

The making of consumer decisions: revisiting  
the notions of evaluation and choice by  
reconstructing consumer habits through subject  
evidence based ethnography

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PhD Thesis

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### **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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I declare that my thesis consists of 107.386 words, title, abstract, references and appendices excluded.

I can confirm that my thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by MA Ralph Church.

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## **Abstract**

This research is concerned with processes of choice in consumers and models of consumer behaviour. It also envisages a broader contribution towards economics in general to clarify how preferences in economic agents arise and change.

The research question is: "are the models and factors of evaluation predicted by experts applicable to real cases?" Factors of value and evaluation processes will be observed in real world participants and in everyday behaviour. The results will be compared to models found in the consumer research literature.

The fieldwork will focus on a single activity carried out by a sample of consumers: shoe buying behaviour. The first set of data is drawn from 11+11 open ended interviews of participants chosen in the two complementary groups of experts and consumers for the purpose of construal identification. The second stream of data relies on an ethnographic approach that involves recording first-person experiences by use of a miniature camera applied at eye-level, or "subcam" (17 participants). The recordings are analysed in order to reconstruct the choice processes through content analysis of events. The third stream of data in the research is produced by means of replay interviews conducted on those same participants who produced the subjective recordings (selection of 12 participants).

Using a first-person ethnographic method allowed: (i) A more exact tracking of the actions involved in the choice process versus standard participant observation or in-shop surveillance cameras, (ii) intersubjective post-hoc account of the recorded activity and, (iii) elicitation of reflective rationalization from the participants in narrative form. The material collected at this step underwent a special kind of process analysis involving memory registers.

Findings suggest the need to re-rank factors typically considered for choice in consumer behaviour. A fundamental rebalancing of weight must be attributed to habits versus rational evaluation as long-term factor of choice.

Equally short-term factors, like emotions and attitudes, acquire distinctive significance in connection with environmental cues that are susceptible to trigger their repetition in future shopping episodes.

The contribution to methodology is twofold. The empirical component extends the use of first-person ethnographic methods to self-reporting of consumer activities in addition to introspective and survey methods. Activity reconstruction led to amending consumer behaviour models by including the influence of social environment found in installation theory.

## **Keywords:**

activity theory; consumer behaviour; consumer psychology; episodic memory; first person ethnography; paratelic; repisode; replay interview; confrontation interview; SEBE; subcam.

## **FIRST PART: Research question, literature review, methods**

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### **1 Introduction, research question and research ethics**

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#### **1.1 Economics and Psychology**

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Over the last two decades there has been increasing reconciliation between psychology and economics. The contention of this study is that the dialogue between economics and psychology is being recovered after a long divergence begun with the first marginalists. As has been recognized by historians of economics, the initial interest for the psychological premises of classical authors like Smith and Marx, underwent a slow evolution into a purely formalistic approach known as orthodox economics (Blaug, 1992). This work wants to contribute something to another field, institutional economics, as an alternative realm of explanation where the sub-field of consumer behaviour finds a legitimate place.

Evaluation processes, choice and decision-making are notions now commonly used in both economics and psychology, although they were first proposed in psychology. Among the many branches of economics that have an interest in human psychology, two of them stand out: behavioural economics and consumer psychology. The empirical field of inquiry of this study relates to the latter, although some aspects of behavioural economics will be dealt with. A specific human procurement activity in the consumer good area will be analysed. So from the beginning the specific question of this work is defined: how do people evaluate material objects in real life and how are these evaluation processes accounted for in economic literature? The broader question has naturally to do with economics in general: how does economic theory account for variation in empirically observed preferences?

By considering the procurement activity of material objects of consumption, one is bound to consider a whole series of phenomena that the decision process implies. Procurement and consumption are indeed complex activities that have far reaching effects on the aggregate scale. As a researcher in psychology I will however limit the inquiry to consumers' needs as they appear phenomenally and the participants' insights about their

consumer related activities. The empirical considerations I will derive from the research on individuals will hopefully in turn shed light on the broad organization that brings about the availability of goods and sustainability of the consumer market. Under this light the value of an object becomes something more than just a personal preference, a rather restricted notion, but also a matter of material relationship of consumer- artefact- external environment, where external environment is meant the complete installation that makes the economic transaction possible and the market as a whole. Under the notion of market thus I include producers, locations where the products are stored and sold, the people who design and advertise them, the financial and logistic support, etc., in practice what is sometimes called the value chain (in a broad sense). This is why my discourse about consumer choice will rest not only on the demand side but also will take into account activities involved in the set-up of the supply side.

In contrast to mainstream economics which considers preferences to be individual, I endorse the unorthodox view that artefacts, just like intellectual products or other material and immaterial goods, predominately have a social, however local, value and that this local value is connected with specific human activities and the social setting where such activities occur. Since local utilities are given by a common use that is socially constructed and culturally shared, both individual needs and the ways to fulfil them are also socially steered. Moreover the perspective here endorsed considers a specific use value is learned in the socialization process so that it is dependent on the ontogenetic cycle as well as on the sociogenetic one. As an empirical proposition this research also addresses the problem of the differences in preferences that might originate in the social context.

I would like to remind here that the first scientific connection between psychology and economics was actually heralded by the interactional view of economic behaviour in contrast with the mainstream. Tarde's "*La Psychologie Economique*" (1902) was built on the author's knowledge of social psychological dynamics. His treatise however did not lead a specific stream of study until Katona, an economic psychologist with a phenomenological background. This last scholar started his work on social behaviour and economic attitudes in the '50s, and he was among the first thinkers to state that classical economic models implicitly owe their concepts to psychology: "*behavioural economics measures and analyses such psychological antecedents of economic activities as the motives, attitudes,*

*and expectations that influence decisions in economic matters*" (Katona & Morgan, 1980). It should be noted that the author uses behavioural economics in a different way in this passage than it would today. Here it stands for psychological economics as understood by Tarde, ideally referring back to the psychological premises that characterized Jevons' and Bentham's works in the early nineteenth century.

Since then, even though the construct of expectation suggested by Katona remained in place, it has been studied by scholars of decision making and behavioural economists with specific experimental frames of reference in a quest for formalization that led to the progressive dismissal of the societal dimension.

From the point of view of social knowledge, the mentioned development is documented by Kirchler and Hözl (2006), who constructed an index from the *Journal of Economic Psychology* showing the proliferation of ever more specialized sub-fields common to the two disciplines. They found that topics like individual decision-making and cooperation and competition showed the greatest increase, whereas topics like socialization, lay theories and consumer expectations suffered a decline in interest. This dynamic once again states the success of decision-making and limited rationality models at the expense of social-observational methods. However, the rational expectation presupposition has not completely monopolized either the public or all economics disciplines. Mainly out of practical needs, some fields in applied economics have pursued research on economic agents' behaviour with observational methods. These fields can be collectively called empirical economics and they correspond roughly to a series of sub-disciplines in consumer behaviour, marketing, empirical economics, experimental economics and preferences studies. This study can be placed in consumer psychology and consumer behaviour studies that are understood as branches of empirical economics. My literature review of consumer psychology, plus its connections to behavioural economics, and to micro- and macro-economics, is presented in the chapter 2.

The methodological framework of this study, activity theory, is based on the empirical methods explained below and on a non-mainstream view of human economic behaviour. The latter requires a long explanation which is the final product/conclusion of this study: it is hoped that the narrative will lead to a clear explanation of why economic

theory should no longer deal with economic behaviour but instead with economic activity. Chapter 3 will review the literature of activity theory.

In the empirical part of this paper, I decided to gather my data from a specific consumer sector, shoes. The reason for this choice is my professional background in the sector that allowed me to learn the activities involved in the production and marketing of shoes between 1992 and 2004.

I used three methods for three sets of fieldwork.

The first is semi-directive interviews a well-established method, included two groups of consumers and producers. This served the purpose of getting acquainted to the field to better understand the reasoning of the professional groups involved and their major concerns when building their decision processes. It also gave me the opportunity to test the acceptability of the subcam method and to find ways to recruit participants for the following part of the study. This introductory part of the research is presented in chapter 4.

The second method is an innovative kind of ethnography that has been devoted to the analysis of real buying behaviour in a natural setting. It makes use of subjective cameras: these are small recording devices worn at eye level. They allow to record the participant's field of view continuously for a period of time (up to 2 hours in this study). In the literature this methodology is referred to as subjective evidence based ethnography or SEBE (Lahlou, 2011). The innovativeness of the method refers to the fact that ethnography uses a first-person perspective instead of the traditional third person. As I will explain, this partly overcomes bias problems inadvertently caused by the research process. Due to the weight of data collected, this in part accounts for the small sample of 17 consumers. First person accounts of activity are truly a booming field (I started the research process in 2010) and real world data are being collected by a host of tools and gadgets that individuals wear or carry leisure (like Google Glass). Such devices have also generated the life-logging field studies (Lee, Smeaton, Jones, et al., 2008). Methodology and samples of the SEBE is described in chapter 5.

The third method follows from the second but has to be distinguished from it because it occurs separately and makes use of the video and aural data generated in the second step. It revolves around face-to face interviews between the researcher and participants and has been called a replay interview or confrontation interview by earlier developers of the method (S. Le Bellu, 2011; Rieken, 2013). The aim of this interview is to explain a participant's activities by commenting on the subcam recordings following an ad hoc protocol. The first-person recordings of activity done in the second part can indeed stand on their own; however it would remain a dumb kind of data for the recordings do not speak for themselves. The third part on the other hand obviously cannot be produced without the previous one. The replay interviews are described in chapter 6.

Discussion of the analysis of empirical data is given in chapter 7, where I will explain how these data modify the landscape of empirical research in consumer psychology, marketing and possibly empirical economics.

I will conclude by referring to the psychological precedents in economic research and why we should think differently about them after a first-person research into buying behaviour. This will be done in chapter 8.

With this endeavour it is hoped to contribute a small methodological brick to empirical economics and suggest why mainstream economics should become much more unorthodox than it is now. I also hope to give some indication of how real-world observations can affect the abstract assumptions concerning human rationality still so pervasive in many branches of economics.

## [1.2 The marketplace, consumer psychology and economic theory](#)

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On different levels, the marketplace is the field of inquiry for consumer psychologists, marketing experts as well as anyone else interested in an economic procurement activity. Traditionally methods have been developed to measure how markets work, either of individuals (the realm of ethnography) as well as of groups of various dimensions (typically studied in marketing, sociology and empirical micro-

economics). These approaches can be described as observational, because they stay neutral both on assumptions on participants and on methods. The distance from economic theory, be it macro, micro, or political economic, is notable: the latter are theoretical approaches that look at aggregated data to confirm or reject models of economic behaviour that are built on a certain idea of how humans should behave in complex societies.

The ethnographic approach, or micro-psychological one, I am advocating in this thesis refers rather to individuals immersed in their cultural and material context and asks essentially why individuals do what they do in those places and circumstances. This is quite different from simply asking why people behave in a certain way. Also I am trying to discover if people do what they say they will do and if they recognize what they do; this part is done through the empirical observational method cited above. Finally the aim of a complex ethnographic approach is to build a model of economic preferences in a much more efficient way and to link them to the participants' activities accounts.

The natural frame of reference of this study is then consumer psychology and behaviour, in that I choose not to refer to economic models at the level of individual observation, but to trace regularities of behaviour only as a result of the finely detailed screening of activities involved in the buying process observed.

By looking into people's activities, one cannot hope to encounter a representative sample as for example in marketing studies. Demographic factors are not assumed to say much about people's activities at this stage. If this is the case, what can one hope to discover through such a study that is relevant for economics theory? The contention is that the detailed data scrutinized in this study in the form of smaller actions, tasks, goals, purposeful behaviour, motivations can become the material for a different frame of reference for grand theories: away from alleged psychological regularities of a higher order, towards different regularities of a lower order.

By doing so we will probably have to renounce constructs we are accustomed to, like attitudes or preferences, and embrace constructs that are found in older studies, namely behaviourism. This implies that constructs like frame of mind, regret, loss-aversion

and others are linked more to activities than to internal cognitive states, so that some concepts in the literature might be linked to real-world observation differently.

As for the similarity of individuals in different groups, this study, while not indicating precise groups, will provide the material from which clusters of representative activity patterns are derived instead of beginning from demographic groups.

The product of interest in this study is shoes as a representative consumer good. Everyone in western society is concerned by shoes, both for physical, objective reasons (protection) as well as for social reasons (fashion, group-belonging etc.). It is also conceivable that consumers build personal relationships to products and that shoes are no exception. This means that in seeking information, selecting and deciding, the actor participates in social practices that are at one time distinctive of each participant and possibly common to given cohorts or social groups. As the literature claims, such practices will entail distinctive linguistic patterns.

The final decision of which item to buy is then at the end just accessory to the final experience. As is understandable, each individual will have her/his own preferences for a single product but the product itself will have little to say about the whole process that leads to its purchase, if anything at all.

Economic approaches are much more interested in whether choice is a product of rational decision making and ultimately if it is rational at all. A rationality versus irrationality opposition has been among the most appealing schemes in the western tradition and is still used in economics. The literature in behavioural economics, for example, is in fact largely informed by such a normative approach. The underlying presumption is that rational behaviour is the norm in real-world humans. This makes of the mainstream economics approach a top-down one, a model building exercise through the revision of rational models whenever reality seems to diverge from the model.

On the other hand, the research on economic behaviour in consumer psychology has a distinctive empirical approach. Researchers in this field observe the market and its participants mostly by describing what they do and trying to formulate psychological theories, that do not necessarily rely on rationality.

The most popular vision of the rational economic agent is still derived from mainstream economics with the main assumption that describes behaviour in terms of rationality and irrationality.

In the western culture decision theory has seen humans as being of two minds, one rational, one irrational. As I suggested above, this belief has existed since antiquity and is found in classical economic thinkers; J.S. Mill for example:

*Men often, from infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be the less valuable; and this no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures, than when it is between bodily and mental. They pursue sensual indulgences to the injury of health, though perfectly aware that health is the greater good.*

(Mill, 1972 [1863], p. 14)

The fact that this view still persists after centuries points to its saliency in real life events. As we have seen, decision making studies traditionally have not distinguished contingent decision processes (the actual activity) from prospective decision processes (the declared modes of evaluation). This distinction, however, would provide a justification of the core difference between an experimental discipline based on presuppositions of rationality and an observational one concerned with inconsistencies in behaviour.

Kahneman's work seems to paint the same picture; humans are endowed with two quite separate modes of thought that come into action depending on the circumstances of the decision process. The quote below, while stating the above also questions the classical picture of the two minds, suggesting going beyond it. He also implies that new research should dig into the causes of what traditionally has been called irrationality:

*The time has perhaps come to set aside the overly general question of whether or not people are rational, allowing research attention to be focused on more specific and more promising issues. What are the conditions under which the assumption of rationality can be retained as a useful approximation? And where the assumption of rationality must be given up, what are the most important ways in which people fail to maximize their outcomes?*

(Kahneman, 1997, p. 124)

This corroborates the turn that behavioural economics has undergone becoming much more empirical than experimental. For several decades the tide has turned towards natural decision making (Ainslie, 1992); this is the very moment in which the situated individual decides positively or negatively in a real-life situation. A hole in these studies

has been the lack of methods to investigate natural decision making (Ariely & Norton, 2007). This work aims to build on this fundamental distinction with the introduction of the mentioned ethnographic subject-based method (Lahlou, 2011) to start filling in this gap with a new methodology that effectively taps into the moment of decision.

### 1.3 Activities and Environment

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Having found that economic theory is a composition of factors the traditional dichotomy of factors in two general classes: factors that are internal and factors that are external to the individual. The former are factors such as cognitive ones, personality, rationality and everything that derives from the agency of the person involved in the economic decision. I add to these habits, that for the time being might be considered to originate internally and are traditionally placed under the cognitive label. The latter are what usually are seen as influence factors, such as the physical environment, advertising, social encounters, social setting, also collectively defined as being cultural. I set aside evolutionary factors that are a class of their own and belong to even broader accounts that as such are widely debated and, probably, cannot be tested empirically on participants.

