between program genres when it comes to their ability to provide resources for a consumer's identity construction.
- c) A consumer who is socially-oriented (i.e. outer-oriented) in his/her self-identification, has a stronger identity-bond with a favorite program than a consumer who has an independent orientation (i.e. is inner-oriented) in his/her self-identification.
- d) Imagined similarity with the other viewers of the shared favorite program intensifies the identity-bond with the favorite program.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY IN THE MAIN STUDY PHASE

Literature review and pre-study phase together guided the implementation of the main study phase. After gaining insights into the phenomenon of symbolic media consumption along with the pre-study phase and getting to know the different theoretical perspectives to identity-related consumption along with the literature review, it is now time to move on to the theory-bound empirical examinations. This study points out and advances the specific relationship-approach to study identity-related media consumption by focusing on consumers' relationships with their favorite programs. Quantitative methodology makes it possible to conclude about the structure and generality of identity-related consumption of television programs among wider population. In addition, verbal accounts (such as open questions posed for the respondents) can bring detailed information and explanations for the numerical answers. There are several studies showing that multiple sources of data can bring rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Mäenpää 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 8; Hall & Rist: 1999; Schaefer & Avery 1993). However, one major challenge is to combine data obtained by multiple methods into a credible account describing the "reality" (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994).

The quantitative study phase focused on studying symbolic consumption of television programs instead of studying consumption of all media contents. The findings are aimed to address the second and third research questions of this study. First, structural equation modeling of the survey data relates to the construction of a comprehensive conceptual model on identity-related consumption of television programs. It provides answer for the question: *How is a consumer's relationship with a television program structured in terms of identity-related consumption, and how can it be measured.* Secondly, analysis of variance in the survey data and cluster analysis of the respondents reveal how consumers actually use TV programs as resources for their identity, and that way aims to answer the third research question: *how does identity-related consumption of television programs become evident among television viewers.*

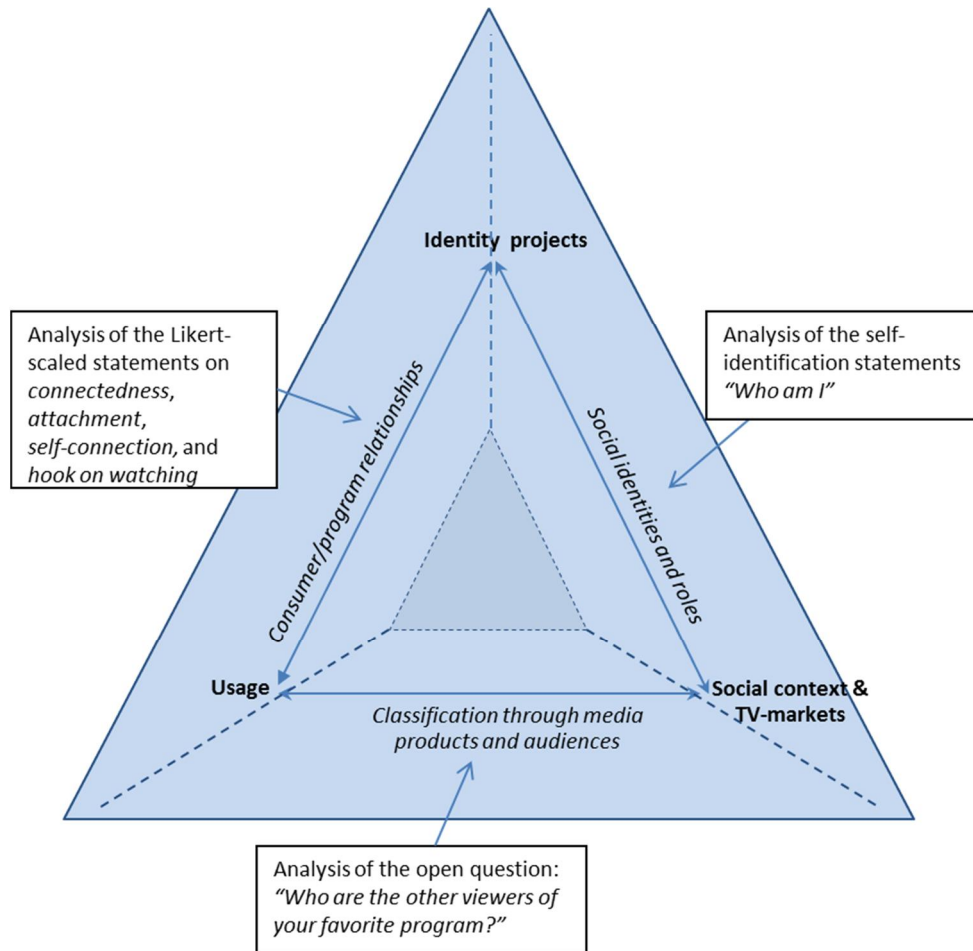


Figure 20. Research techniques in the main study phase

The idea of reciprocal interactions in media consumption and the research approach of symbolic interactionism were kept in mind when planning research techniques for the main study phase. In Figure 20 it is illustrated how different research techniques respond to reciprocal relationships between consumers' identity projects, media usage, and media environment. Along with the literature review the tentative dimensions of identity-related consumer-program relationships were particularized (on left-hand side of the triangle). Moreover, the social nature of media consumer's identification was recognized to be an important aspect of identity construction (at the bottom of the triangle). This aspect motivated one of the open questions in the survey. Also a more sophisticated view on identity construction was adopted when analyzing specific self-identification statements provided by the survey respondents (on right hand side of the triangle). These research techniques are discussed in more detail in Sections 4.1–4.3.

4.1 Online survey on favorite television programs

The main study phase took place year 2009. This phase was conducted in the form of online survey. Online survey is a data gathering method, which is relatively inexpensive and easy to carry out. However, among the disadvantages of the method are difficulties of achieving balanced sampling, possibilities of receiving biased information due to insufficient guidance of survey respondents and ambiguity of the survey questions due to careless planning of the data gathering. These stumbling blocks were tried to take into account by carefully choosing a website on which to place the survey, by taking guidance from literature on research methodologies, and by pre-testing the survey.

Based on the pre-study phase and the literature review, theoretical framework for assessing self-identification in consumer-program relationships was developed in Section 3.6, of which operationalization is discussed in this section. In previous studies consumer-object relationships have mainly been approached quantitatively with means of Likert-scales (Ball & Tasaki 1992, Park et al. 2010, Thomson, MacInnis & Park 2005, Russell & Puto 1999) and Q-sorts (Kleine, Kleine & Allen 1995). The development of general measures and validation of scales has been considered important for the advancement of the theory of consumer behavior. Accordingly, quantitative methodology was a natural choice for this phase.

In order to focus research interests, only consumers' relationships with their *favorite television programs* were examined. Basically, respondents were asked to name one program that they have watched regularly during the year. Respondents were asked to choose such a program that they would feel particularly sorry to miss. Moreover, they had to choose such a program that is in a series-format (e.g. not advertisement, a movie, or a single broadcast of an event). Basic reasoning behind this guidance was to focus on programs that would be considered as favorite programs with which consumers are more likely to form strong and long-term relationships.

In Table 10, there is an overview of the research methods in the online survey. Basically, an online survey with six distinct sections was applied in this study. Specific survey design is illustrated in Appendix 7 in Finnish. Statements on self-connection, attachment, and connectedness are introduced in more detail in the consequent Sections 4.1.1–4.1.3.

Table 10. Main ingredients of the online survey

Research technique in an online survey	Description of the technique	Type and amount of data	Mode and frame of analysis	Reported in
SELF-IDENTIFICATION STATEMENTS	A modification of Twenty Statements test, which is used in identity research to gain spontaneous written accounts of informant's identity.	-verbal data; words and short sentences -352 valid responses, a total of 1057 statements	Categorization and quantification of qualitative content	Chapter 6
GENERAL QUESTIONS	Easy-to-answer, general questions orientate respondent towards the topic of research	-question about TV programs that the viewer typically watches -question about favorite program's qualities that have caught the respondent's fancy	Descriptive statistics and Cross-tabulations	Chapter 6
CHOICE OF FAVORITE PROGRAM	Free choice and naming of one program, based on which respondent answers consequent questions on consumer-program relationships	-TV program, which is in a series format. Not commercial, a movie, or a single-broadcast of an event. -Together 114 programs	Classification under program genres and program types	Chapter 4
OPEN QUESTIONS; PICTURING THE AUDIENCE	Technique is used to capture consumer stereotypes; how respondents classify through media products and audiences	-verbal data; words and short sentences	Categorization and quantification of qualitative content	Chapter 6
LIKERT-SCALED STATEMENTS	Technique, which is used in consumer research to study cognitions, such as attitudes and motivations.	-numerical data -attachment -connectedness -self-connection -involvement "hook" -359 valid responses	-Multivariate analysis -descriptive statistics -confirmatory factor analysis and cluster analysis	Chapter 5 and 6
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESPONDENT BACK-GROUNDS	Technique is used to enable comparisons across respondents	-quantitative; gender, age -qualitative; hobbies	-Classification of gender and age -Qualitative content as aid of interpretation	Chapter 4 and 6

The survey data was collected online from the Finnish speaking visitors of the web site called Telkku.com, which is a site that provides information about the television programs that are currently broadcasted in Finland. Telkku.com also

has a general discussion forum, where registrated visitors can discuss about television programs among other things. Link to the survey was placed on the front page of the site, so no registration was required in order to answer the survey. This type of technique is called ‘unrestricted self-selected survey’, which is open for anyone to participate. Unrestricted self-selected surveys are a form of convenience sampling. Therefore the results cannot be generalized to a larger population (Fricker 2008: 205). The web link for the survey was available on the Telkku.com -site for one month period (25.5.2009-25.6.2009). Three iPod shuffle music players (worth approximately 50 euros) were raffled for the respondents. First two weeks the survey was placed on the website without these prizes, but the level of participation was not satisfactory at that time.

4.1.1 *Self-connection scale*

As a ground for the scale development for self-connection, I stress the ideas of Escalas and Bettman (2003: 339; Escalas & Bettman 2005) who have identified that consumers have predominant self-needs and -goals, such as self-verification and self-enhancement. When related to the discussions of symbolic consumption, self-verification refers to issues of one’s inner self-correspondence and outer image fit played out by the object. The aspect of self-enhancement, for one, calls for a particular object to respond to one’s striving for ideal self and need to present oneself to other people in a favorable manner, that is, to impress them. To sum up, self-verification is a matter of seeking for consistency of self-construction, whereas self-enhancement is about seeking for consistency of self-presentation.

Table 11. Statements on self-connection with television program

Statements (5-point Likert scale 1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)	
<i>Self-correspondence</i>	
	My favorite TV program tells something about me.
	I can identify myself with my favorite TV program/its characters.
<i>Image fit</i>	
	I think that my favorite TV program does not actually fit my “image” very well.
	My friends probably associate me with my favorite TV program when they think of me.
<i>Self-expression</i>	
	I would probably mention my favorite TV program to my new friends.
	I do not like to tell other people that I watch this TV program.
<i>Ideal self</i>	
	My favorite TV program reflects a lot about the kind of person I would like to be.
	I often think that “I would not like to be the kind of person that is pictured in my favorite TV program”.

In this present study, eight statements were formed to measure the different aspects of viewer's self-identification with a favorite television program. Accordingly, the statements were linked to viewer's ideal self, preferred self-expression, and self-correspondence/image fit of the program in question. The eight statements are illustrated below in Table 11.

4.1.2 Attachment scale

Following the line of thought by Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) we can distinguish between different time orientations in attachments; past, present and future, that are able to capture also its inner and outer orientation (i.e. autonomy and affiliation seeking). As regards different temporal and emotional orientations of the attachment, sixteen statements were posed to the informants (Table 12).

Table 12. Statements on attachment

Statements (5-point Likert scale 1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)
<i>Past orientation</i>
My favorite program reminds me of my past achievements in my life.
My favorite program reminds me of my past self.
My favorite program relates to my long for nostalgia/traditions.
My favorite program reminds me of the good times with my closest ones.
<i>Present orientation</i>
My favorite program makes me feel different to other people.
My favorite program reminds me of people who are dear to me.
My favorite program helps me to be updated what happens around me.
My favorite program is nothing to do with what I really am as a person.
I watch my favorite program for no other reason than to kill time.
Everybody watches the same program than I do. There is nothing special about it.
I do not want to discuss about my favorite television program with other people.
<i>Future orientation</i>
My favorite program has something to do with my future goals.
My favorite program shows, what kind of person I am growing to be.
I do not think that I would prefer my present favorite program also in the future.
I do not think that I am going to store some pieces of recordings or posters of my favorite program in the future.
<i>Emotional attachment</i>
I would feel irritated if someone laughed at my favorite program.
If I don't see my favorite program, I would feel as if I have lost a part of myself.
I do not have many feelings towards my favorite program.
If someone praised my favorite program, it would feel like someone praises me in person.
If my favorite program ends, I would not find a substitute one easily.
I would be happy to wear a shirt that has my favorite program's name on it.

4.1.3 *Connectedness scale*

The dimension of audience connectedness manifests the intensity of the relationship that audience member has with his/her favorite television program. It can be assumed that the more intense this relationship is the more likely television program is to have an effect on viewer's life style and identity. According to Russell and Puto (1999) connectedness consists of several aspects: escape, fashion, modeling, imitation, aspiration and paraphernalia. In addition, online activity and consumption choices are added to this list in this present study as important manifestations of audience connectedness. The specific statements for each dimension are listed in Table 13.

Table 13. Statements on connectedness

Statements (5-point Likert scale 1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)
<i>Escape</i>
This program helps me to forget my daily problems and worries.
Watching my favorite TV program puts me in a better mood.
<i>Fashion</i>
I like the clothes they wear on my favorite TV program.
I like the hairstyles on my favorite TV program.
<i>Modeling</i>
I learn about my own life by watching my favorite TV program.
I get ideas from my favorite TV program, about how to live my own life.
I relate what happens in my favorite TV program to my own life.
<i>Imitation</i>
Sometimes, I find myself imitating the gestures or facial expressions from the characters in my favorite TV program.
I find myself saying phrases from my favorite TV program when I interact with other people.
<i>Aspiration</i>
I would love to take part in my favorite TV program.
I would love to meet the characters of my favorite TV program.
<i>Paraphernalia</i>
I read articles, news or books if they are related to my favorite TV program.
I have some objects (posters etc.) that relate to my favorite TV program.
<i>Consumption choices</i>
I often buy clothing styles that I've seen my favorite TV program.
I have purchased some products that I have seen in my favorite TV program.
<i>Online activity</i>
I want to search for information about my favorite TV program online.
I want to discuss about my favorite TV program online.

4.2 A method for examining the nature of self-identification

As there are multiple conceptualizations of self and identity, also the strategies for studying identity are varied. When Sirgy (1982) reviewed different measurement techniques of self, it appeared that many studies have employed quantitative measures of self in the form of Q-sort methodology, semantic differential or Likert-type scaled attitudinal items. A frequently used method is a self-construal scale (SCS) by Singelis (1994), which is focused on measuring the dichotomy of independency-interdependency. However, when approaching such an abstract and rich subject as the self, it is appropriate to consider qualitative methodology as well.

Research on self can be broadly divided into *content-free* and *content-relevant* streams (Deaux 1992). The former type of research focuses on processes of identity construction and organization, whereas the latter is interested in the specific features, such as content of self-definition. *Twenty statements test*, which was chosen for in this study, is a typical example of content-relevant research on self as it operates with subjective identity descriptions. Another example of content-relevant research is the model of *self-discrepancy* by Higgins (1987), which focuses on exploring differences between actual, ideal and normative domains of self. Actual self refers to how a person currently perceives himself, ideal self manifests how a person would like to perceive himself, and normative self includes those attributes person believe he should possess because of a moral obligation. However, self-discrepancy test does not take over the continuum of different orientations of identity, as does Twenty statements test. Moreover, this technique was considered to be too complicated to administer in a survey situation. Alternatively, people may, for example, be directly asked about which of a set of membership they feel close to (e.g., Lau 1989), or they can be assigned a task of ranking their identities to a high, medium or low subjective importance as suggested by Thoits (1991) in order to elicit hierarchical structure of one's multiplicity of identities. However, respondents should have had previous knowledge about identity issues in order to be able to answer these questions adequately. This was not assumed in this study, but purpose was to make all respondents feel easy to describe their identities.

Twenty Statements test (TST) by Kuhn and Partland (1954) has been quite frequently used in previous studies, because this qualitative method is able to yield rich and spontaneous manifestations of different qualities of self-construal. TST is a qualitative open-ended method for eliciting identity data that makes explicit how individuals perceive themselves. Respondents can freely articulate the most

salient aspects of the symbolic system they apply to themselves (Rees & Nicholson 2004) as they are simply asked to give (write on paper) twenty statements about “who they are”. TST has roots in symbolic interactionism approach, which emphasizes that the interpretations of self arise in the dynamics of social interaction (see e.g, Grace & Cramer 2002). Consequently, the main interest in using TST often is its ability to reflect the extent to which individuals locate and evaluate themselves within the social system (Rees & Nicholson 2004). Different self-orientations have also been related to various social psychological phenomena and outcomes such in previous research (Grace & Cramer 2003; Markus & Kitayama 1991). For example, it has been stated that there are cross-cultural differences in orientations of self-construal (e.g., Triandis 1989). Furthermore, there is some evidence of differences between men and women in their basic orientations of self-construal (Watkins et al. 2003). Thus, it is expected here, that different orientation in self-construal may cause differences in how consumers build relationships with media and reflect those in their identities. In this spirit, it will be examined in Section 6.2.3, whether the divergent self-construals of the respondents can explain the differences in consumer-program relationships. Thus, the nature/orientation of self-identification among television viewers was investigated in order to add to the understanding of the nature of identity construction in general and identity-related consumption in particular.

4.2.1 *Application of twenty statements test in the survey*

A variant of *twenty statements test* -method was applied in this study to measure nature of self-identification along the continuum of possible orientations (illustrated in Section 1.2.1 in Figure 1). TST was considered a suitable research tool as it is able to yield rich, yet codable and quantifiable assessments of self-identification. Statements are also good at evoking identity-related thoughts at the top of the respondents’ minds when answering to subsequent questions in the survey. There are some clear advantages in using TST. It is very simple to administer by the researcher and also relatively short to complete by the respondent. In this light, it is no surprise that Twenty Statements Test has been very popular amongst identity researchers. However, it also has some shortcomings. First, it can only study those identities are conscious, i.e. that people can bring to mind. Some of our identities may be so taken-for-granted that they may be forgotten, at least when having only a short time of answering to the test. One two-sided issue is that TST -technique provides spontaneous descriptions of identity. Therefore, statements may be situation-dependent rather than permanent descriptions. Neither can the TST explain why we have the identities we do. For that purpose, we need studies that focus on identification processes.

TST-method was chosen for the study for four main reasons. First, the approach of symbolic interactionism, which is an underlying research approach in TST as well as in this dissertation. Secondly, an alternative of self-construal scale (SCS) that involves 24 Likert-scaled items was considered to be too burdensome for the respondents, since they already had 49 other items to answer that relate to their television consumption. However, also the amount of twenty statements to write for the TST was considered to be too burdensome at the beginning of the survey, as the main interest was in the items examining different aspects of relating favorite TV program with the self. My choice was to delimit the amount of the statements instead of choosing scaled items that would best suit to the research. Thirdly, although twenty statements test is qualitative by nature, it yields codable and quantifiable responses for the purposes of quantitative study. Therefore, there were no limitations to use TST in the study in terms of measurement matters. Finally, the statements are likely to be good at evoking identity-related thoughts at the top of the respondents' minds when answering to subsequent questions in the survey. It was assumed that when the respondents themselves can express the identity statements that are relevant and meaningful for them, it is also easier for the respondents to evaluate and reflect the relationship between their favorite television programs and own identity.

In practice, the section of self-identification statements was placed on the first page of the survey. The respondents were asked to describe themselves with *three statements* before answering to the statements about the relationship with their favorite television program. The respondents were given no limitations for this task except the length of the statements (to 43 marks each). As a guidance, the respondents were asked to describe themselves in other ways than revealing their name. Altogether, 1057 valid statements were received from 353 respondents.

4.2.2 *Analysis of self-identification statements*

The challenges and possibilities of categorizing the statements, and consequently the respondents, are discussed in this chapter. Typically, the main interest is in social determinants of the self when analyzing the self-identification statements. Thus, the common dichotomy for coding is *interdependent-independent* (Watkins et al. 1997; Grace & Cramer 2003). In this vein, idiocentric responses reflect the independent type of self-construal, e.g. "I am happy", whereas large group statements, such as "I am a student", and small group statements, such as "I am a husband" reflect the interdependent construal of self. Also allocentric statements are social-oriented by nature as they are concerned with the viewpoint of other people, e.g. "I am not a sociable person". Alternatively, it has been stated that all self-

identification statements can be fitted into four categories, namely *physical*, *social*, *reflective* and *abstract* (see Rees & Nicholson 2004 and Grace & Cramer 2002). Respondents may give physical statements, such as “I am 60 kilograms”, whereas social statements are related to the position within social roles, such as “I am psychologist”. Statements can also be reflective by nature, for example “I am not very self assure”, or abstract statements that are not really self-identifying, such as “I am a human being”. One could also differentiate between the positive and negative nuances of statements for the purposes of research on self-esteem.

As can be noticed, there are several possibilities for coding the statements, and there often are some disagreements that arise from ambiguity between the categories. Indeed, coding schemes have varied from 2 to 59 categories (Wells & Marwell 1976 in Watkins et al. 1997) in earlier research conducted with the same method. Naturally, the appropriate coding method should be determined by the specific research interest and task in question. Next I will move on to discuss the coding scheme of statements developed for understanding different orientations in self-identification.

Coding categories developed for this study can be seen in Appendix 8 with typical examples derived from the empirical data. Four broad categories of self-identification statements were constituted, namely, *independent self*, *reflective self*, *social self* and *abstract/ambiguous self*. Under these four categories, eleven specific categories were addressed. First of the four broad categories, *independent self*, includes categories of 1) personality traits, 2) situation-related characteristics, 3) physical features, and 4) age-related qualifiers. Statements belonging to the independent self -category manifest the kind of self that is not defined as relation to other people, but is more inner-oriented. Thus, independent self is about “self-image” that one has of oneself. *Reflective self*, for one, is a characteristic of self, but it is more outer-oriented and concerned with “how others see me”, and/or how I see myself as relation to others. The statements of reflective self situate between independent and interdependent self. However, they are closer to manifestations of allocentric than idiocentric orientation of self-identification. Reflective self is here divided into three specific categories of 1) self-traits related to others, 2) behavior- and lifestyle-related features, such as preferences, interests and hobbies, and 3) age-related subjective and relative statements that has no clear boundaries, such as being “young”, “middle-aged” or “fat”. Thirdly, *interdependent self* is a manifestation of belonging to a certain identifiable group. Therefore we may also consider it as a manifestation of group identification. This category was divided up into four smaller categories; 1) geographic group, 2) gender and sexuality group, 3) role in a family, and 4) status and life stage. Finally, a category of ab-

stract and/or ambiguous statements encompasses those statements that are not really self-identifying, or they may have multiple interpretations.

In the process of analyzing the statements, it was noticed that there are several possible methods for coding them, and there often are some disagreements that arise from ambiguity between the categories. High inter-judge reliabilities have often been reported in previous studies, but those cannot be directly assumed. Relating to the matter of multitude of coding schemes, it is also difficult to compare findings from different studies that apply TST. In this study, the aid of two inter-judges was used when coding the categories. When comparing the categorizations at the first phase, we had as many as ninety statements categorized in a divergent way. However, after round-table discussions we were able to find an agreement in the coding. Especially, multi-phrase and qualified statements, such as “I am a caring nurse” or “I am an ordinary young girl”, presented difficulties for coding. These kinds of statements were coded based on the highest level of social identification, here by the category of work status in the former statement and gender for the latter one. Especially reflective statements were often difficult to evaluate. For example, the statement “I am sociable”, is here understood as a reflective trait manifesting other-people-related evaluation of self, but it also refers to individual personality trait. In addition, “I am a fan of Johny Depp” relates to one’s individual behavior-related preferences, but also is a possible source of social identification in a group of fans. Statement “I am a student”, for one, is interpreted here as social statement indicating membership to a grouping, but it could have also been interpreted as a type of behavior-related self-identification, and that way as a reflective manifestation.

Along with the analysis it was also noticed that different orientations in self-identifications coexist in the statements of the respondents, so that self-construal often is a combination of independent and interdependent facets. For that reason, in the future research ranking or scoring of the statements should be considered. Some authors argue that the statements should be weighted according to order of listing the responses as an indication of identity salience. Indeed, it seems reasoned that the more statements are assigned, weighting according to rank order should be considered. For this reason, it is important to consider, whether coding schemes vary according to the number of statements analyzed. It is likely that the more statements are analyzed, the more facets of self are captured, but the relative importance of those as descriptors of self is likely to decrease. Finally, since the focal question in TST method is, whether it is able to elicit self-descriptors that are most significant ones, it might be useful to ask respondents to indicate how important their statements are in regards their sense of self. This procedure would be quite reasoned since empirical findings of Carpenter & Meade-Pruitt (2008)

demonstrate that only one third of the given self-descriptions were considered “extremely descriptive” by the respondents. If the respondents are not asked about the given identity-statements, TST does not provide much help in assessing the actual meaning that is associated with a particular identity statement, such as ‘being young’. Despite of these limitations specified above, TST appeared to be a good tool for eliciting the salient orientation of self-identification. Ease of use and amenable character for various analyses were also among its advantages.

4.3 A method for examining the social-identification among television viewers

There was a section in the survey where respondents were asked to give a description of what the typical audience member of their favorite TV program is like. In other words, a survey respondent was asked to freely describe the person who would typically watch the program of his/her choice. Basically, respondents were provided with a line, and they were asked to write their conception about the typical viewer of their favorite program. This question was assigned to reveal the target groups of the programs from the point of view of the respondents themselves. It is interesting to a) see how the respondents describe other viewers of their favorite program, b) to compare whether respondents can relate to the other viewers of the program, and c) to analyze whether identification with other viewers of the program affects the relationship that a person has with the program in question.

It was decided that the same coding category would be applicable to both self-identification statements and descriptions of other viewers. However, because the descriptions were in the different form (single words versus whole sentences), the sentences had to be itemized as separate descriptions about the typical viewer in order to enable comparisons. The first three descriptions about the typical viewer were analyzed and possible remaining descriptions were excluded from the analysis. For example, description “middle-aged woman” provided two statements about the viewer; relative age and gender, whereas the description “cosy, trendy, hedonic, epicurean” accounted for three statements about personal characteristic, self-trait relation to others, and behavior/lifestyle, respectively. Altogether 676 statements from 353 respondents were obtained. In other words, on average, each respondent provided close to two statements about the typical viewer.

Findings from this analysis are elaborated in Section 6.2.4 in terms of assessing the descriptions provided along the continuum from independent to interdependent orientations, and also analyzing the contents of the descriptions in order to reveal the segmentation criteria of television viewers from the consumers’ per-

spective, that is, how television viewers themselves make sense of the viewer profiles of the programs.

4.4 Descriptions of the survey respondents and their favorite programs

Altogether, 359 valid responses were obtained, and 114 different favorite programs were named. The majority (58.6 %) of the respondents were young or young adults, from 10 to 29 year olds, and 67.4 % of the respondents were women (Table 14). This sample profile reflects quite well the visitors to the web page on which the survey was placed. However, this sample does not reflect the whole population of television viewers in Finland, but the groups of female respondents and young respondents are over-presented.

