

# **UNDERESTIMATED WOMEN**

**Developing a Qualitative Method  
within Consumer Research**

**Exploring Women Amongst Sports**

**MINNA RUNDGREN  
2015**



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## **Developing a Qualitative Method within Consumer Research**

**Exploring Women Amongst Sports**

Masters of Arts Thesis

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*“Tomorrow belongs to women.”*  
- Helen Fisher, anthropologist



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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Brief Overview of the Paper

Women are proven to be emerging consumer segment but they are largely underestimated although they purchase over 80% of all consumer goods. Secondly, lack of qualitative consumer research with human aspects and learning consumer's perspective is problematic in today's businesses. Based on those two arguments I decided develop a qualitative research method to explore women within the sports context. The paper is organized in the following manner.

In chapter 1, I unfold my inspiration for my thesis, outline background of the topic including my observations and experiences combined with some research findings within the sporting goods industry. I also present a review of women based on the previous studies followed by my research question.

In chapter 2, I introduce a theory of the self, which is used as a major framework for my thesis to further explore women within the sports context. The self is viewed through possessing, digitalization and consumption aspects.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the methodology development. I first outline the backgrounds of different methods used within the consumer research combined with

some aspects of so-called creative research methods. I also define the criteria before creating the new method to be utilized in practice. Defining the research and the group contexts as well as presenting the guidelines to conduct, document and analyze the findings are introduced.

In chapter 4, I explore the field through seven women and search for common themes from their individual narratives.

In the last chapter, I conclude this paper by discussing and reflecting on the methodology, the theory and the initial background outlining as well as the research question.

## 1.2. Inspiration

Inspiration for my thesis came from my professional experience as a product designer within the sporting goods industry combined with my curiosity towards consumers, especially women, in deeper level. I chose to use '*a bird in a hand principle*' meaning that I base my thesis on who I am, what I know and whom I know (Peter McGrory, lecture at Aalto University, 2.10.2012). Therefore, it was natural to choose sports as a framework for my thesis because it has been my personal passion since I was a child as well as my professional playground for a decade. I have attained my experiences in international companies and by practicing numerous of sports myself; therefore I am an observer of others but also a user myself. Moreover, while discussing with my peers, both professionally and through hobbies, it was evident that women are not approached appropriately as consumers and users.

After I had read an article in Harvard Business Review Magazine about the impor-

tance of consumer research in today's businesses written by Madsbjerg & Rasmussen (2014), I was ensured to continue my research further. In general, lack of consumer insights is namely one of the biggest deficits in management and business success according to 1500 CEOs studied by IBM. So-called big data is highly appreciated and demanded in today's consumer research. Unfortunately, it doesn't offer complete answers while lacking human elements. In addition, too much of the insights are biased assumptions about consumers made by managers, corporate culture etc. (Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2014: 82)

Certain old fashioned beliefs about women can be very deep in some corporate cultures. For example, it can be easily assumed that women like certain colors that are feminine, but also fit, smell, sound and usability can be based on simply known '*feminine*' factors. According to Madsbjerg & Rasmussen (2014: 84) companies need to focus on the customer's perspective instead of looking at markets, products, and customers from company's own angle. The human science approach towards the consumers requires an examination of the roots of consumer behavior and how people experience life (Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2014: 82).

Based on those findings I decided to explore further women's world and learn more about the consumer research.

## 1.3. Background

### 1.3.1. Observations and Views on Sporting Goods Industry

My aim was not to analyze specifically any of the companies I have worked for but rather demonstrate my professional observations and experiences combined with some research findings, and therefore to illustrate some of the challenges and the

opportunities within the sporting goods industry.

The competition between the sporting goods companies is currently huge due to a large amount of players, who often compete for the same material suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and eventually consumers. For example in the outdoor sports sector, globally top ten companies own only 25% of the market (Nikula, 2014). According to Kolko (2014: 27) companies' focus is often on markets and figuring out what their competitors are doing. A typical approach within the competing brands is to produce similar counter products with similar pricing and so forth. That can easily lead to the '*red ocean*' where everyone is fighting against each other but none are really focusing on creating something radically new.

In turn, there is often significant trust on sales data, which can be analyzed in various ways. Therefore relevant information is sometimes difficult to detect and different stakeholders might misinterpret the data. Buyers, who choose products that will be sold in their shops, are often driven with the previous seasons' data about the sales figures, the popular colors, the pricing, the design details etc. Usually the factual data is directing further decisions and therefore the actual consumer is forgotten behind the numbers. More over, by relying largely on the data may diminish to initiate new innovations that could actually provide better solutions for the consumers and help to stand out from the competitors.

Another issue could arise when different stakeholders such as advanced research, design, development, marketing, brand communication and sales people don't have shared view on their consumers. This might be a result of poor leadership or individual stakeholders being stubborn about their own viewpoints. Brown (2009: 145) highlights that storytelling for a project needs to start at early stage, so it becomes an incremental part of the project and inspires all stakeholders. One aspect of the storytelling is deep understanding and a shared view of the consumer.

Next, let's take a closer look specifically on female consumers in this puzzle. According to my observations women have not got the same level of attention as men for some reason. Sports have been viewed historically more like as men's *'thing'*, especially outdoor and extreme sports, which may require tough physics and daring mentality. Traditionally men are managing most of the sports companies, and the focus *'naturally'* has been on the masculine offer. On the contrary, one of the most successful high street fashion retailers, H&M, has women representing a majority of its employees, key decision makers and even board members; and according to Silverstein and Sayre's (2009b) assumptions that might have largely contributed to their success.

I have been designing apparel for both, men and women, and I need to admit that there has been often lack of thorough consumer insights. They might have been distorted along the process, or gender specific insights are generalized and utilized for both. It is not so long ago when pretty much all the sports brands were offering apparel collections for men while so called unisex designs were suitable for both men and women. Naturally the fit was designed for the masculine body type. Certainly there have been big changes in the recent years and therefore there are collections specifically designed for each gender. However, the focus still seems to be first in the men's offer where as the products for women are often feminized versions of men's collections by *'shrinking and pinking'* (adjusting the fit and the color), or replacing shorts by skirts. For example, currently highly appealing sports brand, Nike, used men's mold to produce women's shoes, just smaller size, until year 2000 (Werner, 2005).

What regards to marketing and communication, for example most of the athlete films are featuring mainly or only male athletes. I.e. in major free ski films only 14% of skiers are women (Stonich, 2014). I also viewed several web sites of different sports companies, especially the outdoor oriented brands, where mostly men are

shown in their brand photos, so the overall look is often very masculine.

I have experienced professionally successful and unsuccessful product design projects for women. In the successful project, women's products were solely inspired by women and their insights, the product creation process was mostly managed by women, and the products were marketed with the female imaginary. There was a shared story from the beginning until the end amongst different stakeholders including shared understanding of the target consumer. Often a professional athlete can be such inspiration for the story. In the example of the unsuccessful project focusing on female consumers, there weren't a shared story, common goals or a defined consumer target. Eventually the project was rejected without even properly studying the business opportunities for women.

Some companies such as *Nike* has changed its corporate strategy in 2006 from product group based silos to more consumer-oriented sports specific silos including the women's fitness to better serve evolving consumers with more holistic offer (Burgelman & Denend, 2007). That has resulted *Nike*-brand to be mentioned often as one of the favorite brands amongst women (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a). *Nike* had understood that women were becoming more and more interested in fitness and sports but also wanting to be able to go out to see their friends after a workout session in their training outfits which were designed according to some fashion trends and colors without forgetting the performance aspects (Werner, 2005). With different approach another sports giant, *Adidas*, has hired a known fashion designer, *Stella McCartney*, to design collections carrying her name specifically for women. The line is designed for sports but is clearly appealing as streets wear too (Werner, 2005).

In order to attain women's attention *Nike* might have had more challenges than *Adidas* due to its performance and athletic driven history where as *Adidas* has

appealed to non-athletic audience in addition to athletic consumers (Werner, 2005). *Adidas's* strategy for women is very different compared to *Nike's* because *Adidas* focuses on luxury products with highly fashionable aspects to create the brand image where as *Nike* uses existing brand to reach female consumers by offering highly appealing but reasonable priced products. On the other hand, there are also some sports companies that have started purely with women's offer such as a Canadian *Lululemon*-brand, which has quickly spread across North America with their yoga inspired apparel. The same company also offers men's line which is much less known. *Lululemon* has open it is first European store in London only in 2014. Some of the previously stated aspects are largely validated by a specific women's study done by *Boston Consulting Group*, which argues that poor product design and customization as well as clumsy sales and marketing "*based on outdated images or stereotypes rather than insights into today's women*" are examples of great reasons not to success amongst the women. The study also argues that meaningful hooks and differentiation for the women are crucial as well as an ability to develop a community with empathy through products and services. (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 110-111)

To conclude, women don't like to be stereotyped or segmented as '*just*' women with certain age and income, or even worse not to be differentiated from men at all (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b). The successful companies do not even consider women as a market but rather try to understand them as individuals and respond to their life (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 111). The topics discussed in this chapter highlight how little attention women have got so far within the sporting goods industry even they are the major players in many ways within the consumption market as it will be reveled in the next chapter.

### 1.3.2. Review on Women

*“What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine”* - Susan Sontag

Firstly, I searched some data about women to better understand how they appear as numbers. The data highlighted an epic female phenomenon. The following information regarding education, working status and consumption power shows that women are increasingly important consumers. To begin with, more than every second university student globally is a woman, while in European and American universities already over 55% of students are women (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 418). While globally about one billion women are working, they also were representing 2,2% increase in the workforce in 2009 (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 10, Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b). Globally women’s earning power was expected to rise from \$13 trillion in 2009 to about \$18 trillion in 2014, and their control power over consumption by the year 2014 was expected to reach \$28 trillion (Huddleston & Minahan, 2011: 1; Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b). More over, aging seems to favor women in terms of life expectancy. According to Dixon (2008) women represent over 65% of 65 years old population, 75% of 75 years old population and eventually the higher the age the higher percentage are women of the population.

The previous has resulted that women are representing over 80% of purchasing of all consumer goods (Eden, 2011; She-Economy). They are also largely in charge of online shopping for example for vacation bookings, books, groceries etc. (Dixon, 2008). Women make buying decisions and purchasing not only for themselves but also for other people such as for their partners, children and grandchildren. It can be said that women are leading the largest economic power, ‘*she-economic*’, in purchases (Eden, 2011) and potentially women “*represent the most important com-*

*mercial opportunity in our lifetime*" (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 10), which is nearly three times bigger than China's GDP in 2014 (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b).

I failed to find especially sports specific studies done about women up to date but also finding sources that would provide data and insights of female consumers was limited. However, one of the major studies from recent years was a research done by Boston Consulting Group (2008) conducting a unique study of more than 12 000 women globally, representing different profiles in terms of education, jobs, interests and so forth as well as women's struggles, needs and desires in their everyday life. That study was used as a base for a book called '*Women Want More*' written by Silverstein and Sayre (2009a), which I have used as one of the references in my background search for my topic.

According to the study, women feel that they are underestimated as consumers and professionally speaking, and they constantly struggle especially with their family, home and work priorities. Women tend to spend mostly in food, fitness, beauty and apparel, which seem to be big opportunities to tap in terms of products and services. For example, women don't necessarily need much of new clothing but are willing to spend on it if the offer was more attractive in terms of fit, comfort and new technologies, and therefore respond to their emotional satisfaction (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 244). According to Dixon (2012) the emotional connection is the most important asset in order to reach the future consumers. In general women value combination of technically (design, technology, materials), functionally (superior performance, convenience, time saving) and emotionally (feeling, story) well-designed products and services (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 115-117). Women value products, services and brands that do well for the world, promotes well-being, concern environment, helps needy people and encourage love and connection. In other words, women are interested in companies that share their own values and contribute to communities they care about themselves. (Silverstein &

Sayre, 2009a: 420) Women also want to be building the better world in some ways for instance by helping other people for example by participating in welfare (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 397).

Women face three main social constraints in their life. First, they feel unbalanced between their work and life; secondly they feel conflicting demands; and thirdly they have too little time in general. For example, women are pressed with the time constraints by having a professional career besides often full-time duties at home. (Silverstein, 2011)

In return, some key drivers which make women happy are love and connection including a fulfilling love relationship and close connections with their family and friends; a career fulfillment encouraged by her loved ones; a balance between work and life, which allows to customize their time use better; and money as a marker, meaning to have more control over their lives but also it is the marker of their influence power in their household (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 47-48, 403-404). According to Silverstein and Sayre (2009b) women are the least happy on their forties when family - one hand with children and on the other hand with own aging parents, and professional demands are the highest. By offering help and creative solutions to these everyday matters should guide the women oriented brands to do better.

*Boston Consulting Group* (2008) had studied some of the key brands that were claimed understanding the female consumers well. I have selected a few of them in order to highlight their success amongst women and how they have responded to women's needs. Some of the favorite brands of women's were *Westin Hotels & Resorts, Haier, Whole Foods, Oprah Winfrey, Victoria's Secrets, H&M* and *Banana Republic*.

For example, *Westin Hotels & Resorts* based in the USA addressed their female consumers by investing in healthy food, opportunity to work out and sleep well. By focusing on the good sleep the company invested largely by buying high quality beds and linen, and created a '*heavenly concept*' that touched especially women. The company also offered a private workout option inside the room and so on. Those small details have led increasing the customer satisfaction. (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 112-115)

A Chinese brand called *Haier* considers women's daily life by designing female friendly refrigerators. For example measurements are according to women's height. The fridges are designed having child friendly aspects in mind to reduce mothers' need to help their children. (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 114)

Maybe the most influential woman on the earth is *Oprah Winfrey*, who has a deep emotional connection with large masses of women due to her own experiences in life from poverty to wealth and from abuse to adulation. Her characteristics are sympathetic, respectful and engaging with the deep emotional connection, which touch many women. She's "*dedicated to helping you live your best life*" through her TV shows, book publishing, magazines, philanthropy work etc. (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 120-124).