If decisions do indeed comprise an evaluation process that to some extent follows rational utility, but which is also dependent on affective states and ecological affordances, the question becomes: how is it possible to reconstruct the decision process that account for environmental and habitual factors that are as a rule excluded by theory? How is it possible to consider decisions as a unitary process if orientation, information gathering, consideration, selection and decision are composed of a host of small steps? Is there a unifying principle of coherence in all such behaviour? How does a planned course of action include rational values (various types of long-term utility) and how are those realised in real-world situations? Naturally these are complex questions and I do not pretend to answer them at this stage in this manner, but it is at least possible to account for some of the factors of the neglected classes involved.

Since we seem to be dealing with processes of two distinct psychological natures here, one about how subjects think of something and the other about how they act towards it, a clear strategy to recognize these two cognitive states has to be determined. As suggested above, if the evaluative dimension refers to general motives and attitudes whose coincidence with actual behaviour must be assessed, empirical investigation has to address both problems under the constraint of action in real-time. To act in a situated environment seems in fact to be a very different psychological situation than to describe a prospective or imagined action. Traditionally self-description of prospective behaviour has always been a narrative exercise in explicitation of intentions that may or may not coincide with what the individual will ultimately do. Indeed intentions and expectations can be substantially different from actual behaviour. Situated decision points are actual deeds, intense and engaging emotionally, during which he/she will experience a cognitive shortfall and is bound to trim and modify his/her tasks in unforeseen ways (Herbert A. Simon, 1990). Such discontinuities constitute the experiential inflection points that are object of the empirical study.

For the time being I would like to address these two dimensions of evaluation and decision as two hypothetical constructs; but how is it possible to get grip on them? The material I plan to evaluate for this purpose will be videos and post-hoc verbal interviews on them. The mismatch between real-time action and verbal report is obviously not completely overcome by this method, but current research shows that it approximates actual behaviour quite effectively by tapping into different types of memories (Brown, Dilley, & Marshall, 2008). Ethnographic subcam recording belongs to this class and adds to the methods of elicitation of past actions through a shift from recall to recognition (Heisley & Levy, 1991). It is in essence a special kind of introspection that I will use to produce a guided explanation of a choice that has been recorded by the participant. What usually gets lost with the decay of short term memory after an activity has been completed, is partially preserved and with the help of the participant made available to observers. This kind of recording also makes observation more certain and enhances validity as recordings can be reviewed at any time in the future.

The empirical case studies considered here are situated actions, traditional buying situations in which a consumer goes into a shop, evaluates, selects and finally buys a

consumer good. Often buying situations lead to deviations from initial objectives due to many environmental and interactional distractions that are difficult to foresee. The aim is to clarify how unexpected and implicit factors influence the final decision.

Recent work conducted with the ethnographic method of subjective point of view recording has already produced findings in emergent behaviours driven by technological change, where it is possible to compare hypothetical formalized sequences of actions with real ones. The use of mobile phones is an example; it has been monitored at France Telecom and UC Irvine to pinpoint elementary decision steps of activities like sending a text message (Christensen, Gilleard, Mark, & Shafae, 2001). Ethnography applied on consumer behaviour has seen great development in the 1990s with sophisticated results and applications (Underhill, 1999). However, it has been seen how micro-activities often go unnoticed when a participant is observed by a third party. In marketing the subcam (also called mindcam) has been tested in shopping malls as an extension to commercial ethnography done with a fly-on-the-wall camera or simple written accounts of observed behaviour. Researchers have noted how this method can be extended to environmental cues such as the look and feel of lighting, the aesthetics of an environment, the nature of sounds and music, the stillness or business of the setting (Starr & Fernandez, 2007). On another level of subjective experience these same researchers observe how it is possible to faithfully recreate participants' experiences: *"what they see, what they hear, what they say, where they move, how long they spend in each area of the premises, what they touch, what they do purchase, what they do not purchase, what they say, and how others interact with them"* (ibid.). It is further pointed out that it had never been possible to recreate the subject's experience in such detail before. Activity theory adds to these empirical findings the insight that what was normally considered a simple deterministic behaviour is in fact a complex bundle of reactions and proactions brought about by stimuli selection coupled with personal cognitive elaboration steered by overarching motives (Lahlou, 2011).

Activity theory has undermined the assumption that the individual operates through independent streams of activity that can be easily chunked as implied by the first wave of behaviourism. This constitutes an important step forward because purposiveness could be considered to give coherence to the succession of activities. However, purposiveness could never be considered an observable variable by the behavioristic

tradition. Activity theory links decisions and actions with purposes and goals that in turn imply basic needs, but also more abstract overarching motives hard to account for in the behaviouristic stream. This model shifts the focus from reactive to proactive behaviour where larger motivations can be accounted for as the source of individual as well as organizational conatus (Lahlou, 2010b). Following activity theory, the construct can be further divided in terms of tasks of various hierarchical and temporal levels. Each task would then entail additional local and contingent motives. Although a coherent model of human activity still does not exist, the two main dimensions of sequential and hierarchical ordering of acts and motives seem to be present in every seminal author (A. Leontiev, 1989), (Von Cranach, Mächler, & Steiner, 1985).

Motives explain why even in the presence of deviations from prior deliberation, humans are able to find their way in the complexity of the physical and social world. Activity expands the fundamental opposition of the rational versus the affective by showing that unexpected diversions in the course of activity are not solely dependent on individual but they are largely caused by environmental affordances that both lead and constrain human plans, making human actions highly unpredictable in the short run but remarkably consistent in the long run by virtue of their superior motives (Nordenfelt, 2007). Finally, from an interpretive point of view for the empirical material, motives can be considered as hierarchically more important than what is usually called rational evaluation; they are much more persistent than rational decisions and contribute to give unity to sequences of divergent activities.

As said above, the unifying construct of motivated activity is assumed to be the principle that links the rational, affective, cognitive components of a decision path. The contributors are unfortunately quite unrelated; because each of them started from very different needs. In any case one has to consider these precursors of the concept are James and the pragmatists, ethologists like von Uexküll and Lorenz, phenomenologists like Talcott Parson and Alfred Schutz, the Russian school of Leontiev and Rubinstein, down to von Cranach and many researchers now working on human goals. Each school has its own concepts of act, action, activity while maintaining the underlying link of motive and action. I will come back to activity theory in the section on the replay interviews and in the general discussion.

A completed course of action, beginning from the initial desire and through the final deliberation is the pattern I aim to describe through a reconstruction of the participants' accounts of buying situations. In the analysis of the replay interviews I will try describe the initial goals, flag the probable deviations from the initial deliberation and reveal how the course of action actually developed in contrast with the participant's narrative reconstruction. I will assume that most participants are unaware of the large number of nested sub-activities that compose the entire activity. Hopefully, it will be possible to outline the short term deviations and local goals and contrast them with long term evaluations. Also I will try to assess how much the situated action is dependent on the environmental context when compared to long term evaluations expressed as a narrative.

Methodologically long term evaluations are usually elicited through open-ended interviews and which I also intend to carry out. Long term evaluations and motives are ultimately compared with short term deviations and local goals using a mixed method approach. As anticipated, this will include open-ended interviews (chapter 4) and the subcam method (chapters 5 and 6). It makes sense to think of long term evaluations as referring both to goods and to general values concerning consumption, lifestyle and, perhaps moral values, which are easier to elicit through open-ended interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The replay interview would then confirm or contrast with the picture from simple open-ended interview, by virtue of the differentiated cueing used in the protocol. The path to higher motivations is somehow longer in this case because the method aims at shifting the search for motivations from pure introspection to a retrospective assessment with the help of images. What these motivations were would then be inferred from their connection with the material task recorded. Prospectively the interview genre might steer from the narrative towards the episodic register (Flick, 2000).

Another methodological concern in this research is how a new perspective on value in economics can be attained. In my opinion the usual methods of surveying or interviewing adopted in industry would benefit from a description of the modes of value satisfaction conducted in the first-person ethnographic approach would allow to look at micro-level activities as the new basis of discussion of value in abstract. As has already been pointed out in recent literature, evaluation would become a process that is influenced from the fit of motivation to the goal pursued. Internal cognitive states would

then be satisfied through actions that are not only directed towards changing the environment, but are truly performed in order to attune internal motivational states to the goals (Tory Higgins, 2005). The real cases observed will hopefully contribute to discover if patterns of actions are independent from specific environments, in other words if the participant would behave in the same way in alternative environments or not.

#### [1.4 Rationality, rationalization and practice of economic exchange](#)

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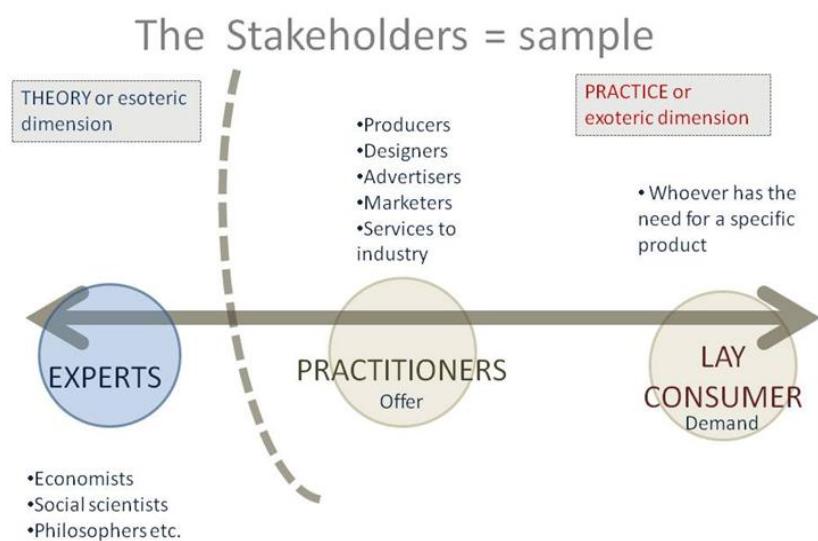
This section suggests a distinction between the actors involved in economic exchange that is shared by microeconomics and consumer psychology: consumers and producers. This division is not very different from the one retained in the more abstract economic theories such as macroeconomics and political economy. These use terms like and demand or consumption and production, including the presence of distinct social roles that can be traced back not merely to attitudes or taste but more significantly to material activities. A different picture might emerge in psychology where this classification is not normative but constitutes a starting point for experimentation.

From a societal point of view a third category must be added to the above division: economists and social scientists in general are the ones who are endowed with awareness at the societal level, i.e. are conscious of the market. To distinguish among experts and non-experts is a traditional division of the field of economics that maps polar categories traditionally considered in the sociology of science: theory vs. practice (Schütz, 1946).

These three social groups, although participating differently in the economic equation, can be understood to be stakeholders in the economic process; they constitute the ideal sample for my research. However, since the method is observational, an expansion into sociological categories has to be advanced with care. It is however useful to keep in mind that theorists are the ones responsible for the concepts that are used in economic theory and as a consequence for the words we use to describe phenomena. Their link to the research is ultimately about words: are same words used with similar meanings or with very different ones by each groups?

Furthermore, the theoretical division into three groups is useful to understand the two groups of physical stakeholders of the economic exchange, consumers and producers and if and why the two behave differently towards same products (here consumer goods).

The following diagram suggests that the group of experts is not part of the economic process itself but they are observers of the economic process; they are assigned the task of rationalizing the material processes of economic exchange. While a measurement of the success theorists have theoretically remains beyond the scope of this study, I suggest that this could become a research venue for applied linguistic studies at the crossroads between psychology and economics.



*Figure 1 Theorists vs. practitioners*

The scheme suggests that theorists hide behind a one way mirror through which they are allowed to contemplate what the public does but where the opposite is not necessarily true. The public generally is not interested in and as a rule might not understand what theorists are doing. As has been pointed out, the two domains of scientific understanding of human activities and public understanding of the same do not match and often ends up in an opposition of rational and irrational representation of human activity (Moscovici, 1993). Traditionally, experts are those who know about the theories, are able to discuss them and provide alternative models to amend those. Experts are such not only because of their objective knowledge but also because of the acceptance of their role by the surrounding social milieu. Such acknowledgment fulfils the other necessary condition to be an expert, that of being framed in an institutional category. In

essence today experts in the economic field are represented by a vast range of academic economists and social scientists whose quality (or alleged one) is measured in the arena of esoteric scientific discourse, of which peer-review is but one form. By contrast I will consider as inexpert everyone else who is described as an actor in expert accounts, and these are the real stakeholders in economic exchange. These are also what I call the physical stakeholders in the process observed in this study. Furthermore, since economics is traditionally divided into supply and demand, the separation in producers/suppliers/retailers and consumers ultimately makes sense: this is the division of the sample in the first data set of open ended interviews discussed in chapter 4.

Market stakeholders are on the other hand the physical market, where situated instances of selection, choice and consumption of a product occur. The material produced by these groups is of a different nature than theory. It is indeed possible to study suppliers/retailers and consumers through direct methods such as interviews and surveys, with the aim of building representations of the economic exchange or in other words models of their behaviour. Although it is not the aim of this study to create social representations of consumer choice, I conducted some exploratory interviews to collocate the knowledge involved in the consumer selection process. For this purpose I selected a sample of insiders to approximate the supply side of the specific market. These participants represented the one pole of the knowledge of market stakeholders, those involved in production, distribution and general services. For the third group, the knowledge of consumption, I selected 11 shoppers in London in 2011. The two groups of stakeholders are quite homogenous and provide a good introduction of the practices involved through 11+11 open ended interviews.

In short, experts are the rational side of the equation and are responsible of interpreting what stakeholders do. I will portray the theoretical side of the problem in chapter 2, discussing consumer psychology, behavioural economics, and economics in general. In particular behavioural economists lately have become the most well-known group of economics esoterics in our society. These are experts who in the last 40 years have produced models of economic behaviour referring to psychological constructs like risk aversion, preference reversals or time-discounting; such constructs have been tested mostly in controlled experiments. The findings of behavioural economics often refer to

mechanisms of evaluation and choice whose model come from cognitive studies and suffer from a poor mapping power onto real-world phenomena for this reason. Behavioural economics is however responsible for several of the social representations our society holds about economic exchange due to the popularization of studies that fall under its umbrella (Thaler, 2008), (Gladwell, 2000), (Kahneman, 2011). On the other hand, studies in consumer choice have a marked observational bent and suffer from the opposite problem, a difficulty in contributing to larger theories.

The literature review in chapter 2 will consider of the three kinds of theory discussed above. The material will also be treated as data itself in quantitative text analysis; this method has the advantage of chronological ordering and of being replicable by anyone with the same dataset.

## 1.5 Research question and field of exploration

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The research question includes a summary of the problem of the relationship between the knowledge of theorists about the economic process and the economic process as performed by real actors. It is also about the content of the economic process, in fact in order to unveil it the study will examine actual behaviour and will conclude describing those behaviours. The question that embraces to these two concerns is:

“Do factors of evaluation in real world consumer choice match the ones found in the relevant literature?”

In each chapter I will try to answer the following questions. In the literature review:

- 1.1) What are the factors and paradigms of consumer choice in consumer psychology, consumer behaviour and related economic literature? Is it possible to group those factors in specific classes?

Concerning the knowledge of market stakeholders (open ended interviews):

- 2.1) What do producers and suppliers think are the main factors of choice?
- 2.2) What do consumers think are the main factors of choice?

Concerning real world consumer behaviour (situated first-person observation and replay interviews):

- 3.1) How do actual instances of consumer evaluation and choice occur?
- 3.2) How are those behaviours rationalized and explained retrospectively? Are there common patterns of explanation?