Table 14. Descriptives of the survey respondents

Descriptive	%	Frequency (total n359)
Gender		
Woman	67.4	242
Man	32.6	117
Age		
10–19 years	30.9	111
20–29 years	27.9	100
30–39 years	15.3	55
40–49 years	15.0	54
50+ years	10.9	39

Favorite programs were classified under genres and program types with help of the information about the programs available online. Program types with small shares were grouped together. A division favorite programs in terms of program types is presented in Figure 21. Appendix 9 provides more detailed information about the favorite programs and their classifications. The most favorite TV program among the respondents was a Finnish soap opera *Salatut elämät* (n48). Also *Lost*, *Prison Break*, *CSI*, and *Grey's Anatomy* were among the most often liked programs.

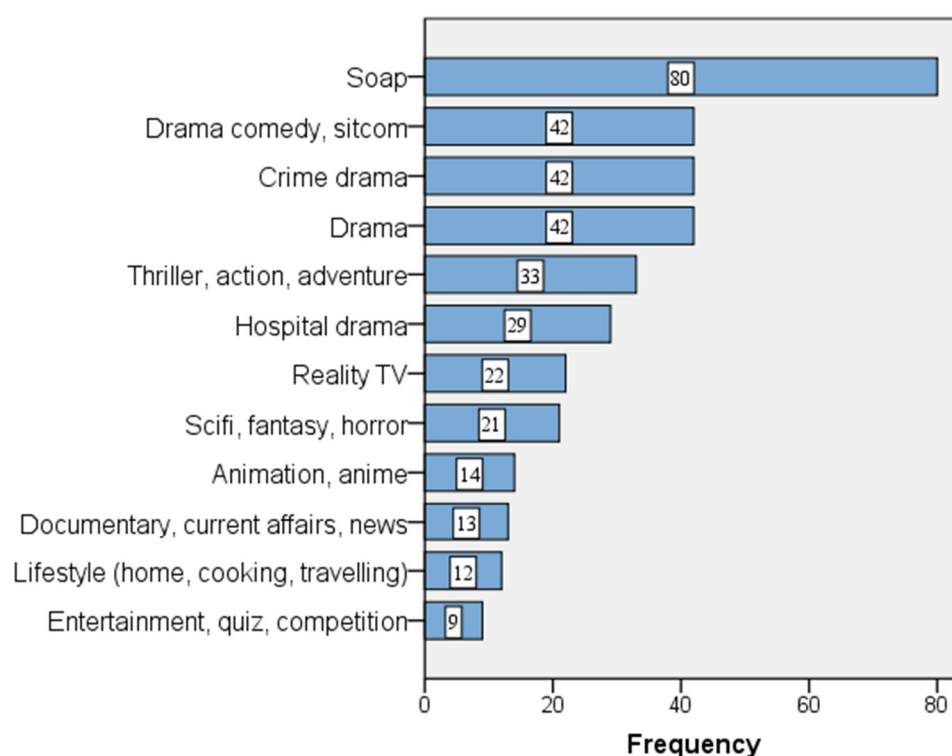


Figure 21. Program types of the favorite programs

The most common program type among the favorite programs was soap opera with a share of 22.3 %. Also different kinds of drama programs were popular. Drama, crime drama and drama comedy/sitcom each received shares of 11.7 %. In addition, hospital dramas gained a share of 8.1 %. A group of thriller, action and adventure programs was recognized as favorite program type in 9.2 % of the cases, whereas reality TV programs received a share of 6.1 %. Science fiction, fantasy and horror programs were grouped together and received a share of 5.8 % among favorite programs. Animation and anime programs had a share of 3.9 %. Group of documentary programs, current affairs and news, for one, received a share of 3.6 %. Lifestyle programs together with entertainment, quiz shows and competition programs had the smallest shares with 3.3 % and 2.5 % respectively. To sum up, variation among the types of favorite programs was large, however, fictive programs dominated over real life -based programs.

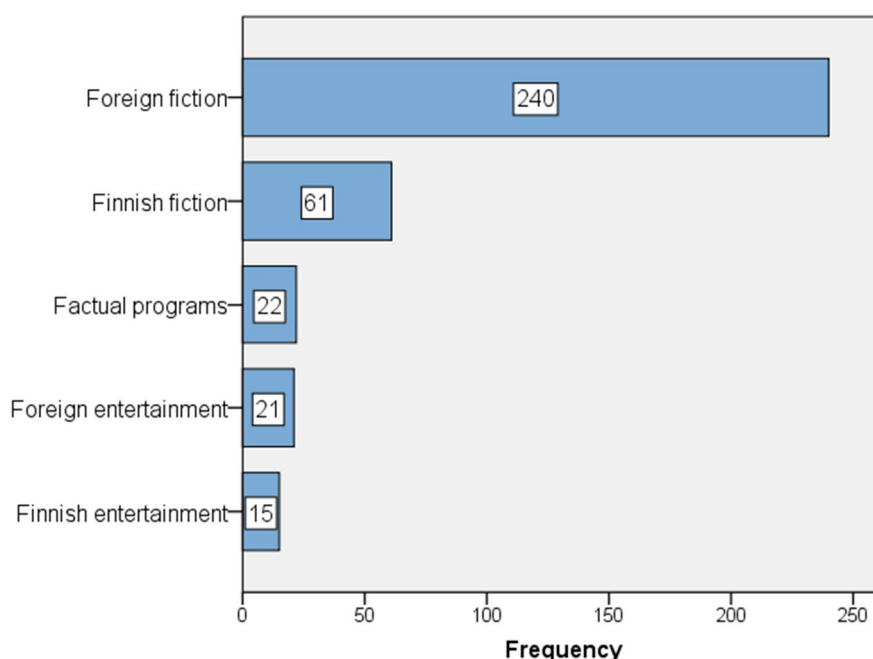


Figure 22. Genres of the favorite programs

Genre of foreign fiction has the biggest share with 66.9 % among the favorite programs of the respondents (Figure 22). This genre includes programs produced in foreign countries within the program types of soap, drama, crime drama, drama comedy, sitcom, hospital drama, thriller, action, adventure, sci-fi, fantasy, horror, animation and anime. Finnish fiction (fiction produced in Finland) is the second biggest genre in amount. It has the share of 17 % and it includes the same program types described above. Factual programs constitute the third genre with the share of 6.1 %. This genre includes documentary, current affairs, news and lifestyle programs (such as home, cooking, travelling and sports). Genre of foreign entertainment has a share of 5.8 %, and finally, genre of domestic entertainment receives only a share of 4.2 %. Altogether, we can notice that fiction-genre dominates, with total share of 83.9 %, whereas the total share of entertainment programs remains around 10 %. The general reasons for favoring certain program over others will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTUAL PROPERTIES OF IDENTITY-RELATED CONSUMER-PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS

Based on the suggested theoretical framework in this study, it is expected that there exists a structure of three latent variables: connectedness, attachment and self-connection. Accordingly, (in P1), it was proposed that a) *attachment and connectedness are positively correlated*, b) *attachment and self-connection are positively correlated*, and c) *connectedness and self-connection are positively correlated*. Each of these concepts was measured with several observed variables, altogether 47 variables. It is further expected that there should exist a relationship between these variables because they all imply to the phenomenon of self-identification with an object of consumption.

An important issue concerning the use of data is the issue of causal interpretation. When data is non-experimental by nature, it should be noticed, that there is nothing in factor analysis or structural equation modeling that would transform correlational data into causal conclusions (Hox & Bechger 1998). Therefore, no causal relations between the latent variables can be suggested on the basis of their covariance structure.

Analysis of the conceptual properties of identity-related consumer-program relationships was begun with exploratory factor analysis after which structural relations between the key concepts were tested with a more advanced multivariate technique, structural equation modeling.

5.1 Correlations and discrimination power of the scales

The purpose of this chapter is to explore internal validity of the scales by using exploratory factor analysis. Preparatory description on Likert-scaled statements with regard to means and standard deviations is also provided. In essence, exploratory factor analysis is used as a ‘theory-generating procedure’ to determine the number and the nature of factors that account for the co-variation between variables (Stevens 1996). Nunnally (1978: 112) reminds us that factor analysis is “intimately involved with questions of validity”. In other words, exploratory factor analysis responds to the question about construct validity: Do the survey items really measure what they are supposed to be measuring?

First all of the 47 Likert-scaled statements were taken under investigation. The *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin* (hereafter KMO-test) measure of sampling adequacy for fac-

toring resulted a good value .902. Also Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2_{6424.640}$, df 1081, $p=.000$) speaks for the validity of the survey items. Although the key constructs have been drawn from somewhat different streams of research, the constructs fit together when the Cronbach's alpha values of all 47 statements are analyzed together. Based on the excellent Cronbach's α value (0.920), we may conclude that the scale items manage to capture different dimensions of one underlying construct, that of self-identification with a television program, and a positive relationship exists between the key constructs.

Findings of the preliminary analysis on correlations indicated that some positive, yet small-to-moderate (.2-.6), correlations exist between the items from different scales (at a significance level of $<.05$). Especially, the aspect of *modeling* from the connectedness scale is related to the self-connection and attachment. In addition, the self-connection and attachment were found to be positively linked to each other. One of the interesting notions concerning factor structures was that the items on emotional attachment did not strongly correlate with other attachment variables, but constituted a factor of their own.

5.1.1 *Principal component analysis of the connectedness variables*

Factor analysis of the connectedness items was conducted using a principal component method with varimax rotation. The KMO-test for factoring was .821, and Bartlett's test of sphericity resulted in a chi-square of 2157.929 (df 136, $p=.000$). The factor analysis is presented in Table 15 with the parameters of the means and standard deviations. All of the expected dimensions of connectedness cannot fully be confirmed, but some of the dimensions seem to have a bond based on the empirical data. Eigenvalues greater than 1 were used as the selection criteria for deciding how many factors were to be retained. Based on eigenvalues, four components were formed, and this solution explains 60.80 % of the total variance.

The first component explains 19.76 % of the total variance. This component combines online activity, paraphernalia and aspiration aspects of connectedness. Thus, this component can be interpreted as a manifestation of fan behavior. The second component explains 18.44 % of the variance. This component includes all of the statements that refer to modeling and imitation. The third component explains 12.62 % of the variance and includes fashion-related items. Finally, the fourth component includes scale items that are related to escapism. This component explains 9.98 % of the variance. As a whole, the relatively high means indicate that the respondents can identify aspects of connectedness in their consumption of television programming. However, according to the findings, it is not likely that liking the program becomes materialized as program-related purchases. The anal-

ysis of the standard deviations also suggests that the level of connectedness can vary significantly among consumers.

Table 15. Principal components of connectedness

Factors (varimax rotation converged in 5 iterations)	Factor loading	Mean	Std. deviation
Component 1: Fan behavior ($\alpha = 0.821$)			
I want to discuss my favorite TV program online.	.770	2.50	1.265
I want to search for information about my favorite TV program online.	.736	3.26	1.278
I have some objects (posters, etc.) that relate my favorite TV program.	.712	1.86	1.217
I read articles, news or books if they are related to my favorite TV program.	.657	3.29	1.259
I have purchased some products that I have seen on my favorite TV program.	.596	1.79	1.073
I would love to meet the characters of my favorite TV program.	.575	3.50	1.272
I would love to take part in my favorite TV program.	.392	3.34	1.366
Component 2: Modeling and imitation ($\alpha = 0.835$)			
I get ideas about how to live my own life from my favorite TV program.	.844	2.72	1.244
I learn about my own life by watching my favorite TV program.	.814	2.87	1.193
I relate what happens on my favorite TV program to my own life.	.806	2.65	1.263
Sometimes, I find myself imitating the gestures or facial expressions of the characters on my favorite TV program.	.584	2.25	1.213
I find myself saying phrases from my favorite TV program when I interact with other people.	.575	2.69	1.338
Component 3: Fashion ($\alpha = 0.796$)			
I like the clothes they wear on my favorite TV program.	.900	3.38	1.118
I like the hairstyles on my favorite TV program.	.864	3.39	1.072
I often buy clothing styles that I've seen on my favorite TV program.	.638	1.98	.998
Component 4: Escape ($\alpha = 0.672$)			
My favorite TV program helps me to forget about the day's problems.	.780	4.13	.908
Watching my favorite TV program puts me in a better mood.	.760	4.32	.815
<i>Scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree</i>			

5.1.2 *Principal components of the attachment variables*

Principal component analysis of 22 attachment variables yielded a four-component solution, which is presented in Table 16. The KMO test of sample adequacy resulted in a good value (.893), and Bartlett's test in a chi-square of 2626.868 (df 231, $p = .000$). Together, the components explain 55.59 % of the total variance. The first component emphasizes the temporal orientation as well as

individuation and affiliation aspects of the attachment to a television program, whereas the second component manifests the affect-laden type of attachment – emotional orientation. The third component includes items that reflect the relationship with the favorite program that are unimportant in relation to one's identity. Therefore, this component is labeled 'self-relevance'. Finally, the fourth component includes items that illustrate a weak attachment with the program, so that the program does not contribute to the identification of an individual, and thus manifests a 'distance'.

Table 16. Principal components of the attachment variables

Components (varimax rotation converged in 7 iterations)	Factor loading	Mean	Std. dev.
Component 1: Temporal orientation, individuation and affiliation ($\alpha = .915$)			
It reminds me of my past accomplishments or other important events in my life.	.820	2.38	1.094
It reminds me of who I used to be.	.819	2.27	1.148
It reminds me of good times with those closest to me.	.813	2.62	1.296
It reminds me of people who are dear to me.	.799	2.80	1.285
It responds to my longing for nostalgia and traditions.	.706	2.53	1.261
It helps me keep up to date.	.656	2.56	1.176
It shows who I am becoming.	.597	2.27	1.116
It makes me feel different from others, not just like everyone else.	.556	2.36	1.125
It has to do with the goals that I have for the future.	.555	2.56	1.265
It makes me feel different from people I aspire to be like.	.480	2.18	1.019
Component 2: Emotional orientation ($\alpha = .792$)			
If I did not see my favorite TV program, it would feel like I had lost a part of myself.	.786	2.62	1.220
If someone praised my favorite TV program, I would feel like someone had praised me.	.691	2.31	1.137
I would feel irritated if someone laughed at my favorite TV program.	.637	2.99	1.214
If my favorite TV program ended, I would not easily find a new program to replace it.	.590	3.58	1.230
It is unlikely that I would store some memories (such as recordings or posters) of this program for the future.	-.535	3.13	1.404
I do not have many feelings toward my favorite TV program.	-.510	2.66	1.097
I would be glad to wear a shirt that has the name of my favorite TV program on it.	.502	2.88	1.440
Component 3: Self-relevance ($\alpha = .625$)			
I probably will not care about this program in the future.	.753	1.79	.847
I do not want to discuss this program with others.	.662	2.10	.983
I watch it just to pass time.	.562	2.39	1.199
Component 4: Distance ($\alpha = .353$)			
Everybody watches this program. There is nothing special about it.	.788	3.08	1.187
It has nothing to do with who I am now.	.632	3.39	1.254

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral opinion, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Shares of total variance explained by the four components are 23.70 %, 15.72 %, 9.40 % and 6.77 % respectively. Thus components 3 and 4 seem not to be strong enough in explaining the variance. Also their Crohnbach's alfa values are low, manifesting that the items should be excluded from the further analyses.

5.1.3 *Principal components analysis of the self-connection variables*

Eight scaled items related to self-connection were factor analyzed as well. The KMO test resulted in a value of .737 and Bartlett's test in a chi-square of 426.847 (df 28, $p = .000$). Based on eigenvalues greater than 1, a two-component solution was suggested (see Table 17). This solution explains 50.79 % of the total variance so that the first factor explains 32.02 % and the second one 18.79 %. It appears that all of the "negative" statements load for the same component manifesting inverse self-connection whereas the first component connects statements related to positive fit with self-concept. Again, this finding suggest that negatively put items can be somewhat biased and the use of them in further analyses can be questioned.

Table 17. Principal components of self-connection

Components (varimax rotation converged in 3 iterations)	Factor loading	Mean	Std. dev.
Component 1: Self-congruence ($\alpha = .769$)			
My favorite TV program reflects a lot the kind of person I would like to be.	.802	2.60	1.185
I can identify with my favorite TV program/its characters.	.738	2.85	1.216
My friends probably associate me with my favorite TV program when they think of me.	.691	2.50	1.111
My favorite TV program tells something about me.	.665	3.61	1.045
I would probably mention my favorite TV program to my new friends.	.664	3.03	1.202
Component 2: Inverse self-connection ($\alpha = .477$)			
I think that my favorite TV program does not actually fit my "image" very well.	.774	2.48	1.060
I often think that "I would not like to be the kind of person who is pictured on my favorite TV program."	.727	2.62	1.232
I do not like to tell other people that I watch this TV program.	.503	1.66	0.848

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral opinion, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Based on the exploratory factor analyses on the key concepts of this study we can conclude that there exist the kinds of factor structures, which enable conceptual modeling of the data. However, it was found out the conceptual network is in

need of some revision, especially what comes to the dimensions of attachment. It was also noticed that the reversed items did not work very well but the findings concerning them are in danger of being biased.

5.2 A Structural model of self-identification in consumer-program relationships

For the purpose of empirical validation of the theoretical framework proposed in this study, analysis of the structural relationships between the key constructs was conducted. This analysis was done with the Structural Equation Modeling - technique (hereafter SEM), which is an advanced multivariate technique to examine multiple dependence relationships between variables simultaneously (Singh 2009). Thus, SEM is a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression. SEM methods are also able to take measurement error into account in the estimation process (Terblanche & Boshoff 2008). One of the strengths of SEM is the ability to construct latent variables (factors) and thereby to provide statistical tests of construct dimensionality. The interest in SEM is often on theoretical constructs, which are represented by latent variables (Hox & Bechger 1998). Latent variables are unobserved, which means that they are not measured directly, but are estimated from several measured (ie. observed) variables. Also relations between latent variables can be estimated. In fact, the SEM can be divided in two parts. The measurement model is the part that relates measured variables to latent variables, whereas the structural model is the part that relates latent variables to one another.

As a whole, the purpose of SEM is to construct a model that fits closely to the observed data. Model fit is never absolute in the strictest sense of the meaning, and there are several possible models that may fit the observed data to the same degree. Therefore modeling requires evaluating various model fit indices and choosing the model which has the most plausible and relevant interpretation in the context of the real world phenomenon in general, and the research question in particular.

A good structural model 1) fits closely to empirical data observations, 2) is parsimonious, and 3) it is interpretable. Basically, model fitting is about balancing between the fit of a model, which can be improved by increasing the number of parameters, and the parsimony of the model, which can be improved by lessening the number of parameters. A variety of criteria have been used to indicate how closely the correlation (or covariance) matrix conforms to the observed data, and thus to guide searches for best-fitting models. Typically researchers also employ

several criteria to determine the best fitting model. The fit criteria that are most commonly used in structural equation modeling, and that are also applied in this study are chi-square (χ^2), a chi-square difference test (CMIN/DF), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), parsimony goodness of fit (PGFI), and comparative goodness of fit (CFI). Each of tests has some limitations as a descriptive index of model fit. Therefore, there is a need to complement one index with others when evaluating the fit of the model.

The specification of the structural model of self-identification in consumer-program relationships is presented in Figure 23. As all of the concepts described earlier; connectedness, self-connection, and attachment have been associated with identity construction in previous research, they are considered here as the manifestations of self-identification. In other words, they reflect self-identification in consumer-program relationships. These kinds of reflective models are typical of factor analysis. Here, it is assumed that the underlying construct of self-identification causes variation in the four concepts rather than the other way round. Hence, change in the higher-order construct affects the underlying measures.

Jarvis et al. (2003) point out that the nomological network for the reflective indicators should not change, but they should have the same antecedents and consequences. Therefore, items in a reflective model should be internally consistent. Here, this means that the four concepts should co-vary with one another, and dropping a variable should not alter the meaning of self-identification with a TV program, because all of the measures are assumed to be interchangeable, and that way equally valid indicators of the underlying construct. It should also be noted that there may be some other variables that indicate the construct in addition to those that are represented in a model. In the end, only the indicators that are the most significant ones should be included in a model to improve its clarity and parsimony.

The construct of self-identification is modeled as a higher-order construct that has multiple dimensions, each of which represents an important aspect of the construct (Bollen & Lennox 1991). The construct of self-identification can be characterized as a hypothetical construct, as it results in the process of conceptual abstraction rather than that of empirical abstraction. Model specifies also the relations between the latent variables as equal indicators of self-identification. Based on the analysis of between-construct correlations we can further illustrate how change in value of one latent variable can affect to the values of another latent variable.

Structural equation modeling was executed with AMOS 18.0 program. A maximum likelihood criterion was used when estimating the parameters of the model. It is the most commonly used estimation method and requires sample size about 200 cases (Hox & Bechger 1998). First, all of the 47 observed variables were placed in the model. However, it was soon found out that this solution would be too complicated and therefore the number of parameters should be lessened both to increase the validity and reliability of the model, and also to make the model more parsimonious. The fit between theoretical assumptions and the empirical observations can be evaluated based on 1) the fit indices of a structural model 2) the magnitude of the parameter estimates, and 3) the p-values of estimates that indicate the significance level ($p < 0.05$ is statistically significant). As a rule, those items that have lowest parameter estimates and statistically insignificant p-values should be eliminated from the model. In addition, we can evaluate construct's validity by assessing Crohnbach's alpha value (CA) which represents internal consistency of the reflective indicators of the construct.

Table 18. Descriptive and measurement statistics of the latent constructs

	Mean (of the items)	SD	CA (alpha)	R^2	1	2	3
1 Connectedness	3.00	1.116	.70	.90			
2 Self-connection	2.75	1.169	.73	.98	.94		
3 Attachment	2.46	1.008	.80	.77	.79	.89	
4 Emotional attachment	2.88	0.997	.74	.59	.78	.71	.68

After some revisions of the group of observed variables an acceptable model was attained. In this model, emotional attachment has become a one of the key factors. In other words, it has been distinguished from attachment. The measurement model of self-identification consists of 16 observed variables, and five unobserved variables (latent factors), see Figure 23. Each of the latent variables has multiple observed variables to control for possible measurement error. All indicators load significantly on the latent factors and are nontrivial in size (threshold value 0.2). As it was expected, the regression weights are positive, as is the correlation between the latent factors of connectedness, attachment, emotional attachment and self-connection, presented in Table 18. This finding indicates that the four concepts are manifestations of the same underlying phenomena, that of self-identification. The observed items in a model are provided in Appendix 10 and the correlation matrix for those in Appendix 11. The highest squared multiple correlation (R^2) value for the construct of self-connection indicates that it ap-

pears to be the best indicator of self-identification, whereas emotional attachment has the lowest estimated reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha values exceed .70 indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The variance of self-identification is estimated to be .675. This indicates that the amount of variance captured by the self-identification construct is good in relation to the variance due to measurement error.

Table 19. A set of model fit indices and their threshold values

Chi-square	df	P	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	PGFI	RMSEA
275.205	100	0.000	2.752	.910	.877	.909	.669	.070
threshold values		>0.05	<3.0	>.90	>.90	>.90	>.60	<.08

Satisfactory goodness of fit of the model was attained as well. The fit indices presented in Table 19 except Chi-square test and Adjusted-Goodness of fit (AGFI) yielded an acceptable value. Given that the χ^2 statistic 275.205 (100 df, p-value 0.000) is less than triple the available degrees of freedom, the significant χ^2 is likely due to the large sample size rather than true misfit in the model. Thus, the CMIN/df ratio (2.75) of relative chi-square indicates a good fit.

With regard to the reliability of the observed indicators, squared multiple correlations (R^2) that are visible in Figure 23, indicate the proportion of variance in a reflective indicator that is explained by its underlying latent variable. The rest is due to measurement error, or it cannot be explained by the model. A high value denotes high reliability for the indicator concerned. It can be seen that *modeling* has the best reliability of the connectedness indicators, with value .43, and *escape* has the lowest value (.08). As regards the concept of self-connection, *ideal* has the best estimated reliability as .57 of the variance of it is accounted for by the variance in self-connection. Attachment, for one, explains .68 of the variance of *present*, whereas the estimated reliability of *reactions* is .74, indicates that it is a good manifestation of emotional attachment.

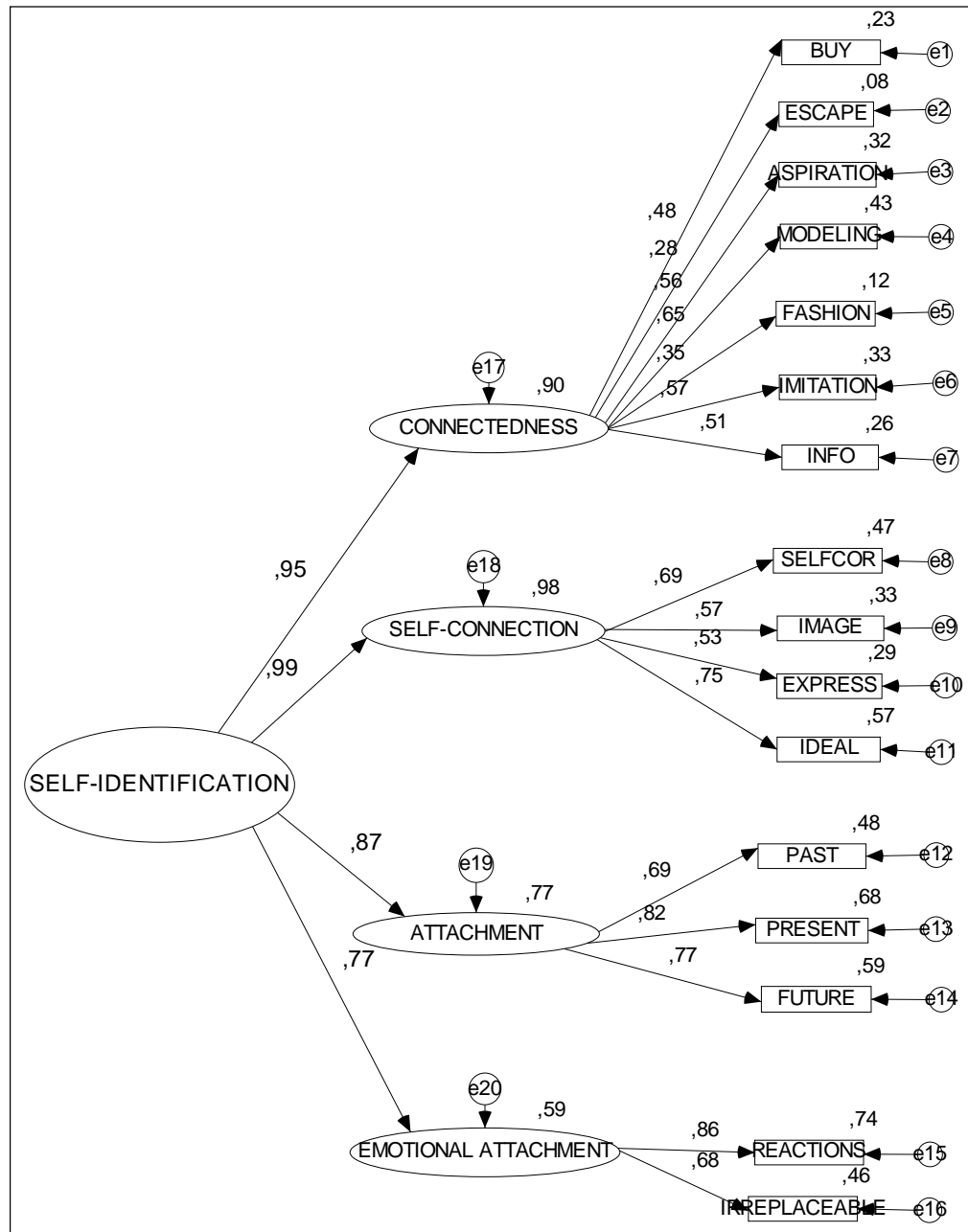


Figure 23. Structural model of self-identification in consumer-program relationships (standardized)

5.2.1 Model fit compared to other possible models

The model described above with four second order latent factors and one higher order factor was tested against other possible models to evaluate its validity. Chosen model proved to be better than model with only one latent factor, that of self-identification and sixteen observable items as in Figure 23. Fit statistics for the

one-factor model are weaker in all indices except parsimony fit index. (χ^2 384.407, df 107, p-value 0.000, CMIN/DF 3.593, GFI .871, AGFI .836, CFI .855, PGFI .685, RMSEA .085). In fact, unacceptable fit of the one-construct model validates that the constructs are separate even though they are highly correlated.