***"She (Oprah Winfrey) makes the world a better place just by being in it and doing what she does."***

- Silverstein & Sayre

*Whole Foods Market* has reached many women by its organic food offer and attractive displays in the shops. It especially reaches urban professionals, single women, affluent mothers and 55+ women who seek healthier diet (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 149-150). Although *Whole Foods Market* is pricy it can easily attract

buying more than attended due its healthy image and friendly stuff. It is also listed one of the 100 best companies to work for by *Fortune* (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 150).

*“Whole Foods is more than a grocery store. It’s an adventure. A place to learn.”* - Silverstein

*Procter & Gamble* with their multiple brands seems to understand women by their daily household appliances, hygiene and beauty products as well as premade baby food. Success behind *P&G* seems to be in their close attention to their consumers’ life; purpose to save the consumer’s time when using their products, especially women’s time as they often are more responsible of their family and household chores compared to men. According to *Dernier Minute Reportage* (2014) women spend over EUR1500 per year more than men in similar daily personal products such as toothbrushes, razors and hair products.

How about clothing in women’s life? According Frilander (2014) women want and need to show what they feel through clothing, and that is much deeper than just following trends or commercial advices. Heti, Julavits and Shapton (2014) also commented in their book *“Women in clothes”* that we all ask something through our clothing for example, admiring, love, wealth, social status as well as showing a version of ourselves. Some of the most successful clothing brands especially amongst women are an American underwear brand, *Victoria’s Secret* (VS), high street retailers - Swedish *H&M* and Spanish *Zara*. VS’s concept is being sexy and attractive, ladder ones provide accessible pricing and quickly changing collections. Women like to buy clothing that does not break their economy and appreciate especially brands that offer variety of fits that suits different body types and that fit is consistent across different models i.e. in pants (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b). Once a woman has found her favorite fit, she can easily order products on-line without

needing to worry about trying them on. *“The fashion cycle is less important. People are looking for different choices for emotional content. Every woman still wants to be as sexy as she can be,”* claims *Leslie Wexner* who has helped many brands to success amongst women (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009a: 132).

How those companies then respond to women’s emotional satisfaction? Do they do well for the world, promote well-being, concern environment, provide economic pricing, help needy people and encourage love and connection? Perhaps the reply is ‘yes’ to some of those questions but certainly not for all. For example mass-produced, low-cost fashion products often discriminate doing well within their supply chain. Especially *H&M* retailer has been quite a lot in different medias for its suspicious production conditions. For example, the company has recently changed its suppliers from Asia to Africa, and there have been some suspicions that their new suppliers actually collaborate with a party that is perpetrated in land grapping from the local people (Tapiola, 2014). At the end, perhaps the most important question relates to deepest values of each individual and there might be different influences depending on product types, financial resources, life situation and so forth.

#### 1.4. Research Question

*How could I better understand female consumers within the (outdoor) sporting goods industry by conducting a qualitative research that utilizes creative methods based on the self-perspective?*

# 2

## THEORY OF THE SELF

The theory of my thesis is discussed next. I have chosen to use Russell Belk's framework of the self-extension as my perspective. The self-extension theory refers to the self through possessions, and it has been cited most often in the business related articles (Connell & Schau, 2013: 22). For clarification, possessions infer to both tangible and intangible objects. Such intangible objects are for example family, friends and social power. Digitalization has forced Belk (2013b: 477) to review his self-extension theory as possessing has got new forms, which are discussed later in this chapter. Similar framework to the self-extension is called the self-expansion by Aron et al., which is associated to the self through close other's resources, perspectives and identities, and it has been cited most often in the psychology related papers (Connell & Schau, 2013: 22). Belk framework of the self-extension -*'incorporating possessions into the self,'* and Aron framework of the self-expansion -*'incorporating close others into the self,'* are partially overlapping while exploring how we create, build and maintain our identity through our possessions and close others (Connell & Schau, 2013: 21). Therefore ladder theory is commented too.

According to Oxford definition the self stands for "*a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others*" where as the identity means "*the fact of being who a person is*". Both words appear in research papers. In turn, Bagozzi (2013: 255-256) argues that the self reflects i.e. beliefs, emotions, choices and relationships

with others through our values, goals and attained commitments although he states that there is only one real self. In addition, I have reviewed literature that offers viewpoints to explain different influencers of the self and the identity; and therefore I try to clarify these multi-faceted entities. Such influencers are for example digitalization and consumption behavior. I have also searched literature concerning specifically the self and the women, which was challenging to find. Costa (cited in Solomon et al., 2010: 153) argues that sex differences can be challenging to define as both cultural and innate influences affect gender behavior. In the following, I resume some aspects of the self.



## 2.1. Possessing and the Self

*“The only reason we want to have something is to enlarge our sense of self and that the only way we can know who we are is by observing what we have.”* - Santre

Belk argues that possessions have different weight throughout our life span.

Children’s need to ‘own’ something is visible at early age when they want to keep objects for themselves instead of giving them to others, in addition material goods play an important role as a carrot or a stick if a child is thought of having something when a task or behavior is completed (Belk, 1988: 147). Teenagers may emphasize on their sports equipments that symbolize certain skills (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981 cited in Belk, 1988: 147-148) or clothing which may indicate their family status (Snyder 1972 cited in Belk, 1988: 148) but also belonging to a certain social network therefore certain brands i.e. in clothing and electrical devices are important at early age as they produce our identity (Leiwo & Manu, 2012). Adults might emphasize their social power and status through their possessions (Furby, 1978 cited in Belk, 1988: 148). They may invest for example in fashion to impress whom they are. Their status may rely on expensive and qualitative luxury products that last time (Heikkinen, 2014a). New status symbols could be for example inherited grandmother’s chandelier; old high quality furniture, which is a sign of higher status than new branded furniture; ability to take a weekday off or a skill to cook traditional recipes (Heikkinen, 2014a). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton founded in their studies that people attempt to value especially furniture, visual art and photographs as they reflect memories, occasions etc. from the past, and in addition Belk, Wallendorf and Arnold found evidence of valuing gifts as a sign of love (cited in Belk, 1988: 149). Rigby and Rigby (cited in Belk 1988: 148) noted that as a person reaches towards his late age there is a sense of extending the self after death through personal possessions by leaving them as reminders i.e. for

museums. Lifton (cited in Belk 1988: 148) claimed that also children could be seen as a continuation of the self after the death as well as somewhat remarkable work left behind.

Collections, money, pets and body parts are considered extending the self too (Belk, 1988: 154-157). As an example according to Belk (1988: 154-157) the collections are not only a privilege of a wealthy elite but have become a way to extend the self for common people these days to replace social circles. Therefore, the collections could become like humankind objects, provide safety and enhance self-esteem.

Money as a form of the self-extension can provide power and feeling of masculinity either by simply having it or by using it to buy goods (Belk, 1988: 154-157). The self is affected negatively if a person wants money whereas having money has a positive impact on the self (Vohs, 2008 cited in Vohs, 2013: 244).

Some people strongly link their self to the pets they own by having the most intimate love feeling for them. Some people may equate their pets to children. (Belk, 1988: 154-157) The pets are often equal family members who are humanized, called '*he*' or '*she*' instead of '*it*', sleeping in host's bed, and their owners might use large sums of money to buy best quality food or even clothes for their far refined pets (Ketonen, 2014). According to Liekki (2014) the pets are capturing a big share of the consumption market, where the products offer for the dogs are somewhat similar to children's products. In addition, there seems to be an increasing trend where dogs are even involved in their owners' wedding ceremonies (Reinikainen, 2014).

The body-parts are concerned as a heart of the self as they are connected to our physical body (Belk, 1988: 154-157). In case of losing a body part, it is seen as a

dismissal in the self. In general, women are more focused in their body-parts than men and tend to take better care for their bodies (Belk, 1988: 154-157). Although, Goleman (1991) claims that 85% of women are dissatisfied at least in one aspect in their appearance. Strong boom of practicing sports can be caused by the pressure of looking good or improving certain parts of one's body (Mänttari, 2014). By measuring organ functioning, sleeping rhythms, body fat, muscle strength, energy consumption and so forth is an increasing trend along quickly developing digital applications which can analyze different body functions and therefore guide into healthier life style (Heikkinen, 2014b). Although, all kinds of extreme measuring is still limited to a small elite and is perhaps more popular amongst the men for the moment, it probably will play more important role in the future also amongst the women, especially if the performance concentrated phenomenon continues.

In addition to previously discussed tangible possession, the self-theory includes possessing of actions such as controlling and having power over something as well as creating, knowing and doing. For example, McClelland (cited in Belk, 1988: 140, 150-151, 158) argues that by having control and power over an object, like conquering a mountain, it becomes part of the self. He also created a hierarchy of the objects where the power is the strongest in one's *'free will'* and weakens towards one's body, (tangible) possessions and friends, being the weakest towards strangers. For example, Mänttari (2014) argues that by practicing sports actively can be seen as a self-enhancing project where an impression of wellbeing and strong individuality is given besides increased concern of one's health. By using our own body by doing things that we believe are good for it is an aspect of control and power over an object. Another modern example of control and power over an intangible object is being able to control one's time i.e. by adjusting working hours, which is seen as a new luxury (Heikkinen, 2014a). Sartre (cited in Belk, 1988: 150) also argues that a gift giving is a form of control because a giver can extend his self to a recipient. The recipient in the self-extension sense is to be significant to the

giver (Belk, 1988: 158).

Another way to possess is by creating an object such as publishing a book or creating a theory, which are acknowledged to their creators. By knowing the object is one way to incorporate objects into the self. For example, by knowing a person, a place etc. can create a sense of owning, and in intimate relationships an object can become a subject. (Belk, 1988: 150-151, 158)

In turn, Karl Marx finds the self in doing; especially doing meaningful work that makes a person to feel self-worth. In Marx's opinion the capitalism has stolen the very self by stealing people's creations created through their own work. The Marxists also suggested that living to work rather than working to live is key to a more meaningful life rather than owning things. (Belk, 1988: 146) This is an interesting perspective of the self and probably culturally varied.

***“Among potential close relationship partners, one is the most attracted to those others that offer the greatest potential to self-expansion via a relationship with them.”***

- Aron & Aron

Other people can be extensions of the self i.e. in a relationship the partner is 'used' as an accessory to boost the self-identity. Other cases might be related to one's children and partner, and how they are seen as possessions i.e. in divorce or in a case of death, and how they are impacting the self when losing them. Some studies also show that vicarious consumption i.e. through friends and spouses can be ego enhancing because their success or wealth can be extended to one's self. (Belk, 1988: 154-157) In turn, Bagozzi (2013: 256) argues that social relationships are used in order to be able to stand out from others. Aron and Aron (1986 cited in Weidler & Clark, 2011: 34) have developed the self-expansion model, where one's

self is expanded into the close relationships; and it helps to understand human motives and inclusion of other's resources, perspectives and identities into the self. The closer the relationship is the closer inclusion of the other is into the self. Aron and Aron (1996: 334) argue *"that it is precisely the perceived potential for increased self-efficacy through a close relationship (by including other in the self) that is the basic motivator for people to seek such relationships."* In some cases friends and lovers are seen as non-human and as one's outfit (Kimura & Sakashita, 2013: 292). According to Aron, Mashek and Aron, (2004: 27-28) the resources of the close other can include material goods, knowledge and social assets; and they feel like one's own. The resources also represent often-conscious inclusion into the self as it can provide benefits such as material or social. Cognitive aspects are the perspectives, which refer seeing the world from other's point of view, and the identity, which can refer i.e. to confuse memories of other's with one's own. The cognitive aspects are often unconscious side effects after including other's resources into the self. According to Aron, Mashek and Aron, (2004: 30-31) by including other's perspectives can refer to social impression where i.e. close other's embarrassing behavior is felt like one's own. Also, close other's successes or failures are part of sharing the perspectives of other's. The identity inclusion may confuse one's traits to close other's ones (Aron, Mashek and Aron, 2004: 32; Aron & Aron, 1996: 331). Next, some aspects of the digitalization and its impacts on the self are discussed.

## 2.2. Digital self

*“The digital world opens a host of new means for self-extension, using many new consumption objects to reach a vastly broader audience.” -Belk*

In the digital age it is impossible to discuss about the self without mentioning the Internet and its opportunities to (re-) create the self. Belk's previous work about the extended self from 1988 is still relevant more than ever in the consumer culture research, but rapid development of the digital technology obliged to review the initial theory and its effects on the consumer behavior (Belk, 2013b: 477). *“The relationship between online and offline personas becomes a key to defining the self in a digital age”* (Belk, 2013b: 478). Belk (2013a: 84-85) talks about the difference between the identity and the self. He points out that the identity is something that we create or want other people to view on us, but that representation does not necessarily represent our sense of the self.

There are five major topics that digitalization has provided: 1) dematerialization, 2) reembodiment, 3) sharing, 4) co-construction of the self, and 5) distributed memory (Belk, 2013b: 477). Compared to the pre-digital age where physical possessions were present and visible, in the digital age many previously visible materials have become invisible and immaterial. Such possessions are for example CD's, DVD's, photos and books (Belk, 2013b: 478-479). However, various researchers haven't found consensus whether digital consumption is as valuable as material consumption to the extended self (Lehdonvirta, Denegri-Knott and Molesworth cited in Belk, 2013b: 479). Odom, Sellen, et al. argue that especially teens make regular backups for their virtual goods in case of a virtual robbery (cited in Belk, 2013b: 480). On the other hand, Siddiqui and Turley found in their studies that digital goods lacked authenticity and were regarded less valuable, and for example people would

more easily delete an e-card than a real post card (cited in Belk, 2013b: 481). Belk (2013b: 481) argues that age might also affect how people rate importance of the material and immaterial goods, especially people who are born in the digital age may find the immaterial goods the most valuable such as music. One might not have an emotional attachment to his smart phone as a *“physical device is increasingly insignificant”* whereas the storied data is the most important part emotionally (Kolko, 2014: 24).