To summarize the issues emerged in this research:

- 1) The study of human evaluation processes is ancient, entailing virtually the history of philosophy down to economics. Some fields in economics like behavioural and experimental economics and psychology in comparison are new disciplines, and are both concerned with evaluation, choice and decision making although with different approaches. Consumer behaviour is again concerned with evaluation and choice but with a more material and situated approach.
- 2) All cited disciplines, and philosophy in particular, contain reference to rationality and impulse usually opposing those two notions. Rationality appears as an explicit,

representational kind of reasoning and evaluation. I suggest operationalizing the concept of rationality in this research by attributing to it a set of characteristics: long-term process, reasoning, long-term memory, weighing of alternatives, prudence, in essence the usual suspects that relate to a cognitive approach to the question. Typically, theorists in philosophy and economics until mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when psychology and historicism were born, have understood deviations from the norm of rationality to be weaknesses of will or biases. Consequently, competing models between the two human faculties of explicit-representation and of implicit, cue-based or emotionally driven action could not be developed before the advent of scientific psychology.

3) An alternative approach to evaluation, choice and decision making has in my opinion to contain not only the two sides of human action, rationality and emotion, the dual-processing models (Chaiken & Trope, 1999), but also a third aspect that is not accounted for in the classical models, the habitual dimension.

The traditional concept of rationality would mirror the first part of the dual-process, the emotional/implicit/primed psychological mechanisms would refer to the second part, whereas habit would be the third part of the equation. The latter takes into account the ecological constraints of the process that pertain to the bodily extension of the mind and its movement as well. Choice and evaluation are then bound to take into account these three dimensions in which reasoning is put on the same level of relevance as emotional states and situated activities.

4) Activity theory is the paradigm that will help to integrate constructs like motivation, goal, evaluation and decision in a better model compared to the simple opposition of reason and emotion. Aim of this study is further to ascertain the different moments into which the economic activity under consideration can be divided. It will be discussed if activities implied by evaluation and choice are explicit versus implicit and how much they depend on environmental and socio-institutional constraints.

5) Because of the presence of an eco-social track, the process of evaluating and choosing a consumer good shall be theoretically addressed using a social constructionist approach. Many factors, attributes, installations and institutions contribute to directing individual choices and are ultimately responsible for the most individual decisions and most of all for fixing habitual behaviours. Habit formation is what replay interviews intend to assess among other phenomena.

The construction of a different hierarchy of factors of choice according to types of activity and human groups must at this point encompass different time frames: short,

medium, but also the long-term motivations that are neglected particularly in behavioural psychology.

The ethnographic observation will moreover reveal the level of expertise of the two groups considered, supply and consumption, with the aim of reconstructing long-term factors.

OVERARCHING QUESTION: Do factors of evaluation in real world consumer choice match the ones found in the relevant literature?					
chapters	Research subquestions	DATASET	METHODS used to collect and analyze data	Types of results	LITERATURE I am addressing (distinguished by relevance of Content and Method)
2 Literature Theory	"What are the factors or paradigms of economic choice in consumer behaviour and consumer psychology? Is it possible to classify them in characteristic themes?"	Section 2.1 Historical introduction on Orthodox and Unorthodox Economics	Section 2.2 Literature review in consumer behaviour and consumer psychology		
3 Literature Method	Activity theory and Ethnographic methods	Section 3.1 Main concepts in activity theory	Section 3.2 & 3.3 Application of activity theory to first-person ethnography. Fundaments of replay interviewing		
4 Interviews	"What do practitioners think are the main factors of value in a product?" "What do consumers think are the main factors of value in a product?"	Semi-directive Interviews Thematic Analysis	Classical method of collection of representations and personal accounts on social objects	Themes / Factors of choice	Consumer Psychology - Marketing - Microeconomics - Behavioural economics <u>CONTENT</u>
5 Ethnography	"How do actual instances of consumers' choice occur?"	<u>COLLECTION</u> : First person video-ethnography <u>ANALYSIS</u> : Content analysis of Acts and Events	Sticking to the observable events; minimal interpretation	Descriptions of elementary activities in the environment	<u>CONTENT</u> Activity theory <u>Method</u> Video Analysis of ethnographic material
6	"How do participants describe their own purchasing activity?"	<u>COLLECTION</u> : Video recorded interview <u>ANALYSIS</u> : Activity reconstruction + analysis of episodes	Fine detailed comment on activity to reconstruct motivations and habits: reintroduces introspection in form of retrospection	Personal accounts, Narratives, Episodes <u>CONTENT</u>	Social Psychology of Consumer Behavior <u>Method</u> Narrative, Episodic, Conversation

Table 1 Overview of the PhD structure

## 1.6 Ethical issues in this research

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The present study involved a complex protocol for data gathering and some novel considerations concerning the ethnographic fieldwork. The first consideration is about the spaces chosen to recruit and observe participants. In Britain a distinction between Public, semi-public and private spaces is made. In such spaces some research actions are allowed without consent and some others are not.

In study 4 (face to face interviews) participants were approached in a semi-public space in London, Somerset house, where the beneath mentioned fashion fairs were held (section 4.1). In this case the protocol involved approaching the participants stating why the researcher would like to interview them and how the interview will unfold. The researcher introduced himself as a PhD student doing a research about consumer behaviour and stating that the interview will consist of around 8 questions for a maximum time of 15 minutes. As some of them did not mind being interviewed for longer and seemed to enjoy the process, some recordings turned out to be up to 40 minutes. Almost all participants have been interviewed inside the fair coffee shop where professionals in the various branches of the industry convened to eat, drink and have a rest. Some participants were interviewed outside in the scenic internal court of the building. For this study the researcher used always an audio recorder and in few cases a video recorder although video material was subsequently not used in the research.

In study 5 (subcam recordings) participants have been recruited through advertising at the University and directly by the researcher in his circle of acquaintances. One participant was also recruited by chance in a pub through small-talk. To all of them was given copy of a participation sheet explaining what the recording was about (PDF in appendix). They were required to sign and give it back to the researcher with name, contact and signature; they can be viewed any time. The form used for this research is a standard form used in subcam experiences since some years by Prof.Lahlou in various countries where he recorded diverse experiences. No compensation was promised to anyone for participating. Participants were given a copy of the recording to thank them for participation. All participants have been adequately explained that the research was about consumer behaviour and more specifically about their own behaviour. The researcher first showed the subcam recording tool in order to make sure that they would like to wear it for a longer period (two hours was the projected time of experience).

Subcam recording is technically overt recording and no form of concealment or deceit was foreseen for the experience in this research. However the parties involved in the filming are not only the recruited participants but also members of the public that happen to cross the viewfield of the participant's subcam. As Kelly et al. suggest: "*Third parties who*

*encounter the wearer have their image captured without the opportunity to provide informed consent. Over the course of a typical day, a participant may encounter many people. These people may be photographed, knowingly or unknowingly, and will not have the opportunity to provide informed consent. In traditional methods, there would likely be a single image and those nearest the photographer (so most prominent in the image) would have an understanding of being “photographed”; this is not the case for automated, wearable cameras”* (Kelly et al., 2013). A similar position is held by Kirkup and Carrigan who also recognize that the continuously updated guidelines proposed by several agencies (UK market research society, ICC international chamber of commerce, ITC Independent television commission, ESOMAR) are at the stage of voluntary adoption and ultimately relying on the professionalism of researchers. They also insist on the collection and archival of written consent for participation and disclosure of future uses of footage (Kirkup & Carrigan, 2000).

In the main codices of research conduct a distinction is done between inadvertent recording and purposeful recording by researcher. This issue is slightly different for the subcam device because the participant is actually steering the device not for research purposes but following natural behaviour; this fact is even less documented and until now not censed. In my research since recording consumer behaviour did not involve any sensitive activity or any disadvantaged or protected group in the British society, nor involved filming in private spaces, it was considered safe to let the participants use them freely to do their shopping trips. To my knowledge as shops are classified as semi-public spaces it is allowed to use video-wearables (wearable electronic devices containing video capture systems) inside them if not explicitly advised outside the shop. Persons that are inadvertently caught on camera while walking around in the shop are obviously not debriefed for the reason that being in such a space they cannot presuppose not being filmed by fixed or mobile devices (Wiles et al., 2008).

Since in this research the participant engaged in normal consumer exploration activity but also interaction, it has indeed happened that some of them have been recorded. This possibility refers especially to shop assistants inside the shops. The approach taken has been to instruct the participant to tell the shop assistant about the recording tool as soon as she had the impression that they wanted to know more about the device. Participants have always explained what the subcam was and indeed many of them did not object to the recording. In few cases they did not give consent (see *subcam editing participant 005*) so that the participant left the shop immediately. The researcher made personally some experience of recording and noticed that this problem came up especially for commercial reasons: shops and chains often do not want people to either take photographs or record videos inside for fear of industrial espionage, especially relating

to prices. However made sure that this was not the case they had the option to agree or refuse filming.

In study 6 (replay interviews) ethical issues involved were compatible with the usual protocol for face to face interviews conducted in a closed space. It must be noticed however that such interviews present some new aspects for participants when confronted with recording of their own behaviour in first-person perspective. As this procedure is somehow revelatory of fine details of own actions and routines some persons could feel embarrassed in discovering aspects of their behaviour that they did not imagine to be revealed. Partly because this study did not involve any self-directed activity, and because of the public nature of shopping, such events did not occur. From the point of view of the effort however it must be noticed that this sort of interview was probably perceived as tiring also because the researcher had to be slightly pushy in rehearsing twice or three times the same excerpt of the subcam recording. This is understandable also in the light that participants were not compensated for spending time in this way.

Informed of the above protocol and shown excerpts of the subcam recording the head of the Department of Social Psychology at LSE, Dr. Alex Gillespie and the head of the ethical committee of the same department, Dr. Ilke Gleibs, consented and signed the ethical approval form to conduct this research.

This literature review like the rest of the paper is best framed by a question: what are the main paradigms in the literature concerned with evaluation and choice? As a starting point it begins by defining some keywords such as consumer choice, consumer decision making, consumer behaviour, rational buying behaviour and so on. This obviously is difficult if one wants to deal with all the work relevant to the question. At this point it is enough to say that many aspects of the problem are found not only in consumer psychology and consumer behaviour literature but also in behavioural economics, microeconomics and in the parent fields of macroeconomics and political economy. To get a comprehensive view of consumer choice it will be necessary to refer back to classical authors to understand how older models of economic behaviour can still be subsumed in recent ones and what they still have in common.

I will first draw with very large leaps the economic landscape in which this study finds its place. I will recall the classic division between neo-classical economic thought and Institutional schools in economics.

Subsequently I propose to analyse how evaluation and choice have been dealt with in consumer research, consumer psychology, down to the more recent social psychology of consumer behaviour. I will make the point that the literature in consumer behaviour is quite distinct from that of consumer psychology and that the two are generally contrasted as anecdotal versus scientific and how this is nowadays a controversial position. Finally, the contribution made by experimental economic psychology (behavioural economics), a field well respected by economists but largely lacking adherence to empirical data.

In section 2.2 I will consider the still more general disciplines of micro- and macroeconomics in order to highlight the general assumptions among economists. The question I am interested in at this stage is classifying perspectives of economists in a few classes and compare them to consumer researchers. I will make the point that economic theories (especially macroeconomics and political economy) are largely prescriptive; as such they influence applied research with predefined conceptions of human behaviour. How larger theories have the power to orient applied research will be discussed.

Finally thinking about economic behaviour traditionally implies a twofold division of behaviour into rational and irrational. In the discussion I will come back to this problem to see how the history of economic thought has clung to this dichotomy and how it could be qualified. I will

also try to keep in the foreground how different fields of inquiry of economic psychology apply their models empirically.

The chapter is divided in the following sections and subsections:

- Section 2.1. How the two classical strands of economic thought have dealt with individual preferences and utility: orthodox and heterodox economics
- Section 2.2. A comparison of three fields of study: consumer psychology, consumer behaviour and behavioural economics.
  - Section 2.1.1 A bird's eye view of the relevant literature in consumer research
  - Section 2.1.2 The constructs used in consumer psychology and how this more recent literature has evolved over the last two decades.
  - Section 2.1.3 How consumer behaviour is distinct from consumer psychology.
  - Section 2.1.4 Behavioural economics, economic psychology and their connections to economic disciplines.
- Section 2.3: Summarizing how the concepts of preferences, choice and evaluation have been treated with an ambivalent nature: individual versus social dimensions of economic behaviour.

## 2.1 Stepping back in time: orthodox and unorthodox economics

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Utility, preference, rationality, evaluation are historically connected in economics thanks to a long process of refinement which started with philosophers in ancient times and continued by scores of social scientists in recent ones. The consumer disciplines examined above are more recent and more open to constructs through which the problem of economic exchange is approached inductively. Consumer psychology and consumer behaviour usually look into consumers preferences with a broad perspective and reject a dogmatic view of individual utility that belongs more to economic theory in general and to most of behavioural economics. It is now necessary to ascertain the different views on utility and value in economics by going back to an established distinction in economic history between *orthodox* and *heterodox economics*. In order to enshrine my discussion in a manageable theoretical framework I briefly sketch a condensed account of value and utility in these two traditions to then shift to the psychological assumptions that lead contemporary macro- and micro-economics.

Before psychology and economics became autonomous disciplines in the nineteenth century, value was discussed more generally because of its omnipresence in human affairs and its apparently contradictory nature of being both intrinsic and extrinsic. The distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic value of an object can be traced back to moral philosophy and the classification in which its main representatives have been grouped: consequentialists (utilitarians), deontological or intuitionistic ethics representatives (Kantian ethics), contractualism (Locke, Rousseau, Rawls) and virtue ethics (Aristotle in ancient times and Ricoeur, Rorty, Anscombe, McCloskey in recent times) (Arrington, 1998). Paradigmatically, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value encloses the dimensions of the individual and the social. Intrinsic value is generally understood in classical moral philosophy as our personal evaluation of usefulness of the immediate referent. On the other hand, the social dimension typically implies a common denominator between objects by which the extrinsic value is measured. This common denominator can be materialized by a commodity or an object; money is the natural symbolic evolution of such a commodity. These two basic categories are parallel to the value in use vs. value in exchange distinction in economics (Anderson, 1993). Aristotle provides the earliest recorded discussion of economic intercourse based on the distinction between value in exchange and value in use:

*Of everything which we possess there are two uses: both belong to the thing as such, but not in the same manner, for one is the proper, and the other the improper or secondary use of it. For example, a shoe is used for wear, and is used for exchange; both are uses of the shoe. He who gives a shoe in exchange for money or food to him who wants one, does indeed use the shoe as a shoe, but this is not its proper or primary purpose, for a shoe is not made to be an object of barter.*

(Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Ch.III, 1257a)

Building on these two forms of exchange, Adam Smith insisted in the eighteenth century on labour as a common measure for what he called exchangeable value or price (Smith, 1776, chaps. IV and V), meaning by this that price is measured in money terms but that inherent value is given by the amount of work required to produce that object, suggesting that an equivalence between price and labour is always possible. This generated the naïve conclusion that an intrinsic amount of labour, or objective value, could be isolated in the object independently from its demand and this view persisted until the emergence of the marginalist school, namely with Jevons in 1876.

If we were to consider this theory today, it would be all too clear that unfortunately in real world cases it is not always possible to match supply and demand quickly and with certainty. Consequently, the objective value of a good is an elusive quantity and does not necessarily mirror the amount of labour contained in it. Subjective theories of value, from marginalism onwards, contend on the other hand that the utility of goods is attributed by individuals.

The variety of individual choices observed at the market level makes the second type of value definition, value in use or use value (utility), much more appealing as an explanation of economic exchange. According to this view an object never has a value per se or as a result of the labor expended on it, but it becomes valuable only in relation to a use a person have for it, i.e. the object's utility is related to activities it enables or satisfies as an instrument. Virtually every early mainstream economist endorsed this view. Menger for example makes of his "*Principles of economics*" a plea for value in use:

*Different species can have different degrees of utility in a given use (beech wood and willow wood as fuel, etc.). But neither the utility of a species nor the varying degree of utility of different species or subspecies can be called "value." Not species as such, but only concrete things are available to economizing individuals. Only the latter, therefore, are goods, and only goods are objects of our economizing and of our valuation. (Menger, 1883)*

As an economic historian noted, classical political economists until J. S. Mill, constructed their models on "*very concrete concepts, close to everyday experience; nowadays economic modelling has more to do with cleaning up the data through isolation, aggregation, inclusion, exclusion, or focusing on some elements instead than others producing instead model economies*" (Mäki, Gustafsson, & Knudsen, 1993). In order to clarify where the links between psychological evaluation

of goods and economic theory lie, it could be useful to take a step two centuries back to recover some key figures in the debate.