Furthermore, better goodness-of-fit statistics did not result when highly correlated latent factors of self-connection and connectedness are combined into one factor having The goodness-of-fit statistics for this model are χ^2 279.109, p-value 0.00, df 101, CMIN/df 2.763, GFI .909, AGFI .877, CFI .907, PGFI .675, and RMSEA .070.

5.2.2 *Validity of the model across several groups*

The chosen model (in Figure 23) was also tested across sub-groups of respondents. It is of importance to find out whether the chosen model holds the same across different groups. In other words, we can examine, if the regression weights, factor interrelations and variations equal across groups (Blunch 2008, 210–211).

First, the model was compared with a randomly splitted data (n179). It appeared that the factor structure holds very well. There are strong (standardized) regression weights for connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment. Regression weights for observable variables are all statistically significant at least at the p-level .05. The regression weights remain non-trivial in size, expect that 'escape' receives only a weight .19. Model fit indices (χ^2 191.207, df 100, p-value 0.000, CMIN/DF 1.912, GFI .882, AGFI .839, CFI .889, PGFI .648, RMSEA .072) show that goodness-of-fit weakens when sample size is smaller.

Validity of the model was also tested with a sample of only male-respondents (n117). Again, there are high regression weights for the four factors and observable variables are able to explain their variance well since squared multiple correlations for connectedness, self-connection, attachment, and emotional attachment vary from .56 to .90. Again, all observable variables except 'escape' have good regression weights, and statistical significance at the p=.001 level. However, model fit indices (χ^2 171.722, df 100, p-value 0.000, CMIN/DF 1.727, GFI .851, AGFI .798, CFI .876, PGFI .626, RMSEA .079) suggest that sample size is not sufficient for the model.

Finally, validity of the model was tested with a sample of consisting only respondents with a favorite program from foreign fiction genre (n240). This sample results with strong regression weights both for the four factors and the sixteen

observed variables. Also rather good model fit indices (χ^2 223.055 df 100, p-value 0.000, CMIN/DF 2.231, GFI .984, AGFI .856, CFI .900, PGFI .658, RMSEA .072) are achieved.

5.2.3 *Conclusions about the conceptual structure*

Based on analyses on the co-variation and factor structures we may conclude that proposition 1 is supported. Self-identification with a television program is a multidimensional phenomenon that is a constitution of affective, cognitive and behavioral determinants. Three expected conceptual dimensions were confirmed and one additional dimension of emotional attachment was distinguished. It was found out that all latent variables are positively correlated with each other manifesting different aspects of identity-bond with a TV program.

As the second aim of this study was to construct a comprehensive conceptual model on identity-related consumption of television programs and to test its validity with empirical data, it is of importance to discuss how theoretical framework meets the criteria posed for theory construction. Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar (1973) point out the criteria for evaluating theory construction especially in the field of consumer research. They suggest that there are four distinct categories of criteria; formal, semantical, methodological and epistemological criteria.

Formal criteria stress that theoretical statements should be well-formed, that is, they can be communicated to others as the underlying elementary logic is clear. Relatedly, conceptual properties of the theory should show internal consistency so that there are no contradictory statements. Moreover, each of the concepts should be independent, so that they can be distinguished from each other. Finally, strength of the theory purports to its adequate level of comprehensiveness and generality. Structure of the model is logical and clarifies the relationships with the latent variables and the observable variables. Thus, formal criteria for the theoretical statements are fulfilled.

Semantical criteria highlight linguistic exactness of the theory under evaluation. Also conceptual unity is an especially important factor when bringing together concepts from interdisciplinary fields of research. Empirical interpretability and representativeness of the theory, for one, relate to evaluation how well the theoretical thoughts proposed can be empirically tested (operationalized) and how deeply it can explain the phenomenon under investigation. These aspects of formal criteria are fulfilled since each latent variable in the model have a distinct definition, however the model shows unifying power between the latent variables in a logical manner.

Methodological criteria relate to the testability and realism of the theoretical statements. In terms of methodological criteria, also parsimony and ease of use of the theory are valued. Goodness-of fit indices suggest that the model has adequate level of parsimony and statistical significance, thus methodological criteria are met as well.

Finally, *epistemological criteria* are concerned with the confirmation, originality, unifying power, external consistency, heuristic power and stability of the theory under evaluation. When striving for originality, the concepts or the relations between them can be new. Yet, the criterion of external consistency stresses that new theory should largely fit to the prevailing knowledge and add to it. In fact, in the spirit of valuing unifying power, one of the major aims of scientific theorizing should be to ‘systematize knowledge’ by establishing logical relations among previously disconnected items (Bunge 1967: 383 in Zaltman et al. 1973: 109). This is because creation of new concepts easily results as more complicated nomological network. In terms of heuristic power, for one, the theory should guide researchers to new fruitful areas of research. As regards stability, theory is rigid enough if is able to accommodate with new evidence to come. It appears that the model succeeds in having unifying power when synthesizing concepts previously kept apart, and also originality when bringing theoretical ideas of identity-related consumption to the context of media consumption. Also stability of the model was put to the test when comparing model fit across several groups of respondents.

6 THE EMPIRICAL NATURE OF CONSUMER-PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS

The empirical nature of consumer-program relationships will be discussed in this Chapter 6 based on the data from online survey. In essence, the purpose of this chapter is to clarify the variation in consumer-program relationships and to identify the extent to which identity-related consumer-program relationships exist. After establishing the general outlines for the reasons to favor certain TV program over others, this chapter aims to answer the propositions from 2 to 6 (described in Section 3.6.). In practice, descriptive statistics about consumer-program relationships will be presented in Sections 6.1–6.2. Then, the survey respondents will be grouped based on their consumer-program relationships with the means of cluster analysis in Section 6.3. Finally, Section 6.4 will sum up the findings.

General reasons for favoring a program were asked in order to understand what makes a *favorite* program in the first place. The respondents were given four alternatives from which to choose. The number of choices was not limited but the respondents were able to choose up to four reasons for liking the television program of their choice. The most common reason for liking the program was the good *plotline or topic of the program* as 66.9 % of the respondents picked this option. The second most common reason for favoring a specific program, with a share of 50.4 %, was that the respondent especially liked the *characters* of it. Finally, 44.6 % of the respondents thought that the favorite program represents the kind of the program a respondent they tend to like *in general*. Minority of the respondents (15 %) gave also some *other reasons* for favoring the program. However, approximately half of the other reasons described could have been placed under the above-mentioned categories. In other words, respondents wanted to express their opinion with own words. Those other reasons that differed from the three above-mentioned structured options can be classified into five main categories; *humor, esthetics, culture, identification, and hook*. Personal taste and subjective experiences play a major role when judging ‘good humor’ or ‘esthetics’ of the program. It is understandable, that not all humor programs catch all viewers’ fancy, and that not all programs are experienced esthetically. Moreover, only for some viewers these qualities become focal points in the programs. Some of the respondents, for one, praised the interesting culture or language of the program, whereas some respondents pointed out that they were able to identify themselves or their closest ones with the program. Finally, some of the respondents described that they are hooked on watching the program for some reason, which is difficult to put into words. There were also some single reasons worth mentioning here. One of the respondents described that the program “is so bad that it becomes good, and it cannot be missed.” In other words, the hook of the program was in

fact the *lack* of quality. Interestingly, two of the respondents mentioned that they liked a particular program because of *not* having certain qualities that other programs typically do, such as “violence or dirty words”.

Table 20. Cross-tabulation between program genres and reasons for liking the program

I especially like the characters of this program			(No)	Yes	Total
Genre	Foreign fiction	Count	100	140	240
		% within Genre	41.7	58.3	100.0
	Finnish entertainment	Count	10	4	14
		% within Genre	71.4	28.6	100.0
	Foreign entertainment	Count	15	5	20
		% within Genre	75.0	25.0	100.0
	Finnish fiction	Count	37	24	61
		% within Genre	60.7	39.3	100.0
	Factual programs	Count	16	8	24
		% within Genre	66.7	33.3	100.0
Total		Count	178	181	359
		% within Genre	49.6	50.4	100.0
Pearson Chi-square 19.652, df 4, P=.001 (two-sided), 1 cell (10%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.94. Contingency coefficient value .228.					
I especially like the plotline/theme of this program			(No)	Yes	Total
Genre	Foreign fiction	Count	66	174	240
		% within Genre	27.5	72.5	100.0
	Finnish entertainment	Count	11	3	14
		% within Genre	78.6	21.4	100.0
	Foreign entertainment	Count	9	11	20
		% within Genre	45.0	55.0	100.0
	Finnish fiction	Count	25	36	61
		% within Genre	41.0	59.0	100.0
	Factual programs	Count	8	16	24
		% within Genre	33.3	66.7	100.0
Total		Count	119	240	359
		% within Genre	33.1	66.9	100.0
Pearson Chi-square 19.448, df 4, p=.001 (two-sided). 1 cell (10%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64, Contingency coefficient value .227.					
I like these kinds of programs in general			(No)	Yes	Total
Genre	Foreign fiction	Count	132	108	240
		% within Genre	55.0	45.0	100.0
	Finnish entertainment	Count	9	5	14
		% within Genre	64.3	35.7	100.0
	Foreign entertainment	Count	7	13	20
		% within Genre	35.0	65.0	100.0
	Finnish fiction	Count	39	22	61
		% within Genre	63.9	36.1	100.0
	Factual programs	Count	12	12	24
		% within Genre	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total		Count	199	160	359
		% within Genre	55.4	44.6	100.0
Pearson Chi-square 5.914 df 4, p= .206 (two-sided), 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.24. Contingency coefficient value .127.					

It is worth analyzing whether the general reasons for favoring a program are dependent on differences in program genres. Cross-tabulation between the program genres and the reasons for liking a program is presented in Table 20. Here, the main categories are under investigation excluding the category of 'other reasons'. The findings suggest that there are genre-related differences in general reasons for favoring programs. It appears that viewers of fictive programs (both domestic and foreign fiction) especially like the characters of their favorite programs, whereas for the viewers of entertainment (both domestic and foreign) characters are not among the main reasons for liking a program. Quite the same is the case with the second most typical reason, namely that of especially liking the plotline/theme of the program. We can see that again the viewers of foreign and Finnish fiction score high in this reason (chosen by 72.5 % and 59.0 % of the viewers respectively). Also viewers of factual programs typically identify that their general reason to favor a program is its theme/plotline. In contrast, especially the pleasantness of Finnish entertainment is not to do with its theme or plotline since only 21.4 % of the viewers had chosen this reason. Finally, when comparing program genres in terms of the statement "I like these kinds of programs in general", there are no statistically significant differences. In other words, we cannot conclude that one program genre would have more loyal viewers than another. Consequently, when genre of the program does not appear to be a common reason for favoring it, there has to be something distinct about the programs or the respondents themselves. Accordingly, we may examine whether age or gender of the respondent somehow relates to the type of reasoning of a choice favorite program. Moreover, a specific program type (soap, reality TV, etc.) may affect the reasoning.

When comparing reasons between *genders*, it appears that women tend to like the characters of their favorite program more often than men do, since 53.3 % of women and 44.4 % of men chose this reason. However, cross-tabulation is not statistically significant, because contingency coefficient value is .083, and p-value .115. (Pearson chi-square 2.477, df 1, 0 cells have expected count less than 5, the minimum expected count is 58.01). Also with regard to liking of the plotline/theme of program, women differ from men as 70.7 % of them especially like this aspect in their favorite program, whereas this share of men-respondents is only 59.0 %. Cross-tabulation is statistically significant since p-value is .027 (two-sided), pearson chi-square 4.861, df 1, 0 cells have expected count less than 5 and the minimum expected count is 38.78. However, the value of contingency coefficient .116 does not indicate a strong correlation. Finally, men tend to prefer similar types of programs in general more often than women do. The share of male respondents who chose the statement "I like these kinds of programs in general" is 47.9 % whereas for women the percentual share is 43.0. However, cross-tabulation does not result statistically significant results since two-sided p-value is

.382 and Pearson chi-square remains low .763. (df 1, 0 cells have expected count less than 5, the minimum expected count is 52.14, contingency coefficient .042).

When comparing reasons between *age groups*, it appears that young adults (aged 20–29) and young (aged 10–19) tend to like the characters of their favorite program more often than members of other age groups with shares 66.0 % and 57.3 % respectively. Especially among the age group of 30–39 year-olds, it is not common to become fond of the characters since the share of respondents who chose this reason remains 27.3 %. Cross-tabulation is statistically significant as Pearson chi-square gets a value 28.807, df 4, two-sided p-value is .000, 0 cells have expected count less than 5, and the minimum expected count is 19.39). Contingency coefficient for this analysis is .273 suggesting moderate dependent relationship. Plotline/theme of the program is again more often preferred by the young respondents than more aged ones. Altogether 73.6 % of respondents aged 10–19 chose this reason, whereas only 46.3 % of the respondents aged 40–49 years thought that they especially like the plotline/theme of their favorite program. Cross-tabulation is statistically significant with a Pearson chi-square 14.168, df 4, two-sided p-value .007, 0 cells have expected count less than 5, the minimum expected count is 12.85. Contingency coefficient is .195, which indicates only a weak dependent relationship. Finally, the statement “I like these programs in general” does not appear to yield statistically significant results in terms of age differences, but p-value .454 exceeds the limit of .05.

Analysis between the *program types* and general reasons reveals that especially the viewers of dramacomедies/sitcoms prefer the characters with a share of 78.6 %, whereas only 18.2 % of the viewers of reality-TV programs see that they especially like the characters of their favorite program. Neither do viewers of thrillers/action and adventure prefer the characters, but the share of the respondents that chose this reason remains low, 27.3 %. Scifi/fantasy/horror series get viewers who especially like the plotline/theme of these programs with a share of 85.7 %. Also viewers of crime drama score high on this aspect with a share of 81.0 % of viewers. Viewers of entertainment/quiz shows/competitions, for one, do not especially like the plotline or theme of their favorite program. The share of the respondents who chose this reason within this program type is only 33.3 %. The viewers of documentary/factual/news programs differ from other viewers in terms of liking the similar kinds of programs in general (with a share of 69.2 % respondents). Viewers of entertainment, quiz shows or competitions for one do not recognize a more general level interest on viewing also other similar types of programs (with a share of 22.2 % respondents). All of the above-presented cross-tabulations yielded statistically significant results at the .05 confidence level.

6.1 The key facets in consumer-program relationships

Chapter 6.1 is divided into four distinct sections. First of the sections concerns the concept of attachment, the second one relates to connectedness, the third one points out findings regarding self-connection, and finally the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program is reflected to the above-mentioned concepts in the fourth section (6.1.4). All of the findings presented under this Section 6.1 are based on Likert-scaled items (1 = totally disagree – 5 = totally agree). Missing values are excluded from this analysis, that is why sample size somewhat differs for each item (from 322 to 354). Information about the mean values and standard deviations are provided in order to ease drawing conclusions about how identity-related consumption of television program becomes evident among the respondents on average.

6.1.1 *The nature of the psychological bond with the program*

This Section 6.1.1 taps into second proposition of this study (P2), which suggests that a consumer is likely to become *attached* to his/her favorite television program. This proposition basically assumes that there is a symbolic bond between the favorite program and consumer's identity a) in terms of the emotional intensity and intimacy of the relationship, b) in terms of different temporal orientations of self (in past, present and future time), and c) in terms of individuation and affiliation, which refers to self-identification that has both inner and outer determinants. Table 21 points out findings regarding these different psychological facets of consumer-program relationships.

First, in Table 21, there are two items concerning negative and positive *reactions to outside stimuli*. It appears that half of the respondents would feel irritated if someone laughed at their favorite program (mean 2.99, standard deviation 1.124). However, they see that if someone praised their favorite program, they would not feel like they have been praised in person (mean 2.31, standard deviation 1.137). In other words, according to the respondents' own thoughts, they would not react to positive type of outer stimuli as strongly as to negative type of outer stimuli. Table represents also findings regarding how *intimately* respondents feel about their favorite program. The item "I would be happy to wear a shirt that has my favorite program's name on it" receives a mean value 2.88 and standard deviation 1.440. Thus variance in the responses is high. Mean value for the second item is 2.62 and standard deviation 1.220. In essence, these findings suggest that intimacy dimension is not among the strongest manifestations of consumer-program relationships. Furthermore, statements of emotional attachment tap into *emotional*

intensity of the relationship with a favorite program. It appears that the respondents do recognize having emotions towards their favorite programs since item “I do not have many feelings towards my favorite program” receives a mean value 2.66 (standard deviation 1.220) and the second item concerning loss of the program gets a mean value 3.58, (standard deviation 1.230).

Table 21. Descriptive statistics for emotional bonds with TV programs

Items	Totally disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neutral opinion % (n)	Agree % (n)	Totally agree % (n)
<i>Reactions to outside stimuli</i>					
I would feel irritated if someone laughed at my favorite TV program.	11.1 (39)	28.5 (100)	23.1 (81)	25.1 (88)	12.3 (43)
If someone praised my favorite program, I would feel like someone praises me in person.	29.4 (103)	28.9 (101)	27.7 (97)	8.9 (31)	5.1 (18)
<i>Intimacy</i>					
I would be happy to wear a shirt that has my favorite program's name on it.	24.8 (86)	18.4 (64)	17.3 (60)	22.5 (78)	17.0 (59)
If I did not see my favorite program, I would feel as if I have lost a part of myself.	21.4 (75)	28.2 (99)	25.9 (91)	16.2 (57)	8.3 (29)
<i>Emotional intensity</i>					
I do not have many feelings towards my favorite program.	14.5 (50)	33.5 (116)	29.2 (101)	17.1 (59)	5.8 (20)
If my favorite program ended, I would not easily find a substitute one.	7.1 (25)	14.5 (51)	18.5 (65)	32.5 (114)	27.4 (96)
<i>The most typical answers are in bold letters</i>					

Table 22 represents findings regarding different temporal orientations in attachments (past, present and future). First, it points out that there are viewers who attach their favorite program with their *past* self, however typically mean values remain low connoting disagreement with the statements. Items regarding past achievements/events and memories of past self receive mean values 2.38 and 2.27 respectively, whereas standard deviations in these responses are 1.094 and 1.148. Items regarding seeking for nostalgia and reflections of good times with the closest ones refer to affiliative type of past attachments. Mean values for these items are 2.53 and 2.62 so affiliation seeking -type of attachment appears to be slightly stronger than autonomy-seeking type of attachment. Standard deviations in these two items are 1.261 and 1.296 showing that the responses are by no means unanimous.

Table 22. Temporal attachment-bonds with favorite TV programs

Items	Totally disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neutral opinion % (n)	Agree % (n)	Totally agree % (n)
<i>Past-orientation</i>					
My favorite program reminds me of who I used to be.	30.5 (105)	33.7 (116)	17.4 (60)	14.8 (51)	3.5 (12)
My favorite program responds to my longing for nostalgia and traditions.	26.7 (87)	26.1 (85)	22.4 (73)	17.2 (56)	7.7 (25)
My favorite program reminds me of good times with my closest ones.	26.6 (91)	22.5 (77)	20.8 (71)	22.5 (77)	7.6 (26)
My favorite program reminds me of my past accomplishments or other important events in my life.	24.7 (85)	33.1 (114)	25.3 (87)	13.7 (47)	3.2 (11)
<i>Present-orientation</i>					
My favorite program makes me feel different from others, not just like everyone else.	27.0 (91)	31.8 (107)	23.1 (78)	14.8 (50)	3.3 (11)
My favorite program reminds me of people who are dear to me.	21.6 (74)	21.0 (72)	22.2 (76)	26.5 (91)	8.7 (30)
My favorite program helps me keep up to date.	23.8 (81)	24.0 (82)	29.9 (102)	17.0 (58)	5.3 (18)
My favorite program has nothing to do with who I am now.	7.8 (26)	19.5 (65)	22.5 (75)	26.6 (89)	23.7 (79)
<i>Future-orientation</i>					
My favorite program has to do with the goals I have for the future.	25.1 (87)	28.2 (98)	20.5 (71)	18.2 (63)	8.1 (28)
My favorite program shows who I am becoming.	29.3 (96)	32.0 (105)	25.6 (84)	8.2 (27)	4.9 (16)
I probably will not care about this program in the future.	42.7 (146)	40.6 (139)	12.6 (43)	3.2 (11)	0.9 (3)
It is unlikely that I would store some memories (recordings or posters...) of this program.	17.9 (60)	17.0 (57)	21.4 (72)	21.7 (73)	22.0 (74)

The most typical answers are in bold letters

In terms of findings regarding *present*-dimension of attachment (Table 22), it appears that the responses are quite scattered. However, on average, the respondents situate near to a neutral opinion. Mean value for the first item is 2.36 (standard deviation 1.125), and for the second one 2.80, (standard deviation 1.285). The third item about keeping up to date about one's (social) environment receives a mean value 2.56 and standard deviation 1.176. Finally mean value for the negative statement about *present*-attachment receives a rather high mean 3.39. However, standard deviation 1.254 for this fourth item shows that there are a number of people having an opposite opinion as well. In fact, 27.3 % of the respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement. Accordingly, these respondents do recognize that the favorite program is somehow significant for their self-concept.

Finally, the Table 22 taps into the *future*-dimension of attachment with four specific items. First one of the items relates to individual's goal setting and receives a mean value 2.56 (standard deviation 1.265). Second item concerns growth and life cycle. The mean value for this item is 2.27 and standard deviation 1.116. Based on the two above-mentioned items, it appears then that the respondents do not generally think that they would identify with their favorite program's characters or situations in the future time. The two items at the bottom line of Figure 29 relate to expected future-bond with the favorite program and storing memories about it. It appears that the respondents rather strongly believe that their attachment to the favorite program will remain strong also in the future. Mean value for this negatively put item is 1.79 and standard deviation .847. In other words, the respondents generally disagree with the statement. Even though long-standing attachment to a favorite program is assumed by the respondents, they do not seem to make the bond concrete by storing memories such as recordings or posters. Mean value for the fourth item is 3.13 and standard deviation 1.404. A high value for standard deviation shows that this statement brings on variance among the respondents.

6.1.2 *The nature of the behavioral bond with the program*

This section aims to answer the third proposition (P3), which relates to investigating whether a consumer becomes *connected* to his/her favorite program. Basically a high level of connectedness would mean that the favorite program can be seen in his/her personally relevant daily activities. There were several dimensions recognized in the previous literature suggesting that a consumer a) seeks escape by watching his/her favorite program, b) favors the fashion and style in his/her favorite program, c) tends to imitate the characters in his/her favorite program, d) wants to get inspired by his/her favorite program, e) admires the setting of his/her favorite program, and f) likes to collect items that relate to his/her favorite program. In addition, it was suggested that the dimensions of online activity and consumption choices should be included; g) a consumer is active online when it comes to his/her favorite program, and h) a consumer is directly influenced by his/her favorite program when making consumption choices.

In Table 23 we can see that *escape*-dimension of connectedness is very strongly agreed among the respondents. In other words, respondents seek escape by watching their favorite programs. Mean value for the first statement is 4.32, whereas for the second one 4.13. Standard deviations for the items are .815 and .908 respectively, which show that there are little differences in opinions regarding escape-dimension.

Table 23. Descriptive statistics for behavioral bonds with TV programs

Items	Totally disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neutral opinion % (n)	Agree % (n)	Totally agree % (n)
<i>Escape</i>					
Watching my favorite TV program puts me in a better mood.	1.1 (4)	1.7 (6)	10.3 (36)	38.0 (133)	48.9 (171)
This program helps me to forget my daily problems and worries.	1.7 (6)	3.2 (11)	15.5 (54)	39.3 (137)	40.4 (141)
<i>Fashion</i>					
I like the clothes they wear on my favorite program.	8.0 (27)	8.0 (27)	40.8 (137)	24.7 (83)	18.5 (62)
I like the hairstyles on my favorite TV program.	6.5 (22)	9.5 (32)	38.9 (131)	28.8 (97)	16.3 (55)
<i>Imitation</i>					
Sometimes I find myself imitating the gestures or facial expressions from the characters in my favorite TV program.	35.4 (122)	29.0 (100)	15.7 (54)	15.7 (54)	4.3 (15)
I find myself saying phrases from my favorite TV program when I interact with other people	25.6 (88)	23.0 (79)	18.9 (65)	22.4 (77)	10.2 (35)
<i>Modelling</i>					
I relate what happens in my favorite TV program to my own life.	24.4 (85)	23.9 (83)	20.8 (72)	24.7 (86)	6.3 (22)
I learn about my own life by watching my favorite TV program.	17.9 (62)	18.4 (64)	28.2 (98)	29.4 (102)	6.1 (21)
I get ideas from my favorite TV program about how to live my own life.	22.5 (79)	21.1 (74)	25.6 (90)	23.9 (84)	6.8 (24)
<i>Consumption choices</i>					
I often buy the clothing styles that I have seen on my favorite TV program.	40.0 (136)	30.6 (104)	22.4 (76)	5.3 (18)	1.8 (6)
I have purchased some products that I have seen in my favorite program.	53.9 (188)	26.1 (91)	11.2 (39)	5.2 (18)	3.7 (13)
<i>Aspiration</i>					
I would love to meet the characters of my favorite program.	9.2 (32)	12.1 (42)	26.0 (90)	24.3 (84)	28.3 (98)
I would love to take part in my favorite program.	12.4 (43)	17.6 (61)	20.5 (71)	22.5 (78)	26.9 (93)
<i>Paraphernalia</i>					
I read articles, news or books if they are related to my favorite TV program.	14.1 (49)	10.6 (37)	23.3 (81)	36.2 (126)	15.8 (55)
I have some objects (posters etc.) that relate to my favorite TV program.	13.2 (46)	14.6 (51)	23.2 (81)	31.2 (109)	17.8 (62)
<i>Online activity</i>					
I want to search for information about my favorite program online.	13.2 (46)	14.6 (51)	23.2 (81)	31.2 (109)	17.8 (62)
I want to discuss about my favorite program online.	28.2 (98)	24.1 (84)	25.3 (88)	14.1 (49)	8.3 (29)

The most typical answers are in bold letters

Moreover, there are two items concerning *fashion*-dimension of connectedness in table 23. We may notice that it is more likely to fancy the clothes and hairstyles seen in favorite program than to dislike those. However, the share of respondents who strongly agree with these statements remain under 20 %. Mean values for the two items are 3.38 and 3.39 respectively. Furthermore, standard deviations for these items are 1.118 and 1.072. Moreover, there are two items for *imitation*-dimension in Table 23. Now, there are more respondents stating that they disagree that they would imitate gestures, facial expressions, or phrases from their favorite program. Mean values remain under 3 in both of the statements (2.25 and 2.69 accordingly). However, for both of the items, standard deviations are rather high; 1.213 and 1.338 respectively.

Findings regarding *modeling*-dimension of connectedness are presented in Table 23. We can notice that the group of respondents shows differences with regard to this dimension. Accordingly, standard deviations are quite high (1.263, 1.193, and 1.244). Mean value for the first item is 2.65, for the second one 2.87 and for the third one 2.72. Thus, on average the mean values situate close to a neutral opinion even though we can recognize rather high variances in the responses.

With regard to the dimension of *consumption choices* we can notice that it is not typical among the respondents to buy clothes or some other products that they have seen on their favorite program. Mean values for these items remain below 2 (value that connotes disagree-opinion); 1.98 and 1.79. Standard deviations are smaller than in above-mentioned dimensions being .998 and 1.073 respectively. In contrast, *aspiration*-dimension is rather strongly agreed among the respondents. In other words, they would love to meet the characters and even take part in their favorite programs. Mean values are well above the neutral value 3, being 3.50 and 3.34 respectively. However, the standard deviations (1.272 and 1.366) show that there are also differences among the respondents.