Reembodiment enables to test different identities through avatars and images of the self through fake and real Internet identities less risky way than in the real world (Belk, 2013b: 482). These avatars have been found affecting people in the real world too for example by enhancing their self-esteem, social behavior or physical being (Blascovich and Bailensen cited in Belk, 2013b: 482-483).

Social networks in the Internet provide a certain image of a person through what type and how many friends one has, but also a platform to represents oneself in the most interesting and attractive way and therefore enhance one’s popularity in the eyes of others (Belk, 2013a: 87). *“The aggregate self can no longer be conceived from only a personal perspective and is not only jointly constructed but shared, that is, a joint possession with others”* (Belk, 2013b: 490). Some social networks such as Facebook or blogs have become enormous sharing platforms where people can share their thoughts, photos, videos etc., and update their status several times per day. These self-narratives and virtual diaries create history of us, which is marked by comments from friends and followers. This increases vulnerability and in some cases addiction to constantly update one’s profile in order to stay interesting (Belk, 2013b: 484). Shame causing intimate or other vice sensitive information might affect one’s life forever as the Internet memory never forgets (Belk, 2013b: 485-486). Potential risks of spreading data such as self detecting photos, comments, learning results, health status of one’s children through the social media or

other data banks are not known (Heikka, 2014). Respectively Heikka (2014) argues that the sensitive information may be cleverly distributed for marketing purposes used by different companies.

According to Belk (2013b: 487) people need other people to co-construct sense of the self through comments, 'likes' etc. Larsen (cited in Belk, 2013b: 487) points out that friends' comments are often visible to other people and therefore they are different in nature than face-to-face communication. The comments 'live' long after they have been published (Belk, 2013b: 487). Opposite to Belk's initial theory of the extended-self from 1988 it has evolved from the individual self-construction to the co-construction where the self belongs to the collaborators as much to the individual (Belk, 2013b: 488).

*“Facebook’s timeline feature appears to be an attempt to facilitate a linear narrative rather than a more random collage of posted photos, comments, updates, and links.” -Belk*

The distributed memory refers to digital storage spaces where unlimited digital possessions are kept as well as to different social media sites where people can view their own or other people's life narratives. That also constructs a sense of the past. (Belk, 2013b: 489-490) Next, consumption aspects and the self are discussed briefly.

## 2.3. Consumption and the self

Various research supports a view that consumption choices can affirm our self-view of our intelligence, performance and future aspirations. We tend to purchase products that support these images such as wearing the same sports products as world-class athletes or using '*lucky*' objects to help us attain better performance, which has been confirmed by some former research. There is a fine line between products' enhancing versus weakening effects depending on a person's current state i.e. in sports. For example, already a high-level performer can be positively impacted by a '*hero*' product whereas a low level performer can actually get weaker. Similar effects have been found when using authentic brands which reflect the real you versus counterfeit goods that may lead to higher cheating etc. (Cutright, Sampler & Fitzsimons, 2013: 91-93, 95)

According to Solomon et al (2010: 145) people tend to compare their actual self (realistic) to their ideal self (aspirational) when making purchasing decisions. It demands to manage an impression of the self that we like to give outside (Goffman cited in Solomon et al, 2010: 145). People are more willing to purchase products that enable rather than enhance themselves (Riis et al cited in Solomon et al, 2010: 145).

To conclude the theory chapter all previously discussed studies support the idea that possessions reflect the self through owning tangible and intangible possessions like home, pets, body parts, skills and status; or having power and control over something like conquering a mountain; or creating something like writing a book; or knowing certain people and places that one feels an ownership to them; or doing i.e. meaningful work. One may expand the self to his close others such as partner, children and friends by feeling the ownership of their resources, per-

spectives and identities. The close others may also help one to stand out from the growth. The digitalization has added a new dimension to the self by providing different views of the self through dematerialization, reembodiment, sharing, co-construction and distributed memory. Eventually, the consumption decisions may support our self-view of our intelligence, performance and future aspirations while we compare our realistic and ideal selves through enabling versus enhancing products.



# 3

## DEVELOPING THE METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present the methodology for my thesis. I start by outlining the backgrounds for a few popular quantitative and qualitative methods as well as presenting aspects of so-called creative research methods. Next, I define the criteria for the method that I created for my study. I also explain how the method is used in practice including the research and group context definitions as well as the guidelines to conduct, document and analyze the findings.

*“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.”* - Henry Ford

### 3.1. Outlining the Background

Popular quantitative consumer research methods such as surveys and questionnaires usually *‘focus on understanding the average experiences of average consumers’* (Avery & Norton, 2014). According to Avery and Norton (2014) the key challenges by using the survey as a research method is that firstly it provides key beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of the consumers but is not able to go deeper *‘why’* those occur; secondly consumers may have a cognitive access gap which means that they often compare their needs to the competition offer; and thirdly there is

a challenge with an inductive/deductive thinking gap, which searches for common patterns from the data. For example, Madsbjerg (cited in STR Team, 2015) emphasizes the importance to search answers for the why-questions by using a human lens, where in turn surveys provide information of what people think they do but are not able to express why they do it. Currently one of the most discussed quantitative methods to gain consumer insights is so-called big data that can be collected from massive amounts of people. *“Big data and the “internet of things”—in which everyday objects can send and receive data—promise revolutionary change to management and society”* (Harvard Business Review Staff, 2014). However there are some challenges with the big data method. According to Ross et al (2013) firstly, managing and analyzing the big data is challenging to do, and secondly, companies collecting the big data of their consumers might be incapable to turn their business to their competitive advantage as per insight analyzes would recommend, because that change might be too complicated and expensive to realize. In turn, Kolko (2014: 44) argues that the data doesn't answer to the 'why' question. Perceptively, people might get skeptical towards the data collecting companies that may abuse or sold the collected data to unknown parties. That could lead to a situation where people wouldn't share their data any longer. (Harvard Business Review Staff, 2014)

***“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”*** - Albert Einstein

A popular qualitative method called focus group where a selected group of people discuss about a given topic can be useful in cases where a moderator remains objective, the group is diversified and the participants are able to express themselves openly (Zikmund et al., 2013: 148). Potential challenges with this method are that the participants are not able to articulate their implicit needs (Brown, 2009:40) or they may be unconsciously '*corrupted*' by the company/brand that orders the focus

group. Other examples of the qualitative methods are interviews and observations. Those are popular research methods especially amongst sports brands to collect knowledge attained by professional athletes or lead users, whom practice their sport in extreme conditions and/or in professional settings. These methods can yield rich ideas for new products. Sometimes it can be challenging to get unbiased feedback from sponsored athletes though.

Although the quantity driven consumer research is still the leading method, have some companies started to understand the value of social and cognitive science methods mixed with the qualitative methods such as emphatic interviews, ethnographic studies and an applied meme science (Vlahov, 2014). Sometimes a single hint or a feedback from a consumer can turn around the whole business and product development i.e. through photos posted in the social media. Unfortunately, that kind of non-quantitative data can be difficult to justify and take seriously by business leaders, although social listening skills are crucial to succeed (Fournier & Rietveld, 2013). In turn, Brown (2009: 58) points out that by inventing new ways to collaborate with the consumers is critical by obscuring the boundaries between the creators and the consumers. For example there is a new growing segment of consumers called '*aspirational*s' who eager to be co-creators and idea-makers for more sustainable and socially responsible products that are developed together with the companies (Baranowski & Bemporad, 2014).

## 3.2. Defining the Criteria

In the literature perhaps one of the most regarded design thinker and IDEO leader, Tim Brown, states that there are three reinforcing elements when researching for successful design. Those elements are meaningful insights of user's life, qualitative observations on extreme users, and empathy that helps to see the world through the eyes of others. (Brown, 2009: 40-54) All these points require studying users with human approach and putting people first (Brown, 2009: 39). Brown (2009: 58) continues that there is need for a new and radical form of collaboration between creators and consumers '*us with them*'. By defining the users to collaborate with is an important step. So-called extreme users can bring you insights where as so-called average users are not able to give. The extreme users can be for example experts in a product category versus never-used users; users who are inhibited to use a product for some reasons versus people who use the product differently than it is meant for; brand lovers versus haters; and people who reject using the product as a principle versus users who overindulge (Avery & Norton, 2014).

Intensions by using non-traditional research methods such as a visual canvas and a diary are to understand person's feelings, pleasures, values and dreams (Hanington cited in Mattelmäki, 2006: 31). Those methods can be called creative methods. They ideally provide insights and inspiration for design projects instead of material to analyze person's psychological problems (Mattelmäki, 2006: 32). For example, the values define person's important beliefs or ideals and "*have major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations*" (Business Dictionary.com). There are good reasons to use creative methods in order to inspire designers and product teams. First of all it is important to create a method that is the most suitable for the research case. Secondly by collecting information helps to define research problems and further questions on the topic. Thirdly incentive participation by users may help to find new solutions. Fourthly a

used method is an agent for a dialogue between the users and the product experts. (Mattelmäki, 2006:58-61) Although the creative methods are mainly utilized with individuals or small sample groups, they can provoke ideas that can be beneficial for larger population. By utilizing them they may initiate playful concept ideas (Mattelmäki, 2006: 33-34), which can lead to practical product or service solutions.

The creative methods often require active participants and their willingness to spend some time documenting their daily lives or thoughts. The participant's self-documentation helps to know about her personal experiences, it gives an opportunity to express her personal thoughts and ideas, it enables to reveal personal perceptions and explore unknown factors as well as permits the participant to become a creative producer in a unique way (Mattelmäki, 2006: 30, 40). Participants' various skills such as writing, sketching, photographing, filming or creating visuals could be utilized in multiple ways.

### 3.3. Creating the Method

My research on different research methods inspired me to develop a new qualitative method that combines some elements from interviewing, diary and visual canvas. I created a digital interviewing method that has an empathetic approach by trying to understand how the other person is feeling or seeing the world through their written and visual material. The method is called *Dig-I'in*. It means: 'dig' for digging, 'I' for the self, 'in' for interactive and 'Dig-I' for digital.

Dig-I'in - method's key characteristics:

- *Easy to use and understandable*
- *Co-creative and interactive between 'me and her'*
- *All information in digital format and easily accessible*
- *Visually rich, ideas provoking with meaningful insights*

The first step was to create a digital platform in order to enable participants easily to share their information regardless their physical location. The method needed to be interactive and enable seamless communication between the researcher and the participants during the study period. I chose to use an existing platform that is easy to access while being the most popular social media application, Facebook (later FB). Certainly this required the participants having or opening an FB account. Knowing popularity of FB I assumed it wouldn't limit too much in order to find appropriate participants. An important aspect was ability to communicate privately with each participant. Within FB it is possible to use a 'group' feature which enables to create a closed FB group, where only the host (researcher) and invited participants have an access. Inside the group, members can ask questions and reply or comment on them as well as upload pictures, videos, documents etc. I created separate groups with each participant.

In practice, the researcher can view during the study period participants' activity towards the tasks, how they react and understand them, and if they may need further guidance in order to continue. My aim was to keep the participants motivated and relaxed during the study period by '*helping*' and '*guiding*' but also '*encouraging*' them during the process if needed. The tasks can be time consuming when done accordingly, and therefore the participants' motivation to act and tell their stories vividly and insightfully was very important. The on-line platform enabled to alter the pre-made questions and tasks individually as per participant if needed. I assumed that the popularity of smart phones has enabled to take photos, videos etc. very easily, but also they enable to connect wherever, whenever and timely, which should facilitate participants' progress.

### **3.3.1. Method in Practice**

The following steps were taken during the research process: defining the research context and the research group followed by creating the conducting and documentation guidelines and finishing with analyses of the common insights.

#### **1) DEFINING THE RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The research context was primarily based on the theory of the self from the possessions, digitalization and consumption viewpoints. In addition, key values were questioned. The questions were majorly open-ended (*what, why, how*). They challenged the participants to tell their personal stories or to continue partially written sentences. The participants were encouraged to make a visual impact by adding photos, videos etc. The created questions (appendix I) aimed to initiate a dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Some additional questions and demands could be added for a clarification.

The following graphic illustrates large content of the self-theory. The key areas were selected based on the research question.



## 2) DEFINING THE RESEARCH GROUP

When mapping different participant profiles, their assumed motivations and perspectives for sports were the most important criteria. In terms of the '*extremity*', I rather looked for the profiles that represented different kind of motivations rather than for example extreme athletes versus sports haters although they may also be represented amongst the desirable profiles. In addition, the diversity in age distribution was viewed amongst the participating profiles. When using a method that requires a lot from the participants, the target group can consist as few as only one, but ideally 5-10 participants (Mattelmäki, 2006: 69). For my thesis I eventually recruited seven women. I used my personal networks and my network's networks in order to find diverse and motivated women. I predicted that due to my personal interest in sports and large networks I could find motivational diversity within the participants. Alternatively, social medias may be useful to recruit appropriate candidates. The following graphic presents the desired profiles.



### 3) CONDUCTING GUIDELINES

After mapping out the desired profiles, the suitable candidates were contacted by personal email (appendix II) that explained the topic and the objectives of the study as well as requested to reply if she was interested to participate. After the potential candidates had showed their interest and agreed to participate in the study, they were invited to become my Facebook contacts. Separate groups were set individually for each participant. Each group was visible only for the researcher and the participant. The information about the study, its objectives, the practical guidelines

and the conditions were revealed (Appendix III) followed by the questions posted separately within each group (Appendix I). After all the preparations were done accordingly each participant was informed by email explaining her that everything was set up to begin the exercise (Appendix IV). I followed the progress by viewing regularly each participant. Guiding her along the process when needed for example by adding '*likes*' when questions were answered clearly or asking further questions was essential. Whenever the posted questions, comments etc. were read by both parties, they appeared to be seen, which helped to keep on track. If the participant didn't show any or hardly any activity, encouraging and motivating her was important. Once all the questions were answered, reviewed and clarified (or debriefed by the phone call), the exercise was concluded and the participants thanked for their contribution.