In western thought the two definitions of exchange and use value have formed the basis for various economic theories. The notion of value in use however was dismissed right after Marx as a category of economic theory because of the impossibility of measuring it (Böhm-Bawerk, 1898). This is also the reason why this second aspect remains underrepresented in economic theory.

As for political economy, the importance of its concepts for this research is twofold. First, it is the theoretical background for framing every general assertion I will make about value in economics, this being the field in which value is treated. Second, popular discourse and the language of economic experts (among which political economists and macroeconomists are an important resource for the media) live symbiotically in the public arena, so they use common metaphors or describe facts in a simplified manner. In the previous section I have outlined how some keywords used in the specialist literature of behavioural economics can be found in the public discourse. It is conceivable but beyond the scope of this study to look into the structural organization of social representations of utility and value. Such analysis would refer to a social representations approach where linguistic expressions are organized around prototypical cores that mirror the two main polarizations by circles of interest (Abric, 2003).

It helps here to remember that the modern notion of utility is the direct descendant of cost-benefit analysis that is attributed to Benjamin Franklin. His famous letter with its simple calculation helped formalize the concept of rationality by making the weighing of pros and cons of a choice more stringent by ranking them. What is often forgotten about Franklin's writing is the time dimension: *"all the Reasons pro and con are not present to the Mind at the same time; but sometimes one Set present themselves, and at other times another, the first being out of Sight."* The first reason to making a list is the difficulty of memorizing all factors for choice in a specific situation. He goes on to say: *"To get over this, my Way is, to divide half a Sheet of Paper by a Line into two Columns, writing over the one Pro, and over the other Con. Then during three or four Days Consideration I put down under the different Heads short Hints of the different Motives that at different Times occur to me for or against the Measure."* (Franklin, 1956) [1772]. The interest of these two passages lies in the two values given to time. *Present time* can be essentially understood as the space of working memory; this time dimension is contrasted to the longer term perspective (*three or four days*). Since the author speaks about this framework as a general guidance to choice we get an interesting insight that sees rational choice as obtained over time and that unsupervised and rash decision making is suboptimal.

The underlying idea of individual utility as a personal, conscious, explicit representation was inherited by neo-classical authors, beginning with Bentham and Mill, through Walras and Marshall and it is still the most important way of modeling individual evaluation of goods. I will come back to the time dimension implied by such an approach, suggesting that this model works only on the basis of the abstraction of time. Throughout the nineteenth century there is no sign of considering evaluation as a process and there is no sign of considering the way of evaluating and choosing as an activity entailing different timespans. Of course in order to speak about motivational time perspectives in economics, new psychological constructs needed to reach the economics community.

Essentially the endeavour has been to fit individual behaviour to a model of unobserved utility-maximising average behaviour. It was noted in the '70s how this belief ultimately generated an artificial exemplary individual (Strumpel, 1990). It should be noted that this is the same fate social psychology had in the post-war period, where the dominance of the methodological individualism derived from cognitivism caused the adoption of experimental protocols containing the tacit assumption of a model individual onto which observed ones were superimposed (Farr, 1996). As a result from these premises behavioural economics cultivated a concept of society ideally composed of rational individuals and even generated a concept of the individual as a miniature version of a rational society (Patnaik, 2009).

The picture in mainstream economics is complicated by the fact that the first behavioural notions were actually present in the marginalist school and had truly been at its foundation. Smith, Mill, Jevons and other classical authors derived their conceptualizations from direct observation of social behavior with very little help from formalized models. Jevons might well be considered the first formalizer of the economic discipline because along with examples taken from the real world he also introduced the first simple mathematical models. The introduction of mathematical formalization made however two casualties: real world economic phenomena disappeared from the treatises along with individual psychology.

What actually happened over the two centuries that separates modern empirical economics from them, has been the progressive formalization of those concepts along with a powerful set of arguments joining them. It seems as if economics has strived to first make seminal concepts homogenous while providing a stringent deductive scaffolding to justify the premises. However it

is obvious that continuity between these two dimensions does not per se guarantee adherence with empirical phenomena.

Critical economic historiography has made the point that economic schools are actually systems of argumentation (McCloskey, 1985). The continuity marginalism-mainstream economics represent such a system. It takes the form of a linguistic tradition that elaborated special assumptions about rationality for at least a century, beginning with Jevons, through Marshall [1890]/(1997-[1947]), Samuelson, and Debreu, up to Keynes. A most notable product of linguistic crystallization is that notions from different traditions are conceptualized and compressed in formulaic expressions or word compounds. These are in turn absorbed by the media discourse and used by the public with decreasing effort, proportional to the degree of repetition of that expression. Two examples: *utility\_maximization* or the related *rational\_expectation* are psychological notions in form of ready-made compounds that once used by economists as building blocks in their treatises got slowly accepted by the public along with their ideological charge.

The well-known definition given by Robbins, “*the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses*”, is still well accepted after 80 years (Robbins, 1935). He realizes that the endeavour relies on simplification, entailing that the individual abstract level of conceptualization must meet the social dimension of economic action. However abstract, it does not put individual preferences in relation to collective outcomes. Mainstream economics methodologically still assumes that people are capable of rationally evaluating all of the factors involved in coping with the task of reconciling ends and scarce means. *Homo oeconomicus* theoretically possesses perfect knowledge and behaves consistently in relation to changing contextual conditions. It is a deep seated misunderstanding that since consistency of trends in economic dynamics appear on the aggregate, some sort of preference stability has to be at its base; the growing evidence is that this is not the case although reasons and dynamics of the phenomenon are not understood (Ariely, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2003).

The adoption of price and quantity as the two main variables in microeconomics enormously simplifies the sketching of demand curves. Implicitly such curves contain not only people's income but also their preferences. The notion of utility is even more comprehensive in that it regroups preferences; the discipline even has a formal measure of utility called the *util*. Microeconomics also works with other generalizations like *bundle of goods*. This is a combination of goods an individual is willing to purchase given a fixed amount of money as a percentage of his income. Luckily prices change slowly as a rule, so that economists do not have to worry too much about the impossibility

of forecasting price movements. What slows down price change is human behavior (Blinder, 1991). From the consumer's point of view, people do not stop buying products when there are minimal variations in price. From a perceptual point of view this means that there is a threshold underneath which the difference in price is not noticeable; we will see how this is confirmed by real world data from this research. Also the tendency to buy similar objects in comparable quantities across social groups translates into stickiness of prices. This is due to consumers moving in similar price ranges or similar quantities regularly over time; this implies that the reason of price stability should be looked for in social dynamics, not ex-post economic data.

That prices remain stable is not only a consumers' social dynamic; stability may persist on the producers' side as well through various forms of agreement among individuals, groups and companies. In microeconomics, Taylor finds that contracts can significantly contribute to the stability of prices. He also notes that contracts can be implicit as well as explicit (Taylor, 1980). Price stability can be explained because purchase and sale of raw- and semi-finished materials generally occur with time lapses of months. This phenomenon means that producers have to plan over a wide time scheme. The interaction of different production timeframes generates seasonal waves in the most cluttered sectors and thus inertia in price movements.

I would like to highlight here that the self-imposed restricted view of microeconomics on the price dimension and on the time abstract purchase decision excludes any reference to the phase of incubation of preferences in consumers problem (Orlet, 2008). Prices alone cannot say anything about the dynamic of preference and taste formation and their change in consumers across time. However it is precisely by surveying these variations that it would become possible to state on which timeframe consumers are acting: do consumers enact a long- or short-term reasoning when they buy a product? This question is relevant if we want to assess for example their price sensitivity. From a more general point of view by taking into account only price and quantity, economic theory is bound to discard also the activities involved in producing goods. However, knowledge of processes and patterns of activities that bring specific products to the market could foster understanding of the curves of adoption-decay of many market goods and thus much better economic models.

The dimension of time in consumption has further a very important characteristic. Since purchases are made for reasons of substitution they often assume a cyclical pattern. Often, and this is the case for this research, products are acquired according to the season, whereby dynamics of

social imitation arise. Cyclical in consumer behaviour is particularly important because people's habits make data series more regular and can even indirectly contribute to a more robust theory, so that economists should take this fact in due account.

Other coarse aspects of economic theory relates to the axioms used in micro-economics. Starting from an economic agent endowed with perfect rationality engenders indeed some problems in the theory when put to test with real world data (Gravelle, 2012). First consumers are *utility maximizers*, so that they are able to rank the most convenient bundle of goods in any situation. This is called a strong assumption in microeconomics. *Completeness* is the next assumption that refers to the ability of the individual to choose among competing sets of goods. In other words economists assume that the consumer compares the possibilities in an exhaustive and consistent way. If applied to real buying situations this postulate would entail perfect knowledge and being able to construct a fixed set of preferences at any one time. *Transitivity* is then the agent's ability to rank options in increasing and decreasing order. *Continuity* is a particularly interesting postulate because it refers to the absence of gaps in agent's preferences; in other words the agent is assumed to always know what he prefers at any point of the choice function. This is in my opinion the most problematic of all assumptions in that if mapped onto processual behaviour it would lead to assume that psychological states in individuals are permanent on a long-term basis. Clearly all of these assumptions contradict both the most casual and the most systematic real world observations. Again it is the mismatch between the atemporal perspective of mainstream economic theory and the temporal perspective of phenomenal observation that causes the cited difficulties.

Further the distinction between ordinal and cardinal utility is relevant for this research in that participants will be asked at different stages how they rank factors of choice in relation to the goods they are considering. The ordinal concept is in practice the way Franklin used to rank choices: ordinal would mean that the utility of the good is measurable in absolute numerical terms so that a ranking among goods is immediately possible. In this case from a practical point of view the price contains the amount of utility: a slightly more modern version of intrinsic value. Clearly to weigh the utility of a good in this way has limited application because contextual conditions must be quite stable. For example rates of inflation or disposable income should not change too quickly in order for purchasing power to be perceived as constant. On the other hand, cardinal utility introduces the concept of an amount of utility for each good. Its application is more flexible in that the ranking of items in a bundle of goods depends on the more common case of a fixed amount to spend. This could conceivably be applied to a list of characteristics in one specific good. In market research

participants are asked about the ranking of goods from the most useful to the least useful in order to outline a ladder of personal needs. If this kind of measurement is coherent it would establish common ground between real world consumer behavior and microeconomic theory that uses the notion of bundle of goods as part of its foundation. Along with those conditions, microeconomics studies substitution effects of goods, budget constraints and income effects. These are all relevant topics for consumer research, because they relate to quantity and quality of products purchased while putting them in relation to propensity of saving.

Finally it can be said that microeconomics is a different knowledge circle than macroeconomics and political economy. The characteristic language of the latter area of knowledge benefits from a double life: concepts are used both in theoretical models and in empirical research whereas macroeconomics is seldom applied to real world cases. The implication is that microeconomics vocabulary is linked to specific activities that link the theory to situated instances as in business and management discourse. Microeconomics is much nearer to the world of work and the distance between theory and practice is smaller, because practitioners and theorists are often symbiotic and interchangeable at the societal level. At the language level, one can infer from the literature on management and enterprises that microeconomics studies are seen as a parent discipline (ex. Harvard Business Review). In other words the communities involved are more cohesive and at the same time separated from theory because they develop linguistic practices influenced by the social networks involved (Granovetter, 1985).

The contrasting field to mainstream economics, the heterodox/institutional stream is historically relevant and constitutes the complementary theoretical underpinning for the classification of observed economic behaviour. The institutional and historical schools of end of the nineteenth century belong to this tradition and are particularly relevant for this study in order to understand what behavioural economics might have overlooked as explanatory elements of economic behaviour.

Much more than the mainstream paradigm, heterodox economics includes cultural aspects in economics, long-term evaluation of goods and courses of action and, above all, social determinants of economic action. Regarding the historical development of this tradition, Rosenberg points out that full-fledged economic theory was not really possible until the industrial revolution, because the empirical field remained homogenously comparable over time. This fact is obviously related to the simple structure of human activities that did not change considerably over the centuries. Change

occurred with technology and the induced differentiation of specialization (Rosenberg, 2009). This view implies that each economic theory is a direct product of the institutional and organizational context of social life in a given period.

Chronologically the first comprehensive account of societal derived preferences in modern societies is due to the German historical economic school, namely to Thorstein Veblen. This anthropologist turned economist proposed to observe economic phenomena starting from the social group in which the individual finds his *raison d'être*. Individual preferences are driven by evolutionary determinants that cause emulation and competition among individuals (Veblen, 1912). Consumption for Veblen is not a result of utility maximization but a matter of declaring one's status in a community, offering a conspicuous example of what one can achieve within one's own socio-interactional milieu. For this reason some purchases contradict utility maximization when goods seem to be chosen even if they have no added usefulness and the price is higher; today the majority of luxury goods fall under this category.

After Veblen, German historicists, British institutionalists (Marx being their precursor) and the Stockholm school explored the institutional aspects of economic exchange. Later these issues became the focal point for Schumpeter and his macroeconomic theory of economic cycles. The institutional school of economics in the nineteenth century began thus to be concerned with collective behaviour, a problem that might have completely different mechanics from the individual dimensions of evaluation and choice. According to institutionalists it was no longer possible to explain social changes only in terms of utility seeking individuals.

The Marxian doctrine, that distinguishes the two main classes of economic participants, producers and consumers, points to some difficulties in economic theory that stem from the very different concerns and actions of the two groups. Their behaviours are reciprocal but often incompatible. Wicksell expanded on the differentiation of economic actors and theorized that the economic cycle depends largely on their presence. The dynamic of the economic cycle slows down when consumers (or savers) prefer to withdraw money from the market instead of putting it to work by financing enterprises or the state. Keeping savings out of the market makes the general interest rate rise causing a higher cost of capital for companies and making them prefer a shorter production process instead of a longer one (scarcity of investment capital). This is to say that in macroeconomics there is always reference to small-scale transactions even when the theorist speaks about large aggregates that derive from collective behaviour. My contention is that it is not

clear if and how the dynamics of individuals and social aggregates differ in the two theories. The preference to save instead of buy is an observed phenomenon on a large scale but the point is that it is not clear how individual behaviour can be subsumed to such a general mood over an extended period of time, in other terms how the observed economic cycle relates to individuals.

The other overlooked problem with behavioural economics concerns the different processes of evaluation based on different timeframes. Choice contextual to real experience, choice in the future, choice in the past, choice in the moment of its recall, are all the same. No distinction in psychological time dimensions allows for average utility criterion to be optimal on all occasions, and this is intuitively rather wrong. Discarding the time dimension implies a leveling out of different behaviours that might well differ because of intervening elements in the evaluative processes in the individuals. Utility allows a simplification through which behavioral economists can dismiss the fact that what people plan to do is not what they will actually do.

Heterodox economics teaches that non-utilitarian goods do not obey the mechanism of the inverse relation between price and demand, i.e. the fact that with rising prices, demand rises or even follows deviant patterns. These dynamics imply that price is socially influenced and not assessed by each individual in a purely utilitarian way. Several categories of goods have been classified in modern economics: Veblen goods, based on status; positional goods, acquired according to their social desirability; experience goods, that are bought again on reputation thus as a matter of societal placement; credence goods, which are bought on faith, thus dependent on social psychological dynamics and perhaps media persuasion (Frank, 2008). The category of Giffen goods also falls in this class. Such goods are consumed more as the price rises due to shrinking resources available for other consumption; this dynamic generally engenders an opposite reaction compared to Veblen goods, in that their social desirability for higher classes decreases with their consumption by lower strata of society. The thesis of the inconstant nature of utility in human groups has recently been studied by some anthropologists (Bowles, 1998), who through several experiments have shown that cultural constraints are probably the main drivers for utility maximization which produces not only price differences, but even very different exchange mechanisms.