Table 23 also points out that *paraphernalia*-dimension of connectedness is relevant in terms of general interest for reading articles, news or books that relate to the favorite program. However, posters or other materials are not typically collected among the respondents. This finding tells that merchandization of TV programs is not yet widely utilized, or it has not succeeded. Mean value for the first item is 3.29, whereas for the second one 1.86. Standard deviations 1.259 and 1.217 respectively show that some variance exists also as regards this dimension. Finally, last items in Table 23 tap into the dimension of *online activity*. Mean value for the statement about willingness to search for information online is 3.26, whereas statement about willingness to participate online discussions receives a mean value 2.50. Standard deviations are quite high for both of the items; 1.278

and 1.265. It appears then that the respondents are interested in widening their interest towards the favorite program beyond the viewing situation by searching more information about it online. However, a minority of the respondents would participate in online discussion forums.

Taken together, we may notice that favorite programs relate to escape, fashion, aspiration and information seeking (online or with more traditional methods), whereas dimensions of consumption choices (products indirectly or directly related to the favorite program), and imitation are not among the typical manifestations of connectedness. However, rather high standard deviations in almost all of the items (except escape- and consumption choices -items) suggest that there can be differences in consumer-program relationships due to individual characteristics (e.g. age and gender) or due to specific characteristics of the favorite programs (genre and program type). These possible differences will be discussed under Section 6.2.

6.1.3 *The nature of the cognitive bond with the program*

This chapter taps into fourth proposition (P4), which suggests that *consumer realizes a strong self-connection with his/her favorite television program*. This proposition can be approached from two dimensions a) in terms of self-verification: “this is who I am” and b) in terms of self-enhancement: “this is who I would like to be.” Table introduces 24 these findings.

First, in terms of the dimension of self-verification the two items in the table 24 tap into *self-correspondence*, in other words, how strongly the respondents feel that their favorite program fit to their self-concept. We may see that the respondents agree rather than disagree with the statement: “my favorite TV program tells something about me”. Mean value 3.58 suggests that idea of symbolic consumption of TV programs is rather widely adopted among the respondents. Standard deviation for this item is 1.072. Also the identification with the favorite TV program/or its characters is rather strong among the respondents. However, mean value 2.85 and standard deviation (1.231) for this statement indicate that there are respondents both for and against. Also the dimension of *image fit* is under examination in the table. The item about image fit of the favorite program (in a revised form) suggests that also outer image of the program seems to suite well with the respondents own ideas about their personal images (mean 2.43 and standard deviation 1.085). However, the respondents do not generally think that their friends would connect the favorite program with their image. In fact, all of the respondents may have not even told about their favorite program to their friends in the first place. Mean value for this second item is 2.49 and standard deviation 1.148.

Table 24. Descriptive statistics for cognitive bonds with TV programs

Items	Totally disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neutral opinion % (n)	Agree % (n)	Totally agree % (n)
<i>Self-correspondence</i>					
My favorite program tells something about me.	5.5 (19)	11.3 (39)	20.1 (69)	45.9 (158)	17.2 (59)
I can identify myself with my favorite TV program/its characters.	17.0 (59)	24.7 (86)	23.3 (81)	26.4 (92)	8.6 (30)
<i>Image fit</i>					
I think that my favorite TV program does not actually fit my "image" very well.	21.9 (72)	34.0 (112)	28.0 (92)	11.9 (39)	4.3 (14)
My friends probably associate me with my favorite TV program when they think of me.	25.2 (82)	24.3 (79)	31.7 (103)	14.2 (46)	4.6 (15)
<i>Ideal self</i>					
My favorite program reflects a lot about the kind of person I would like to be.	20.1 (70)	29.9 (104)	26.1 (91)	15.2 (53)	8.6 (30)
I often think that "I would not like to be the kind of person that is pictured in my favorite TV program".	23.8 (81)	22.6 (77)	30.3 (103)	14.1 (48)	9.1 (31)
<i>Expressed self</i>					
I would probably mention my favorite TV program to my new friends.	11.6 (39)	26.0 (87)	24.2 (81)	25.4 (85)	12.8 (43)
I do not like to tell other people that I watch this TV program.	53.1 (188)	33.3 (118)	10.5 (37)	1.7 (6)	1.4 (5)

The most typical answers are in bold letters

Table 24 also taps into the dimension of *self-enhancement* from two slightly different perspectives; ideal self and self-expression. With regard to how a favorite program relates to viewer's *ideal self*, it appears that the respondents typically hold a neutral opinion. Mean value and standard deviation for the first item are 2.62 and 1.210, whereas for the second one 2.62 and 1.243. It should be noticed that the second item is put negatively. Accordingly, we may conclude that the respondents do not tend to think that their favorite program would either represent their opposite or ideal type of self. Finally, the table represents findings regarding *expressed self* -dimension. The respondents were asked to consider whether they would mention their favorite TV program to other people or would they rather avoid telling about it. The findings suggest that the respondents feel very free to discuss about their favorite program with other people. Mean value for the first item is 3.02, and for the second one (negative item) 1.65. The standard deviations 1.223 and .843 point out that there is more variance in the responses with regards the former-mentioned item.

To summarize this section on self-connection, we could find that the dimensions of *self-correspondence* and *expressed self* are more strongly supported than the dimensions of *ideal self* and *image fit*. This finding is somewhat controversial since typically ideal self and expressed self would go hand in hand manifesting consumer's striving for self-enhancement. Moreover, it was expected that the findings regarding self-correspondence and image fit would be in line manifesting that there are no gaps between the inner- and outer-oriented types of self-verification. That is why a more detailed analysis of these findings is needed. Section 6.2 aims to go deeper in understanding the determinants of consumer-program relationship in the light of self-connection.

6.1.4 *The connection between identity-bond with a program and 'being hooked' on watching it*

After five-point Likert-scaled statements about *connectedness*, *attachment*, and *self-connection* the respondents were asked to consider if they are *hooked* on watching their favorite program or not. Reasoning behind this question was to find out whether this behavioral manifestation positively relates to having stronger identity-bond with a favorite program. Basically, the findings regarding the level of being hooked are now first descriptively presented. Then it will be examined, whether genre of the program influences the level of being hooked on watching, and whether respondent characteristics (gender and age) have something to do with the level of being hooked on watching the favorite program. After the above-mentioned analyses the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program is compared to other dimensions of consumer-program relationship. In line with proposition P5, it is tested whether a) the level of being hooked and attachment are positively correlated, b) the level of being hooked and connected are positively correlated, and c) the level of being hooked and self-connected with the program are positively correlated.

In Figure 24 we may see that the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program is very high among the respondents. Altogether 87.4 % of the respondents inform that they are "somewhat" or "totally hooked" on watching their favorite program, whereas only 12.6 % of the respondents feel that they are "not that hooked" or "not at all hooked" on watching. This finding suggests that being hooked on watching a favorite program is more common among the respondents than to have an identity-related bond with it (in terms of attachment, connectedness or self-connection). When having a closer look at gender differences, it appears that women are more hooked on watching their favorite programs than men. A share of 42.7 % of the women is totally hooked whereas for men this share is

33.3 %. On the contrary, 21.4 % of men inform that they are not at all/not that hooked on watching their favorite program, whereas only 12.6 % of women inform the same. Cross-tabulation results a Pearson chi-square 12.68 (df 2, two-sided p-value .002), which suggests that there are statistically significant differences between the genders. However, contingency coefficient value .185, addresses that there is only a weak dependence relationship between gender and the level of being hooked.

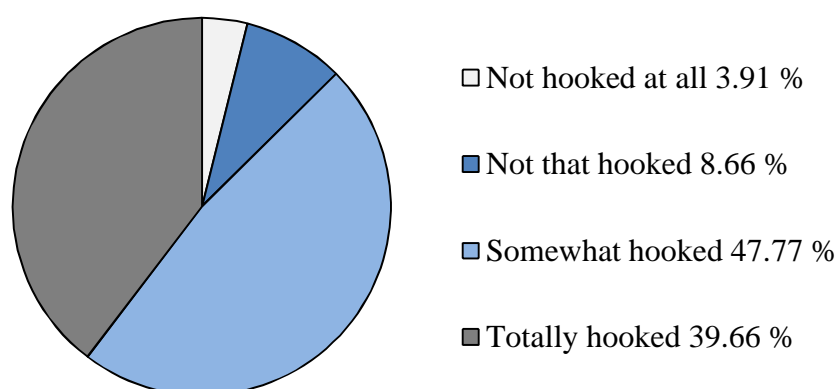


Figure 24. The level of being hooked on watching a favorite program

When cross-tabulating *program genres* (foreign fiction, Finnish entertainment, foreign entertainment, Finnish fiction and factual programs) and the *level of being hooked* on watching, it appears that 43.8 % of the respondents who have a favorite program under the *foreign fiction* -genre are totally hooked on watching it. Also the viewers of *foreign entertainment* seem to be totally hooked on watching, with a share of 42.1 %. However, in contrast a remarkable share of 31.6 % of the foreign entertainment viewers feel that they are not at all/not that hooked on watching their favorite program. When comparing to other genres, the viewers of *factual programs* are not very hooked on watching their favorite programs since only 20.8 % of them are totally hooked. Moreover, not at all/not that hooked viewers constitute an equal size of share (20.8 %). Cross-tabulation results as statistically reliable, as Pearson chi-square results 17.055, (df 8, p=.030 two-sided). Three cells (20 %) have expected count less than five, and the minimum expected count is 1.76. Value of contingency coefficient value is .213, which suggests that genre is not a very strong denominator for explaining the level of being hooked.

When cross-tabulating *age groups* (10–19, 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, and 50+) and the *level of being hooked* it appears that the youngest age group is more hooked on watching their favorite programs than other age groups. In this age group 55.5 % feel that they are totally hooked, whereas only 8.2 % of them see that they are not at all/not that hooked on watching. On the contrary, the age group of 40–49 year olds seems to be least hooked on watching their favorite programs since only 25.9 % of them see that they are totally hooked and 14.8 % disagree in being hooked. Also among the age group of 20–29 year-olds there are a number of people that are not hooked on watching their favorite program with a share of 15.2 %. In statistical terms this cross-tabulation is reliable as it results a Pearson chi-square 19.897 (df 8, $p=.011$ two-sided), the minimum expected count is 4.92, and 6.7 % of the cells have expected count less than five. Contingency coefficient value is .230, suggesting that the age of the viewer is not a very strong denominator when explaining the level of being hooked.

Finally, we may consider whether age and gender together can explain differences in the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program. Unfortunately, men's sample size is not big enough to obtain statistically reliable results, but for women's group we can find significant results. It appears that young girls are more hooked on watching their favorite program than other age groups of female respondents. Altogether, 60 % of them see that they are totally hooked, whereas only 4 % of them feel that they are not at all/not that hooked on watching their favorite program. In contrast, in the age group of 40–49 year-old women only 30.6 % of the respondents are totally hooked on watching and 11.1 % of them inform that they are not at all/not that hooked on watching their favorite program. Pearson chi-square results a value 14.960 (df 8, $p=.06$ two-sided), three cells (20 %) have expected count less than five, and minimum expected count is 2.32. However, contingency coefficient gets a value .242, which indicates that there is a rather weak dependence between the variables.

Now we can turn to consider a linkage between *being hooked on watching a program* and *having an identity-related bond* with it. The level of being hooked can be separately compared with the dimensions of connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment. In practice, each sum variable is constituted based on the chosen (five-point scaled) items for these four dimensions. Accordingly, we have 1) a sum variable for connectedness based on eight items, 2) a sum variable for self-connection based on four items, 3) a sum variable for attachment based on seven items, and 4) a sum variable for emotional attachment based on four items (see Appendix 10). With the help of this procedure we can increase the validity of the conclusions when interpretations are not based on single items only. These resulted sum variables had to be classified in order to ena-

ble cross-tabulations. That is why values from 0 to 2.49 were labeled as *weak* linkage, whereas values from 2.50 to 3.49 connote *moderate* linkage and values above 3.49 up to 5.00 connote a *strong* linkage in terms of type of identity-bond in question.

Based on cross-tabulations presented in Table 25, we can notice that the level of being hooked is positively correlated with all of the dimensions; connectedness, self-connection, attachment, and emotional attachment. The strongest correlation is with *emotional attachment*. Over 48.6 % among those who recognize themselves as being totally hooked on watching their favorite program also have a strong emotional attachment with that program. Only 4.4 % of the total is not at all/not that hooked on watching despite of having a strong emotional attachment with a favorite program. Also the dimension of *connectedness* goes quite well in line with the level of being hooked on watching, since it appears that 39.4 % of those who are totally hooked on watching also have a high level of connectedness. Furthermore, 40.0 % of those who are not hooked on watching their favorite program are not connected to it either. The weakest correlation appears to be between the level of being hooked and the level of *attachment*. Only 13.4 % of those who are totally hooked on watching also are strongly attached to their favorite program. However, weak attachment can predict the level of being hooked quite well as 57.8 % of those who are not hooked on watching are not attached to the program either. Finally, we may notice that *self-connection* and the level of being hooked are only moderately correlated. Altogether 40.1 % of those who are totally hooked on watching their favorite program also have a strong self-connection with it. On the contrary, 28.9 % of those who are not hooked on watching the program also have a weak self-connection with it.

Table 25. Cross-tabulations between the level of being hooked and the different types of bonds with a TV program

		<i>Not at all/ not that hooked</i>	<i>Somewhat hooked</i>	<i>Totally hooked</i>	<i>Total</i>
CONNECTEDNESS					
Weak	Count	18	48	18	84
connectedness	% within group	40.0	28.1	12.7	23.5
Moderate	Count	24	93	68	185
connectedness	% within group	53.3	54.4	47.9	51.7
Strong	Count	3	30	56	89
connectedness	% within group	6.7	17.5	39.4	24.9
Total	Count	45	171	142	358
	% within group	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of Total	12.6	47.8	39.7	100.0
Pearson χ^2 36.31, df 4, p (two-sided) .000, 0 cells have expected count less than 5, the minimum expected count is 10.56. Contingency coefficient .303, Pearson R .310, Spearman correlation .314					
SELF-CONNECTION					
Weak	Count	13	49	24	86
self-connection	% within group	28.9	28.7	16.9	24.0
Moderate	Count	26	84	61	171
self-connection	% within group	57.8	49.1	43.0	47.8
Strong	Count	6	38	57	101
self-connection	% within group	13.3	22.2	40.1	28.2
Total	Count	45	171	142	358
	% within group	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of Total	12.6	47.8	39.7	100.0
Pearson χ^2 19.53, df 4, p= .001 (two-sided), 0 cells have expected count less than 5, The minimum expected count is 10.81, Contingency coefficient .227, Pearson R .208, Spearman correlation .216					
ATTACHMENT					
Weak attachment	Count	26	95	62	183
	% within group	57.8	55.6	43.7	51.1
Moderate attachment	Count	17	55	61	133
	% within group	37.8	32.2	43.0	37.2
Strong attachment	Count	2	21	19	42
	% within group	4.4	12.3	13.4	11.7
Total	Count	45	171	142	358
	% within group	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of Total	12.6	47.8	39.7	100.0
Pearson χ^2 7.442, df 4, p= .114 (two-sided), 0 cells have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.28. Contingency coefficient .114, Pearson R .116, Spearman correlation .120					
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT					
Weak emotional	Count	24	62	14	100
attachment	% within group	53.3	36.3	9.9	27.9
Moderate emotional	Count	19	82	59	160
attachment	% within group	42.2	48.0	41.5	44.7
Strong emotional	Count	2	27	69	98
attachment	% within group	4.4	22.9	48.6	27.4
Total	Count	45	171	142	358
	% within group	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of Total	12.6	47.8	39.7	100.0
Pearson χ^2 72.403, df 4, p= .000 (two-sided), 0 cells have expected count less than 5, the minimum expected count is 12.32 Contingency coefficient .410, Pearson R .435, Spearman correlation .443					

To summarize the findings, we may conclude that being hooked on watching a favorite program is very common. Especially this is the case with young female viewers. However, when comparing female- and male viewers, there are only small differences in terms of the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program. Cross-tabulations between the level of being hooked and the key dimensions of identity-related relationship with a program reveal the emotional attachment and the level of being hooked are most strongly correlated, whereas attachment has the weakest positive correlation with the level of being hooked. It appears then that “being hooked” does imply the stronger identity-bond with a favorite program. However this bond is not as strong as we probably would have expected beforehand. Findings suggest that it is possible for a viewer to be hooked on watching a program without having an identity-bond with it, in other words, a program would not be regarded as personally relevant or as a resource for identity construction. Next, in Section 6.2, we can further examine the differences in identity-bonds across different groups of respondents and programs.

6.2 Use of television programs as resources for identity

This section aims to examine the sixth proposition of this study (P6). Basically, it will be examined how the reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral and environmental elements in media consumption influence each other. According to P6 it is assumed that viewer characteristics, production of TV programs and other consumers would have influence on how consumer-program relationships result. In other words, a) there would be differences between younger and older television viewers with regard to the strength of identity-bond with on favorite TV program, b) there could be differences between program genres what comes to their ability to provide resources for consumer’s identity, c) consumer, who is socially-oriented (i.e. outer-oriented) in his/her self-identification, would score higher on self-identification with a favorite program than consumer who has an independent orientation (i.e. is inner-oriented) in his/her self-identification and d) imagined similarity with the other viewers of the favorite program would intensify self-identification with the favorite program. These assumptions are examined next, in Sections 6.2.1–6.2.4.

6.2.1 *Do younger viewers have stronger identity-bonds with their favorite programs than older viewers?*

It has been stressed in the previous literature that media plays an important role in the lives of the youth. Therefore, the effect of age was taken into focus in the in-

vestigation on the strength of the identity bond. First, the respondents were divided based on their age into five age groups (1 = 10–19, 2 = 20–29, 3 = 30–39, 4 = 40–49, 5 = 50+ year-old). Then, sum variables of connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment were computed for the purpose of being able to compare means across age groups. In practice, each sum variable consists of four to eight items (see Appendix 10). Levene's test for equality of variances and t-test for equality of means are utilized as the methods of analysis in this section.

Table 26. Mean comparisons of identity-bonds with favorite programs across different age groups.

Age group	Connectedness		Self-connection		Attachment		Emotional attachment	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.
10–19 (n110)	3.25	.70	3.02	.93	2.69	.83	3.25	.83
20–29 (n100)	2.87	.57	2.87	.84	2.43	.72	2.78	.89
30–39 (n55)	2.80	.67	2.82	.81	2.32	.93	2.59	.95
40–49 (n54)	2.65	.65	2.84	.84	2.29	.94	2.60	.74
50+ (n39)	2.86	.64	2.96	.95	2.50	.93	2.81	.96

Scale 1= totally disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= totally agree

Means of sum variables of connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment are compared across age groups in Table 26. It appears that the group of 10 to 19 -year-olds is distinctive when compared to other age groups since it has higher means in all of the four dimensions under investigation. When comparing 10–19 -year-olds viewers with 20–29 -year-olds, we can find statistically significant differences in connectedness ($t=4.379$, $df\ 206.087$, $p=.000$), attachment ($t=2.747$, $df\ 208$, $p=.014$), and emotional attachment ($t=4.101$, $df\ 208$, $p=.000$). When comparing 10–19 -year-olds viewers with 30–39 -year-olds viewers, we result with statistically significant differences with regard to three sum variables (connectedness: $t=4.02$, $df\ 163$, $p=.000$, attachment: $t=2.617$, $df\ 163$, $p=.01$, emotional attachment: $t=4.408$, $df\ 163$, $p=.000$). Significant differences can also be found when comparing 10–19 year-olds with the 40–49 -year-olds viewers (connectedness: $t=5.314$, $df\ 162$, $p=.000$, attachment: $t=2.815$, $df\ 162$, $p=.005$, emotional attachment: $t=4.651$, $df\ 162$, $p=.000$). Finally, comparison between 10–19 -year-olds viewers and 50+ year-olds viewers shows that statistically significant differences between groups can be found with regard to connectedness ($t=3.136$, $df\ 147$, $p=.002$), and emotional attachment ($t=2.565$, $df\ 147$, $p=.011$). Comparisons between other age groups yield no statistically significant differ-

ences except that 20–29 -year-olds show more connectedness to their favorite programs than 40–49 -year-olds ($t=2.145$, $df\ 152$, $p=.034$)

To conclude, results support the proposition 6a, that younger viewers have stronger identity-bonds with their favorite program than older viewers. However, we may also notice that on average viewers do not seem to form strong identity-bonds with their favorite programs since mean values stay near a neutral opinion (3.0) in all age groups.

6.2.2 *Does the genre of the program affect the nature of consumer-program relationship?*

As a basis for testing proposition 6b) about the effect of program genre on the strength of the identity-bond, favorite programs of the survey respondents were classified into five genres. Accordingly, the program genres were 1) *foreign fiction* (non-Finnish fictive programs), 2) *domestic entertainment* (Finnish entertaining programs), 3) *foreign entertainment* (non-Finnish entertaining programs), 4) *domestic fiction* (Finnish fictive programs), and 5) *factual and current affairs programs* (e.g. news, documentary programs, and sports). Differences between the genres were analyzed in the same way as age group comparisons, that is, mean comparisons with regard to connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment were conducted, see Table 27 for the descriptives. Again, we can see that means remain primarily near to a neutral opinion (3.0); however standard deviations show that there are differences across responses.

Table 27. Mean comparisons of identity-bonds with favorite programs across different program genres.

Program genre	Connectedness		Self-connection		Attachment		Emotional attachment	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std.D.
Foreign fiction (n240)	2.96	.63	2.95	.81	2.44	.84	2.92	.92
Finnish entertain (n15)	2.85	.93	3.01	.76	2.37	.95	2.69	.99
Foreign entertain (n21)	2.66	.69	2.70	1.03	2.16	.97	2.55	.77
Finnish fiction (n61)	2.94	.77	2.77	.78	2.61	.81	2.82	.79
Factual programs...(n22)	3.11	.66	3.24	.84	2.96	.82	2.95	.78

Scale 1= totally disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= totally agree

We can find seven statistically significant mean differences when conducting t-tests for different program genres. In other words, in most cases there are only minor differences between the genres. Foreign fiction appears to evoke stronger connectedness than foreign entertainment ($t=2.047$, $df\ 259$, $p=.042$). Viewers also seem to get more attached to Finnish fiction than foreign entertainment ($t=2.086$, $df\ 80$, $p=.040$). Factual programs for one create more intense connectedness ($t=2.154$, $df\ 41$, $p=.037$) and attachment ($t=2.926$, $df\ 41$, $p=.006$) than foreign entertainment. Factual programs also significantly differ from Finnish fiction in terms of the degree of self-connection ($t=2.400$, $df\ 81$, $p=.019$). Moreover, there is a tendency of stronger attachment towards factual programs than foreign fiction ($t=2.813$, $df\ 260$, $p=.005$) and Finnish entertainment ($t=2.038$, $df\ 35$, $p=.049$). Overall, it seems that the genre of factual programs seems to create the strongest identity bonds, whereas programs under foreign entertainment appear to evoke the weakest ones. However, before making decisive conclusions, we can further analyze differences across more specific *program types*. It is worth examining whether for example lifestyle programs differ from soap operas, or whether reality TV differs from fiction series.

Table 28. Nature of consumer-program relationships compared between different program types

Program type	Connectedness		Self-connection		Attachment		Emotional attachment	
	Mean	Std.D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.
Soap (n80)	2.98	.77	2.82	.87	2.55	.88	2.89	.90
Drama (n42)	3.07	.61	3.14	.72	2.72	.84	2.90	.84
Crime drama (n42)	2.78	.65	2.91	.96	2.28	.86	2.93	.95
Dramacomedy (n42)	3.01	.60	2.89	.76	2.59	.78	3.04	.95
Hospital drama (n29)	2.82	.52	2.88	.62	2.36	.78	2.46	.71
Action, thriller,... (n33)	2.76	.73	2.57	.79	1.98	.84	2.83	.93
Scifi, fantasy, horror (n21)	3.15	.41	3.23	.73	2.45	.65	3.12	.90
Animation, anime (n14)	3.18	.62	3.30	.52	2.70	.57	3.26	.71
Entertainment, quiz,... (n9)	2.81	1.03	2.79	.73	2.53	.94	2.98	.96
Reality TV (n22)	2.64	.69	2.68	.98	2.17	.91	2.40	.73
Lifestyle, travelling (n12)	3.36	.39	3.22	.60	2.91	.70	2.75	.83
Documentary, news..(n13)	3.00	.80	3.41	.99	2.97	.90	3.08	.86

Scale 1= totally disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= totally agree

There are 12 program types described in terms of their mean values and standard deviations for sum variables on connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment. Based on Table 28 it appears that there are some differ-

ences between the program types. As a general tendency we may notice that *documentary/factual programs/news* together with *lifestyle/travelling/food* programs, *scifi/fantasy/horror* programs and *animation/anime* programs have relatively high mean values, whereas *reality-TV* programs and *action/thriller/adventure* programs have relatively low mean values.

Lifestyle, travelling and food programs get a highest mean value 3.36 in connectedness, whereas the lowest mean value is for the program type of *reality TV*, 2.64. With regard to self-connection, the highest mean value, 3.41, is obtained by *documentary, current affairs and news*, whereas mean value for *action, thriller and adventure programs* stay well below three, 2.57. The dimension of attachment receives a highest value in the program type of *documentary, current affairs and news*, 2.97, when *action, thriller and adventure* scores low in this regard having a mean value 1.98. Finally, there is a rather remarkable difference between *animation and anime* and *reality TV* in terms of the degree of emotional attachment towards them, since the former receives a mean value 3.26 and the latter one 2.40. All of the above mentioned differences between program types are statistically significant at least at the .05 confidence level. Taken together, we can summarize that at the genre level there are no major differences in consumer-program relationships, but when going to a more detailed analysis, we could find out that some program types are better at evoking identity-related bonds than others.

6.2.3 *Does the orientation of self-identification affect the nature of consumer-program relationship?*

Now we can turn to evaluate respondent-based differences in consumer-program relationships. According to proposition 6 c) Consumer, who is socially-oriented (i.e. outer-oriented self-construal) in his/her self-identification, would score higher on self-identification with a favorite program than consumer who has an independent orientation (i.e. is inner-oriented self-construal) in his/her self-identification. In order to examine this proposition, self-identification statements that the respondents gave in the survey are analyzed and operationalized into classifiable variables. Altogether, 1057 statements from 353 respondents were analyzed with a coding scheme described in Section 4.2.2. Self-identification statements turned out to be a very versatile data as over 550 different statements were given. As an illustration, majority of the statements together with their categorizations are provided in Appendix 8. Among the most common statements were *glad* (n59), *humoristic* (n26), and *fun* (n14), but majority of the statements were mentioned only once. Thus, in the light of the statements given, the sample represents quite a heterogeneous group of Finnish population. Moreover, the finding empha-

sizes that consumers should be considered not only as masses of people, but also as individuals having unique characteristics.

Frequencies and percentage shares of the categories are presented in Table 29. It can be noticed that the reflective type of self-identification is the most typical one among the respondents. Thus the notion of social influence on self-identification (i.e. 'looking-glass self') gets support in this study. However, the single largest category is that of *personality traits* under the idea of independent self-identification. It appears that inner-oriented self-identification is more typical than outer-oriented self-identification, as particularly personality traits are frequently brought out when defining 'who I am'. This finding, for one, supports the point of departure of symbolic interactionism, for which individual is considered as the adequate and meaningful unit of analysis instead of group or collectivity.

Table 29. Frequencies and shares of different categories of self-identification statements.