- I) Inviting relevant participants
- II) Setting up the groups
- III) Posting the questions/tasks
- IV) Informing the participants
- V) Viewing the progress
- VI) Debriefing and following up

#### **4) DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSES**

The documentation process started as soon as the participants had started to share their information within the group by reading the material and starting to write narratives of each participant. Early start helped me to go deeper in each participant's replies and possibly ask further questions timely. There were some questions and answers that overlapped with each other's so they were combined when possible within the narratives. As each participant worked in different time schedules depending on their availability, I had to adjust their deadlines accord-

ingly. Some of the participants didn't find time to conclude their replies, although they had initially accepted the invitation. Therefore, I had to find alternative participants within the earlier presented profiles. For the confidential reasons I used alias names for all participants although not all of them requested it. All other personal details like age, nationality etc. were actual. After the narratives were concluded, I collected the key themes from each participant in order to present the common insight findings. As the analyzes of the collected material might be challenging to realize, Mattelmäki (2006: 43) proposes that instead of trying to analyze them scientifically, collected material should simply provoke new ideas and insights for project experts.

# 4

## EXPLORING THE FIELD

In this chapter, I explore the field through seven women who eagerly shared their personal stories by writing and providing visual material. Based on the material they provided I wrote seven narratives. The common themes are presented at the end of this chapter.

### 4.1. Introduction of Seven Women

The participant group included seven women, aged between 26 and 64 years old. The origins represented were Denmark, Finland, France and USA; three out of seven women currently lived outside of their native countries. Their professions varied including commercial, design, psychological and sports fields. All participants were either married or in steady relationships. Two out of seven women had children. All women represented different motivations towards sports starting from the everyday physical activity to the ambitious results oriented goals. Two women had high-level competitive athletic background.

Initially all the communication was to be done in English. Three out of seven women expressed that their participation required some help with English language. In those cases the participants were allowed to communicate in their native language,

either in Finnish or in French. For all the women I sent all the material in English first, and then case-by-case the translation aid was provided. The translations caused extra work but enabled to involve the desired participants.

## 4.2. Seven Narratives

**JANICA**  
**51, FRANCE**



Janica is 51 years old Finnish woman. She currently lives in France and works for a large international media company. She is married with no children. Her educational background is in marketing. Her hobbies include furniture renovating, interior design, traveling and volunteering work. In terms of skills, Janica states having a capability to empathy that she has used a lot in the volunteering i.e. amongst homeless children in Peru; and her decorating and interior design skills that she uses by giving tips to some people. Regarding her likes in life, she says: *"I love my husband. I also love helping other people in need because I am privileged so I feel it is my responsibility."* She says about her dislikes: *"I hate selfishness but generally I try to avoid the feeling of hate and try to understand that people have different values so I avoid judging anybody."*

Janica's top three values are health, inner harmony and responsibility.

The health depends on how well she takes care of her physical and mental well being in order to enjoy life for a long time to come by being physically active, avoiding stress, eating healthy, enjoying life and trying to reach and keep best possible inner harmony. She hopes to care for her aging parents in the future, so in order to do so she needs to care for her own health. For work related stress she learned how to cope with it by traveling to Peru to do volunteering work where she saw poverty, corruption, slow pace and inefficiency that ruled the whole country. That experience changed her attitude and helped her to cope with a tremendous amount of stress at

work later on and it also affected her health positively. The inner harmony contains her surroundings, body and mind as well as having good relationships with the people near her, avoiding unnecessary conflicts, not being judgmental towards others and caring for people who share similar values with her. She practices her inner harmony by doing yoga and foresees starting a meditation in the future in order to maintain loving and supporting attitude towards her close others. Religious aspects don't belong to her inner harmony practices. Being responsible means to Janica to carry out what she has promised to do and is in accordance with her values. She doesn't appreciate the values of the tobacco companies neither the companies that don't respect their workers. She feels responsible for her aging parents and less privileged people; and therefore she does volunteering work i.e. in Peru, which has thought her a lot in life in return.

When Janica looks in the mirror she sees a decent 51 years old lady who has good legs, small feet, properly cut and colored thick hair. She looks younger than her age. She dislikes her cheek pouches, which are hanging, and makes her look grumpy, as she is getting older. She has always been slim but didn't see it when she was younger. Nowadays she feels happy about her body. She appreciates good food and wine so she has accepted losing her waist, but wouldn't let herself fat. She has had an eating disorder when she was younger but with her determination she could get healed.

What comes to her relation to sports, Janica has her weekly 3-5 times sports sessions, which may include 2-3 jogs, in addition to a gym and yoga sessions once a week. During the week she trains during her lunch hour. On weekends she skis or hikes depending on the season. Janica claims that her motivations to do sports are health and well-being reasons. Her main motivations are: *"I do sports because I want to keep myself fit when I am old and it also makes me feel good afterwards. I am pretty lazy so if doing sports would not give so much pleasure afterwards I*

*would probably not do anything.*” Janica enjoys the most hiking and sometimes skiing if conditions are fine. She likes to do them with someone. Other sports mentioned before, she prefers to do them alone and forces herself to do them although she doesn’t really enjoy doing them.

Regarding her favorite possessions Janica points out three articles including a necklace, a wedding ring and a bracelet. Those objects involve personal stories of their givers. She got the necklace from her mother, who had attained it as a wedding anniversary gift from her husband. She recently wanted to give it to her daughter who feels both happy sad about this object as it reminds her of her parents but also of her father’s severe illness. She designed her custom made wedding ring herself. The ring was a present from her husband and it brings her memories of their wedding and honeymoon. It also reminds her how lucky she is by having found a great person to love, to respect her happiness and not to complain about minor things. A Peruvian boy who used to live on streets made the bracelet made of oiled yarn. He gave it to her in person during her volunteering session in Peru. Janica appreciates the memory of this boy, whom she met again when visited Peru last time.

When discussing about the possessions at home Janica doesn’t feel very attached to any of them even when imaging her home burned down. In fact she would like to change the whole interior every 4-5 years if it was possible. Only objects she claims having the emotional value to her are some of her paintings bought during her travels abroad. She explains: *“We have met the artists themselves and heard the story behind the painting which makes them more special for me. E.g. I have a painting from Cuba in my kitchen. Looking at it I always remember the artist Pablo Mesa and it brings me happy memories of the trip and the person.”* In addition she claims that she owns a summerhouse in Finland, which used to belong to her grandfather and his family. All the furniture and the objects are original. She values

the house as such but mentions that the most valuable things in it are the letters written by her grandfather during the war.

Next, Janica reveals her wardrobe with her favorite pieces and explains what matters the most when choosing and buying her clothes. In general, she likes dresses, as they are easy, make her look dressed up immediately and are handy while traveling, as they are cool on the hot days and chic in the evenings. She also likes her jeans from Las Vegas with sparkles and a teenage look. She claims: *“I like sometimes to wear clothes that are completely different style that women at my age are supposed to dress. I want to show that the age does not matter, you can wear what you like and what you feel describes you. However, I would not dress in stomach revealing clothes as I find them vulgar.”* The main factors when buying clothes she considers usefulness versus just looking nice. She buys clothes that are comfortable, don't feel tighten while sitting and don't highlight her non-existing waist. Her frustrations comes from not easily finding small sized clothes (especially in Scandinavia), small and wrongly light fitting rooms as well as lack of service i.e. when trying to find correct sizes. Janica's top five garments are as following: 1) Las Vegas jeans as they make her feel a bit rebel and young. 2) A blue flower dress as she loves the fabric and she finds it stylish and suitable for all possible occasions. 3) A pink down jacket as it is definitely her color; it is extremely warm and makes a grey winter day look colorful and cheery. 4) Black suede high heels shoes. In her opinion every woman must have black high heel shoes, they are an absolute must in the wardrobe. Her high heels she bought already 15 years ago and she still uses them. 5) A turquoise power dress. She bought the fabric from China and designed the model herself that her dressmaker friend carried out. She uses this one in many occasions, like in the wedding of a dear friend but also in the business meetings when she wants to stand out from the crowd and make a statement. It definitely works well in her opinion.

Janica 's favorite sports equipments are her excellent Salomon hiking boots and useful walking sticks that facilitate the ascent and descent on steep slopes. She writes about her boots: *“When I put them on I feel happy because I know that soon I will be walking in the mountains admiring fantastic sceneries. I love the feeling when I am up in the mountains looking massive Alps. There I feel very small and realize how powerful the nature is.”* In terms of the favorite sports clothing Janica mentions her colorful running leggings with floral print that gave her extra energy during the Stockholm Marathon in 2006 and says: *“I stood out from the huge crowd of runners and heard people encouraging me by shouting: hooray the girl with the floral leggings! That was great.”*

In terms of the favorite brands, Janica claims that she doesn't care for any of them. All what matters to her, are sustainable and responsible actions behind the products. To her it is important to know where the products are made. The brands that she would never use are *Gap* and *Walmart*. She doesn't use fake brands.

Regarding the relations with close others Janica says, that as she is the only child and has no children her own, her family includes her parents and her husband. She is especially close to her mother, talks with her almost daily, and believes that she will spend more time with her parents in the future to help them out, especially with her ill father. With her husband she shares the values like helping less privileged people by volunteering and fundraising. She gets inspired and encouraged to jump into the new things from her husband, like when she has been changing jobs. They don't value material things but prefer to live and experience through traveling, charity, good food and drinks. She values highly her friends from different countries and feels happy when spending time with them although they are not necessary alike. She claims: *“I believe that I will keep most of my dearest friends as long as I and they live because I cannot think of anything so bad that would stop me loving them.”*

Regarding the social media Janica uses *Facebook* pretty often to facilitate connections with her friends and family abroad. She often uses *Skype* to talk with her much traveling husband. Janica sees her on- and off-line personas alike. She avoids posting negative topics like being angry, sad, disappointed or family diseases. She likes to share photos from her home surroundings and travels. '*Likes*' indicates her who is reading her postings. She reviews her contacts regularly to see if sharing her personal life with them is relevant.

When Janica describes her dream day it happens in her summerhouse near the lake in a sunny summer day. She dreams of not hurrying anywhere, having a peaceful breakfast, light lunch and dinner out in a terrace while admiring the lake. Some games with friends and a call with her mom to hear all are fine are part of the day's activities. Sauna and swimming in the lake takes couple of hours in the evening and day ends like this: *"After the dinner we sit on the pier cam watching the sun going down behind the lake while enjoying some glasses of wine. We are relaxed and we are happy to be together."*

# SUSAN

## 36, FRANCE



Susan is 36 years old textile specialist. She was born in Denmark in a traditional Protestant family. She believes humanity and in God, but is not religious. Susan has traveled and lived in different countries and feels like at home in any European country. She is married to a French man, and they have two small children. She likes that in general she feels good about her body and hates if her body aches.

When describing her skills, Susan mentions open mindedness, adaptation skills, 6th sense and being a quick learner, which are difficult to acquire in her opinion. She describes herself *'like an open book'* when she meets a new person that she likes. She adapts herself easily to mingle with different type of people regardless their social levels, cultures etc. and eagerly learns from those situations. She feels her 6th sense is something that she can trust and she is proud of it. She feels she quickly learns new things, which both helps her but also backfires when she is not patient i.e. in the professional settings.

Susan found it tough to select her top values but concluded on freedom, inner harmony and pleasure, which represent her state of mind at the moment. The freedom is the most important of all to Susan as it is about the freedom of movements/mind/thoughts/spirit/choice. They lead to adventure, creativity, friendship and happiness. The inner harmony or the inner peace means being happy about herself, who she is, what she does, and the choices she makes. Her family and the people around her should give that piece to guide her through out her life even through tougher periods. With the pleasure value she means enjoying small things

such as life, friends, family and nature. She concludes: *“You are responsible for this [pleasure], again linked back to freedom; taking the freedom to enjoy what you have in life.”*

What Susan sees in the mirror: *“She is perfect with a lot of imperfections.”* She sees herself the same as before with the great self-esteem. Her body shape and weight are the same as when she was 20 years old. When she was younger she didn't like her pale skin color that doesn't get tanned due to a lack of pigment but accepts it now. Only current issue she has is her body hair that she hasn't found a right treatment to care for. Sometimes she wonders if she has too much fat in her body but generally feels good about her body especially that she doesn't do too much effort to maintain it, and when comparing to her friends who have many issues with their bodies. Susan doesn't like special diets but generally she eats home made food based on the fresh organic raw materials and sometimes she goes to restaurants with no problems of an occasional McDonald meal. Susan has experienced a pregnancy once and was perhaps afraid how it would affect her body. After four years of her pregnancy she feels she has totally recovered and doesn't see the difference to her pre pregnant body.

In terms of sports Susan likes long walks and yoga, and feeling presence of her body. They balance her workdays. In her childhood she was involved in some sports like trampoline and swimming. She has always disliked team sports and she feels that individual activities are better fit to her personality. In general she likes to integrate 'sports' as everyday physical activities like climbing stairs instead of taking an elevator.

Susan claims that she is not attached to any of her possessions even after careful consideration. In consideration of the objects at home she can only name her bed that needs to be comfortable and maybe cooking equipments for the practical nour-

ishing reasons.

Susan has realized that she is a lucky one in terms of her body type, she represents hourglass figure, which allows her to fit anything. When Susan looks into her wardrobe, she finds two different styles. Chic/elegant style: it is a very feminine, simple style including dresses/skirts and high heel shoes. Street relaxed style with a colorful and feminine touch including relaxed clothing like jeans with colorful pumps and single or multi color tops. She likes to buy basic pieces, mainly black or white color, or colored pieces that fit easily with her jeans or her black dress or skirt. She doesn't have too many clothes in general and she usually wears her favorite pieces, although they might change from day to day. Comfort is important in clothing for her meaning they don't hurt any ways when worn. The same goes with her shoes even if they are high heels. Susan keeps her favorite worn out clothes and shoes aside hoping that one day she can have them remade for her. In general, she likes stuff that can last in quality wise and would prefer to wear clothes that are custom made for her if she could afford it. She wants to look different than others, fashion is not so important to her neither brand stories. She says: *"I presume each woman want to be precious, we just all want it in a different way."* Susan likes a few Internet stores like [www.monshowroom.fr](http://www.monshowroom.fr), which provides a shopping experience with details and femininity. [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com) -site provides 100% service and well-designed site in her opinion. In terms of her sports clothes she keeps her selection small, colorful and diverse so they can be used for many activities. For yoga, she likes to have something light. She likes to have only a few pieces in order to change them whenever they worn out. She thinks that shoes are the most important for most of sports activities.