Recently there have been attempts to transform Veblenian status into a measurable economic variable (Oswald & Wu, 2010). While evidence of conspicuous consumption and similar non-efficient pricing behaviour appears in social life and is confirmed by numerous observations (Han,

Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), the formalized model is tentative because of the difficulty of finding a single cause. Today the concept of conspicuous consumption has been appropriated mostly by marketing and consumer culture (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and is classified as a societal constraint and not an economic law.

In order to construct a psychological science of consumers, scholars are by definition bound to take into account the broad context in which the consumer is immersed, the context being different goods, shops or, more broadly, the market place. For this reason it is much more difficult for psychologists to conceive of experiments in this specific field because products change independently from the desires of the consumer and the ability of the scholar to foresee the possibilities. But what are the factors influencing the ever changing preferences of consumers? Indubitably that what causes change is not the individual cognitive capabilities that are usually considered equivalent for all humans; change is mostly due to the social and cultural aspects of human life. As cultural factors we have to consider the culture of origin of each market participant and his relation to the current cultural environment: is the subject familiar with the market or is there a disconnection between his cultural background and the current environment? In which cultural group or sub-group can the subject be placed: can we safely assume that the cultural group is clearly definable and known to the scholar? If not how does she deal with the unknown culture from a market perspective?

Social class is the other major construct with a sociological origin that has been used broadly in consumer behaviour in recent decades. This notion has proven useful because it is ideally stable, relying on sociological aspects like demographics and census data and to a lesser degree on socio-psychological aspects, such as reference groups, family groups, the roles that the individual covers in those groups and the dynamics of hierarchy and economic status. Lifestyles and life cycle are also sociological variables that are in-between constructs bridging consumer behaviour research, cognitive psychology and sociology.

Socially oriented research strives to ascertain the placement within the social group of the individual acquiring a certain good. Social groups however are both actual and prospective (membership and peer groups vs. aspirational and reference groups). The preference in this case derives from appraisals of the reactions of others to the use of a certain object, thus from situated interaction. Positioning is then observable only in relation to a group and is thus dependent on the personal history of the consumer. Drawing on this group dynamic “positioning” has acquired a

different meaning in the marketing discipline: it is the effort of the company to build an image of goods in relation to a target group. This is a further example of how a process described by consumer psychology is turned into its opposite by marketing experts

Advertising is an aspect of consumer research that relates to cognitive aspects for the modalities of communication as well as to social aspects for its content. Previous research shows that some cognitive regularity can be exploited by the industry in order to convey a message more convincingly and with a foreseeable effect. Indeed advertising plays a large role in propagating cultural representations that help fix consumer tastes. A way to disentangle the effects of advertising both before the purchase and while the purchase is taking place however is still problematic. The contextual ethnographic approach is probably efficient in better defining the mechanisms of situated influence in a specific activity of shopping.

Backed by the heterodox tradition, qualitative research in micro-sociology aims to discover paths of socialization in order to reconstruct how economic transactions occur in specific cases (Sassatelli, 2007). Every individual's understanding of theoretical issues and their implementation in everyday activity is determined by his own history and milieu. This happens from early age in two forms at least that are relevant for economic exchange, education and market participation. Bourdieu's sociological explanation expresses awareness of the social construction of individual values in regard to goods: "*preferences and tastes are the product of their [participants'] positioning and movements within social space, and hence of collective and individual history*" (Bourdieu, 1992). Tastes are long-term factors that have a situated interactional origin, which however become implicit in buying behaviour and influence habitual purchases. A feasible research program in my opinion could start more modestly by looking for individual activities that shape medium-range preferences. Routine activities for example are constructed through time and a hypothesis could be that the repetition of actions and imitation of other participants play a major role in shaping individual evaluation procedures.

Ultimately economic decisions depend in large part on social influence as is increasingly recognized by behavioural economists. Aware of the unavoidability of these societal factors, mainstream economists wonder how to include societal and cultural constraints in economic models. Interviews try to elicit explanation of individual habits in reference to production and purchases. However, there are many reasons to be doubtful about tapping into cultural and

motives behind consumption. The isolation of cultural variables to be used in models of economic prediction for individual behaviour has only been suggested in broad terms by institutionalists.

## 2.2 Consumer behaviour, Consumer psychology and Behavioural economics

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The modern disciplines of consumer behaviour, consumer psychology and behavioural economics largely owe their basic notions to the tradition in economics; evaluation, choice, decision and utility to name a few are accepted cornerstones of economics that are still present in fields of empirical research. Along with these traditional notions a flexible apparatus of locutions and explanations is built, drawing from research in marketing, management and advertising. Aim of this section is to trace how much current research on consumer choice is founded on traditional economic notions, especially considering the two most relevant literatures: consumer behaviour and consumer psychology.

A distinction between the fields of consumer psychology, consumer behaviour, behavioural economics and marketing studies relies on the different treatment reserved to the major notions involved. I already anticipated that traditionally the area of study of consumer psychology and consumer behaviour does not seem to make use of notions related to activity; as I will illustrate below they are quite distinct from the traditional constructs that have been used in consumer psychology in the last 40 years. Specifically, if we compare consumer behaviour to consumer psychology we are not mistaken if we attribute an observational character to the former and an experimental one to the latter. Especially in the last 20 years, consumer psychology seems to have thrived on experiments, very much in accordance with behavioural economics. As a consequence, consumer behaviour can be considered more of a practitioners' field and less of a scholarly endeavour than consumer psychology or behavioural economics. Being first of all a practitioners' corpus of knowledge consumer behaviour grows out of a constant exchange between the two parties involved, industry and academic research. As acknowledged by Holbrook, consumer research was in the late '80s a field of arduous definition; the journal of consumer research in fact encompassed a very diverse range of disciplines. He proposed back then to redefine the discipline not much from the methods of study but from the object of its enquiry, consummation [i.e. the act of consuming], bypassing the problem of which disciplines can be involved with value, choice, selection of products. Ultimately consumer research would encompass all human activities regarded from the viewpoint of consummation (Holbrook, 1987).

In the early days of consumer research however this distinction between behavioural and psychological studies of consumers was less marked and very differently treated. Two psychologists by training contributed to establish the field: Lazarsfeld (1935), and Katona (1960). They relied heavily on market data, so that by today's standards they would be belong more to consumer behaviour rather than to general psychology. It is however also true that these two figures had a similar fate and remained quite isolated with almost no followers for decades to come.

New impulse for consumer behaviour came from marketing and its links to industry rather than intellectual institutions. Marketing is generally considered a subfield of business in universities so that its link to psychology has never been stressed. For similar reasons it is also naturally associated with micro-economics (Kotler, 2000). Consumer research and marketing make also use of a terminology derived from the early stages of psychological research; the word stimulus is often found in connection with the word market. For example, the four P's of marketing refer to market stimuli or external inputs in the terminology of consumer behaviour: product, price, place, promotion. The word stimulus in psychology is used today with great care since technically a stimulus is such only if it is controlled in a laboratory experiment. To associate measurable stimuli with market phenomena occurring in the real-world has to be regarded with suspicion because of the much higher complexity. More and more, consumer behaviour is leaving behind older functionalist paradigms and is migrating towards observation (O'Shaughnessy, 2013). Today it mostly relies on direct observation of the real-world and consequently resorts to qualitative analysis. An unresolved problem with consumer behaviour today is that it seems to be a collection of largely unrelated theories. Its usefulness, especially for economics is thus restricted because abstract normative conclusions about general human behaviour seem hard to obtain.

The other hand the fate of consumer psychology is no better in this regard, suffering from the old problem of collection of many small theories that have at best local validity, but lack a connexion to a grand theory of decision making. This problem, is put aside for the moment, and it is assumed that the many findings in consumer behaviour depend on its various interests over time. Proof of this is that numerous relevant problems were raised by companies trying to answer real-world questions. So how can one get their bearings in such a fragmented field?

Prestigious handbooks on consumer behaviour (Earl, 1999) face the problem by sketching a broad palette of themes that have accumulated over decades of empirical research. Possibly the highest level division of these is the distinction between individual preferences and social preferences. Psychological disciplines distinguish among individual preferences and socially

motivated ones; the first kind of research is traditionally the realm of cognitive psychology whereas the second belongs more to social psychology. This is indeed an old division since today no kind of psychology is considered individually oriented: there is no psychology which is at the same time also not social (Tajfel, 1981).

Consumer behaviour studies make another distinction: consumer and buying behaviour are not exactly the same topic. Buying a consumer good is a procurement activity of a good or a service and is obviously a subset of consumer behaviour. Studying buying behaviour thus is not tantamount to studying consumer behaviour because consumption implies a more complex activity and a longer time span. In the present study for example, a participant might buy something at a certain moment and give reasons for the choice. At that moment we do not know anything about the consumption of the item. The correspondence between initial intentions and final use of the good cannot be known and it might well be that the reasons why a product is bought for will not be fulfilled.

Observation of purchasing behaviour is not new in consumer research. The field was born with the supermarkets and marketing research in the '50s. The first recorded study in the field is the one by Wells and Lo Sciuto who first conceived the idea of tracking customers' purchases while describing them on a sort of ethnographic diary. They also suggest calling *episodes* the instances of consumer behaviour observations: "*an episode began when a shopper appeared in the aisle with the apparent intention of buying something, and it ended when the shopper left the aisle*". Similarly to this research their intention was to bypass the limitations of introspective reports. Back then they pointed out some limitations of their method, like not being able to get explanations from shoppers of what they were doing, no experimental control and difficult to evaluate qualitative data from different researchers (Wells & Lo Sciuto, 1966). Other researchers have found additional limitations to this method like the ascription of intentions to the customer by the data collector, a problem of over interpretative data collection protocol. The latter also pointed out the problem of the sample size: "[the problem of] *determining whether to observe less detail on more subjects or more details in less subjects*" (Cooper, Eyrich, & Waldo, 1967). They also observed that ascribing intentions to the customers or to co-shoppers is unwarranted. Interestingly such concerns keep busy consumer researchers still in recent years. Agafonoff, a market ethnographer with anthropological background, proposes participant observation as the solution to the decision making problem of why consumers buy. He found that through non-participant observation: "[he] *could not conclusively tell whether or not they were reacting to packaging, in-store advertising, or because it was a sale item. [he] was missing one final snapshot of the consumer, the decision-*

*making process happening inside their heads*" (Agafonoff, 2006). The author explains in his article how lengthy overt participant observations in various situations has been conducted. Insights gained through participant observation are in my opinion valuable especially on the long-term side; they deliver not only individual but also group motivations for example in the case of consumption rituals, social construction of stories or discovery of group cohesion rules, ultimately modern day anthropology. Taken alone however the method is in my opinion not suitable to market needs if not coupled with a more stringent content analysis of behaviour as the one I propose below (5<sup>th</sup> chapter).

The present study addresses all of these old issues with original and updated methodology concerns. One final problem addressed by the present research is trying to classify types of customers and behavioural styles. I will suggest that while this subfield is derived sociologically, the empirical work can produce an alternative classification of purchasing styles based on the reconstruction of people's activities instead of individual properties (section 7.5).

### *2.2.1 Consumer psychology constructs*

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To compare some relevant notions in consumer psychology with the ones used in the present study, it may be useful to look at the mission of the Journal of Consumer Psychology that currently (2013 edition) states it as follows:

*The Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP) publishes top-quality research articles that contribute both theoretically and empirically to our understanding of the psychology of consumer behaviour. JCP is the official journal of the Society for Consumer Psychology, Division 23 of the American Psychological Association. JCP publishes articles in areas such as consumer judgment and decision processes, consumer needs, attitude formation and change, reactions to persuasive communications, consumption experiences, consumer information processing, consumer-brand relationships, affective, cognitive, and motivational determinants of consumer behaviour, family and group decision processes, and cultural and individual differences in consumer behaviour. Most published articles are likely to report new empirical findings, obtained either in the laboratory or in field experiments that contribute to existing theory in both consumer research and psychology. However, results of survey research, correlational studies, and other methodological paradigms are also welcomed to the extent that the findings extend our psychological understanding of consumer behaviour.*

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-consumer-psychology/>

Revealing of how much the field is still dependent on the old cognitive and attitudes vocabulary is the listing of classical factors of twentieth century psychology is the line *affective*, *cognitive* and *motivational*. Relevant to the present research is the absence of the words habits, routines or activity. Also, the class of consumption represented by entities other than individuals seems absent; although the literature and indeed great part of economic theorizing takes into

account not only individuals but also organizations of all sizes. For economic theory, the fact that buying decisions can be an expression of collective intentionality would imply completely different decision dynamics (Schiffman, 1978). The personal consumer should not be considered the sole subject of economic decisions simply because interactions among entities with their organizational complexity influence choices by making available certain products to the detriment of others, so restricting individual consumer choice. A comparison based on co-citation analysis between the journal of consumer psychology and the journal of consumer research proposed by Alon, Morrin Bechwati some 20 years ago pointed out that JCR drew more diverse content coverage, methodology and data analysis whereas JCP was more diverse in terms of the range of authors coming from multiple academic branches but relatively less from business. The two journals were then distinct for a more frequent use of qualitative methodology for the former and a more frequent use of experimental settings for the latter (2002).

It should be noted that consumer studies like other economic disciplines may make use of aggregate data. Essentially then there are two types of data available to all economic disciplines: individual and aggregate. To start an inquiry with either one makes a fundamental difference in the kind of analysis a researcher can perform with implications for its results. Definitions of consumer behaviour in the most popular handbooks pertain in the intentions of individuals: "*Consumer behaviour reflects the totality of consumers' decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and dispositions of goods, services, activities and ideas by decision making units*" (Hoyer, 2001). However, this definition is unclear on the aforementioned distinction: is the totality of consumers' decisions to be understood as the totality of separate individuals that are aggregated a posteriori or is individual behaviour inferred from aggregate data that are considered valid a priori and subsequently broken down? The other problem is about the treatment of observations on individuals. While generalization is legitimate, a danger could arise by the use of such data to explain why the market on the whole behaves in a certain way. The hypothetical individual derived shall then be considered a supra-individual economic actor and not a real individual per se. In practice it seems legitimate to infer aggregate behaviour from single cases but I maintain that this inductive process is not reversible, in the same sense as demonstrated by Cicourel for statistically derived social categories (A.V. Cicourel, 1964).

One of the founding fathers of consumer psychology, Lazarsfeld, clearly thought generalizing from empirical findings is problematic and his stance was to refrain from using aggregate data and study instead individual motivations. From the 1930s to the 1950s he produced an amount of empirical work on qualitative methods of analysis of consumer preferences studied

mainly through interviews and projective techniques (Fullerton, 2005). Since these methods came from psychoanalysis, it was not surprising that such research did not aim to aggregate by cohorts or social class. This stream later became known as interpretive approach in consumer psychology (R.W. Belk, 1995). While today Lazarsfeld is known mainly as a sociologist, his contribution for contemporary research was direct observation of consumers on the shopping floor. The expertise in motivational interviewing was subsequently improved by his Austrian disciple Ernest Dichter. This author, also a Jewish refugee to the US during the 1930s, is among other things credited for the coinage of the word focus group, even if the method itself was invented by K.Merton (Dichter, 1964).

A different approach to interpretive studies of individual motivation appeared around the same time in the USA. It can be defined as a social sciences approach because understandably it came through the different research tradition of quantitative studies on aggregate data (Belk, cited). The introduction of societal issues in consumer psychology is attributed to the first wave of behavioural economics scholars begun by Katona. Since he was interested in public attitudes rather than in individual decision-making, he was in fact the first psychologist able to implement unorthodox economics concerns into a social psychological explanation of economic behaviour. Notably he introduced the concept of habitual behaviour into the typical patterns of investors and consumers (Katona, 1960). He contrasted habitual behaviour to genuine rational decision making which he called *extended problem solving*. Habitual behaviour is rarely coincident with authentic rational behaviour (Dierks, 2005) because it relies on patterns that have been selected from past experiences. According to him this kind of conduct is the norm for consumer decisions, but he did not maintain that the mechanism was simply derived from operant conditioning; from his writings it seems that this idea was derived from sociology and was not really demonstrated by experiment. It is interesting to note that his research used a method that compared to modern behavioural economics is its inverse. He did not reject aggregate data and used a top-down approach from them to the individual, while modern behavioural economics experiments on individual and then aggregates the data to make claims about the behaviour of humans generally.