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Independent self-identification:</i>	358	33.8
Personality traits	260	24.6
Situation-related traits	31	2.9
Physical features and age	67	6.3
<i>Reflective self-identification:</i>	396	37.5
Self-traits related to others	232	22.0
Behaviour/lifestyle-related traits	125	11.8
Relative age	39	3.7
<i>Interdependent self-identification:</i>	260	24.7
Geographic and ethnic group	26	2.5
Gender, sexuality	101	9.6
Family, role	60	5.7
Workstatus, lifestage	73	6.9
<i>Abstract, ambiguous self-identification</i>	43	4.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>1057</i>	<i>100</i>

The share of abstract or ambiguous self-identification statements remains low, 4 %. This finding suggests that making sense of self and expressing it is rather easy for the consumers in general. If majority of the respondents would have given statements in very general terms, such as "I am human", it would have meant that

people are not that conscious of their individual identity nor the construction of identities could be considered as active.

Interestingly, self-identification as *media* consumers was rare among the respondents as only three out of 353 respondents somehow manifested their interest in watching TV in their statements. This finding suggests that even though the respondents of this online survey can be considered as relatively high-involved television viewers as they visit the site *telkku.com*, they show no evidence of being fanatic with regard to television programs. Perhaps, if the survey had been placed on some fan forum of a particular TV program, such as *Star Trek*, we would have resulted with more self-identification statements that relate to media consumption. Instead, *Telkku.com* forum appeared to reach 'ordinary people', who do not primarily identify themselves as serious fans of particular media products.

As a whole, empirical data illustrates that the coding scheme of self-identification statements succeeded in eliciting different orientations in self-identification since it enables rigorous differentiation as well as integration of the categories. Moreover, self-identification statements can be operationalized (quantified) for the purposes of further analyses.

As a consequence of established coding scheme, it was possible to divide respondents into distinct groups as regards their type of self-identification and to use this grouping for the purposes of analyzing determinants of consumer-program relationships, especially relating to the proposition P6 c. However, it was soon found out that many of the respondents had expressed three statements that each manifest different orientation in self-identification. Hence, in addition to independently, reflectively, socially, and abstractly self-identified respondents, there were respondents of 'mixed self-identification'. As a solution, the respondents were given scores based on their three statements in order to be able to assign them to one of the four categories based on their *principal mode* of self-identification. Following a form of continuum of different orientations in self-identification (which gets support from the identity-discussions in Section 1.2.1), abstract statements received a value of 0, and statements referring to independent orientation were 1 point each. Reflective statements were scored with two points and statements showing interdependent orientation with three points. As a result, each respondent was given a score between 0 and 9 points as a sum score of their three statements. This scoring is illustrated in Figure 25. Basically, the less the combined score of the three statements given is, the more *independent self-identification* (personal self) is assumed. In contrast, high combined scoring of the three statements manifests here the type of *interdependent self-identification* (social identity).

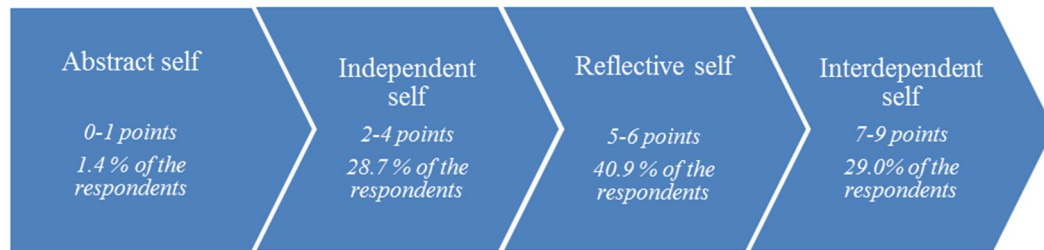


Figure 25. Scores by different categories of self-identification

After establishing the sum scores for the statements, it was found out that the most common type of self-identification was *reflective*, with a share of 40.9 % (n144) of all the respondents (n352). Also *interdependent* and *independent* selves self are popular types of self-identification with a shares of 29 % and 28.7 % respectively. The share of *abstract/ambiguous* self remains under 2 %. A comparison between the shares of self-identification statements (in Table 29) and that of respondents after scoring procedure, illustrate that the two findings are quite close to each other. This notion validates the mode of scoring.

Table 30. Nature of consumer-program relationships compared between different types of respondent self-construals

Type of self-construal	Connectedness		Self-connection		Attachment		Emotional attachment	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std.D.
Abstract self (n5)	3.05	.61	2.75	1.25	2.73	.98	2.75	.66
Independent self (n101)	3.10	.67	3.01	.81	2.65	.88	2.97	.85
Reflective self (n144)	2.89	.71	2.94	.84	2.41	.81	2.88	.93
Interdependent self (102)	2.85	.63	2.81	.81	2.37	.84	2.78	.89

Scale 1= totally disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= totally agree

With the help of above-mentioned scoring procedure respondents with different types of self-construals were compared in terms of their mean values for connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment (Table 30). It appears that respondents with *independent self-construal* receive the highest mean values in all dimensions except attachment. T-tests further address that there are statistically significant differences between those who have independent orientation in their self-construal and those who have interdependent self-construal in terms of *connectedness* ($t=2.736$, df 201, $p=.007$) and *attachment* ($t=2.275$, df 201, $p=.024$). This finding is somewhat surprising since beforehand we would

have expected that people with social rather than self-orientation are more likely to use consumption objects such as TV programs, symbolically by expressing their identities to others. To summarize the findings of this section, the orientation of self-identification seems, at least partially, affect the nature of consumer-program relationship since some statistically significant differences were found between the respondents having independent -type of self-construal and those having interdependent self-construal.

6.2.4 *Does the similarity with other viewers of the program intensify viewer's identity-bond with the program?*

This section taps into proposition P6 point d) by examining a specific question that was posed in the online survey, namely “who would typically watch this program”. Thus, here instead of self-identifications, social-identifications with other television viewers are in the focus of analysis. This section introduces the findings regarding respondents' common sense knowledge (i.e. stereotypes) about other TV viewers. The respondents were asked to give descriptions about the imagined other viewers of their favorite program. However the respondents were not directly asked whether they identify themselves with these viewers. First of all, typical viewer profiles are described and illustrated with some examples from specific favorite representing different program types (lifestyle program, soap-opera, drama series, reality-TV and detective series). Then, descriptions of the typical viewers are coded in order to be able to compare those with respondents' own self-identification statements. As it was proposed in Section 4.3, the coding scheme developed for self-identification statements can also be applied to descriptions of typical viewers of one's favorite program. By analyzing similarity between these two descriptions and respondent's actual stance in a relationship with the favorite program, we can conclude whether imagined similarity with other viewers of the program intensifies viewer's identity-bond with the program.

Examples in Table 31 show that television viewers themselves are able to segment TV-markets into meaningful groups. Puustinen (2008: 117–118) has brought up the viewpoint of marketing specialists when outlining classifications of audience members as potential consumers. This present study, however, emphasizes that also audience members themselves can recognize distinct, homogeneous groups of viewers. For example, the respondents' descriptions of typical viewers of *Madventures* -lifestyle program reveal that viewers are often described based on lifestyle characteristics (i.e. in terms of their activities, interests, and opinions) when compared to other viewer profiles of other programs. In contrast, when having a look at the viewers of CSI-detective serial we may notice that they

are considered to have share similar *taste of program*, but differ greatly in their demographics (and lifestyles).

Table 31. Imagined viewer profiles of Madventures, CSI, Mad Men, Salatut elämät, and Muodin huipulle

<i>Madventures</i> -lifestyle program	<i>CSI</i> –detective serial
Relatively young, extrovert, experimental-minded Program is suitable for everybody The kind of person who travels a lot abroad Knows how to relax, humorous, broad-minded Young or youngish person Probably 16 to 25 years old, likes freaking-out, humour, and travelling Interested in different ways of living in this world	Young adult 25–45 year-old woman or man who is interested in so called detective series It can be anybody Middle-aged Someone who longs for a program that is a bit closer to reality Someone who likes crissum, puzzly, and chemistry between people Someone who is interested in these topics, characters, and what is going to happen next Someone who is interested in real things, does not like fictive series Someone aged from 14 to 15 years upwards and who like thrillers Appr. 30-year-olds Young, old, or somewhere between, likes detective series
<i>Mad Men</i> -‘quality drama’	
Grown-up, urban, intelligent Cosy, trendy, hedonist, epicure Calm, humorous, intelligent, handsome/pretty	
<i>Salatut elämät</i> -soap opera	
Middle-aged woman Fool Watches every episode, does not make noise while watching Ordinary Finn Ordinary housewife Young, but old-fashioned Approximately 40-year-olds with a family Probably the type of person who ‘gets hooked on’, typically young, but older people as well Well everybody watches it People at any age, women more than men Pretty humouristic people watch this program Fat and ugly Person who keeps his/her feet on the ground Young or plus 40-year-old	The one who likes soap operas The one who likes surprising plotlines The one who looks for excitement The one who has good choices of program Could be quite a vivid person Young or old who has time to watch every day except on weekends School kid A bit like me. One just gets hooked on the program Vivid and excited, who wants topics and relaxation Likes the kinds of soap operas that are close to real life Everyday’s workman who wants to relax in front of TV
<i>Muodin huipulle</i> -reality TV serial	
Interested in fashion and follows other reality programs as well Young Young woman who is interested in fashion/clothes Young, interested in fashion Young urban woman who would like to know how to tailor clothes herself Interested in fashion, young or young adult Interested in fashion and prefers well-done documents	

In Table 31, there are also provided most of the viewer descriptions of *Salatut elämät* -program, which is very popular soap opera in Finland with nearly a million viewers per week (Finnpanel 2011). It appears that viewers of *Salatut elämät* are considered as very ordinary people. Moreover, we can notify that there are some under-valuing descriptions of the viewers, such as “fool” and “fat and ugly”. This finding is not surprising based on the previous literature, which suggests that soaps are at the bottom of television value hierarchy, lumped with game shows and professional wrestling in terms of their perceived moral worth (see Alasuutari 1991; Harrington & Bielby 1996: 5). We can also consider two programs that have somewhat different imagined viewer profiles than the above-mentioned programs. There are not many descriptions for the viewers of *Mad Men* -program available, however, it can be noticed that the viewers of *Mad Men* are described as sophisticated people having quite preferable *personality traits*, especially when compared to the viewers of *Salatut elämät*. Viewers of *Muodin huipulle*, for one, are described as a quite narrow segment of people. According to the descriptions, anyone who is not young and interested in fashion would not watch this program. Thus basically, it should be very easy for the media marketers address viewer segment for the program.

When analyzing the viewer descriptions further (Table 32), it appears that the respondents have very versatile accounts about the other viewers of their favorite program as all of the coding categories were needed. Most typically, with a share of 31.7 % of all the statements, other viewers were described manifesting reflective identification that is concerned with behavior-/lifestyle-related traits, such as activities, interests and opinions of the viewer. Similarly as it was found out when analyzing media consumption narratives (in Section 2.1) we may notice that it is easier to describe taste preferences (at the having level) and lifestyles (at the doing level) than it is to characterize identities (at the being level). It was common among the respondents to define the typical viewer in terms of *age*. A share of 20.7 % of all the statements concerned age of the viewer. Most infrequently, the style of description was concerned with family/role, with a share of 1.5 % of all the statements given. In other words, this segmentation criterion would show least discrimination power among the viewers themselves.

As only 7.1 % (n48) of the respondents defined typical viewer of their favorite program in very general terms such as ‘normal’, or ‘anybody’ (i.e. not being able to specify who would be the typical viewer of the program), we may conclude that consumers are able to identify meaningful social groupings based on their consumption experiences. These groupings manifest particular kinds of identities or lifestyles and support the notion of Holt (1997) about symbolic boundaries between collectivities having distinctive consumption patterns and tastes.

It was found that self-identification statements and descriptions about other viewers of the program somewhat differed in their level of description. Basically, the main distinction is that respondents described themselves more in terms of stable personality traits, whereas other viewers were more typically described based on their behavior/lifestyle-related traits. As a whole, the descriptions about the self were more precise than descriptions about the other viewers, for example in terms of age-descriptions. This, of course, makes sense, as the task was to give a generalization about the typical viewer, not to name or describe someone in person.

Table 32. Frequencies and shares of different categories for the descriptions of typical viewers of the program.

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Independent identification:</i>	78	11.5
Personality traits	24	3.6
Situation-related traits	14	2.1
Physical features and age	40	5.9
<i>Reflective identification:</i>	448	66.3
Self-traits related to others	94	13.9
Behaviour/lifestyle-related traits	214	31.7
Relative age	140	20.7
<i>Interdependent identification:</i>	102	15.1
Geographic and ethnic group	10	1.5
Gender, sexuality	72	10.7
Family, role	9	1.3
Workstatus, life stage	11	1.6
<i>Abstract, ambiguous identification:</i>	48	7.1
	<i>Total</i> 676	<i>100</i>

When comparing respondents' own self-identification statements and their descriptions of other audience members, it was found that 23.2 % of the respondents (82 persons) shared at least one same characterization with their description about the typical viewer. In other words, these respondents explicitly identified with the other audience members of their favorite program. When taking into account also the background information about the respondents (age, gender, and hobbies), it

was found that at least 42.2 % of the respondents (151 persons) could well-identify with other viewers of the same program. What has to be noticed here, is that the description of age group is often inaccurate and rather subjective, which may cause bias in the interpretations. For example the term *middle-aged* can denote to somewhat different factual age across respondents. This is the reason why the results concerning fit between age of the respondent and that of the typical viewer are only indicative. When analyzing age comparisons, I interpreted that *young* or *teenager* refers to an age group from 10 to 19, *young adult* from 20 to 29, *adult* from 30 to 39, *middle-aged* from 40 to 49 and *seniors* would be older than 49 year olds. There is a mean comparison between the respondents having a 'close fit' with their imagined typical viewer program and those respondents that have 'no (explicit) fit' with the viewer profile in Table 33.

Table 33. Comparisons between the respondents with and without a close fit with a typical viewer profile

Fit with a typical viewer profile	Connectedness		Self-connection		Attachment		Emotional attach.	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.
Close fit (n151)	2.90	.63	2.86	.80	2.36	.63	2.79	.85
No (explicit) fit (n208)	2.97	.71	2.97	.84	2.56	.71	2.94	.91
<i>Scale 1= totally disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral opinion, 4= agree, 5= totally agree</i>								

Surprisingly, the findings suggest that the imagined similarity with other viewers of the same program does not seem to influence the strength of consumer-program relationship. In other words, those respondents who were identified as having a close fit with their viewer description do not score any higher on the dimensions of connectedness, self-connection, attachment and emotional attachment. In fact, those who did not have explicitly recognized fit with a typical viewer profile (in terms of age, gender, hobbies, and self-identification statements) receive a higher mean especially in attachment ($t=2.199$, $df\ 357$, $p=.029$). However, we should consider these findings only indicative due to a possibility of bias in interpretations of the viewer profiles and lack of more detailed information. Therefore, future research on this matter is encouraged. In order to improve the validity of the findings, this study would have benefited from a direct question on identification with a typical viewer, such as, "How closely do you think you match with the typical viewer of this program, and why is that?"

6.3 Profiling respondents based on their relationship with a program

The purpose of this Section 6.3 is to group respondents according to their consumer-program relationships into distinct groups, and compare these groups with each other. Basically, the profiling of respondents is here meaning-based when focusing on the respondents feel about their favorite TV program. This is supported by for example Susan Fournier (1991) who has argued that *meaning-based segments*, i.e. groups based on agreements regarding the roles and functions served by products, can be identified. She asserts (Ibid: 741) that “because of their considerations of idiosyncrasies in processes of perception and interpretation, these segments may perhaps be more reliable and valid than those based on simple usage habits.” With regard to the close concept to that of consumer-program-relationship, Hollebeek (2011) has suggested that customers could be segmented based on their specific levels of brand engagement and loyalty. In other words, Hollebeek recognizes that there are a group of ‘Apathists’ with high level of loyalty, but low level of engagement, ‘Exits’ with low levels of loyalty and engagement, ‘Variety seekers’ with low level of loyalty but high level of engagement, and finally ‘Activists’ who are highly engaged and relatively loyal customers. The ‘activists’ appear to be the most desirable group in an organization’s customer base. Continuing this line of thought I suggest that respondents of this present study should be segmented based on the nature and intensity of their relationships with their favorite program.

As a loosely guiding frame for the profiling of survey respondents, I propose a distinction between *realized* and *unrealized* identity-bond with a program. In other words, we can analyze whether respondents consciously identify connections between their identity and their favorite program or do they disagree in having any identity-related bond with their favorite program. In practice, this means examination on how strongly respondents agree or disagree with the statements regarding connectedness, attachment, emotional attachment, and self-connection. This analytical frame is also roughly in line with the ideas of Hirschman and Thompson (1997) about consumers’ different strategies for interpreting media messages, and with the ideas of Meline (1996) on meaning construction, which takes into account consumer’s evaluation of the *nature* of the meaning and the *truth* in the meaning in their own life contexts. In this connection, it is likely that we can identify a group of respondents that *rejects* identity proposals of their favorite program because of a poor fit of those to his/her own life. In contrast, there is also likely to exist a group of respondents that can themselves *identify* having an *identity-bond* with their favorite program. Thus, they are active in meaning construction and their favorite program concretely extends into their daily lives in

various ways. There might also exist a group of respondents which appears not to be that connected to the favorite program in the daily life, but still *adjust* to the possible identity proposals of the favorite program through a process of incorporation and appropriation of mediated meanings. This kind of identity-bond would manifest a symbolic and reflective type of identity-bond with a program. Finally, we could expect to recognize a group of respondents that is *unresponsive* to the possible identity proposals of the program, yet which is highly involved in consuming the program, such as to be a loyal fan of it.

6.3.1 *K-means cluster analysis*

Cluster analysis is one of the most widely used methods for the purposes of segmenting markets (Wedel & Kamakura 2002). Especially K-means technique has gained popularity in market segmentation since its introduction 50 years ago (Tuma, Decker & Scholz 2011). Basically, cluster analysis seeks to identify homogeneous structures in the data by analyzing the similarities and dissimilarities of the objects to be clustered. Cluster analysis provides a possibility to segment respondents based on their relationship with a favorite program.

Cluster analysis was conducted with K-means method, which is suitable for sample size over 200 respondents. The idea behind K-means cluster analysis is that researcher can by him-/herself decide the number of clusters and to compare the plausibility of different cluster solutions. Good cluster solution is first and foremost easy to interpret and express. It is able to meaningfully group homogenous respondents and to clearly distinguish between different group profiles. Resulted groups should also be relevant in size. In practice, the differences between clusters are analyzed based on how cluster centers situate with regard to variables under investigation. Basically cluster centers vary between -1 to +1, so that value close to -1 connotes strong negative loading, whereas +1 connotes a strong positive loading. A value near to zero shows that the cluster does not have a strong loading with regard to variable/factor in question. It is possible to address cluster membership for each respondent that has no missing values in the variables that have been chosen for the analysis. In this study, it was decided that missing values (i.e. I don't know answers) should be replaced with mean-values in order to have all data (n359) in use. Without this procedure, only 242 respondents would have been included in the analysis due to one or more missing values in the answers of other respondents. Missing values were scattered across data so that there were missing values from 1.9 to 9.5 % (i.e. frequencies from 8 to 34) for the statements under investigation. Based on the comparison between data sets with

and without replaced missing values, it was concluded that the replacement of missing values could be done without harming the quality of the analysis.

No matter how small sample or how many variables, cluster analysis will always render a solution. In consequence, researcher is left with a lot of responsibility to conclude about the reasonability of the solution achieved and what would be the best amount of groups. There are, however, some quantitative indicators that help the researcher to make this decision. In this study, analysis of variance (ANOVA), F-tests, and Tukey HSD were used when comparing mean differences between the groups.

Table 34. Variables for cluster analysis

Dimension	Statements included
FANDOM	I want to discuss bout this program online. I read articles, news or books, if they relate to this TV program. I have some things (posters etc.) that relate to this TV program. I would like to meet the characters of my favorite TV program.
MODELING	I get ideas from this program to my own way of life. Sometimes, I find myself imitating the gestures or facial expressions of the characters on my favorite TV program. I like the clothes they wear on my favorite TV program.
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT	If I did not see my favorite program, I would feel like I have lost a part of myself. If someone praised my favorite program, I would feel like that someone had praised me. I would feel irritated, if someone laughed at my favorite TV program. I would be happy to wear the shirt with the name of my favorite program, when walking on street. If my favorite program ended, I would not easily find a new program to replace it.
ATTACHMENT	My favorite program reminds me of important events or achievements in my life. My favorite program reminds me of who I have once been. My favorite program reminds of the people that are dear to me. My favorite program reminds me of the good times with my dearest ones. My favorite program shows the kind of person that I am becoming. My favorite program helps me to keep up to date. My favorite program responds to my longing for nostalgia and traditions. My favorite program somehow relates to my future goals. My favorite program makes me feel different than others.
SELF-CONNECTION	My favorite TV program reflects a lot about the kind of person I would like to be. I can identify with my favorite TV program/its characters. The fact that I watch this program, tells something about me. I would probably mention my favorite TV program to my new friends. My friends probably associate me with my favorite TV program when they think of me.

As cluster analysis with all of the survey items would have been too complicated it was decided to choose the kind of variables that could best explain the variance in the data. Therefore, a factor analysis was conducted based on which it was possible to find the best variables for each construct (in Table 34). Cluster analysis was conducted based on five factor scores that were found to best cover differences in consumer-program relationships. In other words, only the statements and dimensions having the best factor loadings were chosen as variables for the cluster analysis. First, there were two dimensions concerning connectedness, namely *fandom* and *modeling*. These factor scores resulted altogether from nine statements. Moreover, *emotional attachment* was covered with five statements and *attachment* with nine statements. Finally, there was a factor score developed for *self-connection* as a constitution of five statements.

Tuma et al. (2011: 399) state that the weakness of K-means technique is that it does not identify well clusters of different sizes. This is because K-means technique is based on finding cluster centers rather than the boundaries of the clusters. Consequently, sizes of the clusters should be considered as indicative only.

6.3.2 *Cluster solution*

The four cluster-solution rendered the best solution. It included statistically significant, high F values in the ANOVA, satisfying distances between final cluster centers, and an iteration history reaching an end point at the thirteenth iteration.

Chosen cluster solution is presented in Table 35. Strong loadings are illustrated with bolded letters. Altogether there are four clusters of respondents that are labeled as “fans”, “rejectors”, “meaning makers” and “identifiers”. *Self-reflectors* constitute the largest group with 112 respondents. They differ from other groups by scoring high on modeling, attachment, relatively high on self-connection and negatively on fandom. This kind of cluster highlights that own favorite program is symbolically consumed as respondents drive different kinds of meanings from their favorite program and incorporate these meanings and models to their own life. The next biggest group is constituted around 92 respondents who score negatively with regard to all of the dimensions. In other words, these *rejectors* deny the idea that they would have any kind of identity-bond with their favorite TV program. The third group consists of 89 respondents who could be named as *fans* of their favorite program, however, not having an identity-bond with the program. This cluster scores high on fandom, but negatively on attachment, modeling and self-connection. With regard to emotional attachment, this group has a mild positive stance. Finally, there is a group of respondents (n66) that score high on all of the dimensions. Therefore, they can be named as *self-identifiers* who are con-

scious about having an identity-bond with a favorite program. In addition to being a fan of the favorite program and self-reflectively involved with it, a self-identifier shows a high level of emotional attachment.

Table 35. Four-cluster solution based on five variables

	<i>Clusters</i>			
	1 SELF- REFLECTORS n112	2 REJECTORS n92	3 FANS n89	4 SELF- IDENTIFIERS n66
ATTACHMENT	.458	-.984	-.293	.991
FANDOM	-.464	-.684	.501	1.066
MODELING	.751	-.814	-.658	.748
SELF-CONNECTION	.351	-1.000	-.242	1.126
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT	.005	-1.041	.115	1.287

As a whole, cluster solution shows that symbolic consumption is prevalent among TV consumers as there is a great amount of respondents, over thirty percent that could be classified as self-reflectors. However, based on the results of this analysis, having an identity-bond with a favorite program seems not be as common as rejection of it. Interestingly, we can also distinguish a group of fans that are not ego-involved in their consumer-program relationship, but they have other reasons for liking and engaging their favorite program. In other words, they are more or less unresponsive to the identity-proposals suggested by their favorite program.

Goodness of this four-group cluster solution can be evaluated based on analysis of variance and equality of means between the groups. Findings from the Anova-analysis are illustrated in Table 36. It appears that all values for F-test are significant at the level of .000. Thus the test rejects the null hypothesis that means of the groups with regard to the five variables (attachment, fandom, modeling, self-connection and emotional attachment) would be equal. In particular, Tukey's test (in Appendix 12) validates that there are significant mean differences (at the .05 level) between the four groups with regard to attachment and self-connection variables. However, not all groups differ in terms of all variables. There are no statistically significant differences between rejectors and self-reflectors with regard to fandom variable. Moreover, rejectors and fans do not differ with regard to modeling-variable. In addition, self-identifiers and self-reflectors have equally high means in this modeling-variable. Finally, self-reflectors and fans do not differ in terms of their level of emotional attachment.

Table 36. Anova-table for the five variables in cluster analysis

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Attachment	Between Groups	185.058	3	61.686	129.621	.000
	Within Groups	168.942	355	.476		
	Total	354.000	358			
Fandom	Between Groups	164.562	3	54.854	101.192	.000
	Within Groups	192.438	355	.542		
	Total	357.000	358			
Modeling	Between Groups	199.487	3	66.496	149.867	.000
	Within Groups	157.513	355	.444		
	Total	357.000	358			
Self-connection	Between Groups	194.680	3	64.893	141.056	.000
	Within Groups	163.320	355	.460		
	Total	358.000	358			
Emotional attachment	Between Groups	210.208	3	70.069	170.616	.000
	Within Groups	145.792	355	.411		
	Total	356.000	358			

Finally, validity of the clusters was confirmed by randomly splitting half the data and analyzing whether the structure of the clusters holds. Four-cluster solution is provided in Table 37. It appears that the same kinds of clusters could be identified also in this data. However, the relative strength of each clusters somewhat changes. Now, the number of rejectors is the biggest one with a share of 27.2 %. There are 25.3 % of self-reflectors, 23.8 % of fans, and 23.8 % of self-identifiers.

Table 37. Final cluster centers and Anova-statistics for the five variables in a randomly splitted data (n202)

	<i>Clusters</i>				<i>F-value</i>	<i>p</i>
	SELF-REFLECTORS (n51) 25.3 %	REJECTORS (n55) 27.2 %	FANS (n48) 23.8 %	SELF-IDENTIFIERS (n48) 23.8 %		
ATTACHMENT	.36272	-1.02881	-.11988	.71331	69.236	.000
FANDOM	-.51557	-.80953	.49518	.90857	68.934	.000
MODELING	.75926	-.82334	-.64124	.81931	94.225	.000
SELF-CONNECTION	.21042	-1.03429	-.27643	.97478	79.269	.000
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT	-.18049	-.97943	.04222	1.14914	90.549	.000

Based on good F-values (from 69,236 to 94,225) at a significant level .000, we can conclude that also randomly splitted data provides a cluster solution that meaningfully distinguishes between clusters based on the variables under investigation.

6.3.3 *Profiles of the cluster members*

The four clusters are now to be compared and profiled with regard to important aspects of consumer-program relationships. It is interesting to find out whether genre or type of the favorite program can explain differences across the clusters. Moreover, the clusters are compared with regard to age and gender of the cluster members. Differences in general reasons for favoring a program and level of being hooked on watching it are analyzed as well across the four clusters. Because the genre of foreign fiction, the program type of soap, and the amount of young and female respondents were overpowering in the data, it is reasonable to compare their relative shares within clusters instead of their frequencies in comparison with other possible categories of responses/respondents.