What comes to Susan's favorite brands, she likes *IKEA* that solves problems affordable way and *Nike* that follows its own story and provides attractive designs.

Susan chooses her human relations based on her so called 6th sense. She shares similar values and worldview with her parents. Her brother influences and brings her inspiration by his alternative way of living. She appreciates strong personalities who are humble, not afraid to live and who attain a life education such as traveling. From her childhood family she used spend more time with her mother's side family but as the grown up she prefers the family of her father's side due to their similar life style and way of thinking that matches to her own. She feels closeness to her husband due to their similar mindset and family values although there are differences in some other areas in life. She also mentions their long story and family built together as important linkages. Here, she trusts her 6th sense. As for friends she's drawn to her early childhood and other long-term friends as they push her limits. She doesn't care to have same values with her friends as long as they are open-minded and can lift each other up to higher grounds.

Susan couldn't live without *Facebook* which she uses every day to be connected with her loved ones and other meaningful people to her. She shares pictures, articles or other interesting topics. The '*likes*' are not important to her but the comments show the interest of other people. She also has a *Twitter*-account on but doesn't use it although she would like to. Via *LinkedIn* she finds interesting people and articles to read and share them with others. Advertisement annoys her in the social media.

A dream day in Susan's life consists of natural wake up, a peaceful breakfast, a walk outside in order to clear her thoughts before starting to work with her projects. When her focus is off she would go to a market to buy some fresh ingredients to cook. She would spend an afternoon with her children outside followed by a relaxed dinner with the whole family and eventually reading a book in her bed before sleeping. Susan adds that this doesn't sound very sexy but she appreciates simple things. She could add traveling to all continents to her dream life, as it is her big-

gest passion and way to meet new people. As she has experienced fancy hotels etc. during her work travels, she doesn't need that for her personal holidays. She says: *"I very much appreciate the very little things in life. My man and I never celebrate Valentines day and we have spoken about this, we just so much more love the everyday thing; sitting and talking at the dinner table after a very simple dinner (fridge leftovers :-)"*

# ||| GABRIEL

## 37, FRANCE

Multi outdoor/  
sports enthusiastic  
/competitive

"I love to practice several times per week and set my goals high. Sports is my pleasure and I like to challenge myself in competitions."

Gabriel is 37 years old French woman living in France. She is trained a clinical psychologist and a psychotherapist, which she currently practices privately. She admits that she likes her job very much. Gabriel likes to be on top of the mountain peaks and feeling fresh air on her face; she also likes the sun and the chocolate. She hates low lands, feeling fatigue or bored, seeing a grey sky and routines.

The best skill Gabriel possesses are ability to provide herself means to fulfill her desires and projects; all she has and does are due to her perseverance. She is an actress of her life and doesn't wait things to happen. She uses that skill both privately and professionally. She is also fast in analyzing things and people; sometimes she feels these analyses make her think too much.

Gabriel selected her values as follows: perseverance, sensitivity and generosity. She chose the perseverance as it well describes her as a person, who always finds the means to get what she wants in life including work, sports results and personal enrichment. She keeps searching to move forward and keeps questioning herself in all those areas. She says: *"I do not give up unless I'm sure my stubbornness doesn't help me."* She thinks that life and the world without the sensitivity would be a great poverty. She lets different forms of arts to touch her. By feeling the emotions she feels alive. Due to her profession (psychologist) she has learned how not to be affected by her patients' emotions, but she always remains empathetic. Although she loves to organize things i.e. through sports that bring joy and happiness to all, in contrary she might sometimes look cold, distant and untouchable. Gabriel

is generous towards those who she loves. She gives her time and support to them as well as gifts etc. However, she likes to keep things in balance and therefore scares for her own comfort and desires too.

When Gabriel looks at herself in the mirror, she hesitates if she sees *“me and my body or my body and me”*. She perhaps prefers the most her blue eyes and her flat stomach. She feels her legs are too short although she is quite small herself. She feels she has a paradox relation to her tights, before she wanted them to be as slim as possible but now as she wants to perform well in trail running she likes her thighs to be strong and muscled. She feels she has accepted her body as it is today. She also admits that she has abused her body by not eating much and being as thin as possible to maintain her low weigh. Today she claims that she eats what she likes, and even uses a help of a sports nutritionist to serve her training needs. Her body looks more athletic now than before and she accepts it. She doesn't look for imperfections anymore in the mirror although she sees forming wrinkles on her face and grey hair. *“She is small and cute. She looked like a doll when she was younger. She is fragile and an angel looking but also is full of energy and has a strong personality,”* Gabriel concludes.

Gabriel is a high-level athlete; she used to compete in climbing until she was 35. She quit competing in the climbing as she felt there was too *‘closed’* atmosphere. Other vice, Gabriel does plenty of different sports like trail running, cross-country/back-country/alpine skiing, mountain/road biking and hiking during long efforts. Gabriel is a true outdoor enthusiast training six times per week in a spirit of progress, performance, competition and well-being. She usually trains alone or with her club mates and with her partner on weekends. She wonders: *“I don't really know why I am doing so much of sports. Five times per week with a personal trainer.”* She feels she is changing although she needs to feel strong especially in trail running and get good results from it but feels even the good results don't satisfy her anymore. She

loves the outdoors and being in the nature as they bring balance in her life. She likes the effort and feeling her body strong.

In terms of possessions, Gabriel values the most her apartment that she has decorated herself; she can rest in her little peaceful '*bubble*'. She also likes her bookshelf because she likes reading although doesn't have much time for that currently. She values her three statues which all represent women. Two of them represent ideal woman to her who is feminine, cares for herself and is culturally oriented. One of them, a tall feminine woman, she has made herself and another one was given to her by her father and it is called "*la femme aux livres*" (the book woman). The third statue reminds her that women can't have a perfect magazine like appearance because we are human and therefore not perfect. Her multiple pairs of running shoes are also valued highly by Gabriel as she runs a lot. They bring her pleasure and she takes them anywhere she goes.

Gabriel doesn't have especially favorite clothes except red pants that give her energy. Other vice her dressing up depends on her mood and the season. Sometimes she wears some stuff a lot at times and then stops wearing them completely for a long time. She likes both colorful and plain black or grey clothes. In terms of her favorite brands, Gabriel is not 100% satisfied with any but mentions clothing brands that she likes such as *Kookai*, *Naf Naf*, *IKKS kids*, *Zara*, *Mango*, *Le temps des cerises* and *Freeman* for jeans. They correspond to different personalities and moods of hers such as classic, simple, feminine, cool, energetic, fun. By contrast, it is easier for her to indicate her favorite sports clothes. Gabriel looks for lightness, color, comfort and looks. As she does plenty of different sports she likes to have a diverse wardrobe in order to avoid same routines, and dress up functionally as per sport/weather/mood. She has two running skirts from *Craft*, in purple and in black. The purple is more original and less worn by other runners while the black one is easy to combine with colorful tops. She describes a skirt from *Salomon* where she

admires its feminine sky blue color but she is bothered by its compression properties and that it is hard to match with other clothes. It is worn by a lot of runners and it resembles some of the elite runners. When she wears it she feels as a shadow of them as she is not as strong as they are. She likes her *Craft* windbreaker jacket that is light, comfortable, anti-odor and goes with everything. “*These clothes make me feel good, performing, original, feminine*”, she says. In general, she thinks it is hard to find a good fit and actual size for her, as she is small. Sometimes she buys children’s clothes but she may feel child looking and cuts are not made for women. She may buy things that she really likes except if they are way too expensive. She doesn’t use fake products as she looks for quality. *Craft* is her favorite sports brand as it is simple, feminine, comfortable and technical at the same time and makes her feel sportive and performing.

Gabriel feels connected to the people who are simple and generous with the strong personality. She likes to have deep, philosophical discussions with an intellectual and ethical compliance. Other people help her to see herself and her actions, which is important. Originally she was connected to her partner through sports, which they still share as the common passion. They also share their passion to travel and look for adventures. They like simple things, being outdoors in the nature or watching a film. She feels they had very different upbringing, him respecting rules, and her more flexible. She likes that she has adapted higher moral from her partner.

Social medias are not so important to Gabriel except for communication purposes for her running related issues. She doesn’t like to post her private life on *Facebook*. She thinks her *FB* profile presents accordingly her actual self by including her adventures and sports practices. She doesn’t expect any comments or ‘likes’ on her photos. She wouldn’t share political or ideological views. In all, she prefers to communicate face to face with people, not via screen.

When Gabriel imagines her dream day she emphasizes that it might change from one day to another but describes it in a context of today, so being winter and seeing a gray sky. Therefore she misses the sunshine and the warmth. She wakes up peacefully and without an alarm clock, after a long breakfast she goes to do a bit of sports in the mountains while enjoying the nature and the snow. After a restaurant lunch she travels to Germany to jump into a thermal spa and relax in a sauna with her partner. No clock, no time pressure, no plans.

# IV EVA 26, FINLAND

Occasional enthusiast / late starter  
"I like to try out new stuff in sports, and I feel they are good for me although I don't need to do it regularly."

Eva is 26 years old Finnish woman. She cohabits with her partner and has no kids. Eva attains a master's degree in the economics and works as a consultant. Her favorite hobbies include going out with her friends in local clubs or festivals, traveling a few times per year, languages and watching series on TV. She loves life although she adds: *"Even though it's weird and complicated sometimes."* She hates narrow minded and hateful people and the abuse of living creatures in the industrial meat production, although she eats fish and dairy herself.

In terms of skills Eva feels she has a good basic fitness level that maintains her good health and allows her to run long distances without walking in between, even if she had had months of breaks. She is also good in organizing stuff and caring for herself. But mostly she appreciates her apt for languages as they open a new world or a new way of seeing things. She concludes: *"I'm not super good at anything but curious and knowledgeable about many things."*

In terms of values Eva ranks her top three as follows: self-respect, freedom and affection. The self-respect is the most important of all and it means that she acts according to her own ethics including professional settings, respectfully towards others in her relationships, and expects that in return. The freedom is important to Eva, especially at this point of her life. It means that she can do what she likes without restrictions. It also means to find her way of living and being; to work on one's freedom by not getting stuck with routines, old habits or thought processes. The affection supplements other values of hers and without it everything gets cold

and meaningless. She wants to treat people with affection and expects that in return. *“Affection is beautiful and warm and important”*, she completes.

When Eva looks herself in the mirror she likes her height (176 cm), long legs, proportions, slim limbs, face and hair. She feels she could improve her posture, strengthen and tone her body especially her tummy area. She sometimes get headaches from doing sports and feels that it is caused by the muscle tension, so she would like to be more in touch with her body and be able to handle it better. In general, she respects and appreciates her body, as it is relatively thin and healthy. She concludes: *“She is a tall but cute person. Sometimes she gets surprised how small many women are in terms of length. Then she remembers what size she is in relation to others. Because in her own world, there is nothing to compare to, and she does not feel big.”*

Regarding sports Eva says that her relationship has shifted and changed over the last 13 years. Her feelings towards sports have varied from love to hate; from obsession to indifference; or have been purely appearance focused. Today she feels: *“[Sports] as a way to feel connected to my body (because I have felt out of touch at times) and a source of balance and wellbeing. I’m also somehow scared that my relationship to sports will tilt back to hate or discomfort but that’s not a very active feeling. Mostly I feel exited about it, now especially with the running...It feels like finding a side of me I thought was lost forever. It’s just awesome.”* She adds that doing sports makes her feel good and she wants to have a good energy level through sports. Her favorite sport at the moment is running that she does about three times per week. She participates in a running school where she hopes to learn a good technique, set a right ‘gear’ and prepare her to run a marathon. She is also interested in dancing, aims to start playing badminton and sometimes she goes to a stretching class in a local ladies’ gym.