The stream of studies that privileges habit versus rational decision making remained rather subdued afterwards with some exceptions, like work by Günter Schmölders with his *Forschungsstelle für empirische Sozialökonomik* in Cologne (Schmölders, 1953). Later, this particular kind of behavioural economics had a revival in Europe in the 1980s with Karl Erik Wärneryd in Sweden and Bruno Frey in Switzerland. These researchers might be linked to the historical German economic school of Veblen, which apart from an offshoot in Britain with

Cunningham and Toynbee, remained rather isolated. Consumer psychology then decidedly took the path of individual consumer research and left the task to deal with aggregate data and households to microeconomics.

If the inspirations of motivational research and social sciences cited above paid attention to the factors that build consumer preferences, the following developments in consumer psychology are characterized by methodological individualism and are collectively positivistic in orientation. The individual paradigm in consumer psychology and behavioural economics had been adopted first through the influence of behaviourism and then cognitivism. The two streams were predominant from the post war period to the 1990s. Cognitive constructs like personality and attitudes can both be considered to derive from an individualistic paradigm.

The subject-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm of responses to external stimuli has been particularly intriguing to consumer behaviourists in the past decades (Belk, 1975). The field of stimuli has been mapped onto the market that for them could be considered a huge arena of artificial stimuli that only needed to find the right target. Advertising for example could be thought of as a huge behavioural machine that administers recurrent stimuli to obtain the desired buying response from consumers. Obviously the next problem is how to measure conditioning if the setting is not performed in controlled circumstances.

Behaviourism is traditionally divided in the two approaches, classical (Watson, Pavlov) and operant (Thorndike, Skinner) conditioning. Behaviouristic consumer psychology relied mainly on Skinner's theory of operant conditioning. This later kind of behaviourism developed the construct of learning in order to explain why animals had a memory for self-induced stimuli that allowed them to modulate responses in the future. Conditioning became in this paradigm the consequence of an operation and pointed to a more flexible model of behaviour compared to the classical one based on reflex proposed by Watson (1970).

There are two distinctive features of behaviourism: rejection of the possibility to look into human mind and rejection of teleological explanations of human actions. A recent definition of how we should understand consumer behaviour under a behavioural framework comes from a champion of the school: "*behavioural science should focus on the explanation of observable behaviour in terms of contingent environmental stimuli and the process whereby rate of responding is brought under the control of consequent stimuli in the presence of antecedent signals that particular outcomes will follow the performance of specific actions.*" (G. R. Foxall, 1990). To study consumer behaviour in this paradigm implies first recovering the experimental setting as opposed

to unstructured survey methods or qualitative research. It also implies a different notion of stimulus: from the artificial administered by researchers to the uncontrolled that consumers encounter in the market environment. Finally this definition contains a paradox by evoking specific actions instead of behaviour, and this difference is particularly important because it presupposes goal constructs. It has to be noted that in the behavioural frame verbal accounts are also accepted as stimuli as well as responses (Skinner, 1957).

Since a challenge to behaviourism comes from the critique that environmental stimuli as a rule are complex, behaviourists have answered that every complex stimulus can always be subdivided in simpler stimuli. It is obviously true that at the lowest level of perception every mammal would show similar kinds of behaviour to simple stimuli. However if it is conceivable that physiological stimuli at a very elementary level can produce the same reactions in all primates, the problem remains when cultural and environmental stimuli are considered. Even with a very simple three stage model of Perception-Interpretation-Reaction-(Action), the variety of responses in the wild appears to be uncontrollable. Consumer reactions to market stimuli vary because of the Gestaltian nature of stimuli: a cultural, environmental or representational stimulus is hardly divisible into simpler stimuli without losing its informational richness. Feedback between perception and representation logically occurs at every stage of human development; it may become a mistake however to put too much emphasis on the constructive capability of cognitive faculties. I take the view that perception is logically antecedent to representation even if this might be seen as a dated empiricist viewpoint. We might take Merleau-Ponty's advice to consider perception as the fact from which our cognition starts and not a result of our cognition:

*If the reality of my perception were based solely on the intrinsic coherence of 'representations', it ought to be for ever hesitant and, being wrapped up in my conjectures on probabilities, I ought to be ceaselessly taking apart misleading syntheses, and reinstating in reality stray phenomena which I had excluded in the first place. But this does not happen. The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination.*

*Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. preface, X)*

Hence the way humans perceive cues and events in the environment is more than the sum of the properties of objects: each phenomenon has a status in itself that is not analysed in the very

moment of perception. Every stimulus is a phenomenon that constitutes a brick on which subsequent action is constructed. A comparison to less complex animals clearly shows that what distinguishes human perception is not so much the physiology of organs but the process of learning through perceptions. Humans draw their responses from the memory capabilities that have evolved to recognize ecological affordances for individual survival and social cooperation (I will expand on Gibson's theory of affordances in the third chapter) (Shettleworth, 2012). The enormous plasticity of memory in humans is what really explains different responses to same stimuli, and not the cognitive capabilities alone. This is why past experiences and the way they are memorized are key to understanding the way humans perceive the environment (physical, social and cultural) and set future goals and act on this basis (Hommel, Müseler, Aschersleben, & Prinz, 2001).

Operant conditioning tried to save the day with the notion of learning and this was indeed a fruitful step, but since individuals will prioritize certain informational aspects instead of others, it is still impossible to tell how the connection between stimuli and learning really works. The situated nature of experience and repetitive patterns of learning depending on material and social context do not allow considering everyday objects like consumer products as simple stimuli but on the contrary as a complex set of stimuli. In the empirical part of this study how information about a product prior to purchase is gathered and why every subject is able to override the desired effect of advertising will be investigated.

The third step of our simple behavioural model identifies another problem for behaviourism: the connection between motivation and action. How can behaviourism account for the autonomous initiative by consumers to construct preferences with different timeframes and different levels of information seeking? In other words, why does a stimulus not have the potential to trigger the same response in all consumers? Consumers are sensitive to very different sets of environmental cues used to understand the features of products and markets. In turn this depends very much on personal motivation leading to selective attention to different aspects. In other words, humans are purposive in their behaviour so that they are able to identify goals and find various strategies to achieve them (Bargh, Gollwitzer, & Oettingen, 1998).

Even if today there is not much sympathy for behaviourism as a whole, some features of human behaviour outlined by behaviourists are incontrovertible. If we want for example to understand why a positive consumer experience can (not necessarily will) produce repetition of the same buying behaviour we have to call in Thorndike's law of effects. Positive or negative reaction to stimuli is a discriminant factor in behaviourism and he states in fact that reinforcement of

behaviour occurs if the consequences of a choice are satisfying and will not occur if such consequences are undesirable. Modern goal-setting theory implements behavioural principles while acknowledging at the same time that conditions naturally occurring in the real world might be baffling for the behavioural models in their simplicity.

An interesting set of results in the behavioural stream has to do with the concept of utility. From experimentation a parallel between experimental results obtained with animals and results obtained with humans is found. These experiments confirm the universality of decreasing marginal utility of the stepwise administration of same stimuli for animals; this is indeed the most coherent result of economics on a physiological level (Lea, 1978).

What behaviourism today teaches ethnographic consumer researchers is the balance we have to give to short-term environmental affordances and long-term evaluation factors. The importance of immediate response to contingent stimuli is not always obvious in cultural studies and has indeed to be factored in. The warning is that methodological ethnography and narratives are often dominated by long-term factors. This imbalance might hinder our appreciation that short- term factors contribute not only to the explanation of individual behaviour but even more of the aggregate societal behaviour as because of a compounding effect.

As is often the case in science, behaviourism caused a reaction and gave rise to cognitivism, the dominant psychological school from the 1970s to the 1990s. Cognitivism has to be included the positivistic paradigm as behaviourism since the approach at least in the beginning involved experimentation on individuals. To put things in perspective I take O'Shaughnessy's advice to consider cognitive psychology as just one of the dimensions studied in psychology; today we are sufficiently distant from both behaviourism and cognitivism to say that they might be only facets of psychology research. Particularly spot on is his view of the old tripartite model of the human psyche that makes cognition one aspect that has to be integrated with affection and especially with conation (Hilgard, 1980). Consumer behaviour is especially exemplary of this model in that buying behaviour phenomenologically includes the three of them quite distinctively. Evaluation and acquisition of a consumer product intuitively entails affection and cognition because the consumer might be drawn to buy both for persuasive, emotional or rational causes. Equally conation must be foreseen because it is not only a matter of being affected by an external stimulus and elaborating it either affectively or cognitively but also enacting it. Conation is in this model the action component of the decision. It is debatable if what we understand as cognition must be the study of all these dimensions or if it may be more fruitful to separate them decidedly.

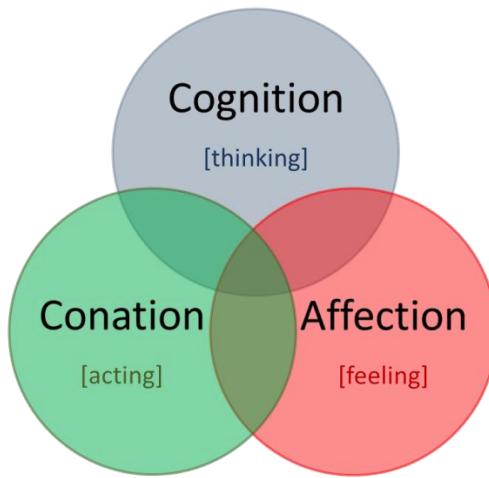


Figure 2 A classical tripartition of the human psyche (from Hilgard)

Cognition is traditionally interested in the following processes: perception, memory, representing knowledge, attention, language use and problem solving. Affection is the realm of transient events having to do with emotions, feeling, motivation, and their power to fix events in memory. Modern accounts of affective states take a reductionist stand on their modularity going as far as to localize them in quite precise zones of the brain. Although this view is largely justified by comparative psychology that has been able to locate affective events consistently in all mammals, the full story must consider the complexity of human adaptation (Tooby, 2005). The modularity of the brain could be too restrictive a hypothesis if such modules were understood as unidirectional cognitive programs like the closed behaviour programs in animals that have been proposed in ethology (Mayr, 1974). On the other hand, the notion of motivational modules seems much more justified in that they would provide the organism with the right level of flexibility. Heckhausen suggests considering such modules as open behavioural programs by stating that *“emotional mediation between situational affordances and the organism’s responses provides an overall directionality to behaviour, and thus enables the organism to activate behaviour that tightly fits its specific needs and the environmental opportunities”*. The author is proposing a multilevel architecture of human behaviour in which the conative level is tightly connected to emotions through phylogenetic motivational modules. The author identifies six of them: attentional readiness and sensitivity, preference for behaviour-event contingencies, the above cited law of effects, asymmetric pattern of affective reactions to positive and negative circumstances, curiosity and exploration, perception of personal control (Heckhausen, 2000). Adaptive behaviour would then be activated or deactivated through the triggering of these six basic mechanisms when encountering environmental affordances. The essence of this evolutionary position on motivations is that human flexibility is first at the level of motivation and much less at the level of cognition; control of the environment is obtained most of all by selecting the problem in which the desired

outcome can be reached and by discarding situations that are not manageable with the individual's resources.

Motivation and conation are both problematic levels in psychology. Conation addresses intention to act, will and the triggering of action. Clearly, this construct is also very difficult to study experimentally because ideally it is impossible to simulate decisions in humans since they depend on ecological variables. Even fully recreating the natural environment in an experimental setting would not be enough since the fact of participating in an experiment would undermine the reality of the decision. Over the last three decades this debate has been discussed in philosophy of mind concerning the body-mind problem and has divided philosophers into two opposing factions. Reductionists and eliminativists maintain that it is in principle possible to produce natural states of consciousness in humans in an artificial environment, whereas the opposing faction of holists maintains that it is impossible to abstract mind from the body, essentially indicating that cognition is not only a product of the mind. From the captious character of *Gedankenexperiment* of some philosophers like Putnam's brain-in-a-vat (Putnam, 1981), it is quite clear that the missing factor is not cognition but the realization that humans first of all act in the world with the complex of their body and not in a vacuum. Abstracting from the natural environment, causes, if any, a very different kind of consciousness than the ecologically embodied one that phenomenologists posit.

This in short is the reason why the present research is deeply concerned with this third aspect of conation. The human flexibility of combining goals and activity in unforeseen ways in a specific course of action is in fact very much a problem of how conation is generated and less of cognition. The discussion of how activity theory could respond to the need to merge conation and the other two dimensions of the human psyche is left to the next chapter.

The division in mind and body on which Western thought has relied for centuries has brought with it a deep-rooted opposition in internal world of thought and external world of objects. The different schools of idealists or empiricists agree that thought is in various degrees caused by the stimuli coming from the external world. A surreptitious result of this division however is the passive character attributed to the human that is particularly apparent in empiricists. Locke's and Hume's individuals are a sort of passive being who seem to lack the power to autonomously strive to change or modify anything in the world. Western thought in other words has always focused on the input side and much less on the output side of the psychic equation. Cognitive psychology seems to have stayed in the tradition.

We might assert at this stage that cognitivism led to the idea that input factors cause internal states and that output states have to be considered post-hoc attitudes. Experimentation as a consequence became mostly controlling inputs as well as measuring outputs. In this

perspective a pre-experimental definition of the kind of inputs and outputs to be measured is necessary.

Within the cognitivist paradigm, we might think that what humans experience in the real-world is essentially different from that in the experimental setting. The stimulus administered by the psychologist is always a pale imitation of natural occurrence. Seeing red is difficult if we do not imagine seeing something that is red (Humphrey, 2006). To take the case of consumer behaviour I can advance a prosaic example to make the point that socialized individuals usually do not think of red as a concept. A red dress in a shop window can be judged a simple piece of cloth by a neophyte, where an expert sees in it the latest hue of purple proposed by Stella Mc Cartney as the appropriate apparel for the most important gala of the season. And someone else could imagine what could be achieved socially by acquiring that purple dress even if she does not like it at all. Cognition in the wild necessarily is mixed with intentions (part of conation) while in an experimental setting conation disappears. We might then suggest an opposition of passive cognitivism and an active cognitivism in which humans are endowed with agency, in which conation regains its significance. The problem to go beyond cognitivism remains to understand how agency and conation develop in humans.

Again, the example of buying behaviour of products by consumers will be particularly important because it entails phases that exemplify the hypothesized mix of cognitive, affective and conative states. The active part of decision making, like being motivated, moving inside an environment, reaching for objects, manipulating them and finally enact all of the movements buy something constitute the conative part of behaviour. I shall now consider these constructs separately and demonstrate how they are relevant in consumer psychology.

Perception largely identifies the input phase of cognition. Under perception often different factors from the physiological ones that are the natural object of general psychology are found. Consumer psychology in our case is less precise and includes under the umbrella of perception both elementary events proper of cognitive experimentation and complex ones belonging to marketing or applied disciplines. Examples of constructs that are used as stimuli in consumer behaviour literature include: brand perception, price perception, store perception, consumer self-perception. A definition of perception in consumer behaviour states the following: *“the study of perception is one part of the study of the largely unconscious processes through which information in the external environment is attended to, transformed into beliefs, stored in memory and acted upon by consumers”* (G.R. Foxall, 1994). Perceiving is however different from sensing; of course senses are involved but the literature treats perception as giving meaning to sensations; meaningful sensation: but meaningful of what? Here again we can distinguish an active and a passive meaning, the latter including everything that is understood in a certain way by virtue of previous experiences, most of all social learning. Examples abound in the retail sector: one is led to buy things she knows about so that perception of the object triggers recognition and further elaboration. However, we might

distinguish an active perception in which needs and wants direct it, so that the consumer is less prone to accept and more directed to discriminate between the features of the product. Higher order beliefs are ultimately constructed on small perceptual features of the object like colour, texture, dimensions, packaging. Although sight is the queen of senses especially at the market level, senses such as touch and hearing may determine the final outcome of a selection and choice process. It is paramount that a consumer feels the weight, solidity and temperature of objects in a shopping environment, but he will also be sensitive to sound, position, movement of other shoppers, etc. At the level of information gathering it has been reckoned that consumers take in around 90% of the information through sight, and of the remaining 10% through hearing (Foxall, cited). It is an acquired datum that perception is both selective and constructive. Selection depends both on the nature of the stimulus as well as on individual experiences. Constructivist theories of perception assert that stimulus perception depends largely on hypotheses, expectations and memorized knowledge. In this sense vision for example is inferential, and counter intuitively is a largely indirect process (Gregory, 1980).