Profiles of the clusters are illustrated in Table 38. with regard to distributions of genre and program types of the favorite programs as well as general reasons for liking a program and examples of the most typically chosen programs in each cluster. Backgrounds of the cluster members are compared with regard to distribution of gender and age group. Finally, differences in the level of being hooked on watching a favorite program are illustrated in the end of the table. Also the percentual shares in the whole sample (n359) are provided in the fifth column in order to better recognize the significant deviations from the average.

We can see some significant differences but also similarities across the clusters. First of all, Fans tend to favor genres of foreign fiction and domestic entertainment more typically than other groups, whereas favorite programs of the group of Rejectors belong to foreign entertainment and domestic fiction more often than when considering other three groups of respondents. Interestingly, viewers of factual programs situate in the group of Self-identifiers above the average.

What comes to program types, Fans' programs come under crime drama and sci-fi/fantasy/horror more often than other groups' favorite programs. Accordingly, their favorite programs include CSI and Heroes. Rejectors, for one, have favorite programs that are typically soap, action/thriller/adventure or reality TV. Basically, their favorite programs include *Salatut elämät*, *Lost* and *Prison Break*. Self-reflectors' favorite programs include drama, hospital drama and animation/anime, specific programs such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *the Simpsons* above average. Finally, Self-identifiers have chosen a favorite program which belongs to drama-comedy/sitcom or lifestyle/travelling/food more often than viewers in other groups.

With regard to general reasons for favoring a specific program, self-identifiers differ from other groups by having more reasons for watching their favorite pro-

gram. They score higher than other groups on all three general reasons, namely favoring characters, plotline and genre of the program. The group of rejectors, for one, does not find these general reasons as equally valid but they have the lowest shares. When analyzing “other reasons” that the respondents mentioned, the rejectors seem often to reason their choice of program with its ability to hook people on watching, whereas the fans find their favorite program entertaining and different. The self-reflectors like the feeling of the realism of their favorite program, and the self-identifiers find their favorite program to correspond with their specific taste and interests.

Table 38. Cluster profiles (n359)

	<i>Fans</i>	<i>Rejectors</i>	<i>Self-reflectors</i>	<i>Self-identifiers</i>	<i>The whole sample</i>
Genre of the favorite program	%	%	%	%	%
Foreign fiction	69.7	62.0	67.9	68.2	66.9
Domestic entertainment	6.7	4.3	1.8	4.5	4.2
Foreign entertainment	3.4	10.9	6.3	1.5	5.8
Domestic fiction	15.7	20.7	15.2	16.7	17.0
Factual programs	4.5	2.2	8.9	9.1	6.1
Program type	%	%	%	%	%
Soap	23.6	27.2	16.1	24.2	22.3
Drama	5.6	10.9	16.1	13.6	11.7
Crime drama	14.6	10.9	10.7	10.6	11.7
Drama comedy/sitcom	9.0	9.8	13.4	15.2	11.7
Hospital drama	6.7	9.8	10.7	3.0	8.1
Action, thriller, adventure	11.2	13.0	5.4	7.6	9.2
Sci-fi, fantasy, horror	11.2	1.1	5.4	6.1	5.8
Animation, anime	4.5	1.1	5.4	4.5	3.9
Entertainment, quiz show	3.4	3.3	0.9	3.0	2.5
Reality TV	4.5	10.9	6.3	1.5	6.1
Lifestyle, travelling, food	1.1	1.1	5.4	6.1	3.3
Documentary, current affairs	4.5	1.1	4.5	4.5	3.6
General reasons for liking the program	%	%	%	%	%
I especially like the characters.	49.4	37.0	52.7	66.7	50.4
I especially like the story-line/theme.	71.9	55.4	67.9	74.2	66.9
I like to watch these kinds of programs in general.	46.1	39.1	39.3	59.1	44.6
Some other reason (typical reason)	11.2	18.5	16.1	13.6	15.0
	(it's entertaining, different)	(it's hooking)	(it's reality-based)	(it corresponds with own interests)	

Table 38 continues

	<i>Fans</i>	<i>Rejectors</i>	<i>Self-reflectors</i>	<i>Self-identifiers</i>	<i>The whole sample</i>
Examples of typical favorite programs	Salatut elämät, CSI, Heroes, Prison Break	Salatut elämät, Lost, Grey's Anatomy, Prison Break	Salatut elämät, Grey's Anatomy, Madventures, The Simpsons	Salatut elämät, Skins, CSI, The L word	Salatut elämät, Lost, CSI, Prison Break, Grey's Anatomy
Gender	%	%	%	%	%
Female	77.5	72.8	55.4	66.7	67.4
Male	22.5	27.2	44.6	33.3	32.6
Age	%	%	%	%	%
10-19	25.8	17.4	30.6	56.1	30.7
20-29	29.2	31.5	30.6	16.7	27.9
30-39	12.4	19.6	18.0	9.1	15.4
40-49	16.9	19.6	13.5	9.1	15.1
50+	15.7	12.0	7.2	9.1	10.9
Level of being hooked on watching favorite program	%	%	%	%	%
Totally hooked	46.1	18.7	33.0	71.2	39.7
Somewhat hooked	48.3	58.2	50.9	27.3	47.8
Not very / at all hooked	5.6	23.1	33.0	1.5	12.6

As it was observed also earlier in this study, the share of women in this sample is bigger than that of men. Even more so, this is the case in the group of Fans. In the group of Self-reflectors, for one, men are over-presented. In terms of age groups, Self-identifiers are mainly young from 10 to 19 year olds, whereas rejectors are a bit older people, especially from 20 to 49 years old. The oldest age group, 50+, is represented in the group of fans above average. Finally, we may recognize that the four groups differ also in terms of the level of being hooked. Self-identifiers are typically "totally hooked" on watching their favorite program (71.2 %), whereas rejectors are least so (46.1 %).

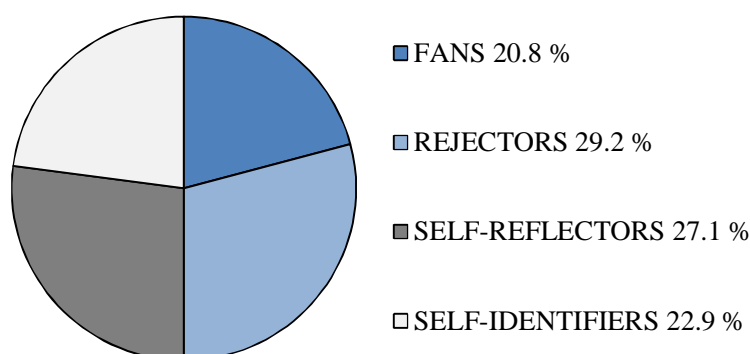


Figure 26. Relative shares of cluster members within respondents who have *Salatut elämät* -soap as their favorite program (n48)

Finally, as an example of differences in consumer-program relationships, Figure 26 illustrates the division of the four clusters within viewers of *Salatut elämät* - soap opera. We may notice that all four kinds of consumer-program relationships can exist with a single program. This finding highlights that resulted relationship is not that dependent on the program, but how the viewer self realizes program's lived meaning. Interestingly, this finding also points out that even though soap operas are having top places in the audience ratings they seem not to evoke the strongest identity bonds.

6.4 Summary of the findings on the empirical nature of consumer-program relationships

Chapter 6 has introduced findings from the online survey on consumers' relationships with their favorite TV programs. Analysis of the findings was guided by the third research question of this study, namely "*How does identity-related consumption of television programs become evident among television viewers?*" Thus, the third aim of this study was to specify how and to what extent consumers use TV programs as resources for their identity.

Empirical examination of the levels of connectedness, attachment, emotional attachment, and self-connection helped us to reveal general tendencies and facets of identity bonds with favorite television programs, and to constitute profiles of the respondents based on their consumer-program relationships. Analysis of the nature of self- and social-identification among the TV viewers, and the level of be-

ing hooked on watching a favorite program gave additional insights into this analysis.

The propositions P2-P6 about the nature of consumer-program relationships were under examination in this chapter. Conclusions about their accuracy are summarized in Table 39.

We may notice that the propositions P2-P4 are only partly supported because, even though the conceptual dimensions are empirically recognizable in the survey data, respondents who are attached, connected, and self-connected are in the minority of the respondents. Moreover, in many cases, not all of the sub-dimensions of these concepts were manifested as equally strong. When it comes to proposition P5, there is a strong support for positive correlation between the level of being hooked and the strength of identity bond with a program. Thus, P5 is supported.

The sixth proposition was divided into several sub-propositions, all of which are not supported based on the empirical findings. It appeared that viewer characteristics, production of TV programs and other consumers do influence how the consumer-program relationship results, but not quite in the way it was assumed beforehand. As expected, it was found that there are age-related differences in consumer-program relationships so that young consumers aged 10 to 19 years have stronger identity bonds with their favorite programs than older viewers do. Comparisons between the program genres resulted only a few statistically significant difference, but the more detailed analysis of program types pointed out that there are some differences due to a specific *type* of a program.

Finally, the effects of orientation of self-construal and the fit between own self-concept to a typical viewer profile were investigated. It was found that the respondents typically have a reflective type of self-identification, which means that they have both personal and social determinants when making sense of own self-concept. Moreover, the respondents showed that they especially segment their fellow audience members based on gender, age, and taste for a program, although more specific psychographic bases for segmentation were noticed as well. It appeared that there are some statistically significant differences between the respondents due to the nature of their self-construal and due to the fit to a viewer profile. Surprisingly, the effects were opposite to what was expected based on the literature review. One reason for this may be the way of operationalizing these propositions in this study as, for example, it was noticed that there are several possible modes for coding the self-identification statements. Therefore, especially future research on the propositions P6 c) and d) is encouraged in order to validate the findings.

Table 39. Summary of the findings regarding research propositions

Proposition	Findings
<p>P2 A consumer becomes <i>attached</i> to his/her favorite television program, which means that there is a symbolic bond between the favorite program and the consumer's identity.</p> <p>a) in terms of the emotional intensity and intimacy of the relationship.</p> <p>b) in terms of different temporal orientations (past, present and future) of self.</p> <p>c) in terms of individuation and affiliation, which refers to self-identification that has both inner and outer determinants.</p>	<p>P2 is partially supported. Some of the respondents, however a minority, clearly become attached to their favorite programs. Especially they have emotionally intense bonds with their favorite program, and this bond is expected to stay strong also in the future. Aspects of individuation and affiliation do not seem to differentiate between the respondents.</p>
<p>P3 A consumer becomes connected to his/her favorite program, which means that the favorite program can be seen in his/her personally relevant daily activities.</p> <p>a) seeking escape by watching his/her favorite program.</p> <p>b) favoring the fashion and style in his/her favorite program.</p> <p>c) tending to imitate the characters in his/her favorite program.</p> <p>d) wanting to get inspired by his/her favorite program.</p> <p>e) admiring the setting of his/her favorite program.</p> <p>f) enjoying collecting items that relate to his/her favorite program.</p> <p>g) being active online when it comes to his/her favorite program.</p> <p>h) being directly influenced by his/her favorite program when making consumption choices.</p>	<p>P3 is partially supported. Favorite programs relate especially to the dimensions of escape, fashion, aspiration and information seeking (online or with more traditional methods), whereas dimensions of consumption choices (products indirectly or directly related to the favorite program), and imitation are not among the typical manifestations of connectedness.</p>
<p>P4 A consumer realizes a strong self-connection with his/her favorite television program.</p> <p>a) in terms of self-verification: "this is who I am."</p> <p>b) in terms of self-enhancement: "this is who I would like to be."</p>	<p>P4 is partially supported. The dimensions of <i>self-correspondence</i> and <i>expressed self</i> are more strongly supported than the dimensions of <i>ideal self</i> and <i>image fit</i>. This finding is somewhat controversial since typically ideal self and expressed self would go hand in hand manifesting consumer's striving for self-enhancement. Moreover, it was expected that the findings regarding self-correspondence and image fit would be in line manifesting that there are no gaps between the inner- and outer-oriented types of self-verification.</p>

Table 39 continues

<p>P5 The level of being hooked on the favorite program positively correlates with self-identification.</p> <p>a) The level of being hooked and attachment are positively correlated.</p> <p>b) The level of being hooked and connectedness are positively correlated.</p> <p>c) The level of being hooked and the self-connection with the program are positively correlated.</p>	<p>P5 is supported. Being hooked on watching a favorite program is very common among the TV viewers. Emotional attachment and the level of being hooked are most strongly correlated, whereas attachment has the weakest positive correlation with the level of being hooked. It appears then that stronger identity bond results a higher level of “being hooked”. However, the findings also suggest that it is possible for a viewer to be hooked on watching a program without having an identity-bond with it.</p>
<p>P6 Viewer characteristics, production of TV programs and other consumers influence how the consumer-program relationship results.</p> <p>a) Younger viewers have stronger identity bonds with their favorite program than older viewers.</p> <p>b) There are differences between program genres when it comes to their ability to provide resources for a consumer’s identity construction.</p> <p>c) A consumer who is socially-oriented (i.e. outer-oriented) in his/her self-identification has a stronger identity bond with a favorite program than a consumer who has an independent orientation (i.e. is inner-oriented) in his/her self-identification.</p> <p>d) Imagined similarity with the other viewers of the shared favorite program intensifies the identity bond with the favorite program.</p>	<p>a) supported. Younger viewers have stronger identity-bonds with their favorite program than older viewers.</p> <p>b) partially supported. At the genre level analysis there are no major differences in consumer-program relationships, but when going to a more detailed analysis, we can identify that some program types (such as documentaries, lifestyle programs, animation and sci-fi) are better at evoking identity-related bonds than others (such as reality-TV and action series).</p> <p>c) not supported. It appears that respondents with <i>independent</i> type of self-construal typically form stronger identity bonds with their favorite program than respondents with <i>interdependent</i> orientation in their self-construal.</p> <p>d) not supported. Findings indicate that imagined similarity with other viewers of the same program does not influence the strength of consumer-program relationship. Instead, those who did not have explicitly recognized fit with a typical viewer profile (in terms of age, gender, hobbies, and self-identification statements) received a higher mean especially with regards attachment.</p>

In addition to the examination of above-mentioned propositions, the respondents were grouped based on their consumer-program relationships in the end of this Chapter 6. K-means cluster analysis was the technique that was utilized to produce meaningful groups of respondents. A four-group solution was chosen based on its good interpretability and support from statistical ratios.

The identified groups; self-identifiers, rejectors, fans, and self-reflectors differ from each other in several aspects. It appeared that the group of self-identifiers, (18.4 % of all of the respondents), have the strongest identity bonds with their favorite programs. Typically this group is made of young viewers who are totally hooked on watching their favorite program, such as *Salatut elämät*, *Skins*, *CSI*, or *The L word*. Rejectors (25.6 %), for one, do not have any kind of identity bond with their favorite programs. Moreover, they are least hooked on watching their favorite program. This group is typically made of grown-up viewers who watch programs such as *Salatut elämät*, *Lost*, *Grey's Anatomy*, or *Prison Break*. The group of fans was found to be engaged with their favorite programs in many ways, but not identity-relatedly. They especially enjoy the story line/theme of their favorite program, which often falls under the categories of scifi, fantasy, horror or crime drama. The group of self-reflectors scores high on attachment and modelling dimensions. In other words they realize a symbolic bond with their favorite program. Programs such as *Madventures* or *the Simpsons* stand out in this group.

To sum up this part, we may remind us about the sixth premise that was formulated for this study: *There is a great variation in the practices of media consumption, the contents that are consumed, and the motivations for consuming those.* Along with the empirical findings on consumer-program relationships, especially those of cluster analysis, we can conclude that this premise holds very well.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The interest of this study has been on analyzing symbolic media consumption, especially that of television programs. More specifically the purpose of this study was *to uncover how consumption of television programs and identity construction are connected*. This connection was assumed to involve different ways in which consumers make use of the television programs in order to construct their identities as well as make sense of their selves, others and social relations in their everyday lives. The study was positioned in consumption rather than production side of media with a clear focus on consumer's symbolic meaning making and lived experiences. By doing so, a cognitive and psychological approach was undertaken rather than emphasizing actual media consumption practices or dynamic processes of identity-formation across time.

As a starting point, symbolic interactionism was chosen as the research approach for this study. It points out reciprocal interactions rather than causal effects in human behavior and identity formation. Symbolic interactionism sees identity construction as self-identification through a reflection of meanings that arise in social interactions. This conception brought us to take into account the social nature of meaning making and widen the research interests into social identification and classification of media consumers and media consumption styles. It was asserted that consumer's 1) motivations and goals 2) behavior, and 3) social relations and cultural environment all affect each other when making sense of self within the context of media consumption.

With regard to theoretical choices, a relationship-perspective to media consumption was adopted in this study. Thus it was put across that consumers form parasocial relationships with the objects of consumption, such as their favorite TV programs. Accordingly, a conceptual framework of this study was built upon relationship-based concepts; connectedness, attachment, emotional attachment, and self-connection. These concepts are able to address different behavioral, affective and cognitive aspects of identity-bonds. Connectedness brings out the intensity of consumer's relationship with a television program by showing how a television program can extend beyond the viewing situation and become an inherent part of daily life. Attachment manifests and specifies the particular nature and orientation of a consumer-program relationship by showing how consumers can signify television programs in relation to their past, present, and future self. Emotional attachment emphasizes the emotional intensity and intimacy of the relationship. Finally self-connection helps us to assess television program's fit to consumer's identity projects and life themes.

Methodologically this study has employed methodological pluralism, which adds rigor and breadth to the analyses. The study was divided into two distinct phases of data gathering and analysis; qualitative pre-study and quantitative main study. The aim of qualitative study phase was to gain insights into relevant areas of symbolic media consumption in terms of identity-construction. A constitution of narratives, diaries, vignettes, and interviews on media consumption shed light on those contents of media consumption (media consumption styles, media-related identity projects, private and common meanings as well as social judgments of media consumption) that open up what symbolic media consumption is all about. It was recognized that media consumption connects with identity construction at three different levels of abstraction; 1) daily routines and styles of media consumption can be a relevant part of consumer's lifestyle, and that way act as signifiers of identity, 2) media consumption can be motivated by consumer's life themes, goals, and identity projects, and that way manifest significant aspects of those, 3) consumers can identify other people and themselves based on their preferences for media products, and that way constitute taste-based groupings (segments) of consumers. Accordingly, identity-bond with media was found to actualize following both top-down principle and bottom-up principle in identity construction. Moreover, media consumption was found to attach to both individual and social identity of consumer as it provides resources for understanding self and others in one's social encounters.

Pre-study phase guided the theory construction and consequent quantitative study phase by suggesting that media consumers identify themselves reflectively and they segment other audience members especially based on their age, gender, and taste for media products. It was also found that the incorporation of media into self-concept is a multifaceted phenomenon since it may be grounded media content's fit with own preferences, personality traits, ideal self, media consumption style, or identity projects in a specific life stage. Literature review further clarified the nomological network. Six propositions concerning conceptual properties and empirical nature of consumer-program relationships were posed and examined in the main study phase, of which data gathering was conducted with an online survey on consumers' relationships with their favorite TV programs. The quantitative main study phase proved the tentative ideas on conceptual structure valid and at the same time advanced the measurement issues of identity-related media consumption. Further analyses of the characteristics of respondents' relationships with their favorite TV programs showed differences in the strength of realized identity-bonds between different age groups, program types, levels of being hooked on watching, and orientations of self-construal. Four distinct groups of consumers in terms of their identity-bonds with favorite programs were identified by the means of cluster analysis; self-reflectors, rejectors, fans, and self-

identifiers. Thus, it was found that there is a great variance in consumer-program relationships what comes to the realized identity-bonds. These findings are limited to concern the nature of consumer-program relationships in the Finnish context and among the young/young adult viewers who constituted the majority of the survey respondents. Therefore future studies are encouraged to validate the findings.

Next it is time to assess how this study contributes to conceptual, methodological, and substantive domains (as it was addressed in Figure 7). Thus, the contribution of this study is discussed in terms of theory-development, methodological advances, and practical implications. Then, aspects of validity and reliability are in the focus, after which limitations and avenues for future research will be pointed out.

7.1 Theoretical contribution of the study

This study contributes to the research on symbolic consumption by providing understanding of identity construction within the field of media consumption, with a specific focus on consumer-program relationships. Previous research on symbolic consumption has mainly touched upon the role of tangible products and brands in consumers' identity construction. According to symbolic consumption literature we may state that 'we are what we have and consume'. In this spirit, we may see that media contents may have characteristics that consumers can relate to and identify with. Along with the study this premise has gained support since it was found that some consumers do form strong identity-bonds with their favorite TV programs.

Despite of the wide recognition of the importance of media consumption to consumer's lifestyle and identity-formation, previous empirical research has primarily examined other perspectives on media consumption. These studies have especially focused on 1) describing media consumption practices (under the stream of media ethnography), 2) general developments in media usage across time (audience ratings and statistical descriptives), 3) typologies of motives for media use (under uses and gratifications studies), or 4) situation- and content -specific interpretations (under media reception studies). This study at hand develops understanding on how media consumption and related meanings are used as resources for identity construction. Hereby the study brings longed-for empirical insights into the phenomenon of identity-related media consumption from a consumer research perspective. Thus, the focus has not been on what media does to a consumer, but what a consumer does to the media.

Identity is a rather complex construct to take a grip on. This study has approached identity formation from symbolic interactionism perspective and pointed out some important facets of identity that have been neglected in many previous studies. Thanks to a careful reading of identity-research, this study has avoided having a one-legged view to identity-related consumption. Along with the theoretical discussion and empirical findings of this study, we have been able to make a distinction between what is meant by lifestyle and identity, but also to connect those in a logical manner. All this improves and sophisticates current understanding of symbolic media consumption as well.

Finally, this study contributes to the theory-development of identity-related consumption. One of the remarkable contributions of this study relates to the development of modeling and measuring of identity-related media consumption, which (according to own knowledge) has not been done in the previous literature in this extent. Different concepts, which have previously been kept apart, have been amalgamated along with this study. Thereby this study creates parsimony by integrating distinct pieces into a unified whole. Zaltman, Lemasters and Heffring (1982: 80) remind us that “in reference to any theory, it is the relationship of these constructs that is significant.” Therefore, one of the contributions of this study is to illustrate how different concepts are related to each other, rather than launching a once more concept to the already heterogeneous field of consumption studies. Also the nomological network with attitudinal antecedents and behavioral consequences of consumers’ strong relationships with consumption objects has been clarified in this study, which helps to situate further research in this theoretical area.

7.2 Methodological advances of the study

This study has developed from broad, research philosophical, paradigm choices, to qualitative explorations and specific quantitative measurements. Along the way, insights into the phenomenon of identity-related media consumption have gained richness, depth and precision.

As a starting point for the research process, it was suggested that a researcher should not focus only on media usage or plain attitudes towards media products if he/she wants to understand symbolic media consumption. Instead, the research tradition of symbolic interactionism advises us to focus on the meanings that arise in social interactions. Relationship-based approach to consumer behavior further addresses that the understanding of the quality of consumer-object relationships brings out how significant the object of consumption is with regard to consumer’s

identity issues. Following these two threads, this study was conducted by focusing on meanings and relationships.

Qualitative pre-study phase focused on exploring meanings that arise in media consumption. For this task various qualitative methods were successfully applied. Media consumption narratives were good at eliciting talk about media consumption styles and about the instrumental value that media vehicles have in the lives of university students. However, as a recognized disadvantage of this method, narrative accounts somewhat suffered from lack of detail and depth. Diaries pointed out well the daily media consumption choices and practices, however as such they did not provide explanations for the behaviors. Interviews with specific projective techniques were good at opening up various identity-related individual and shared meanings that arise in media consumption. However, without information gained in preceding data gathering phases, it would have been difficult to plan and prepare themes for the interview. Together these data complemented each other and they were able to provide a multifaceted account of symbolic media consumption. However, one of the conclusions in the qualitative phase was that it is rather difficult for the respondents to directly talk about such abstract things as identity and identity-related consumption, but they need specific questions to which answer. Moreover, in order to interweave pieces of empirical findings together, a look at theoretical ideas on identity-related consumption was needed.

Along with the literature review, findings from the pre-study phase were placed into the nomological network of identity-related consumption. Dialogue with qualitative findings and previous literature resulted in a focus on investigating consumers' relationships with their favorite TV programs. It was noticed that empirical research on consumer-program relationships would cover important dimensions of identity-related media consumption in a holistic manner. Use of existing measurement scales was possible with minor modifications, which improves reliability of the empirical study. Moreover, in order to have a chance to empirically test conceptual properties of the phenomenon, correlational data (achieved with quantitative methods) was needed. Due to a rather extensive conceptual framework, it was decided to choose only one type of media contents under investigation to ease empirical work load. Findings from qualitative pre-study spoke up for the choice of favorite television programs since television programs were noticed to evoke versatile symbolic meanings, and especially the favorite contents were notified as the most self-relevant media contents.

When turning to the quantitative study phase, it was important to make sure that appropriate sample could be achieved. The choice of a website called Telkku.com

helped to find people who are high-involved in their television use and who are likely to have a favorite program, based on which to answer the survey. Thus the choice of purposive sampling was justified in this study. Scales for measuring consumer-program relationships managed to result a good internal consistency, which is also proved by a structural model of self-identification in consumer-program relationships.

As a whole this study is a good example of sophisticated consumer research that benefits from a triangulation as regards used methods, theoretical perspectives, and researchers (as aid of interpreting self-identification statements). Taking account of reciprocal interactions in symbolic media consumption widened the research perspectives and demanded some extra efforts by the researcher. Hopefully, this study has managed to open up to a reader as a clear piece of research despite of its multi-sided nature.

7.3 Managerial and practical implications of the study

Although this study could be best situated under basic research, findings of this study have possible managerial and practical contributions as well. In addition to finding key dimensions and structure of identity-related media consumption, this study has provided a great deal of information and examples about consumers' relationships with their favorite programs. For example, profiling of the respondents into meaningful groups with a means of cluster analysis added to the contributions of this study when enabling differentiation between the television viewers.

This study should be of interest to media producers, media marketing planners, and brand managers, since it is relevant for those who wish to understand the management of value creation in the production of television programming as well as the allocation of the media marketing efforts. Accordingly, media producers should take into account the different dimensions of consumer-program relationships if they wish to understand the nature of media consumption in general, and how the value of their own media product is created, in particular. They might especially benefit from investing resources in building intense and deep relationships with the consumers, since in the future it seems likely that there will be more fragmented markets with more passionate viewers who are also willing to pay for the media contents of their preference. The share of pay-tv in Finland has increased in the recent years, which highlights the fact that TV programs have essentially become more like products that are purchased by the consumers.

By providing a conceptual framework and a measurement scale for analyzing consumer-program relationships, this study advances the understanding of TV programming's value in use. As a whole, this study highlights the necessity of assessing brand value and advertising effectiveness from a consumer's point of view, which is especially important in highly competed markets. It is not the amount but the intensity that relates to the phenomenon of identity-related consumption of television programming. Even though findings of this study point out that behavior of the viewer (e.g. being hooked on watching) goes hand in hand with the strength of the identity-bond, there are more shades in media consumption than usage measures can address. Therefore, marketing potential should evaluate media not only based on exposure but also on the strength of relevant experiences provided by the media context.

Television programs are commodities as well as other cultural products. Therefore, their production involves both financial and creative considerations. On one hand, TV institutions are in the business of 'delivering audiences to advertisers' (see Moores 1993: 2–3), on the other hand they strive for programming of higher quality which might go beyond commercial attractiveness. As regards commercial forces, it is obvious that advertisers are ready to pay for reaching the right audience. In this task, the study at hand helps to identify audience members with strong consumer-program relationships.