Possessions that Eva is the most attached are a ring, a radio, a bookshelf, an *Edelfeldt* picture, a purse and a phone. She got the ring from her boyfriend as a birthday present when visiting *New York*. They chose it together at *Chelsea Market*. It means love and companionship to her. She thinks that she would be heart broken if she lost it. She inherited the radio from her grandmother that she was close to. Eva plays her old radio everyday and gets reminded of her grandmother who used to listen to a speaking program on it to have companion at home. She ads: *“I think it’s beautiful and also has that old school charm that I love...it keeps talking even though it’s out of date in terms of technology.”* She also got her grandmother’s old bookshelf that Eva cherishes as much as the radio as she feels that she shared some personality qualities with her grandmother. *Albert Edelfeldt’s ‘Pariisitar’* -picture (presents a sophisticated Parisian woman) is precious to Eva as it reminds her of her happy childhood summers in their family cottage. She reveals: *“I really like the picture, or I love it. It’s elegant and beautiful with an old-fashioned charm that I’m weak for. I keep it because I feel connected to it, almost like it was some ghost of some version of myself.”* Next she shows her torn out wallet/purse with a broken zipper and lost beads. It is not practical at all but Eva loves it as it suits her style. She received it as a present from London from her grandfather. She doesn’t feel so close to him though. She uses it on and off already about 13 years. She says: *“I don’t want to change to an ‘adult wallet’. It’s also an accessory that can be pink and girly when most of my other stuff that I carry along everyday is not.”* Eva’s iPhone serves her as a calendar, a notebook, a budgeting tool, a camera and a diary and she uses sports applications with it. She admits: *“I’m so addicted to it.”*

When Eva opens her wardrobe she picks a classic grey skirt with a *‘school girl’* flare and a dark blue knit sweater from COS with buttons and holes as she has worn it so much. She replaced it with a similar one recently. When she buys clothes she considers her needs, a price that can vary depending on products, a quality especially with basic pieces, comfort, ease and her personal style. What frustrates

her in clothing shopping is that she never knows how much she is going to wear something, as it depends on comfort and how it makes her feel. She shops when she is abroad and a few times per year in her home country. She thinks unnecessary things are wasteful and ads: *“Sometimes I make great second-hand finds that become classics in my closet.”* When revealing her sports gear, Eva claims that she needs to buy new running shoes, as her old ones are too heavy and not even actual running shoes. She needs some instructions which shoes to pick. She also bought running pants with compression, as it was a recommendation of her running school instructor. She feels they are much better than her old outdoor pants that were not meant for running. Eva ads that *iPhone*, *Sportstracker* and interval timer are must to have for her training. She also uses a heart rate monitor. She concludes: *“The gear makes me feel good and they encourage me to get out, especially the iPhone... The iPhone saves me time and the music gives me energy.”*

Eva feels uneasy and hyper-aware of brands perhaps due to her job and says: *“The more I think about the brands, the spookier it gets, because they are all around me and I guess I want to think that I don’t have a specific emotional relationship to them, but of course I do. On some level.”* Only brand that she clearly prefers is Apple. She thinks is annoyingly a horrible hipster cliché. She cannot specify if it has any feminine characters in it. She claims that they have some branded items at home due to her boyfriend’s design enthusiasm. She has owned some fake bags from China but has got rid of them, as they felt contaminated or embarrassing.

Eva lists trust, mutual understanding, similar values and view of life as the most important things amongst her friends and partner. She appreciates that her boyfriend knows about good stuff e.g. events, things to do and TV series as they like similar things. She values the most that her partner makes her feel that he is always on her side and understands her even when she has been silly.

Eva uses *Facebook* daily for social chatting, news and boredom. She uses also *Instagram* daily in search of nice pictures, capturing moments and inspiration. *Twitter* she uses monthly for usually work related topics, and *LinkedIn* for professional contacts and news. She feels she is more open off-line than on *FB*, but reveals that on *Instagram* she shows of herself more openly than on *FB* or even off-line. Camera helps her to show what she has seen or how she has interpreted something through the camera lens. Eva chooses carefully what she posts on her *FB* wall, as she would feel stupid if no one cared, liked or commented her posts. She avoids sharing any work-related issues, as she doesn't want to be '*socially identified*' with her work. "*On Instagram I share much more of my world on some level. And there I don't feel bad about posting often*", she completes.

Eva describes a day of her dreams as simply being really present in the moment, surrounded by the people she loves and whose company she enjoys. Having the time for herself or quiet moments with others belong to that day too. The summer day is warm, sunny and she perhaps sits in a train to somewhere. She really doesn't know what day it is. "*Everything would be mellow and crisp at the same time. I would be stress-free but no "out of touch" or dazed somehow*", she adds.

# V ANNE

## 64, FINLAND



Anne is 64 years old Finnish woman, living in Finland with her husband; they have no children. She has done her career as a product designer in the sporting goods industry, and is about to be retired. Her hobbies include friends, watching ballet, golf, yoga, cinema and art exhibitions. She loves silence and birds singing. She dislikes noise and blinking lights. Anne thinks she is a good drawer and singer too. She is proud of her *'high chip'* approach cue in the golf. She is conscientious in yoga and likes to do it well.

In terms of her top values today, she presents adventure, freedom and health. Life is an adventure that happens in everyday life. She feels especially in Paris that there is the adventure in every corner she goes even though she has been there numerous of times. She also feels that meeting and getting to know new people is exciting and adventurous. Anne highlights that the freedom in one hand makes both adventure and life themselves possible, and the health on the other hand enables to live and be free. She also knows what good health means through her experience of not being well.

When Anne looks in the mirror she sees a fleshy woman who looks younger to her actual age. She has a sporty style and often she wears snickers, as she likes to walk. Anne thinks she wears too often black clothes but they make her look slimmer although colours look better on her.

Anne likes to play golf because it has a mental aspect like vice yoga that she prac-

tises too. She thinks that her mental balance is important in order to escape from surrounding noises and blinking lights. In addition, both sports help to improve her fitness and posture, to lose weight as well as improve her sleep. Golf has taught her to be social with others and it has brought her some new friends whereas yoga makes herself peaceful. She likes golf because it causes little injuries and fits well for her high blood pressure. In addition, she always finds excuses to play golf either with her husband or other people.

In terms of the most valued possessions Anne names several objects that she feels attached to. She says a light that provides daylight is important during the grey winter days to feel energetic. She values her balcony where she can view birds and rabbits in the middle of the city centre. She also values her picture boards that represent her parents, friends and travel around the world. She owns some valuable antique furniture such as a peasant cupboard filled with inherited stuff and a large bed where she can rest. The peasant cupboard is hand made back in the 18th century and therefore represents true sustainability. She especially values her bed, as it is a *'multi-purpose centre'* and a haven.

When Anne opens her wardrobe she picks out a neon yellow layered skirt from *Karen Miller*, several white simple shirts, a black O-neck knitted sweater, a yoga top, a golf skirt, a yellow longer sweater and a down jacket. With those pieces she can mix different looks and change the looks easily by adding different kind of shoes or accessories. For example, the neon colour skirt goes well in parties and everyday occasions as well as in professional settings. She changes looks e.g. by wearing sneakers with it. Although the skirt was expensive even in sales she wanted to have it. The black sweater looks different depending if she wears it with a shirt under or with a pearl necklace. Her yoga top goes well with skirts. She likes to wear her golf skirt also outside the golf courses. She finds her wardrobe quite black, so yellow brings some variety into it. In terms of her favourite brands, Anne

mentions *Max Mara* and *COS* which are both sporty but not too festive. She buys brands that suit her income and feel qualitative. Although her everyday and party looks are different, they both include simple clothes and accessories. She has once bought an expensive designer dress for Finland's Independence Day party and her husband's dissertation occasions. "*I felt myself solemn and representative*", she remembers. In terms of the sports clothing Anne likes golf clothes that often look nice and are fashionable, still functional. Such piece is a '*skort*' that combines both shorts and a skirt together and it looks good on different summer occasions, even outside the golf courts. She also likes functional materials like insect proofed fabrics. Her favourite golf brand is *Puma* that provides clothing for any age. For her it is important that the products don't inhibit her game and look good after the match. She is annoyed when the functionality is ribbed off due to some feminine looking reasons. She thinks that there is no good service in shops anymore. She dislikes fitting clothes as they often don't fit well. For Anne, quality and design are the most important aspects when choosing her clothes rather than the price. "*I am not interested in The Emperor's new clothes, but innovations instead*", she concludes.

In her close relationships, Anne values the most her husband and friends. As they don't have own children, relatives' children and godchildren are important. Some of them share the same values and they even play golf together.

Anne's dream day includes an early wake up and a peaceful breakfast with a newspaper. Her day's highlight is a golf tournament with some good friends, and it ends at noon with a lunch and a joyful discussion about the match and joking around. That's all.

# VI JANET 38, SWEDEN

Sports professional /  
low lands / indoors

"It is my job to motivate  
others and help them to get  
into good shape. It is my  
lifestyle."

Janet is 38 years old woman, originally from Finland. She has one child with her partner. Janet had an extended career as a professional athlete in cross country skiing, belonged to a Finnish national team and attained a high national level in terms of results. Nowadays she owns a company that offers different sports services such as yoga lessons, running and skiing schools, nutrition coaching for both individuals and groups, and she also works as a teacher in a primary school. She likes that she can encourage people to do sports and she shares her sports knowledge eagerly with others in her work. Due to her experience in sports previously, she feels that it helps her to guide and coach people and she clearly knows the difference between high and basic level practices. She likes to do other activities as well such as having meals with her clients. Because of her professional demands she feels bad not be able to spend evenings with her family. She loves animals, nature, and discussions with her friends, but also being alone. She dislikes negative people who only see problems in everything.

When Janet describes her skills she highlights the most of her ability to listen to her heart i.e. re-educating herself and starting her own company in a small town, to believe in her dreams to do professionally what she likes, of being brave to take under new work opportunities while learning new things as well as determined and positive attitude towards challenging situations.

Janet's top values are health, inner harmony and family happiness. Although she says that her job and hobbies are important to her she feels that if her health is

not good, things are not well at home, or if she feels unstable herself, it affects her ability to do well at her job and willingness to do things that are usually important to her.

Janet feels that she has very natural relation to her body, and it has not changed over time. For example, her weight has always been normal due to her enthusiasm towards sports and she has never followed any special diets. In fact, she has to remind herself to eat enough from times to times. She gets admiring comments about her body from her clients. She thinks she wouldn't be credible in her job if she was over weight. During her pregnancy she naturally gained some extra weight but lost it by doing sports, and admits that that extra wasn't pleasing her either.

Janet is an avid practitioner of running; cross-country skiing and horse back riding. To her sports mean balance between her mind and body. Due to her professional sports background she is willing to care for her physics well and she feels emotionally attached to sports and says: *"Love for sports...it doesn't disappear."* In fact she still would like to participate i.e. long distance races but due to some health problems it is inhibited. Therefore she finds enjoyment in lower pace training nowadays.

Home is a place for Janet where she can relax although she works from home a lot too. She loves to decorate her home but doesn't find enough time to do for time being. She also likes gardening as a relaxing thing to do; she recently bought a chicken house to be placed in her garden.

Janet's favorite pieces of clothing are jeans with low waist and stretchy fabric combined with a T-shirt and sneakers. In terms of sports clothing and equipment Janet mentions that well fitted and breathable as well as colorful garments are her favorites. At work she likes to wear tights and generally colorful clothes that her clients can see her easily during her sports coaching. If she is sick and unable to

train, she often likes to wear colorful training outfit to cheer her up. She thinks it is not always easy to find nice sporting clothes. Black is too common color. To find something special is quite difficult to find. In addition to her favorite equipments, Janet shows her roller skis. Janet doesn't feel attached to any brands specifically. She doesn't use fake products.

In terms of social media Janet mainly uses *Facebook*, which is handy for communication with her clients and market her professional services. Nowadays Janet considers more carefully what she writes in her *FB* site due to the business reasons as she has some of her clients as friends there. Therefore she likes to keep her private things for herself and prefer to write sports related comments.

Janet's dream day sounds something like that: *"I can sleep late, eat a breakfast peacefully, do some sports with my dog, eat a lunch with a friend in piece..."* She would also do stuff with her daughter like care for horses and train her clients in the evening.

# VII KATHY 45, USA



Kathy is 45 years old woman; originally white North American and currently lives in California State. She has attained a marketing and communication degree, and currently works as a marketing and product specialist in a small company. She is dating a man who has children. They live separately in different towns. She describes her attitude balanced and positive and is an easygoing person. *"I love life and I hate moody people"*, she claims.

In terms of skills Kathy is a total green thumb, as she loves plants, succulents to be exact. They mean a lot to her because she has started them all from *'clippings'* from her friends or during her walks around the neighborhood.

When Kathy looks at herself in the mirror she feels quite proud of her entire body. She says: *"I work hard at staying in shape, but I also balance it out by never being too hard on myself."* In the past she has been more physical image centered and highly considered of her nutrition in terms of what, when and how much she can eat but nowadays she feels that life is too short for that level of focus. She says that she still tries and keeps her nutrition in check. She thinks she is an attractive looking with strong shoulders, nicely defined arms, and a belly that could need a bit of toning but is not bad as such. She has great legs and a butt. She says about her legs: *"They are shapely with beautiful muscle and I know they look good, but I work hard at them too."* She is the least satisfied on her back that could be tighter and more shaped in order to look good in a strapless dress. In general, she sees herself as strong, beautiful and always up for a challenge, especially when it comes

to something athletic. Although she has suffered from a back pain for some years, she is hopeful to be healed and says about herself: *“She is pretty amazing though, if you genuinely take care of her, she will heal herself!”*

Her relationship to sports started when she was young. She competed in gymnastics until around 18 years old. She claims: *“I’ve always been quite athletic, sports came easy to me as I’ve always been strong, agile, flexible, lots of coordination. I’m pretty healthy, I eat well, exercise often, but I also love to drink alcohol and eat shitty food, which is another reason I stay so active.”* Her sports hobbies vary with the seasons - in the winter she loves snowboarding and travels to be able to do it and in the summer she enjoys the beach and SUP surfing. She is an avid yoga person all year around, 3-5 times per week, and she claims it is her biggest activity for time being. *“Power Vinyasa to be exact. Class is from 60-90 minutes, the room is headed to about 100 degrees and the class is TOUGH! It is amazing full body workout. I sweat my ass off. Muscularly it’s very challenging. It taps into cardiovascular exercise (honestly!) and the mental aspect is simply cleansing...I participate alone and love it that way”*, she says. Regarding SUP surfing she likes to do it with her friends although nowadays she is more fond of doing her sports solo due to her unknown daily schedules. Kathy also runs 1-2 times per week. Although she has many bikes, they are waiting to be rid as other fun things have taken over. In general, sports contribute to her health, mental well-being and better physical appearance.