Perception in consumer behaviour literature however often has a very different meaning. Instead of the strictly physiological-cognitive one explained above, models of consumer attention refer to preventive cueing like advertising and concurrent visual cues on the shop floor; to these we have to add direct promotion from interaction that is a different channel. In this case stimuli are put into the field intentionally by the industry (experts). This is the position of the studies in persuasion that dig into the mechanisms by which it is possible to overwhelm the consumer with refined rhetorical and cognitive tactics (Cialdini, 1994). Seldom is it considered that consumers can outdo experts and ignore intentional acts of persuasion. Consumers can overcome the persuasive intentions because communication generates traces that can be used as indices and signs of industry's covert goals. In other words the field is never clean: consumers might derive knowledge about products and the industry in indirect ways.

This fact leads me to distinguish two modalities of intentional communication and unintentional scattering of traces and cues by the industry that can be used by the consumer to reconstruct a picture of the market actively. It is in fact my contention that professionals as a norm consider consumers as a cognitively passive ink paper whereas consumers de facto engage in active and creative reconstruction of social traces. This idea is depicted in my original table below.

Table 2 *Proposal of stimuli classification in consumer psychology*

		<u>Complex stimuli in applied consumer psychology</u>	
<u>cognitive attitude</u>	<u>learning modality</u>	<u>Experts' communicative intentions</u>	
<i>consciously perceived</i>	<b>A</b>	intentional communication: <i>passive consumer</i>	unintentional scattering of information: <i>active consumer</i>
		central route symbols are communicated successfully and are in part negotiated: <u>Highly involved consumer</u>	signals are interpreted successfully: <u>intelligent consumer</u>
<i>subliminally perceived</i>  <i>unconsciously perceived: incidental learning</i>	<b>B</b>	peripheral route symbols are communicated successfully through peripheral characteristics of the message: <u>Less involved consumer</u>	<i>not applicable</i>
		Iconic memory hidden persuasion in advertising is successful: <u>consumer as prey</u>	Consumer intuition about repeated signals and indices: <u>instinctive consumer</u>
<i>unconsciously perceived: incidental learning</i>	<b>C</b>	Echoic memory articulated knowledge of consumers' cultural embedding: <u>persuasion prone consumer</u>	
<i>Imitation</i>	perception of movements	<b>D</b> Habit formation by imitation does not presuppose a mediated message; empathy instead of cooperation: <u>the natural consumer</u>	

The table compares the type of stimulus as to how it originates from the industry and how it is understood by the consumer. Industry has usually the intention to persuade consumers through intentional communication. The market is in fact largely an intentional construction by the experts, in other words there is a communicative intent embedded in much of the environment surrounding the shopping experience. This attitude presupposes a cognitively passive consumer. This case is depicted in zone A. I retain here Cialdini's distinction that successful reception of a message can follow the central or the peripheral route, whereby in the first case there is room for negotiation by the part of the consumer. This distinction does not change the picture and may be irrelevant. Industry's intentions are however counterbalanced by an opposite mechanism that is unavoidable: by sending messages the industry also sends attached connotations and disseminates traces of the information generation process into the market. In other words we might say that it pollutes the field with non-intentional information. In this second case the consumer appears cleverer and actively takes a path to independence. This is depicted in zone C.

I make the case however that both classes of intentional and unintentional stimuli can be perceived not only consciously, but also subliminally or unconsciously. These cases are more behaviouristic and less cognitive: the consumer is again considered and is effectively passive. They are depicted in zone B.

I foresee a case in which market information does not derive from industry and originates intersubjectively: I call this the imitation case. It is depicted in zone D. I do not dwell on this case as

there is no specific literature on it in consumer behaviour. I leave this construct to be discussed after the analysis of recordings to ascertain if it is useful.

I reiterate the explanation of these rather complex distinctions by referring to semiotics. The two dimensions of intentional and unintentional communication refer to the distinction that Eco made about communication and signification in semiotic theory. The first is the authentic semiotic exchange (symbols/rhetoric) whereas the second is a more general and comprehensive notion that can be applied to every form of information detection (Eco, 1984). If we presuppose that market communication is overt symbolic communication, then it is conscious from both sides. This case satisfies Grice's principle of overt and collaborative communication (the A area in table 2) (Grice, 1975). Since however communication occurring in markets is by rule one-way (at least before social media), from experts to consumers, we can safely presuppose that collaboration is actually deceptive. It is the case for subliminal and for rote induced learning (represented on the B area). In these cases we see in market communication sophisticated transgressions from Grice's maxims that are enacted for persuasive reasons. The other case of market semiotics is when the stimuli are not intentionally administered by anyone but are somehow experts' and other market participants' leftovers: this is the case of raw significants scattered around in the perceptual environment in which the active consumer identifies signs, icons, indices and interprets them for his own consumption purposes.

Notably models like the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, 1986) or the Heuristic Systematic Model of information processing (Eagly, 1993) cover only the first column (areas A and B), intentional communication and intentional persuasion. Cacioppo proposes to look at consumers either as high involved or low involved, whereby the two states differ by the attention that the individual is ready to give to the message. The first state leads to the central route of elaboration, the second to the peripheral one. Clearly research deals with overt communication intentions by the experts and this implies at least a minimal degree of involvement on the part of the consumer, otherwise the communication would be unsuccessful. However, information processing models only portray part of the reality of consumer evaluation and choice (O'Shaughnessy, 2013). Automaticity of behaviour and scripts formation are explained in a limited fashion by conscious processing of information; there is increasing consensus that such phenomena are in fact caused mainly by mechanical repetition of actions and imitation of actions performed by other actors (Aarts, Dijksterhuis, & Dik, 2008).

Following Lahlou's suggestion (Lahlou, 2008b) the market can be conceived of as a social installation composed of stimuli that are constructed with the purpose of influencing consumer choice and of stimuli that are no intentional construction of anyone: these latter are very much understudied though focus of the present research. Unintentional stimuli contribute to building a frame of reference for the consumer by way of influences through visual cueing, aural environmental directedness and most of all material constraints on action like compulsory paths.

The resulting setting is embedded into the ecology of the action system and in my hypothesis makes a decisive contribution to forming the habits of consumers.

Consumer psychology has also acquired important constructs from general psychology. In the 1990s attitude and personality were the ones most used in market related disciplines. These constructs are different from those seen so far because these characteristics are obtained from participants through self-declared scale protocols, so that they are purely introspective and do not lend themselves to external observation.

The attitudes approach in decision-making was developed by Fishbein (1963), then by Ajzen (1991) and finally by Eagly & Chaiken (1993) and often cited. Attitudes are described as being unobservable and for this reason they have been a contentious construct in psychology. They are derived by inference, as a sort of cognitive factor that resides inside the individual, a hypothetical cause or effect of behaviour. Ajzen's theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour are probably the most cited use of attitudes in decision making theory. Succinctly the theory maintains that the best predictor for volitional behaviour is one's behavioural intention. Intention is in turn influenced by attitudes and subjective norms. It has been noted how Ajzen's theory would exclude all behaviours that are not purely intentional, like behaviour that is habitual, impulsive or derived from cravings and scripts. Further, behaviours that require skills, special resources or cooperation with other humans are also excluded (Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2002). The objections to the use of attitudes in the social sciences have been their variability both over time and by situation (LaPiere, 1934), the lack of an empirical referent (Blumer, 1955) and the overall weak predictive power of action (Chaiklin, 2011). In consumer psychology an added problem with attitudes lies in recent times in their multiplication and subsequently in the dilution of their meaning as a theoretical construct. To these difficulties I would like to add that attitudes are also collected at a different point in time than the phenomenon they intend to measure, thus, even considering introspection as a valid method for psychological analysis, it is not possible to state if they precede, accompany or follow behaviour. What they measure might be a psychological state that is caused by the result of the action that in turn might not fully depend on the actor. If attitudes are generally measured on a different time than the very moment of purchase of a product, or interaction with the sales assistant, or consumption, their declared value at the moment of the survey is either a memory of the attitude in the moment considered or it is an intention to act in a certain way in the future. The construction validity is thus limited to memory reconstruction and intentions, but it is by no means a survey of actual behaviour and even less a link to the causality of future action. Other methods for measuring attitudes include physiological values that could act as proxies for attitudes. This would mean recovering old methods used in psychology (Titchener, 1915), with the aim of more reliability since the measurement is independent of self-declaration and does not take attention away from tasks or current behaviour. They happen in real-time and do not distract the participant from their activity (Crosby, Ghosh,

Murimi, & Chin, 2012). As for the validity of the measurement we must agree on the connection between physiological states and inner cognitive states, which actually brings the discussion back to cognition as a black-box and its relation to behaviour.

Lahlou recently pointed out that the critical component for modern activity theory is motivation and this needs to be addressed for two reasons. First it delivers guidance to understand human homeostatic affective processes in the course of activity and second it is the most suitable construct to address human ability to pursue the satisfaction of long-term needs (Lahlou, 2010a). Among those processes the tendency of living organisms to self-regulate is also physiological short-term satisfaction that is phylogenetically determined in all animals and that in humans assumes high level of sophistication (Cabanac, Guillaume, Balasko, & Fleury, 2002). A particularly important theory of motivation for this study is reversal theory proposed by Smith and Apter in the mid-1970s (Michael J. Apter, 2005). It is essentially a homeostatic theory linked to activity and this is the main interest for this study in that it could provide a framework for the identification of pivotal changes in activity. Reversal theory is founded on interdependence between arousal and hedonic tone adopting a cyclical view on human emotional states. It also explains how learning derives from emotional responses to environmental change.

It starts from the intensity of arousal and hedonic tone experienced and suggests that the shift between states of high or low level of arousal is too simplistic to account for observed behaviour. Apter suggests instead that there might be two ways in which arousal is felt in humans: it can be sought or avoided, depending on the particular state of the individual, telic or paratelic. In the arousal seeking condition high hedonic tone is perceived as excitement; its opposite leads to boredom. On the other hand in the arousal avoidance condition (negative arousal) high hedonic tone is found in relaxation, whereas low hedonic tone is identified with anxiety. Figure 9 should clarify the idea.

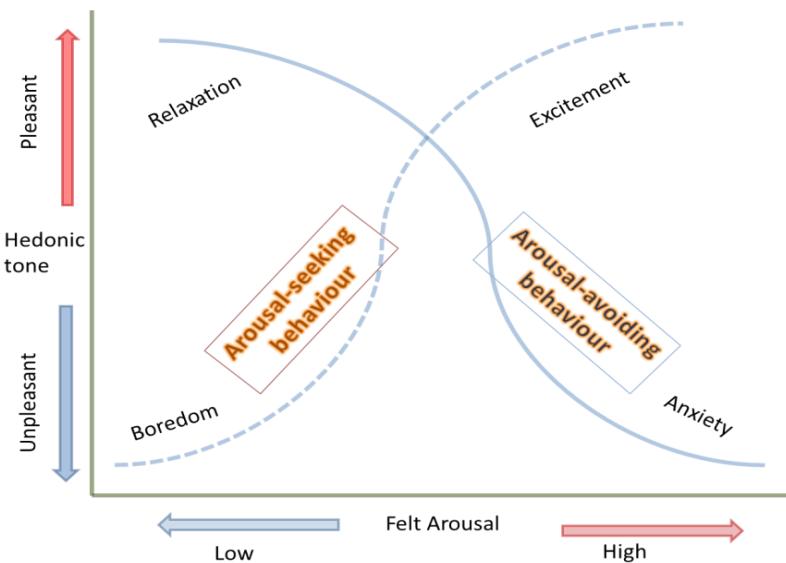


Figure 3 Reversal theory model (from Apter)

He also proposes the theory as a bi-stable mechanism with two systems that can lead to homeostasis. The arousal-seeking condition is one in which the individual is disinterested in the activity goal that is being performed; he calls such a state paratelic activity. The arousal-avoidance condition is one in which the individual is very involved with the activity goal he is performing and corresponds to a telic state. In his words: “*instead of there being one level of preferred arousal to which the organism attempts to return, and which is felt as pleasant when obtained, reversal theory suggests that there are two such levels, only one of which is preferred at a given moment. Since the two alternative preferred levels are assumed to be toward opposite ends of the felt arousal dimension, switches between the systems involved are referred to as reversals.*” (Michael J Apter, 1989)

The author describes these two modes of seeking or avoiding arousal as interpretations of the same motivational state, arousal, and suggests calling them metamotivational systems, with the related concept of metamotivational reversal. The presence of these two types of arousal came to Apter from observation of children at play whose activities could be categorized as either serious (*telic*) or playful (*paratelic*) phenomenological states. The goal-seeking motivational orientation is directed to a long-term final state; in this state the goal is more important than the behaviour itself and is accompanied by the serious attitude and future oriented interest. The latter is a disinterested way of acting in which the individual prefers a high level of arousal because the interest is not in the goal, but in the activity itself.

This table summarizes the notion.

	Low level of arousal	High level of arousal
Telic state	Relaxation (pleasant)	Fear (unpleasant)
Paratelic state	Boredom (unpleasant)	Excitement (pleasant)

Figure 4 Telic vs. Paratelic states in reversal theory

The fact that high level of arousal in paratelic activity is perceived as pleasant, whereas in the telic activity is perceived as unpleasant, might have to do with the most efficient way to use emotional and cognitive resources for a given task, and is ultimately an ethological and biological question and possibly evolutionary.

The two dimensions of emotional and of rational decision, are always mingled together and it has to be assessed how much the former can prevail on the latter and how much can rationality be maintained in humans as the final explanation for behaviour. This has been pointed out among others by Lazarus (1991): decision making, especially if involving a large hedonic component, must be thought of as a loop between cognitive antecedents and emotional drives for decision, engendering a feedback model that could accommodate the two conflicting processes in decision making.

Ethnographic research starts from different positions than cognitive, affective and motivational psychology. The constructs involved in these branches have a slightly recursive nature especially when they are described as unobservable: once introduced, a construct needs to be explained by the next one in an escalation of variables that leads to *misleading boxology* as the author clearly puts: “*many models of buying behaviour are loaded with hypothetical constructs that have sense-meaning but no operational meaning or measure, which is another way of saying that have no referential-meaning in terms of observables*” (O'Shaughnessy, 2013), the old Frege's problem. Hypothetical constructs must then be used with caution in order to minimize the mismatch of sense-meaning towards referential-meaning; the danger is to lose the validity of the research. The most popular antidote to this methodological problem is the concept of cross-validation of constructs and methods. If sense and reference is recognizable by others (Dourish, 2001) we as researchers are on a path to establishing justified links. A turn towards behavioural observation could be beneficial for a competing model in modern consumer psychology.

## 2.2.2 Models of consumer behaviour

It took some decades for consumer behaviour to become a distinct area of study from consumer psychology. It seems fruitful in this case as well to set milestones for the

discipline by looking at the foundation of relevant associations and journals. The 1930s saw the birth of the *American marketing association* with its *Journal of Marketing*. The 1950s saw the birth of the *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. Finally in 1974 the *Journal of Consumer Research* was founded at the University of Chicago.