Bowden (2009: 64), among other experts in the area of marketing, sees that there is a need for the development of measurement models that would account for the depth of customers' emotional responses to consumption situations and the evolvement of customer-brand relationships through accumulated experiences. Segmenting consumers based on consumer-program relationships seems promising since it offers deeper and more complete understanding about the liking of a specific program than would plain attitude/motivation or demographic-based segmentation provide for media marketers. It is possible to assess the extent to which the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the consumer-program relationships operate for different customer segments. With the help of this study media practitioners should better understand the mechanisms and conditions of why and how existing and/or potential customers develop their loyalty to a media product. In other words, the proposed model can be a useful tool for practitioners in the field of media marketing when monitoring the development and strength of people's relationships with media products. What has to be reminded is that not only media environment, but also consumers change across time. Therefore, one should not settle with single studies, but to follow the development of consumer-program relationships across time.

Moreover, a customer-centric approach to media marketing is worth emphasizing. In this spirit, segmentation of audience members could be built not only upon what marketing specialists think of their markets, but also upon consumers' own ideas about the viewer segments. Along with the analysis of self- and social identification of consumers, it was recognized that there are various groups and characteristics that consumers can identify with. It would be interesting to test in practice, what would be the impact of making social self-identification more salient among the audience members, in other words to even inform audience members about the viewer profiles the programs.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that merchandization of TV programs, such as product placement in TV programs, has not really caught on within TV viewers. This is something that requires attention and the development of product placements to avoid a waste of money and efforts. Of course, we have to remember that findings of this study are based on viewers' own accounts of the influence of a favorite program to their consumption. In reality, this influence may be more profound than consumers self realize or are willing to admit.

7.4 Evaluation of validity and reliability

Aspects of validity and reliability are of interest when evaluating the success of the research process and limitations when generalizing the empirical findings. Brinberg and McGrath (1985) outline that validity of a research process is built upon: 1) validity as value, 2) validity as correspondence, and 3) validity as robustness.

There are somewhat different criteria for *validity as value* with regard to methodological, conceptual and substantive domains of research. Methodological domain is valued by generalizability, precision and realism of the findings, whereas conceptual domain is valued by parsimony, scope (i.e. comprehensiveness), and ability to differentiate between constructs. The value of substantive domain is judged based on one hand its ability to provide well-being for the system under investigation (i.e. individuals, organizations, and so on), and on the other hand on its harmless to that system. However, all of these criteria cannot be maximized at the same time, but value of a research becomes a matter of compromises and finding an appropriate research orientation. The study at hand has followed a theoretical path with a predominant basic research orientation. Thus the aspects of validity as value should address a good *construct validity*, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 7.4.1.

Validity as correspondence relates to ‘matching tasks’ of the research, which basically refer to bridging of conceptual, substantive, and methodological domains into a unified whole. Correspondence can be achieved by a systematic research design and its implementation (i.e. how constructs are made observable). These aspects of validity improve *content validity*, which will be discussed in Section 7.4.2.

Validity as robustness relates to the probability of replicating the findings. In other words, if the study were repeated in a same manner by another researcher, the results would stay the same. Robustness relates also to convergence of the findings, which means that the findings should hold despite of different samples of population. Thirdly, robustness relates to searching for the boundaries for the application and explication of the findings. These qualities improve *external validity* and *reliability* of the study, which will be discussed in Section 7.4.3.

7.4.1 Construct validity

Zaltman et al. (1973: 44) define that construct validity is “the extent to which an operationalization *measures* the concept which it purports to *measure*.” Since constructs are terms that cannot be observed through either direct or indirect means but that can be applied on the basis of observables, operationalization is not an easy task for a researcher (Zaltman, Lemasters & Heffring 1982: 80).

A nomological network concerning antecedents and consequences of strong consumer-program relationship, as well as a tentative conceptual framework were proposed based on the careful and extensive literature review. Construct validity was put to the test in Chapter 5 when constructing a structural model on self-identification in consumer-program relationships. Along with the examination of conceptual properties it was possible to address convergence of different concepts but also the distinction between them. Attitudinal antecedents and behavioral consequences were identified, but not empirically examined, except the level of being hooked.

Findings from pre-study phase and main study phase complement each other rather than contradict, which further supports the achievement of construct validity in this study. The findings of online survey managed to illustrate meaningful differences between respondents in terms of the strength of consumer-program relationships, thus operationalization of the construct of identity related media consumption succeeded.

7.4.2 *Content validity*

Zaltman et al. (1973: 44) define that content validity is “the degree to which an operationalization *represents* the concept about which generalizations are to be made.” Content validity of this research has been improved by combining insights gained from pre-study phase and extensive literature review to the quantitative survey phase. In practice, this study has aimed to operationalize identity-related media consumption, which can be itemized as concerning contents of *identity* and *consumer-program relationships*.

Already in the beginning of the research it was noticed that the concept of identity in need of clarification as it can be understood in various ways. Three distinct characteristics of identity were identified and taken into account in this study. First, dynamic, instead of stable nature of identity was acknowledged. Therefore, temporality of identity-bond with television program (with past, present and future self) was examined. Secondly, the different orientations of self on a continuum of independent-interdependent self were taken into account when studying identity-related consumption of television programs. Basically, inner (self-correspondence) and outer oriented (image fit) identity-bonds with television programs were examined. This choice was supported also by the research approach of symbolic interactionism adopted in this study. Thirdly, actual versus ideal self with regard to media consumption was examined as media product can relate to self-verification but also to self-enhancement. Based on the ideas of goal-oriented consumer behavior and symbolic consumption, it was assumed that individual's media preferences and choices, as well as expressions of those, are guided by one's conception of ideal self and, how he/she would want to be perceived by other people.

The construction of identity in consumer-program relationships was operationalized based on three key concepts; connectedness, attachment and self-connection with the help of previous relationship-based literature on identity-related consumption. Together these concepts were able to cover behavioral, psychological/emotional, and cognitive/evaluative aspects of realized identity-bonds with television programs in a holistic manner. Even though the survey was limited to focus only on favorite TV programs, data turned out to cover various program types and respondents with different backgrounds. The four types of consumer-program relationships that were identified along with the cluster analysis do not cover all of the possible relationships that consumers may have with television programs, but that was not even the aim of this study. The focus of this research was on active and meaningful side of media consumption that would connect to identity construction.

7.4.3 *External validity and reliability*

Without validity aspects discussed above there can be no reliability concerning the results. In this study, the aim has been on providing clarity as regards the interpretations, the assertions, and the research procedures. Citations from qualitative data, descriptive statistics from survey data, and several appendices relating to the research procedures have hopefully been of good assistance to the reader when evaluating credibility of the findings.

When qualitative pre-study phase did not strive for statistical generalization of the results or replication of the research setting as such, external validity and reliability were the concern of quantitative main study phase. First of all a sufficient sample size was achieved to enable multivariate analyses and statistical significance. Statistical tests were applied to ensure reliability and robustness of the findings. Only findings with statistical significance were introduced to avoid any misleading concerning the results. Repeatability of the study is supported by the survey design, which available in the Appendix 7.

Naturally the scope of the study is somewhat limited and there are some concerns regarding the generalization of the results to other populations and media vehicles. In this regard, the study at hand would benefit from support of future studies ahead. Next section points out the limitations of this study and points out avenues for future research.

7.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

Several limitations should be pointed out. First, all of the measures in the survey were perceptual, which means that there is a place for perceptual errors and misunderstandings when answering the survey. We have had to lean on consumers' self-reports on their media consumption. Therefore, only conscious media consumption and identity connections are reached in this study. Based on the survey data any causal relationships are difficult to assess. Moreover, the research approach of symbolic interactionism points up reciprocal relationships. That is why the findings address correlations between the variables instead of causality.

Data of the online survey were collected in Finland and only among those viewers who visit Telkku.com web site. This of course becomes a limitation when generalizing the results of this study. That is why validation of the conceptual model and the empirical findings is still needed, and future studies on consumer-program relationships are encouraged. Also the measurement of scales can be further im-

proved and developed. For example, fit of the TV program with consumer's values can be taken into account as one relevant dimension of identity-bond. Also the use of inverse statements should be carefully considered in the future studies since in this study they posed a cause for a bias.

In this study, only age and gender of the respondents and program genres were analyzed as moderator variables. However, more background information, such as income level, and educational background of the respondent could be investigated in order to gain insights into the differences of consumers what comes to their inclination to identity-related media consumption. This study wanted to cast a wider net by targeting a much broader segment of the television viewers, not to focus on a specific program, genre or type of viewer. However, more specific analysis of the television programs would benefit the comparison of different programs what comes to their ability to connect with consumer's identity construction. Thus, in the future, it will be interesting to study identity construction more program-specifically, especially the field of lifestyle programming and those television programs that have active fan forums or heavy product placement efforts. Also 'advertainment' and 'advertorial' -productions provide interesting contexts for identity-related consumption research since they represent recent thinking on how to replace traditional advertisements by entwining media consumption and advertising more tightly together.

Willingness to pay for television content could be a fruitful topic of research as the number of channels of distributed programming is increasing and developing the field of TV markets. More often television programs are being watched web-based. Thus, studying consumer-program relationships in the context of web-based consumption would be insightful as well. There may also be country-specific differences in consumer-program relationships, which were out of the scope of this present study.

Finally, we should point out that the process of identity construction is by no means an uncomplicated phenomenon. We define ourselves through our favorite objects of consumption, but also by addressing the things we do not like or withdrawing from the kinds of consumption practices and situations that we do not prefer. That is why, in addition to investigating consumers' favorite programs in television, we might benefit from elaborating the relationships with hated and disregarded programs as well. In the light of this consumers' resistance movements have gained an increasing interest in the field of consumer culture theory. Finally, it should be reminded that identities are influenced by many things other than media consumption, which certainly deserve research efforts as well when striving to understand the lives of the consumers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Guidelines for the writing of narratives

Kirjoita omasta mediakulutuksestasi tarina, jossa kerrot suhteestasi medioihin, niiden käytöstä ja roolista arjessasi. Voit keskittyä joko yhteen tai moneen mediaan, mutta ethän kirjoita ranskalaisin viivoin vaan kokonaisiin lausein ja luettavalla käsialalla. Esseen pituudella ei ole väliä. Pääasia on, että tuot rehellisesti ja avoimesti esiin asioita, jotka liittyvät medioiden kuluttamiseesi. Sinun ei tarvitse liittää kirjoitukseen nimeäsi, joten säilytät anonyymiutesi. Esseitä käytetään väitöskirjatyössä, jonka tarkoituksena on kehittää mediakulutuksen teoriaa kulutuksen elämäntyyliperustaista ilmiökenttää tutkimalla.

Voit otsikoida kertomuksesi vapaasti tai valita jonkin seuraavista:

Minä ja mediat
Lehdet kulutukseni kohteena
Radio kulutukseni kohteena
Televisio kulutukseni kohteena
Internet kulutukseni kohteena

Kirjoita esim.

- Mitä medioita kulutat, mitä et. Miksi kulutat ja/tai miksi et?
- Mihin/miksi käytät medioita?
- Miten ja milloin kulutat medioita, esimerkiksi jossain tietyssä tilanteessa, seurassa jne.?
- Mitkä ohjelmat/lehdet/kanavat/taajuudet/sivustot jne. ovat suosikkejasi, miksi?
- Mitä ohjelmia/lehtiä/kanavia/taajuuksia/sivustoja jne. inhoat, miksi?
- Millainen mediankuluttaja koet olevasi?
- Ovatko mediat sinulle tärkeitä vai yhdentekeviä, miksi?
- Onko jokin media välttämättömyyshyödyke, jota ilman kukaan ei tulisi toimeen? Onko jokin media sinulle sellainen, joka sinulla on, etkä ilman sitä tulisi toimeen?
- Onko sinulla kokemuksia jostakin uudesta mediasta, millaisia?

Arvostan vaivannäköänne ja apuanne, kiitos!

MEDIAN MÄÄRITELMÄ (Wikipedia): Media on nykyään hyvinkin laaja käsite. Yleiseltä merkitykseltään media on mikä tahansa joukkoviestin. Useimmiten mediallyä tarkoitetaan kuitenkin massamediaa eli joukkotiedotusvälineitä, eli niitä lähettävän median muotoja, joilla voidaan tavoittaa samanaikaisesti suuri yleisö.

Appendix 2. Diary design

DIARY FOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION

The purpose of this preliminary study is to specify the narratives you wrote about media consumption.

Put the consumed media (even if only a little time) to the first column. And describe the media content of that you have seen/heard/read. Another column is for the time and duration of media consumption. Third column is for the context/situation where media has been consumed. That is to say, you should write if you have done something else simultaneously, the reason/motivation for media consumption and with whom did you consume the media. There is more space below the table, where you can add notations that do not fit to the columns. Prefer recording your media consumption promptly and extensively rather than broadmindedly and briefly.

Record all media consumption of one week period. You can choose the starting date, but you should give back the diary by 22.12.06. You can fill the diary in electronical format or print out the pages and handwrite the diary. Please be as accurate and honest as possible, because the diary will be utilized for scientific purposes. If you need any help for the diary, you can ask me either via phone 06 324 8294 / 050 3666 166 or e-mail jeha@uwasa.fi.

Thank you for your help! You get a reward for your efforts when you bring the diary back to me. Room is B326, in Tervahovi building.

Regards, Jenniina

Note! Please write down only one media for one row. That way it is clearer. And remember the media included to the study: television, internet, radio, and the papers.

(Note, small-scaled diary design below)

Media vehicle and content	Date, time and duration	Situation (where, with whom, what else)

Additional information:

Appendix 3. Interview design

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

a) Age b) Major in University c) Mode of living (alone, pets etc.), definition: “where is your home?” d) Do you have a TV? Where and what kind? e) Do you have a radio? Where and what kind? f) Do you have any magazines or news papers on order right now? Why did you wanted to get them and what it is that you read about them? Do you get some papers, even if you don’t want them? Do you read them? Do you keep the papers in safe somehow or throw them away after reading? g) Do you have an internet connection at home? What kind of computer do you have and where is it located in your apartment? h) What do you like to do at home? i) What do you like to do/take an interest outside the home? j) What kind of things are you interested in? k) What is important for you in your life?

2. DIARY

a) Did you have any problems of keeping the diary? If yes, what kind of problems did you have? b) Did your media consumption differ from the usual at the time when you kept the diary? If yes, how and why did it differ from normal media consumption? How about now, is your media consumption different at the moment? If yes, how does it differ? c) What kind of programs you watch regularly and/or occasionally on television? Why? What kind of programs you do not watch? Why is that? d) What do you listen to radio regularly and/or occasionally? What is that you don’t listen to radio, and why? e) What parts of the newspapers and magazines do you read regularly and/or occasionally? Why? What don’t you read, and why is that? f) What sites do you like to surf the Internet regularly and/or occasionally? Why? On what sites do you not visit, and why is that?

3. LIFESTYLE/VIGNETTES

a) Describe by your own words the person that consumes this kind of media contents? What else could he/she consume? What wouldn’t he/she What media contents wouldn’t he/she consume? b) If you were a magazine/newspaper, what would you be? Or if some of the papers/magazines described you, what would that be? Why? c) If you were a television program, what would you be? Or if some of the television programs described you, what would that be? Why? d) If you were an internet site, what would you be? Or if some of the internet sites described you, what would that be? Why? e) If you were a radio channel, what would you be? Or if some of the radio channels described you, what would that be? Why? f) Which newspapers and/or magazines would you want to have, if you got the free of charge? Would you like to have any? Why?

4. MEDIA CONSUMPTION NARRATIVES

a) Why is that the media contents you mentioned in your consumption story appeal to you? b) Why is that the media contents you mentioned in your consumption story annoy you? c) In what kinds of occasions do you watch television? d) In what kinds of occasions do you listen to the radio? e) In what kinds of occasions do you surf the Internet? f) In what kinds of occasions do you read magazines and/or newspapers? g) Is there something about the media that makes you feel happy or glad? h) Is there something about the media that makes you feel confused or unhappy? i) Do you think that you are average media consumer or different than others? Why? j) What kind of person is a good media consumer? What kind of person is not a good media consumer? k) If you didn’t have television, internet, radio or any papers(magazines), what would you acquire first?

Appendix 4. Citations from narratives for different media consumption styles

Media consumption styles	Exemplifying citations
Demanding and critical selector	<p>“My common-law wife is demanding listener of radio. She changes channel immediately if it does not catch her fancy. “ (man 21 about her common-law wife)</p> <p>“I rarely just surf in the web.” (Woman 16)</p>
Private consumer, individual choices	<p>“Sometimes, I may wait for my favorite series next episode for long, and I want to make the watching of it a special moment just for me.” (Woman 20)</p> <p>“Typically I buy magazines that are related to fitness or decoration because those are close to my heart.” (Woman 7)</p>
Reasonable media consumption, not enslaved by the media	<p>“I don’t get withdrawal symptoms if I had to be one week without the presence of media. Thus I can state that I have a balanced relationship with the media.” (Woman 7)</p> <p>“Even though he consumes a lot of media, he is not a slave to certain series” (Woman 29 about her boyfriend).</p>
Active and skillful ‘mixed user’	<p>“He owns all of the possible gadgets and he is more aware of the happenings than STT. He has not spent a without Internet since he got it.” (Man 14 about his friend)</p> <p>“I have become a mixed user of media. I may not always even be aware of it” (Woman 5)</p>
Routinized, loyal media user	<p>“My boyfriend is a real friend of mediums” (Woman 27 about her boyfriend)</p> <p>“I listen to radio always in the mornings while I’m eating and when I am reading a paper. (Man 6)</p> <p>“My favorite is newspaper Kaleva because I have read it since I started reading newspapers in the first place.” (Woman 17)</p>
Carefree and omnivorous surfer	<p>“Sometimes I relax by surfing on the web pages of travel agencies” (Woman 10)</p> <p>“No single media is a necessity for me, as long as I get information somewhere.” (Woman 11)</p> <p>“I am omnivorous what comes to media consumption...It is like a little bit of that and a pinch of that as well.” (Man 13)</p>

Social consumer, 'family viewing'	<p>"Typically I watch the same TV program as my boyfriend does." (Woman 13)</p> <p>"The media have an important role as an entertainment and as a source of information, but also to keep discussions going." (Woman 3)</p> <p>"I often set a date with my friends to watch O.C. together." (Woman 14)</p>
Devouring and even addicted large-scale consumer	<p>"Sometimes it can go a little bit too far, when he has to see every match and to view assembly of the team on web right before the beginning of match." (Man 19 about her brother)</p> <p>"When I think of my girlfriend's relationship with TV, the word necessity is emphasized." (Man 17 about his girlfriend)</p> <p>" 'BigBrotherist' Reino is severely addicted to this reality show. He won't miss a single episode unless with a really good reason." (Man 18 about his friend)</p>
Passive and one-sided user	<p>"I think that my mother could be more active what comes to media use. Currently her relationship with media is rather passive" (Woman 28 about her mother)</p> <p>"My common-law wife has an occupation in which she meets new people. Nice, quiet music is suitable for breaking the ice." (Man 21 about her common-law wife)</p>
Spontaneous and adaptable	<p>"I watch television mainly in winter time and when I'm not busy with school works." (Woman 17)</p>

Appendix 5. Informants in the vignette task

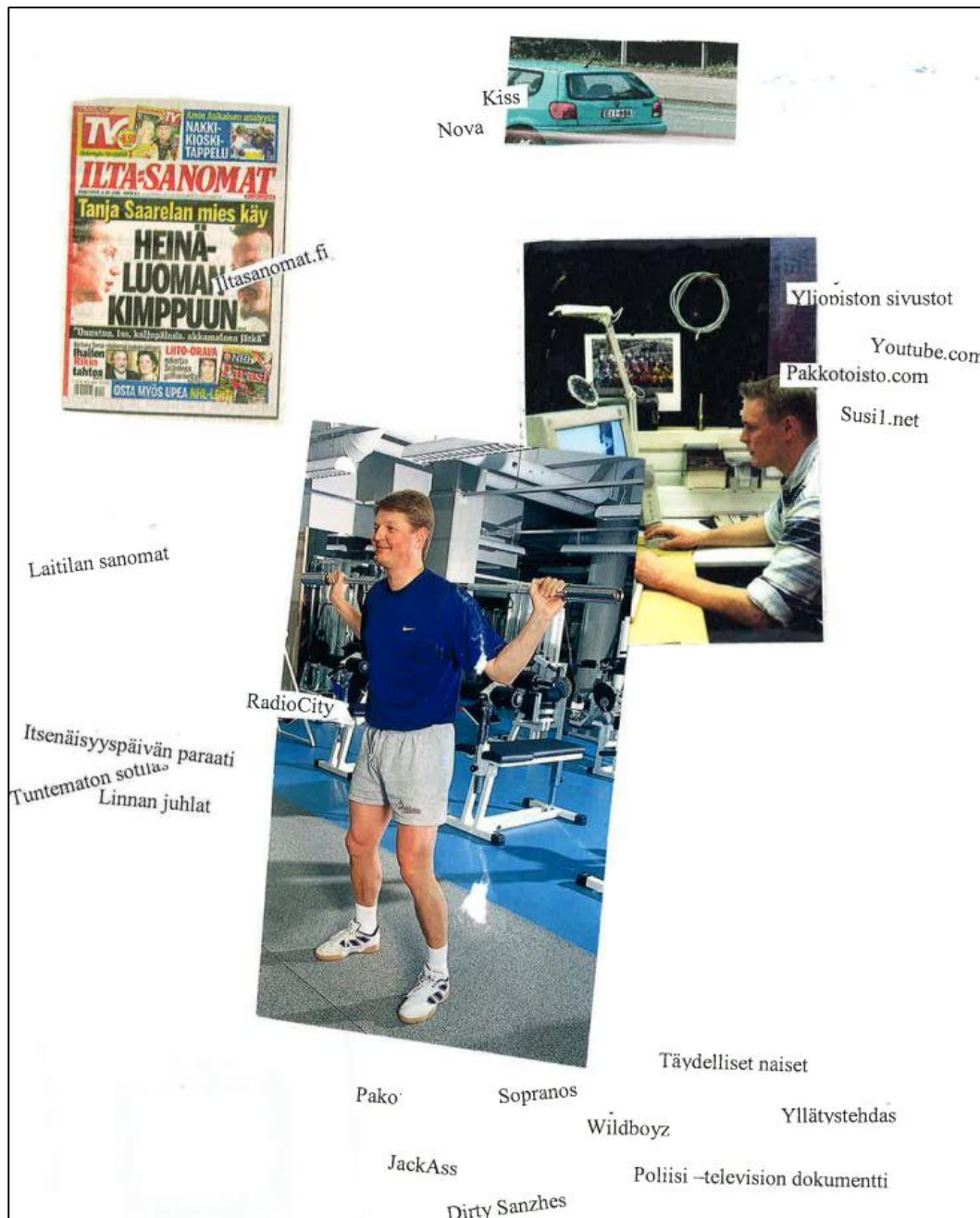
Name	Age	Relationship status	Occupational status	Place of residence	Hobbies and interests	Priorities in life
Andrew	24	Cohabiting	Studies management at the University of Vaasa, graduating soon and getting a job	Hometown Tampere and bedsit apartment in Vaasa	Friends, football, politics, just sleeps and eats at home	To be a smart and balanced person, which is a good start for having things such as family, career and hobbies
Tommy	23	Single	Studies management at the University of Vaasa	Originally from Ylöjärvi, now Vaasa	Coursework, jogging, physical exercise, going out	Graduating and getting a job, closest ones, healthiness, good life, self-actualization, achievement of own goals
Thomas	22	Has a girlfriend, but he lives together with his friends in a bigger apartment	Studies International business at the University of Vaasa	Vaasa, originally from Laitila	Socializes and drinks coffee with his friends at home, watches TV and surfs the web, gym training, jogging and skiing	Healthiness and freedom to choose himself what to do in life
Jack	21	Cohabiting	Studies Marketing at the University of Vaasa	Vaasa, originally from Alajärvi	Watching TV together with girlfriend, jogging, gym training, elk-hunting	Studying, getting a part-time job from which to continue after graduation, to stay healthy, to do whatever he likes and to move on in life
Jonathan	27	Has a girlfriend in Lahti	Studies Marketing at the University of Vaasa, has a part-time job in Lahti	Lives in Lahti and in Vaasa	Cars, media vehicles are all on when he is at home, sports such as badminton, tennis, skiing and gym, current affairs	Health, family, hobbies, friends, having some money

Mary Jo	20	Lives alone, but has a boyfriend who lives in Pori	Studies English at the University of Vaasa	Originally from Harjavalta, now lives in Vaasa	Internet is always on at home, watches TV- series, reads books and magazines, learns Spanish, does some sports, participates in student organizations, interested in societal affairs, foreign cultures, traveling and movies	Family, boyfriend and friends. To be healthy, to study whatever one likes and to someday get a nice job
Kathy	24	Has a boyfriend who lives in Helsinki	Studies Marketing at the University of Vaasa, has a part-time job at a bank	Originally from Tampere, has a single apartment in Vaasa	Listens to music, does some housework, studies, exercises, walks with friends or goes out to have a cup of coffee with them, reads books	Family, friends, freedom to study the thing that one likes and is interested in
Evelyn	25	Has a boyfriend who lives in Tampere	Studies Marketing at the University of Vaasa	Lives with her boyfriend in Tampere, and alone in Vaasa	Interested in studying, dreaming about a vacation, and thinking of what to do in the future, likes to see her friends and relax	To keep on going; mental and physical well-being, family and friends are important as well
Ann	22	Single	Studies Marketing at the University of Vaasa	Originally from Viiala, now lives in Vaasa alone	Does coursework, surfs the web, chats with friends via Messenger or Skype, watches TV and some series from the web, goes jogging, likes to hang around in the city center with friends	Education, family, friends, invest in the future

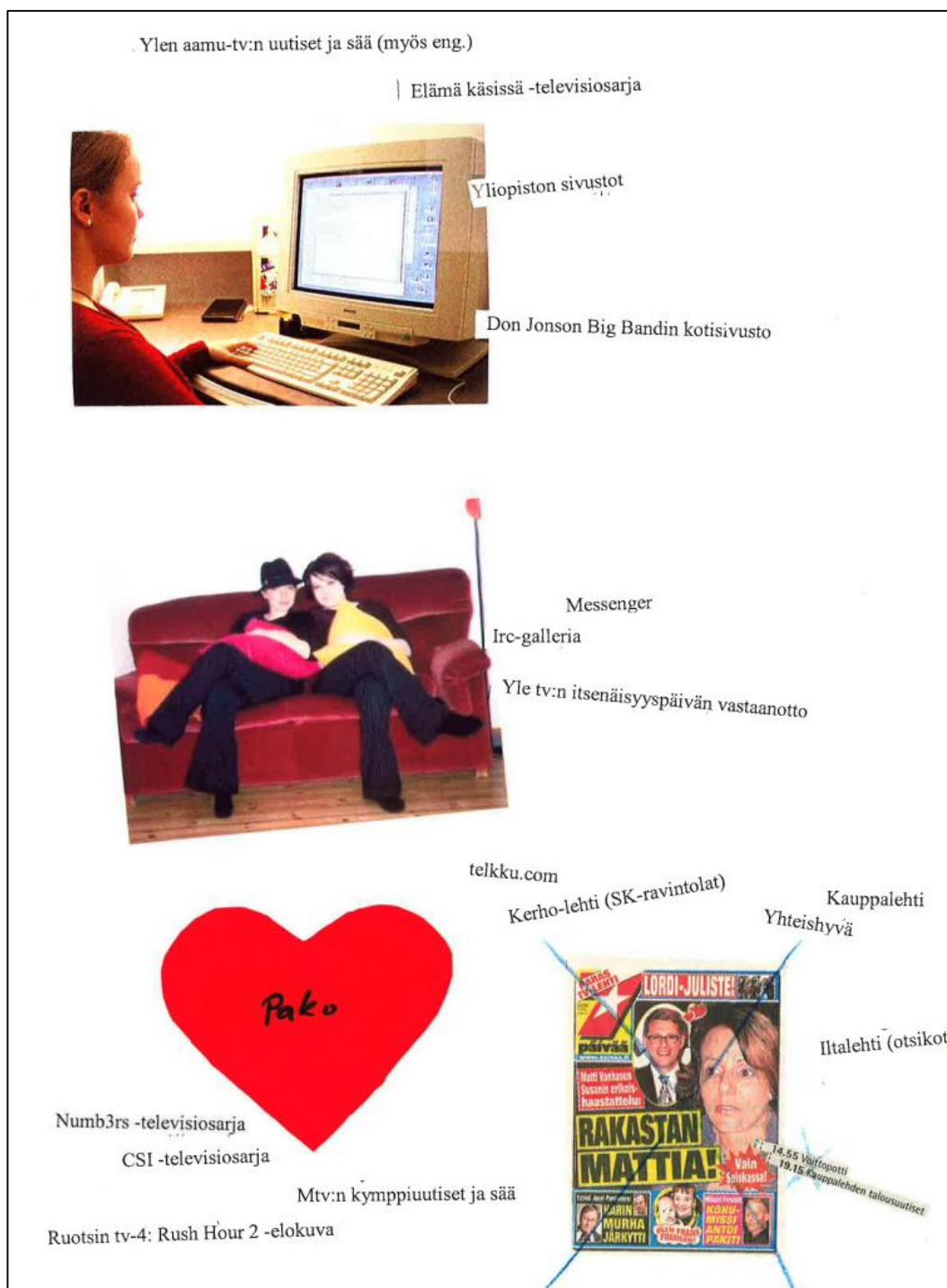
Appendix 6. Vignettes



Kathy's vignette



Thomas' vignette



Ann's vignette

Appendix 7. Survey design in Finnish

Tässä kyselyssä on kysymyksiä suhteestasi suosikkitelevisio-ohjelmaasi. Kyselyyn vastaaminen kestää 10–15 minuuttia.