In consideration of her loved possessions, Kathy first claims that she doesn’t think she is attached to any possessions although she owns a lot of stuff like 10 pairs of (cowboy) boots. She feels good to get rid of things. Although she is currently renting her apartment, she feels like it is her home with high ceilings, incredible light, two terraces with a view to the mighty Pacific Ocean and a spacious personal space. In terms of the furniture Kathy mentions that all pieces she owns have a story from where they were purchased and she takes good care of them like of a

wine barrel she has bought in German flea market. She also claims that she loves her plants and adds: *"I have a real talent for creating beautiful potted succulent gardens."*

When Kathy opens her wardrobe she loves the most of her 'everyday' sweaters explaining: *"I have the cashmere grey sweater from the brand called NAU. Hooded, deep V-neck with a button, it's incredibly soft and I would wear it everyday if I could (I do on the weekends!)."* She also likes her *Patagonia* Puffy Down Sweater jacket which is simple, black and warm enough and it fits her perfectly although she has broader shoulders and slimmer hips. She says that her worn out jeans, that should be thrown away, are precious to her with low hanging on hips, ripped knees and perfectly faded. They are a bit big since she lost some kilos but she doesn't want to retire them. Kathy claims that she only buys clothes nowadays when she really needs something for example to replace worn out pieces, like her jeans. Her biggest frustration when shopping for clothes is to find good sizing and fit, especially for her Y-shape body. When the fit is fine on the top it is too big on the body. For sports Kathy likes to wear a quick drying, lightweight, spandex, non-smelling and non-binding yoga apparel from *Onzie* brand. She reveals: *"My favorite sports bra's at the moment are from Lululemon (surprisingly!). I have larger breasts, 36C and let me tell ya, I need support especially at certain times of the month."* Kathy claims that she likes beautiful, supportive, fashionable sports garments with longer hemlines, never binding but supportive. She says that tops should never be too tight on the waist because: *"Tops are meant to flow and enhance a figure, not bind where you might have a little extra fat."*

In terms of the favorite brands, Kathy wonders if she is connected to any brands and eventually admits that she is in some level, she even feels that she is a bit a brand snob. She mentions that she is especially connected to the brands like *Lululemon* and *Patagonia*, which are deeply rooted in sports, and their products just

simply speak to her. She also appreciates *Arc'Teryx* high quality and well performing sporting clothes although she finds them very expensive.

In terms of close relationships Kathy has met her close friends often through sports although relationships often develop and deepens beyond sports.

When it comes to Kathy's dream day, she describes three different kinds as she feels those days depend so much on the season. For example in the winter time she would dream of waking up peacefully, enjoying a cup of coffee with her partner and heading to the mountains with the fresh powder snow. They would be there alone with her partner and first ones to mark tracks. She would snowboard until her legs wouldn't move any longer. The winter dream day would end up with a dinner with some wine, good company and great conversations. When it is the warm season, she dreams of heading to a beach where high waves are welcoming her to paddle board. She would finish her beach day by the fire, roasting marshmallows and eating fish tacos with some *Pacifico* beer while chatting away with her friends and telling stories around the fire. Her third dream day would happen in the rainy day when she just hangs out at home in her pajamas drinking coffee and reading books in the quietness.

## 4.3. Common Insights

The following findings are collected under the major themes that evolved from the narratives.

### > VALUES

In terms of the top values health, inner harmony and freedom got selected most often and one or two of them appeared in five responds. Health seemed to be selected especially by those who had already experienced some health problems earlier and by the women over 50 years old who claimed that maintaining the good health enables to live better life and care for others (i.e. their parents). The inner harmony was claimed to bring balance for the self and with others. The freedom seems to enable to implement other values in life and also giving an ability to choose without restrictions.

### > BODYIMAGE

How the participated women saw themselves in the mirror? Responses varied from being satisfied, pleased, quite proud, having accepted, feeling respect, appreciation and natural about their bodies. Two out of seven women mentioned that they have had a tricky relation to eating versus their body images in the past. Three out of seven women practiced sports very often, almost daily and mentioned that it has affected their body shape. One of them said that she has accepted her muscular body although she used to like to be thin. Another woman said that she worked hard to maintain her athletic looks that she appreciates. The third woman said that she always had a natural relation to her athletic body due to her sportive habits throughout her life. Two of the most athletically active women mentioned that they had to pay extra attention to eat enough. Two of the eldest women said that they looked younger compared to their actual age. Only some minor considerations for the body improvements were mentioned like toning the belly area or concerns for

aging signs such as wrinkles. Only one woman saw herself fleshy but she didn't mention that as a problem though.

### **> RELATION TO SPORTS**

Three out of seven women had either a high level or a professional athletic background. Only one of them still competes, but not on the professional level anymore. The most common words mentioned when describing their reasons to do sports amongst all seven women were balance (4/7), well being (3/7) and health (2/7) aspects. Two women mentioned that losing weight or remaining fit were one of their motivations to do sports. All seven women liked and practiced outdoor sports such as walking, hiking, running, different forms of skiing and golf. Yoga and running were the most popular sports amongst all women (5/7) followed by some winter sports such as alpine/cross-country/back-country skiing and snowboarding (4/7).

### **> POSSESSIONS**

In terms of the possessions three out of seven women first reacted that they were not attached to any possessions at all. One woman could not find anything that she especially appreciated. The importance of one's home as a base camp or a safety nest was mentioned three times out of seven replies. 4/7 women mentioned that they valued some of their furniture, which were antiques and/or inherit. 3/7 women appreciated artifacts that they had at home. Most of them brought memories from the past. 2/7 women said that they valued their jewelry, which were all gifts from loved ones or attained from other important people to them.

### **> CLOTHING PREFERENCES**

In terms of the clothing the most common themes mentioned quite often or often were to have good basic pieces (3/7) such as tops, bottoms, skirts and dresses; to have a unique looking or a custom made or just something special was mentioned quite often too (3/7); diversity, timeless look and quality were mentioned by

4/7 women. The most women (5/7) were looking for colors, energy and fun in the garments and light, functional materials especially in their sports apparel. The most brought up topic was to find comfortable and well fitting garments according to their body shapes (6/7). In terms of shopping 4/7 women mentioned that they tend to shop only when they need something or to replace worn out pieces. Another topic regarding the clothes shopping was lack of service, poor shopping experience and need to have a knowledgeable staff (3/7). Some of the favorite clothing brands mentioned were *COS*, *MaxMara*, *Nau* and for sports *Nike*, *Onzie*, *Puma*, *Lulu- lemon*, *Patagonia*, *ARc'Teryx* and *Craft*. None of the women mentioned that fashionable or trendy clothes were important to them.

#### **> FAVORITE BRANDS**

In terms of the favorite brands none of the women shared the same brand references. Some brands other than clothing brands mentioned were *IKEA* and *Apple*. 4/7 women claimed that they were not really attached to any brands. One woman claimed that she cared for the sustainable and responsible production methods.

#### **> CLOSE OTHERS**

Regarding the close others, 5/7 women mentioned their partner with whom they share similar values and mutual interests such as hobbies. With close friends 2/5 women said they shared similar values and/or worldview, and 3/5 women said that their friends weren't necessary similar to themselves but they had strong characters and they helped to reflect on oneself.

#### **> SOCIAL MEDIA**

All women used *Facebook*. They claimed sharing mainly pictures and articles. Two women said that they used Facebook almost only for sports related postings. 'Likes' and comments indicated who are following them.

## > DREAM DAY

To describe a dream day of all respondents, it could sound something like this:

*“Sun is shining; I wake up naturally, early or late, I enjoy a long peaceful breakfast.*

*I spend my day with my loved ones by playing, doing sports, relaxing and eating.*

*Time has stopped for this day. It is not so different compared to my normal days*

*but it is special anyhow.”* On the other hand all the stories were unique and had

their personal nuances regardless the common insights. Sports were mentioned as

part of the dream day by most of the women.

# 5

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I discuss about the process and conclude my thesis. First, I return to discuss about the *Dig-I'in* method and what I have learned by using it, I also reflect on how it's utilization could evolve in the future as well as present the SWOT analyses of it. Next, I reflect on the self-theory and the common insights arouse from the participants' narratives. Lastly, I close the circle by returning to the initial background outlining where I discussed about my professional observations and views within the sporting goods industry, the studies done specifically about women up to date and the research question.

### > METHOD

A difference between the consumer and design research is not always clear. Typically, consumer research specialists do consumer research and designers or a design team carry out design research. Those two entities are not necessarily combined or used side by side but rather remind as stand-alone research material. My aim with the *Dig-I'in* method was to create a co-creation tool between the humans and the obtained nuanced insights would ideally serve several stakeholders that are involved in projects. In my opinion a designer could play a critical role as a moderator between the consumer and the company. Designers' skills such as imagination, creativity, visualization abilities and emphatic qualities could help to interpret the nuanced insights in a meaningful way and to create a red thread to fol-

low for various stakeholders. Eventually designers can integrate consumer insights into meaningful designs.

It appeared that there was a great amount of insights and inspiration to be drawn from each participant. As many of the questions were quite private even intimate it may be challenging to get the participants to '*open up*' sharing their deeper emotions, which is key in terms of serving the consumers accordingly in the future as stated in the introduction. Perhaps the on-line '*in between*' helped participants to reveal more openly themselves as they had time to reflect and respond whenever they were ready. Respectively, Brown (2009: 54) argues that if companies have an emotional understanding of their customers, they can turn them into the brand advocates instead of advertisers, which may lead to new business opportunities. In addition, most of the participated women shared eagerly photos, links, illustrations etc. in order to support their written stories. Although, I haven't uncovered any of the visual material for my thesis, I was delighted to discover the effort used to illustrate the responds.

By utilizing the self-theory created a meaningful frame to design questions and tasks. I had initially created a lot of questions but I had to edit out many of them in order to maintain decent conditions in terms of time spending for the participants but also for myself. Defining the relevant profiles wasn't difficult but finding the candidates that matched the profiles and were available to participate was more challenging. Due to the time constrains I had to exclude a few interesting candidates that expressed their interest to get involved. The conducting guidelines helped to repeat the steps with each participant accordingly. The documentation part was the most laborious as it involved on-going on-line discussions with each participant as well as writing the individual narratives and collecting common insight findings. The quality of the obtained material seemed highly depending on how much time the participants were willing and able to commit. The method is quite time consum-

ing for participants and also for a researcher to view, comment, write narratives and so forth. In fact, the time constraints seemed to be one of the biggest challenge with the *Dig-I'in* method. The initial one-week time scale stretched very quickly and I had to allow extra time to most of the participants. As some of the questions were quite complex they required more time to reflect on. One woman utilized practically her work commuting trips to reflect on the questions and to respond via her phone. I demanded feedback about general feelings of the experience from all women participated. Some women found the exercise fun and self-reflective. One woman found the exercise engaging, and emphasized that she appreciated that she was 'listened to' personally and felt unique, and was therefore happy to share her time and insights. One of the women commented: *"It's always a good thing to do a little self reflection about the things we surround ourselves and life with, the commitment is purely time. Taking the time to reflect. Taking the time to search thought out answers. Taking the time to be honest. And simply taking the time because it matters."*

One of the women commented that she had reflected a lot about herself during this exercise. She said that she had met her introspection limits in the sense that she had to demand help from her partner in order 'seeing' herself better with neutral eyes. This kind of dedication impressed me as such.

One woman said that she was slightly concerned about the safety and confidential issues due to often changing *Facebook* user guidelines. This certainly can be problematic aspect when recruiting people. However, I think that the closed group feature helped the participants to feel somewhat secure.

One woman revealed that it was easy to use the familiar platform instead of getting into something unknown. That perhaps increases chances to include rather than exclude potential participants in the future. One woman concluded: *"I liked the first*

*photo tasks! It was something I hadn't really thought about much before or done before. The value thing was also interesting and enlightening. All in all, the exercise was nice to do! The technique was nice and flexible, good that the platform is familiar so I didn't have to learn a new platform for this."*

I also reflected on the future and how using the *Dig-I'in* method could evolve. The analyzing phase could be done differently by using an open-ended sense-making technique. In brief, it means that all the material without any pre selection is collected on the wall; insights are sorted by themes from where possible deeper meanings and inspiration can grow. For example, *Adidas* has used the sense making technique to attain better understanding of their customers (STR Team, 2015). I would also invite some other specialists like psychologist or anthropologist to 'make sense' of the collected material. In any case, the sense making technique is very time consuming and to use it for my thesis would have required another project. When reflecting on the women who participated in my study they all had similar socio-economic backgrounds and therefore their views perhaps are limited. In the future, I would try to recruit participants with more diversity in terms of age distribution, geographic location, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic background as well as 'extremity' in terms of their motivations towards the research topic. By doing so that would hopefully reveal more diverse female aspects to be compared to each other as well as treating them as stand alone narratives as such.

In order to recap the *Dig-I'in* method, I used the SWOT analyses by reflecting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threads of the method.

## **STRENGTHS**

- + *Familiar and easy platform*
- + *Digital platform enables to directly upload photos, videos etc.*
- + *Easy access whenever/wherever*
- + *On-line interaction*
- + *“Me with her” -approach: support, empathy and encouragement*
- + *Anonymous possibility*
- + *Diverse and unique insights and inspiration material*
- + *Adjustable per person*
- + *Co-creation tool between the humans*
- + *Unites different project stakeholders*

## **WEAKNESSES**

- *Confidentiality of the platform*
- *Time consuming to participate*
- *Documentation laborious*
- *Biased interpretation of the material*
- *Results generalization difficult with small sample groups*
- *Identifying and inducing potential candidates*

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- + *Yield radical innovation ideas*
- + *Further/on-going collaboration with unique participants*
- + *Include different specialist in the research  
(before/during/after material collection phase)*
- + *Co-sharing with and creating a red thread for different stakeholders*
- + *Utilizing designer skills  
(imagination, creativity, visualization abilities, emphatic qualities)*
- + *Obtain emotional insights*

## **THREATS**

- *With a small sample group may be hard to convince business leaders*
- *Challenging to induce appropriate candidates*
- *Concern for confidentiality of the platform may inhibit some potential candidates*

## > THEORY

The theory of the self is quite large and complex. Although many aspects of it were presented in the chapter 2, I could only cover certain areas of it within the questions used for my thesis in order to maintain decent input demands for the participants but also to allow myself to view their progress and responds properly. In the future, depending on a viewpoint of the research, different areas of the theory could be emphasized. Here, I have viewed some of the key areas of the theory and reflected on the responds to them.

