

Abstract

Göteborg University
School of Business, Economics and Law
Center for Consumer Science
PO Box 600, SE-405 30 Göteborg,
Sweden

Author: Pernilla Jonsson
Language: English
~~ISBN 13-978-91-974642-3-6~~
ISBN 10-91-91-974642-3-6
254 pages
Doctoral thesis

Capturing the elusive simplifier

This thesis is part of a four year inter-disciplinary research program devoted to the exploration of "commercial cultures". Thus, it emanates from a cultural perspective on consumer research. The purpose of this thesis is to explore and describe how consumers create, maintain and communicate a lifestyle using consumption practices which reflect a voluntarily restricted consumption i.e. simplicity. Two different approaches on how to conceptualize lifestyles from a cultural perspective are used: "The tribal approach" (Maffesoli 1996, Cova & Cova 2002) and "Lifestyles as social reproduction" (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1997).

As this thesis has a cultural perspective on consumer research, its methodology is inspired from ethnography and has a qualitative and interpretative approach. Two empirical studies have been conducted, which both emanates from consumer practices reflecting voluntarily restricted consumption, i.e. simplicity. The first of these studies uses a car sharing organization as a basis for material gathering, and the second uses an eco-village for similar purposes.

Using lifestyle theory based on the cultural perspective on consumer research, this thesis capture the elusive simplifier as emerging in between symbolic boundaries (Holt 1997) as a middleclass lifestyle characterized by its adherents emotional and/or ideological commitment (Maffesoli, Cova & Cova 2002) to the "green".

Keywords: Lifestyle, voluntary simplicity, sustainability, consumers, consumer culture

Printed in Sweden
By Intellecta Docusys AB
Göteborg, 2006

© Pernilla Jonsson
and Center for Consumer Science