Kuvaile ensin spontaanisti kolmella eri tavalla/sanalla itseäsi, eli kuka olet ilman, että paljastat oman nimesi.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Luettele muutamia televisio-ohjelmia, joita seuraat/olet seurannut eniten viimeisen vuoden aikana.

Valitse nyt yksi televisio-ohjelma, jota seuraat/olet seurannut televisiosta säännöllisesti/toistuvasti, ja jonka väliin jääminen sinua erityisesti harmittaa. (Vastaukseksi Ei siis käy yksittäinen elokuva, dokumentti tai tapahtuma, vaan sarja tai toistuvasti esitetty ohjelma): Kirjoita tämän suosikkiohjelmasi nimi viivalle: _____

Miksi juuri tämä ohjelma on noussut suosikkiohjelmaksesi? Valitse rastittamalla alla olevista vaihtoehtoista vähintään yksi. Jos valitset kohdan ”jokin muu syy”, tarkenna tätä syytä omin sanoin.

- ☐ Pidän tämän tyyppisistä ohjelmista yleisemminkin.
- ☐ Pidän erityisesti tämän ohjelman juonesta/aihepiiristä.
- ☐ Pidän erityisesti tämän ohjelman henkilöistä.
- ☐ Jokin muu syy. Mikä? _____

Millainen on käsityksesi mukaan tämän ohjelman tyypillinen katsoja? Kuvaile viivalle omin sanoin

Pidä mielessä edellä ilmoittamasi suosikkiohjelmasi. Ympyröi nyt jokaisessa alla olevassa kohdassa sopivin vaihtoehto 1-5 sen perusteella, oletko väitteiden kanssa samaa mieltä vai eri mieltä, kun ajattelet tätä televisio-ohjelmaa. Ympyröi numero 0, jos väitteeseen on mielestäsi vaikea antaa vastausta.

1= täysin eri mieltä

2= eri mieltä

3= neutraali mielipide

4= samaa mieltä

5=täysin samaa mieltä 0= en osaa sanoa/vaikea vastata

<i>1 Väitteet</i>						
Tämä ohjelma auttaa unohtamaan päivän ongelmat/murheet.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Tämä ohjelma saa minut paremmalle tuulelle.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Pidän vaatteista, joita heillä on yllään tässä ohjelmassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Pidän hiustyyleistä, joita näen tässä ohjelmassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Ostan usein sen tyyllisiä vaatteita, joita olen nähnyt tässä ohjelmassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Huomaan joskus matkivani tämän ohjelman hahmo(je)n eleitä tai ilmeitä.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Olen omaksunut joitain tämän ohjelman lausahduksia tai puhetapoja.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Huomaan oppivani tätä ohjelmaa katsomalla asioita omasta elämästäni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Saan tästä ohjelmasta ideoita siihen, kuinka itse eläisin.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Vertaan tämän ohjelman tapahtumia omaan elämäni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Rakastaisin olla mukana tässä ohjelmassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Luen lehti juttuja, uutisia tai kirjoja, jos ne liittyvät tähän ohjelmaan.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Haluaisin tavata tämän ohjelman henkilöitä/hahmoja.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Minulla on tavaroita (julisteita tms.), jotka liittyvät tähän ohjelmaan.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Olen hankkinut itselleni joitakin tuotteita, joita olen nähnyt tässä ohjelmassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Haluan etsiä lisätietoja tästä ohjelmasta Internetistä.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Haluan keskustella tästä ohjelmasta Internetissä.	1	2	3	4	5	0

<i>2 Väitteet</i>						
Se, että seuran tätä ohjelmaa, kertoo jotakin minusta.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Koen samaistuvani tähän ohjelmaan/ohjelman henkilöihin.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Luultavasti mainitsisin suosikkiohjelmani, jos kertoisin itsestäni uudelle tuttavalle.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Tämä ohjelma kuvastaa paljolti sitä, millainen ihminen haluaisin olla.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani ei oikeastaan sovi nykyiseen ”imagooni”.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Luultavasti ystäväni joskus yhdistävät ajatuksissaan minut suosikkiohjelmaani.	1	2	3	4	5	0
En mielelläni kerro muille, että seuran tätä ohjelmaa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Tätä ohjelmaa katsoessani ajattelen usein, että ”tuollainen ihminen en ainakaan haluaisi olla”.	1	2	3	4	5	0

Ympyröi jokaisessa alla olevassa kohdassa sopivin vaihtoehto 1-5 sen perusteella, oletko väitteiden kanssa samaa mieltä vai eri mieltä, kun ajattelet edellä ilmoittamaasi televisio-ohjelmaa. Ympyröi numero 0, jos väitteeseen on mielestäsi vaikea antaa vastausta.

1= täysin eri mieltä

2= eri mieltä

3= neutraali mielipide

4= samaa mieltä

5=täysin samaa mieltä

0= en osaa sanoa/vaikea vastata

<i>3 Väitteet</i>						
Minua ärsyttäisi, jos joku pilkkaisi suosikkiohjelmaani.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Jos en näkisi suosikkiohjelmaani, tuntisin kuin olisin menettänyt osan itsestäni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Minulla ei kummemmin ole tunteita suosikkiohjelmaani kohtaan.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Jos joku ylistäisi suosikkiohjelmaani, tuntuisi kuin joku ylistäisi minua.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Jos suosikkiohjelmani loppuisi, sille ei löytyisi helposti korvaavaa ohjelmaa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Kulkisin ihan mielelläni paidassa, jossa on tämän ohjelman nimi.	1	2	3	4	5	0

<i>4 Väitteet</i>						
Suosikkiohjelmani muistuttaa minua tärkeistä tapahtumista tai saavutuksista elämässäni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani muistuttaa minua siitä, kuka olen joskus ollut.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani vastaa perinteiden/nostalgian kaipuuseeni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani muistuttaa hyvistä ajoista lähimmäisteni kanssa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani saa minut tuntemaan itseni erilaiseksi kuin muut.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani muistuttaa minua ihmisistä, jotka ovat minulle tärkeitä.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani auttaa minua olemaan ajan tasalla asioista.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani liittyy jollakin tavalla tulevaisuuden tavoitteisiini.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani ei oikeastaan kuvasta samanlaisia arvoja kuin itselläni on.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani näyttää, millaiseksi ihmiseksi olen kasvamassa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani ei liity mitenkään siihen, millainen ihminen oikeasti olen.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Seuraan suosikkiohjelmaani vain aikaa kuluttaakseni.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmaani seuraavat kaikki muutkin. Ei siinä ole mitään erikoista.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Suosikkiohjelmani saa tuntemaan itseni erilaiseksi kuin ihmiset, joita ihailen.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Tuskin pitäisin nykyisestä suosikkiohjelmastani enää tulevaisuudessa.	1	2	3	4	5	0
En usko, että tulen säilyttämään suosikkiohjelmastani muistoja (nauhoituksia, julkisteita, jne.)	1	2	3	4	5	0
En halua keskustella suosikkiohjelmastani muiden kanssa.	1	2	3	4	5	0

Kuinka ”koukussa” sanoisit olevasi tähän televisio-ohjelmaan, eli koetko, että sinun on pakko nähdä tämä ohjelma? Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto.

Täysin koukussa

Jonkin verran koukussa

En juurikaan koukussa

En ollenkaan koukussa

Vastaa vielä näihin taustatietokysymyksiin:

Sukupuoli: Nainen_ Mies_ **Syntymävuosi:** 19____

Tärkeimmät/mieluisimmat harrastuksesi ovat:

Olet nyt lomakkeen lopussa.

Kiitos vastauksistasi!

Jos olet kiinnostunut osallistumaan jatkotutkimukseen, jossa sinua haastatellaan television katseluusi liittyen, täytä alla oleville viivoille vielä yhteystietosi. Tällöin tutkija voi ottaa sinuun yhteyttä, mutta sinulla on kuitenkin mahdollisuus kieltäytyä jatkotutkimuksesta. Yhteistietojasi ei käytetä kaupallisiin tarkoituksiin eikä saateta ulkopuolisten tietoon.

Nimi: _____

Puhelinnumero (arkisin klo 8-16): _____

Osoite: _____

Appendix 8. Coding categories I-IV of the Self-identification statements

Coding category	Examples from the empirical data (translated from Finnish to English)
I Independent	<i>“How I see myself”</i>
Personality traits -permanent feature or attitude towards life -pure self-traits	hard working, fireball, smart, right-minded, kind, lazy, laughter, thoughtful, calm, honest, romantic, strict, precise, emotional, extrovert, forgetful, speedy, sensitive, systematic, short-tempered, temperamental, colorful, vivid, dreamer, non-erring, nuts, kind-hearted, frisky, peculiar, creative, optimistic, engrossed, realistic, adventurous, sarcastic, spontaneous, intelligent, bustling, relaxed, open, absent-minded, passionate, sparkling, stubborn, clever, fastidious, broadminded, bore, peppy, dutiful, persistent, cheerful, wild, wit, self-possessed, cool, philosophical, carpe diem -person, selective, perfectionist, decorous, impulsive thinker, gasbag, easily stressed, brisk, enquiring, thinker, fair, crosspatch, imaginative, idealist, realist, conscientious, impatient, practical, sunny, positive, optimist, pessimist, unpredictable, active, hedonist, glad, naïve, curious, skilful, quick to learn
Situation-related traits -changing feature, such as mood, temper	depressed, motivated, full of life, longing, in love, lost now and then, busy, not drunk, without faith, happier, exhausted, weekend in mind, a little bit tired, waiting for summer holidays, on vacation, sick, harassed, on a summer holiday, depressed at times, tired, sometimes hard-working, hopeful
Physical features and age -objective weight, height, appearance -objective, and rather precise age	blonde, short, fat, 162 centimeters tall, tousle-headed, brown-haired, blue-eyed, dark-haired, rather slim, ugly because of pimples, black-haired, short, long-haired, long-bearded, roly-poly, blind, plump, stumpy, buxom, bold, put on weight, tall, wearing glasses, brunette, slender, big-boned, blue-green-eyed, 15 years old, 14 years old, 16 years, almost of age, under 30 years, nearly fifty, nearly sixty
II Reflective	<i>“How I see myself as relation to others”</i>
Self-traits related to others, public identity -subjective and relative rather than objective self-evaluations, beliefs and values	wonderful, patriotic, interesting person, talkative, social, a little shy, super social, stupid, lonely, sympathetic, friendly, super, almost fantastic, agreeable, good at listening, weird, loving, brave, boring, participative, exceptional, isolated, thoughtful, trustworthy, reliable, loyal friend, mindful, pretty perhaps?, patient, trendy, embarrassed, rich, ugly, sociable, malicious, loyal, right-on, ordinary, interested, hillbilly, autonomous, empathetic, blonde who hates it, youthful, the man in the street I guess, has a mind of a twenty-years old, individual, original, independent -yet in a relationship, compelling, story-teller, sociable, irresistible, friend of everybody, world’s cutest, always [his] usual self, liberal, pitiless, extraordinary, great, independent, poor, full of oneself, caring, well-heeled, childlike, at best age, handsome, pretty, funny, crazy, unselfish, conservative, silly, weirdo, absurd, nice, a little bit brutal, without sense of humor, humoristic, good sense of humor, quiet

Behaviour-related lifestyle-related characteristics -preferences, interests, hobbies	movie enthusiastic, sporty, nerd, vegan, drinker, drama enthusiastic, a fan of Johnny Depp, wear black clothes, cycles a lot, musical, player, dynamic, lives in a detached house, watch a lot of TV, friend of music, play video games, artistic, TV watcher, fan of Frasier, sport spectator, dog lover, food lover, rock-spirited, creative craftsman, rocker, animal lover, NO-life person, fan, TV almost always open, TV addict, hooked on American TV-series, deep-seated in front of TV, nature-lover, sophisticated, hippy, lover of punk-rock, movie nerd, homebody, coffee-lover, cyclist, computer user, sport enthusiastic, cat owner, large-scale consumer of TV, watch soap operas/news/documentary, watch TV from dusk till dawn, friend of swimming, techno freak, fond of children, hump-dancer, good at cooking, shy partygoer, very athletic, traveler, watches a little TV, geocacher, Goth, bohemian, urban, multiply skilled person, net maniac, goal keeper, News-addict, sex-addict, swimmer, guitar player, chocolate-addict, scout, barfly, environmentalist, society-conscious, mother hen, friend of cats, technical, good at mother tongue, outgoing, looking for excitement, dance-like, virile, workmanlike
Relative age -subjective perception of age	adult, young lady, middle-aged woman, in [his/her] thirties, over fifty, grown-up woman, young adult, early middle aged, young, middle-aged, old, under age
III Interdependent “Which social group I belong to”	
Geographic and ethnic group -hometown/ region, nationality Gender, sexuality	resident of Porvoo city, soon to be German, a girl from Seutula region, resident of Seinäjoki city, resident of Tampere city, resident of North Karelia, Finnish, resident of Kallio district, from Western Finland man, woman, girl, boy, hetero, homosexual, lesbian, a short <u>boy</u> , 53-year-old <u>woman</u> , ordinary young <u>girl</u>
Family, role	dog owner, single, mother, friend, partner, father of four kids, 50-year-old grand mum, mother of four kids, spouse, grandmother, middle-aged grand mum of two brats, still working hard, mother of the family, granny, with a family, happy granny, childless, widow, Mother with big letter M., the best granny as my grandchild says, married, single mother, mother of a best boy in the world, nice family, mother of three
Work status, life stage	school kid, high school student, student, student girl, drunken student, employed, IT expert, salesman, salesperson, successful student, unemployed, nurse, worker, officer, laboratorian, entrepreneur, graphic educated, cash keeper, researcher, influential person, medic, dentist, academic, artist, high-educated, nanny, seller at bookstore, analyst, cook, student at university of applied sciences, house-builder, teacher, retired, editor in chief, athlete, hairdresser, project manager at IT-sector, caring nurse, fallen behind a grade, on maternity leave
IV Abstract, ambiguous	human being, happy, free, King, Sagittarius, Master, God, melodious, troll, readable, reborn, child of God, Aquarius, marmot, pen, animated character, genius, dwarf, piggy, like vigorous bear, rich, poor, loose, Al Bundy

Appendix 9. Names of the favorite programs and their frequency in data

	Frequency	Program type		Frequency	Program type
112-hengenpelastajat	1	1	Lemmen viemää	7	1
24	3	6	Lentopallon maailmanliiga	1	12
90210	4	2	Life	5	3
Alias	1	6	Lost	16	6
Amazing Race	1	10	Mad Men	3	2
America's Best Dance Crew	1	10	Madventures	9	11
Anthony bourdainin matkaeväät	1	11	McLeodin tyttäret	2	2
Antiikkia, antiikkia	1	12	Metsien miehet	1	10
Avara luonto	1	12	Metsolat	5	2
Babylon 5	1	7	MTV aamulähetys	1	12
Bel Airin Prinssi	1	4	Mullan Alla	1	2
Bones	4	3	Muodin huipulle	7	10
Californication	1	4	NCIS Rikostutkijat	3	3
CSI	13	3	Pako	13	6
Derrick	1	3	Pasila	1	8
Dexter	2	3	Peep Show	1	4
Eden	1	11	Pelastajat	1	12
Elämä käsissä	3	5	Pirunpelto	1	2
Emmerdale	7	1	Poliisit	1	12
Etsivä Lea Sommer	1	3	Prisma	1	12
Farscape	1	7	Puhelintytön päiväkirja	1	2
Francon aika -Näin me sen koimme	2	2	Päivien viemää	4	1
Frasier	5	4	Reikä seinässä	1	9
Frendit	5	4	Riivatut talot	1	10
Fringe -rajamaila	3	3	Robinson	1	10
Fullmetal Alchemist	1	8	Ruma Betty	2	4
Genesis-Tappajan jäljillä	1	3	Sairaala	1	10
Gilmoren tytöt	2	4	Salaiset kansiot	1	7
Gordon Ramsey- Pannu kuumana	1	9	Salatut elämät	48	1
Gossip Girl	6	2	Saulin ja Nikon parhaat pätkät	1	9
Greyn anatomia	13	5	Se on siinä	1	9
Hauskat kotivideot	3	9	Selviytyjät	1	10
Heroes	9	7	Serranon perhe	5	4
Historia: Kuvia kadonneesta ajasta	1	12	Simpsonit	9	8
House	10	5	Sinkkuelämää	5	4
Huippumalli haussa	1	10	Skins -liekeissä	5	4
Hurja remontti	1	10	South Park	1	8
Hädän hetkellä	1	3	Star Trek	1	7
Ihana Elisa	1	2	Star Wars -The clone war	2	8
Ihanan Elisan tytär	2	2	Strömsö	1	11
Jumalanpalvelus klo 10.00	1	12	Suomen huippumalli haussa	3	10
Kauniit ja rohkeat	1	1	Supernatural	5	7
Komisario Beck	1	3	Sydämen asialla	2	2
Komisario Lewis	2	3	Taivas tarjolla	1	2
Komisario Montalbano	1	3	Tanssii tähtien kanssa	1	9
Kotikatu	7	1	Tartu mikkiin	1	9
Kova Laki	1	3	Teho-osasto	4	5
L-koodi	6	2	The O.C	1	2
Las Vegas	1	2	Tie Avonleaan	1	2

Todistettavasti syyllinen	2	3
Tudors	1	2
Tuhkimotarina	1	1
Tunteita ja tuoksua	2	1
Tähtiportti	2	7
Täydelliset naiset	9	4
Ultimate fighter	2	10
Uutiset	1	12
Valioliigan jalkapallo	1	12
Wallander	1	3
Veitsen alle	1	10
Vielä virtaa	1	4
Viidakkoperhe	1	2
Xena	1	7
Ylen uutiset	2	12
Zorro -miekka ja ruusu	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>359</i>	

1= soap

2= drama

3= crime drama

4= drama comedy, sitcom

5= hospital drama

6= thriller, action, adventure

7= scifi, fantasy, horror

8= animation, anime

9= entertainment, quiz show, competition

10= reality TV

11= lifestyle (home, cooking, travelling)

12= documentary, current affairs, news

Appendix 10. Observed items for each construct.

(Measured with five-point Likert-scale 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)

CONNECTEDNESS	Mean	Std. D.
BUY: I have purchased some products that I have seen on my favorite TV program.	1.79	1.057
ESCAPE: My favorite TV program helps me to forget about the day's problems.	4.13	.895
ASPIRATION: I would love to be on my favorite TV program.	3.34	1.341
MODELING: I learn about my own life by watching my favorite TV program.	2.87	1.173
FASHION: I like the clothes they wear on my favorite TV program.	3.37	1.082
IMITATION: Sometimes, I find myself imitating the gestures or facial expressions of the characters on my favorite TV program.	2.25	1.189
INFO (<i>consisting of two variables</i>): I read articles, news or books if they are related to my favorite TV program. I want to search for information about my favorite TV program online.	3.27	1.076
SELF-CONNECTION		
SELF-CORRESPONDENCE: I can identify with my favorite TV program/its characters.	2.85	1.212
IMAGE: My friends probably associate me with my favorite TV program when they think of me.	2.49	1.092
EXPRESS: I would probably mention my favorite TV program to my new friends.	3.02	1.182
IDEAL: My favorite TV program reflects a lot about the kind of person I would like to be.	2.62	1.191
ATTACHMENT		
PAST (<i>consisting of two variables</i>): It responds to my longing for nostalgia and traditions. It reminds me of who I used to be.	2.40	1.039
PRESENT (<i>consisting of three variables</i>): It reminds me of people who are dear to me. It makes me feel different from others, not just like everyone else. It helps me keep up to date.	2.57	.960
FUTURE (<i>consisting of two variables</i>): It shows who I am becoming. It has to do with the goals that I have for the future.	2.42	1.025
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT		
REACTIONS (<i>consisting of two variables</i>): I would feel irritated if someone laughed at my favorite TV program. If someone praised my favorite TV program, I would feel like someone had praised me.	2.65	.996
IRREPLACEABLE (<i>consisting of two variables</i>): If my favorite TV program ended, I would not easily find a new program to replace it. If I did not see my favorite TV program, it would feel like I had lost a part of myself.	3.10	.999

Appendix 11. Correlation matrix for the observed items

Correlation	PRES.	PAST	FUT.	IRREP.	REACT.	IDEAL	EXP.	IMAGE	SELF	INFO	IMIT.	FASH.	MODEL	ASPIR.	ESC.
PRESENT	1.000														
PAST	.620	1.000													
FUTURE	.607	.509	1.000												
IRREPLACEABLE	.363	.248	.323	1.000											
REACTIONS	.496	.386	.474	.586	1.000										
IDEAL	.517	.443	.629	.341	.440	1.000									
EXPRESS	.281	.221	.344	.330	.366	.444	1.000								
IMAGE	.454	.353	.431	.342	.347	.423	.363	1.000							
SELF	.534	.415	.436	.352	.408	.531	.298	.346	1.000						
INFO	.297	.152	.243	.403	.372	.281	.368	.260	.275	1.000					
IMITATION	.362	.294	.352	.328	.444	.360	.312	.345	.365	.306	1.000				
FASHION	.244	.158	.197	.172	.215	.318	.133	.089	.345	.214	.153	1.000			
MODELING	.514	.427	.490	.293	.417	.477	.325	.317	.491	.265	.339	.140	1.000		
ASPIRATION	.308	.220	.355	.245	.333	.425	.321	.279	.414	.386	.320	.230	.336	1.000	
ESCAPE	.138	.117	.120	.251	.249	.166	.156	.088	.224	.203	.078	.177	.204	.229	1.000
BUY	.317	.243	.352	.233	.294	.285	.266	.277	.232	.385	.373	.190	.292	.219	.060

Appendix 12. Tukey's test for cluster analysis

Dependent Variable	Cluster	Cluster	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Attachment (factor score)	Fans	Rejectors	.69101601*	.10256649	.000	.4262672	.9557648
		Self-reflectors	-.75131738*	.09796009	.000	-1.0041759	-.4984588
		Self-identifiers	-1.28393239*	.11206088	.000	-1.5731885	-.9946763
	Rejectors	Fans	-.69101601*	.10256649	.000	-.9557648	-.4262672
		Self-reflectors	-1.44233339*	.09706604	.000	-1.6928842	-1.1917826
		Self-identifiers	-1.97494839*	.11128018	.000	-2.2621893	-1.6877075
	Self-reflectors	Fans	.75131738*	.09796009	.000	.4984588	1.0041759
		Rejectors	1.44233339*	.09706604	.000	1.1917826	1.6928842
		Self-identifiers	-.53261500*	.10704938	.000	-.8089352	-.2562948
	Self-identifiers	Fans	1.28393239*	.11206088	.000	.9946763	1.5731885
		Rejectors	1.97494839*	.11128018	.000	1.6877075	2.2621893
		Self-reflectors	.53261500*	.10704938	.000	.2562948	.8089352
Fandom (factor score)	Fans	Rejectors	1.18559254*	.10946659	.000	.9030329	1.4681521
		Self-reflectors	.96544048*	.10455029	.000	.6955710	1.2353099
		Self-identifiers	-.56462432*	.11959970	.000	-.8733399	-.2559087
	Rejectors	Fans	-1.18559254*	.10946659	.000	-1.4681521	-.9030329
		Self-reflectors	-.22015206	.10359609	.147	-.4875585	.0472544
		Self-identifiers	-1.75021686*	.11876648	.000	-2.0567817	-1.4436520
	Self-reflectors	Fans	-.96544048*	.10455029	.000	-1.2353099	-.6955710
		Rejectors	.22015206	.10359609	.147	-.0472544	.4875585
		Self-identifiers	-1.53006480*	.11425106	.000	-1.8249743	-1.2351553
	Self-identifiers	Fans	.56462432*	.11959970	.000	.2559087	.8733399
		Rejectors	1.75021686*	.11876648	.000	1.4436520	2.0567817
		Self-reflectors	1.53006480*	.11425106	.000	1.2351553	1.8249743
Modeling (factor score)	Fans	Rejectors	.15593023	.09903630	.395	-.0997063	.4115667
		Self-reflectors	-1.40858299*	.09458843	.000	-1.6527385	-1.1644275
		Self-identifiers	-1.40579322*	.10820389	.000	-1.6850935	-1.1264929
	Rejectors	Fans	-.15593023	.09903630	.395	-.4115667	.0997063
		Self-reflectors	-1.56451322*	.09372516	.000	-1.8064404	-1.3225860
		Self-identifiers	-1.56172345*	.10745006	.000	-1.8390779	-1.2843690
	Self-reflectors	Fans	1.40858299*	.09458843	.000	1.1644275	1.6527385
		Rejectors	1.56451322*	.09372516	.000	1.3225860	1.8064404
		Self-identifiers	.00278977	.10336489	1.000	-.2640199	.2695994
	Self-identifiers	Fans	1.40579322*	.10820389	.000	1.1264929	1.6850935
		Rejectors	1.56172345*	.10745006	.000	1.2843690	1.8390779
		Self-reflectors	-.00278977	.10336489	1.000	-.2695994	.2640199
Self-connection (factor score)	Fans	Rejectors	.75848034*	.10084523	.000	.4981745	1.0187861
		Self-reflectors	-.59245098*	.09631612	.000	-.8410661	-.3438359
		Self-identifiers	-1.36762727*	.11018028	.000	-1.6520291	-1.0832255
	Rejectors	Fans	-.75848034*	.10084523	.000	-1.0187861	-.4981745
		Self-reflectors	-1.35093132*	.09543708	.000	-1.5972774	-1.1045853
		Self-identifiers	-2.12610761*	.10941268	.000	-2.4085281	-1.8436872
	Self-reflectors	Fans	.59245098*	.09631612	.000	.3438359	.8410661
		Rejectors	1.35093132*	.09543708	.000	1.1045853	1.5972774
		Self-identifiers	-.77517629*	.10525288	.000	-1.0468593	-.5034933
	Self-identifiers	Fans	1.36762727*	.11018028	.000	1.0832255	1.6520291
		Rejectors	2.12610761*	.10941268	.000	1.8436872	2.4085281
		Self-reflectors	.77517629*	.10525288	.000	.5034933	1.0468593