In terms of possessing tangible objects some of the women claimed that possessions didn't have any importance for them although most of them could name the most important objects. As according to the self-theory also in this study people seemed to value the most their inherit furniture or other objects at home like visual art and photos reminding them of the past important occasions including close others. A few of the respondents mentioned their home as such as one of the most important possessions. Also gifts given by a significant person were valued, especially jewelry which was usually seen as a sign of love. In the self-extension sense the recipient was to be a significant to a giver. Only one respondent highlighted that she had invested in a designer dress for the special occasions, which made her feel solemn.

The self-theory claims that body-parts are concerned as the heart of the self as they are connected to our physical body. In general, all the respondents seemed to be relatively happy with their bodies and were able to point out their best parts. The most respondents claimed that they could improve some parts of their bodies although some of the '*improvement*' needs were related to natural aging rather than not taking care of oneself. On the other hand, a few of the women responded that doing sports were their ways to enhance and manage their body figure, weight and general looks. According to the self-theory this can be a form of control and power

over one's body, and by practicing sports could be seen as a self-enhancing project where well-being, health and individuality are concerned. Both, well-being and health were valued highly by most of the women participated. None of the participants revealed that they had lost any of their body parts. An athletic person whom has disability could be an interesting profile to interview in order to get another viewpoint. Only one of the women revealed in her response using a digital application for measuring and motivation reasons. None of the women claimed using any extreme type of body measuring. It still seems to belong to a margin group. That topic could be interesting to question again in the future studies as there might be different needs for women versus men.

In terms of the close others the most respondents highlighted that their partner, children, parents and other relatives as well as friends were the most important to them. Love, inspiration, shared values and interests were words to describe the relationships. None of the respondents revealed that attaining close other's resources (material, social) were significant.

The self-theory was largely discussed from the digitalization point of view and how it may affect out the self-construct. Belk argued that people '*build*' their digital identities the way they like others to view them. According to the respondents in this study women mostly claimed that they were the 'same' person on-line and off-line. However, almost everyone claimed that they were quite or very selective about what they posted for example in their *Facebook* site i.e. only positive things, traveling, sports related and non-sensitive information. Belk argued that the social networks enable us to represent ourselves in the most interesting and attractive way and therefore enhance our popularity in the eyes of others. In addition, a few women agreed that having '*likes*' and comments from the others showed their interest but also encouraged to maintain the *FB* friends.

In terms of the consumption and the self there wasn't proof that the participated women would purchase products that enable rather than enhance themselves as the theory suggested.

### > CLOSING THE CIRCLE

As it has been stated at the beginning it was difficult to find the women's specific studies either from the self or sports perspectives. When I was about to finalize my thesis in February 2015, I learned that *Sporting Goods Industry Europe* had just conducted a large survey about women and sports called "*Women & Sports - A Comprehensive Study of the Female Sporting Goods Market in Germany*". Unfortunately it wasn't possible to get a copy of that 400-page book due to an expensive price and time restrictions but I managed to view an executive summary of it (e-mail from Ulrike Luckmann, 11.2.2015). The main intension of the study was to support sports brands and sports retailers with marketing and merchandising matters towards women. Highlights of the summary approved my earlier observations about the importance on the female consumers, whom are rapidly growing segment within the sports market in Europe. The study had surveyed around 3500 women in Germany. The executive summary included the questions asked in the survey, which were quite basic close-end questions related to women's preferences within sports. Regardless, the study highlighted similar problems that I have stated at the beginning of my thesis based on my personal observations like: "*Shrinking it and pinking it' no longer works. Sports products designed for women have improved in recent years, but the thinking process and the market structures are still extremely male-dominated and male-oriented. Sports marketing is still primarily aimed at a male audience. Still missing is an all-round understanding of what makes women tick and what they value most during sporting activities and when purchasing sports products.*" The executive summary also claimed that women spend increasing amount of money of their income on sports products although sports industry is not fully exploiting that opportunity. They also found that women

are entering to do typically male domain sports like mountain sports and cycling. Running, yoga, Pilates and outdoor sports were growing favorite sport while individual sports were much more popular than team sports amongst the German women. I had similar findings within my study group. I was glad to see that that kind of study has been just released, as I believe it also strengthens my initial set up and viewpoints on this topic. It also shows that by using different research methods, where the quantitative survey method collects a high-level data from large amount of people and the qualitative creative method provides depth and different viewpoints from just a few participants, can bring you partially similar findings.

In addition, I interviewed a few professionals within the sporting goods industry to get their viewpoints on the female topic. The interviewees included designers and business people. Their viewpoints are presented anonymously. Here, I have collected some of the key findings as follows. In general, it was agreed that women are largely underserved as consumers. One designer revealed for example that although her company produces women's apparel, only men's products are tested or only men's feedback is listened to. Women are less important than men as the consumers; sales people are often men who only see female consumers from their male perspective meaning something *'pretty and pink'* is for women. Another designer claimed that women's collections are less technical or technicality is replaced by a feminine detail. In turn, one viewpoint was that many women tend to underestimate themselves as sports consumers and do not even demand better offer, or accept to be the *'followers'* regarding the men. Other challenges mentioned were that some companies are so used to their old habits and relay on the outdated user insights. For example, 50 years old user today is not the same as 20 years ago. The interviewees also suggested that by rethinking the traditional distribution channels for women could enhance business opportunities. Especially so-called baby-boomers belong to the emerging segment who travel, follow healthy life style and is interest in sports but by their own means. They are not so price sensitive

and are willing to pay for the qualitative, functional and good-looking sports products. The interest in sports is increasing even amongst unusual segments including Muslim women, who have been seen wearing sports hats on the top of their burkas. These comments support my personal observations especially on the industry part.

In addition, I reflected on my initial statements about the sporting goods industry and assumptions about women. Critically speaking, they may be biased due to my own gender. Perhaps a man in my position would have viewed and experienced differently based on his personal gender perspective. However, some of my views and statements were supported by the various external sources as discussed earlier in this chapter.

In my background search I prominently referred to the book called '*Women want more*' based on the women's study done by *Boston Consulting Group*.

There were some similar findings in the study compare to the insights I found in the women's narratives. Some of the similarities were for example willingness to build the better world for instance by helping other people through the welfare and by valuing brands that do well for the world. In terms of clothing, the insights from both studies showed that women are concerned and interested in the fit, comfort, functionality and emotional aspects.

In terms of the research question I expected to understand female consumers within the (outdoor) sporting goods industry better by conducting a qualitative research that utilizes creative methods based on the perspective of the self. I am confident that the *Dig-I'in* method has brought new insights of the interviewed women that would probably not have been possible to gain by using other popular methods like focus groups. The self-theory was useful but could be replaced by other theories depending on the perspective.



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**Abstract**

Women are proven to be emerging consumer segment but they are largely underestimated although they purchase over 80% of all consumer goods. Secondly, lack of qualitative consumer research with human aspects and learning consumer's perspective is problematic in today's businesses. My perceptions are mostly based on my professional observations and experiences within the sporting goods industry that I utilize as a platform for my thesis. I unfold my aspects on heavily masculine oriented sporting goods industry and present some examples of how women have been approached differently. I present a review of women found from the previous studies together with several successful brands examples that have approached women unique ways. I have utilized the self-theory as a framework to further explore women within sports context for my thesis. The self is viewed through possessions, digitalization and consumption aspects. After having reviewed some popular consumer research methods such as surveys and focus groups, I developed a qualitative research method called *Dig-I'in* to further explore consumer insights. The method is based on a digital platform and using interactive and empathic interview approach. I reveal how the method is used in practice including the research and group context definitions as well as the guidelines to conduct, document and analyze the findings. The field was explored through seven women with different profiles generated from their sports involvement perspectives. From the interviews I generated individual narratives of each participant and searched for common themes. The conclusions fraps up the paper by reflecting on the method, the theory and the background by discussing about different aspects of them and by bringing some new evidence to support my initial assumptions.

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**Keywords** women, consumer research, sports

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# 4X APPENDIX

# Appendix I

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. About you: Name, age, ethnicity, city, country, education, profession, family status, and hobbies. Your relationship to sports (i.e. health, well-being, physical appearance, mental balance...). Continue following sentences: I love\_\_\_\_\_. I hate\_\_\_\_\_. Please share any other information about you that you feel is relevant.
2. Look around you. What are the most important and loved possessions (3-5) you have? Show images; describe your emotional connection to them... Why do you keep them? Why are they valuable to you? Has someone given them to you or did you buy or make them by yourself? By owning them what do they tell about you? If the object could talk, imagine what it would tell you about your relationship with it.
3. At home. What objects do you value the most at home? Why?
4. Open your wardrobe. What are your most important and liked clothes? Why? Show and tell stories of your favorite pieces. What is the key factors when buying clothes, and why? What kind of frustration do you experience when buying clothes?
5. You are into sports some level. What do you do? How often and where and with whom? Why do you do sports? How does it make you feel? Show your favorite sporting clothes (and equipments). Tell me what is so special about them or what would you like to change. How your favorite piece make you feel like? How do they enhance and enable you?
6. Time to take a selfie! Upload a full body picture of yourself - "Me in the mirror". What parts of you make you feel the most proud of and what the least satisfied? How do you describe your ideal self in comparison to your actual self? What is your relation to your body today compared before? Tell a story of you by starting 'She is..'. '.
7. What kind of skills you have that describes you the best and you are the most proud of? Why? (i.e. sports, music, other hobbies...)
8. Think about your closest relationships (partner, children, family, friends...). Based on what criteria do you choose your close others? How do you relate to them and how they influence you? How do you feel the most connected to your partner (i.e. shared values, possessions, identity..)? Describe and illustrate.
9. What brands you feel emotionally the most connected? Why? How they specifically serve you as a woman? What is your most valued brand item? How does it make me feel? Do you use fake brands? What and why?

10. What social medias do you use? How often? Why?
11. Look back your Facebook timeline. Describe your on-line persona compared off-line. Are there differences, what and why? Is there topics that you prefer to share / not to share? How important are the 'likes' and comments of others?
12. Describe your dream day. You can use for example "What if.." sentence in forming your story with images.
13. Values. A piece of paper may help you in this exercise. Remember, values might shift over the time, depending on your life situation, age, geographical location, family status etc. 1) Start by choosing the most relevant values to you - as many as you like, 2) next start editing your value list by deleting the least important values 3) until you have your top three (3) values left. Review and make sure those are the most relevant values corresponding to your own perception of you and how you live your life today. After your definite selection, 4) go deeper in each value and try to elaborate and describe it with visuals and story telling.
- achievement
  - advancement
  - adventure
  - affection
  - competitiveness
  - co-operation
  - creativity
  - economic security
  - fame
  - family happiness
  - freedom
  - friendship
  - health
  - helpfulness
  - inner harmony
  - integrity
  - involvement
  - loyalty
  - personal development
  - pleasure
  - order
  - power
  - recognition
  - responsibility
  - self-respect
  - spirituality
  - wealth
  - wisdom
14. Could you tell how you found this exercise and the interviewing technique? Likes/dislikes?

## Appendix II

### INVITATION LETTER

*Hello!*

*I am currently conducting a study of women called: "Underestimated Women in sporting goods industry - Application of The Self and Creative Methods in the Consumer Research", which aims to learn about women's implicit needs and insights. This is a graduation project for my studies in the Master's degree in Helsinki.*

*I am looking for motivated participants who would respond to some questions and observe their daily life during one week, and report about it with an easy digital tool. All you need is a Facebook account and some time to do it. The study is conducted in English. I will be supporting you during your participation. I am contacting you, as you appear to be 'presenting' a certain type of my study group. Your participation can be anonymous if you wish.*

*As I am getting closer to the deadline, I would like to hear as soon as possible if you are willing and available to participate shortly. Your participation is greatly appreciated and perhaps during that week you would learn something new and inspiring about yourself.*

*With best wishes, Minna*

## Appendix III

### WELCOMING LETTER

*Dear you!*

*I am so grateful that you said “Yes!”. During the following week, I hope you to have fun, not to take this too seriously, reflect openly and discover yourself, perhaps even from new angels.*

*What is this project about? The purpose of this project is to collect so called implicit insights of you and your life to better understand women, their thoughts, emotions, daily life, struggles, dreams, values etc. to inspire design ideas to improve and delight women’s life in the future. The majority of the exercises are designed by using the Self-theory, which is based on the possessions we perceive to have.*

*How does it work? This exercise is done through Facebook group feature (visibility: secret) and it only is accessible and visible to you and myself. All the given information is used to draw general picture of you and trying to find patterns between you and your peer candidates. All communication is done via Facebook. You will be sent questions, you are suppose to reflect on them and openly respond by writing short comments, interpretations or narratives, uploading photos, videos, sketches or any other imaginary that best describes your thoughts and emotions. I encourage you to be innovative and open. During the process you can request more explanations on tasks from me, and I may ask further questions or support you regarding the situation. The timeline is to finish the exercises within a week by doing a little each day so the exercise doesn’t prolong too much. Alternatively, you can do it in less time if you like as I plan to post most of exercises at once, each in separate ‘discussion’. You can choose in which order to respond to them. After the tasks are finished we may have a call for further clarification.*

*I would like to highlight that you can decide to be anonymous but I would need to show certain information for practical reasons like age, country, status etc. I expect that this project has a big visual impact and therefore I wish to use the material that you are to share with me for analyses, inspiration and possible for visualization purposes in the project outcome. Again, if you like your name not to be shown related to any information you share please let me know.*

*Kindly, Minna*

## Appendix IV

### INFORMATION LETTER

*Hello!*

*I have now invited you to a group called "Women's study". First you need to accept the invitation. The group is only visible and accessible to you and myself. In the bottom I have explained what to do. I have posted 13 question-exercises. I advice you to start from the bottom, all questions are in a bottom up order. You can do the exercises in any order you wish; just make sure you respond to each question directly under the question by writing, adding visuals, photos etc. Please be creative! I will view your progress regularly. Please feel free to ask if any questions, always under the related question.*

*Kindly, Minna*