Although it is handy to fix dates for the emergence of a discipline, it is also necessary to interpret the shift in meaning that is implied in the migration from marketing to consumer behaviour: from industry funded applied research to systematized academic knowledge. It is useful to quote the purpose of the *Journal of Consumer Research* to appreciate its different and more focused orientation when compared to the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*:

*Founded in 1974, the Journal of Consumer Research publishes scholarly research that describes and explains consumer behaviour. Empirical, theoretical, and methodological articles spanning fields such as psychology, marketing, sociology, economics, and anthropology are featured in this interdisciplinary journal. The primary thrust of JCR is academic, rather than managerial, with topics ranging from micro-level processes (e.g., brand choice) to more macro-level issues (e.g., the development of materialistic values).*

(<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/journals/journal/jcr.html>)

A more varied span of interest than just consumer psychology is implied in the mission of the journal. Rather than referring to abstract constructs and theories, *Consumer Research* focuses from the beginning on processes: the use of the formula *micro-level processes* is in fact the distinctive feature of consumer behaviour. The discipline went through phases of interest that have been disciplinarily cohesive compared to psychology, probably because of its closeness to management studies. Notably for managers the need is to propose changes and optimization in production, ultimately increasing their profit. The flip side however is the short-range character of the strategies involved. Management praxis has often run the risk of limiting the scope of consumer behaviour research to reaching tangible goals. This journal represented a long overdue distinction between it and consumer psychology, as well as a bridge between consumer research itself and marketing research (Russell W Belk, 1995). Marketing as an antecedent of consumer behaviour research still influences the discipline with its constructs.

The cognitive orientation of the consumer behaviour discipline is then the formulation of typical processes of consumer choice. Such processes make use of constructs that feed into the intrapersonal information processing perspective. This cognitive inspiration affirms that the

individual has a degree of autonomy and subjectivity as opposed to earlier behaviourism that strove for objectivity and the empirical validity of observation.

Allegedly those models had a double inspiration: observation of real-world behaviour and the influence of cybernetic models that came out of the first wave of cognitive studies. The TOTE model (Test-operate-test-exit), introduced by Miller, Galanter & Pribram (Miller, 1960), was then a popular model. It attired to explain cognitive tasks in the form of a series of loops where the end state, the exit, was attained on the condition that all the necessary steps, operations, had been successful throughout. Alternatively, a series of feedback processes would be triggered. Miller and colleagues defined their model as a plan, with the accent on the representational and memory component of it. The plan was *“any hierarchical process in the organism that can control the order in which a sequence of operations is to be performed”* (ibid.). This definition was innovative because it was the implementation of a self-regulating device, a big step forward from classical and operant conditioning. Following in their footsteps a series of theoretical models were proposed and spread among researchers in consumer behaviour in quick succession.

John Howard's model was the first model proposed specifically for consumer behaviour. The model identifies six stages in the buying process: 1) prior information, 2) deterministic phase, 3) probabilistic phase, 4) informational phase, 5) decision, 6) act. At the fifth step the author foresees a feedback loop that can lead back to the deterministic phase; this diversion occurs when the decision is negative so that the previous steps are interpreted as information gathering. Although Howard originally proposed his model independently, the version that became famous is known as Howard-Sheth model (Howard, 1969). Its importance for research lies in the change of perspective from buying behaviour to a problem solving process. The author further explains that the six phases can be articulated in three degrees of maturity of consumer decision. He called those: extensive problem solving, limited problem solving and routinized response behaviour. They represent in practice three stages of a process of habituation through which the consumer shifts from a stage in which he has no experience of the brand, to one in which the consumer starts to accumulate knowledge through direct experience, to a final step in which purchase is made with confidence but with the downside of repetitive behaviour. The last step is the habituation step through which a brand is preferred on the basis of positive (satisfactory) past experience. This final stage of learning allows the consumer to bypass intermediate stages and to build a pattern of quicker responses to market stimuli, characterized by a low-involvement affective level of choice. In a sense the model fades away when this stage is reached. The three definitions point to three learning stages that in turn define three types of consumers.

In the second version of the model the authors divide the decision process into four phases each one with its characteristic variable: the first is inputs from the environment, the second has to do with perceptual constructs and attention (low level cognition), the third with learning constructs (higher level cognition), and the fourth with output attitudes like brand comprehension, attention and intention. The third phase is articulated primarily in terms of cognitive mechanisms and can be described as the black box IT inspired metaphor. The whole model can be interpreted, in my opinion, as cognitively internal or representational. Contextual stimuli are largely unaccounted for but interestingly the authors divide input variables neatly into the significant and symbolic. The former are situated physical characteristics of the object, whereas the latter are representational signs of the object, advertising, word of mouth or other types of reference, blogs for example. This model has at least two severe limitations. First, it can only work with brands because the learning process could not be referred to a stable item of reference otherwise. Furthermore the external inputs are in the starting stage of the process and can hardly be inserted at different stages. The Howard-Sheth model remains important for the insertion of the construct of phases.

Nicosia in the sixties (1966) proposed a second famous model that is divisible roughly into the four phases: reception, evaluation, decision, learning. While this model has been very successful for decades, it inserted attitudes between the first and second phase and motivation between the second and third phase. Furthermore, it suggests that the fourth phase of learning works mechanically on the basis of the firm's power to persuade consumers through advertising. Also learning is given as an output factor that is accounted for after consumption. Nicosia's model thus seems simpler than the Howard-Sheth model, and it is particularly important for at least four reasons. First, it points to two different behaviours in the consumer: one of exploration and the other of habituation. The second reason is the insertion of environmental stimuli as the starting point of the process. Furthermore, the model also employs symbolic variables linked to advertising and social input variables like family and group. It impinges on the feedback loop. The main drawback of this model is in my opinion the non-adequate explanation of attitudes and motivation. Interestingly however Nicosia talks for the first time about consumer's goals although it does not develop into activity theory.

The third model to be considered historically comes from Engel, Kollat & Blackwell (Engel, 1973). This model tried to implement all factors of choice in just one big picture and became quite complex. The stages of the process recognized by the author are grouped in six main groups: information input, information processing, decision process, product evaluation, motivating influences, internalized environmental influences. The central part of the model is the decision

process that is divided into six stages: problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, choice, purchase and outcome. This model is strongly influenced by cybernetics and cognitive sciences; it still retains unobservable constructs grouped under the central classes of factors; the many factors however make prediction difficult (Farley & Ring, 1970). In appendix 2.1.3 I report flow-charts of the models cited above.

The complexity of the models of those years expresses a quest for exhaustivity. The growing the number of constructs to be incorporated in the outcome however made predicting anything impossible (Ekström, 2003). The period of utopian grand theories of consumer behaviour, can be considered to have come to an end with Bettman's treatise, *An information processing theory of consumer behaviour* (1979). The contribution of these authors was to pin down the basic constructs of consumer behaviour research.

The stream that pointed to evaluation and choice as processes was slowly replaced in the 1980s and 1990s by research into attitudes and ethnography that contributed to a more complex view on consumers' motives related to more complex strategies for the marketing and advertisement of consumer products. The most important effect of this change at the epistemological level was the distancing from cognitive individual constructs in favour of socially embedded psychological constructs. Farr outlined clearly that psychology research had been founded for decades on intrapersonal paradigms, those we have seen at work in consumer behaviour above (Farr, 1996). Interpersonal paradigms in psychological research indeed existed in some branches of the European stream of social psychology but do not seem to have been implemented in consumer behaviour research until recently. Only in the last decade a growing number of studies aim at reconciling the typical constructs of social psychology with the analysis of consumer behaviour (Wanke, 2008).

The importance of interaction for consumer behaviour was contained in the motivational stream of studies of Lazarsfeld and Dichter at the outset; slowly its importance diminished with the increase of behaviouristic inspired research. One more foundational advice to use interaction paradigms in consumer behaviour comes from Kurt Lewin in his study of interaction applied to families, a classic group studied in both social psychology and sociology. The point of depart for Lewin's study was in fact refraining from using sociological categories and study occurrences of interaction in natural groups instead. Such groups are the preferred sample because they naturally contain purposeful activity (common goals) accompanied by meaningful interaction, both verbal and pragmatic. The same cannot be said for artificial groups formed ad-hoc such as Asch's ones. Lewin's study of eating habits was ground-breaking because it found causes of individual behaviour in social influence, in this way shifting the focus of research from reductionist individual constructs towards constructs that could not exist outside group dynamics. The author is also accredited for

the introduction of the term action research (1948) but contrary to what the label seems to suggest, Lewin's research was linked to organizational psychology of work groups more than to activity theory as I use it in this study.

The broader application of ethnography to consumer psychology however happened very slowly and more recently ethnography has become a broad term to denote highly differentiated methods of examining people in their social context, thus losing the initial focus on interaction. The more general use of ethnographic methods is reflected by the following definition by van Maanen: *"When used as a method, ethnography typically refers to fieldwork (alternatively, participant-observation) conducted by a single investigator who 'lives with and lives like' those who are studied, usually for a year or more."* (1996)

Methodologists in qualitative methods have stressed the point that ethnography can accommodate to two epistemologies, positivistic and a constructionist, with the associated opposition of explaining (*erklaerung*) and understanding (*verstehen*). A positivistic inspiration presupposes the objectivity of observed facts. This stance presupposes that ethnography becomes a method that enhances the self-evidence of real facts happening in groups and cultures. Constructionists believe on the other hand that phenomena observed in the field in the field have no intrinsic reality and can only be understood and labelled accordingly; the gap has to be filled by reflection (Glaser, 1998). The procedure implies a co-construction of an explanation of observed phenomena by the researcher and subject together. Video ethnography makes no distinction in the epistemological division outlined (i.e. it is neither realist nor constructionist in its technical approach), but the danger of not distinguishing the stances properly is increased by the apparent self-explanatory power of the medium. New ethnographic methods based on the multiplication of recorded digital material are currently flourishing and consumer behaviour studies profit from this trend (Cefkin, Bezaitis, Mack, & Anderson, 2013). Marketing studies seem to confirm a turn towards a kind of consumer psychology that is both more personalized and objective at the same time. The adoption of targeted marketing vs. mass-marketing (Spellings, 2009) and the booming field of online consumer behaviour logging in social networks (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) are prominent examples of this shift. It should be noted that consumer psychology is undergoing this change for technological reason as well. The availability of huge amounts of data on single consumers is largely responsible for this (Dumbill, 2013).

Video ethnography is a method in consumer behaviour that is at great risk of fostering positivistic views on consumption because of the increased availability of material. It is all too easy to take what the video recording shows for reality. To attain a more verisimilar model of events there should be reflection on the material: what is usually lacking is the actors' perspective. Video material has in fact the power to increase the plausibility of facts just because they can be fix in digital form and thus repeated *ad libitum*; the possibilities of manufacturing worldviews is thus

multiplied. The new possibilities of co-construction through the use of the moving image will be discussed in the next chapter.

Each stream of consumer behaviour research has its own strengths and weaknesses. First person perspective ethnography finds its place among explorative methods. It is thus a constructivist approach that refrains from considering social constructs like consumer segmentation as an initial condition for research. Its specific value in this study is its power to track participant's activities in a way that can approach the original studies of Lewin and Lazarsfeld, keeping a safe distance from a dumb construct of behaviour. By focusing on just one complete activity of consumers, buying episodes, the particular ethnography I am proposing here would avoid focusing separately on phases of the information gathering, shopping, purchase, consumption, follow-up cycle as has been done with other models of consumer behaviour. In essence whereas consumer behaviour, marketing and partly consumer psychology would generally cut the experience in stand-alone chunks to better identify the cognitive and affective ingredients, the ethnographic consumer psychology I propose will try to analyse the complete activity cycle in the light of motivation. The effort is to recover an interpretive consumer research program that is connected to motivational research by linking it to a very human construct of activity (Tadajewski, 2006). As a result cognitive and affective micro-elements will find their place in the final picture of consumption as confirmatory rather than explanatory constructs.

### *2.2.3 Behavioral economics between psychology and economics*

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The reason why behavioural economics is considered much less psychological than economic depends mainly on the persistence of a certain inspiration that has been tightly defended: behavioural economics as a discipline is much nearer to mainstream economics than consumer psychology or consumer behaviour. Loewenstein notes that behavioural economists were well aware that the underpinnings of their research are shared with mainstream economics: *"The neoclassical approach is useful because it provides economists with a theoretical framework that can be applied to almost any form of economic (and even non-economic) behavior, and it makes refutable predictions."* (Camerer & Loewenstein, p. 3). Stemming from the mainstream economic theory debate, behavioural economics embraced the premise of rational expectation, an assumption that both psychologists and economists admit is unobservable. Moreover, referring to one idealized person, the implicit assumption is that it must be valid for every subject observed (Bunge, 2000). That is why behavioural economics was understood in its infancy from the 1960s, as ancillary to economics and to its technical apparatus; in other words the association of thought and

action was assumed as coherent as a rule and diverging manifestations were classified as biases. Rabin and Thaler refer to the analysis of economic behaviour as a quest to reform economics beginning with the anomalies that can be observed empirically: “*Economics can be distinguished from other social sciences by the belief that most (all?) behavior can be explained by assuming that rational agents with stable, well-defined preferences interact in markets that are (eventually) clear. An empirical result qualifies as an anomaly if it is difficult to "rationalize" or if implausible assumptions are necessary to explain it within the paradigm.*” (Rabin & Thaler, 2001). Tversky and others in fact set off in the 1960s (Laibson & Zeckhauser, 1998) where mainstream economics encountered serious difficulties in explaining complex problems stemming from real-life observation (Rosenberg, 2009). That is why in the collective imagination BE still enjoys the status of official bridge between economics and psychology.

The constructs used in BE have been rather limited in number with some usual suspects used in economic discourse like judgement, reasoning, rationality, heuristics (see appendix 2.2.1 for a keyword ranking), showing that even today behavioural economics literature is tied to a normative scheme, sharing many assumptions with mainstream economics. The tight link with standard economics disciplines is also directly responsible for the choice of the particular experimental protocols relating to rationality as the ultimate criterion of economic behaviour. It follows that much of the tools developed by behavioural economics, like biases (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), game-theory outcomes (Hausman, 1992), and models of limited rationality (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996), can be interpreted as deviations from a presupposed norm, that of rational utility. In other words, the prevalence of artificial settings and use of hypothetical situations like for example the *bundle\_of\_goods* used in micro-economics, are typical in experimental and behavioural economics because experimenters retain neoclassical models of economic behaviour as their point of reference. As pointed out by Dijksterhuis psychological biases are particular phenomena that cannot be confined to the unconscious and the short-term (Kahnemann's fast-thinking) but they interact both with conscious and unconscious thinking and are dependent on motivation. A dependence between motivation and cognitive biases has been noted by which higher motivation in problem solving leads unexpectedly to higher bias dependency (R. B. Dijksterhuis, Bongers, Van Leeuwen, & Vanderleji, 2008). From such recent studies in the field it seems that an interest in motivational constructs can lead to a reconsideration of biases as being elementary parts of more complex classes of economic behaviour.

Experimental protocols are another example of the self-imposed limitations of behavioural economics. The application of game theory to social choice has for example undergone an

interesting evolution. Born from real world considerations game theory was formalized by mathematicians (Von Neumann, 1953) and soon afterwards its hypotheses began to be tested in the laboratory thanks to collaboration among psychologists, economists, social policy experts, computer scientists and others (<http://www.rand.org/about/history.html>). After a long process of formalization and experimental testing game theory lost sight of situated application through which the distance from real-world phenomena became dramatic (Binmore, 2007). The heritage of the school can be seen today in behavioural economics and social choice theory in the use of variables conceived in terms of virtual money and often proposed as fixed choices (binary or proportional), mainly with the aim of providing experimental replicability. Inconsistencies between experimental conditions and real world application have been highlighted by the difficulty of transferring real-life expertise to the laboratory where, lacking the familiar context of action, they do not work (Levitt, List, & Reiley, 2010).

The problem with behavioural economics today is that a reference behaviour to be qualified as rational is not observable in reality. Experimental economists themselves struggle to prove that reference behaviour really exists, given that the outcomes of experiments differ according to the cultures in which they are implemented (Bowles, 1998). The cited study points out that in seminal experiments conducted in behavioural economics over twenty years only eight out of the forty-one studies had been conducted in the real world. Of those eight field experiments none entailed the use of any material artefacts other than money. As a consequence, to infer real life behaviour from virtual choices as is suggested in the behavioural economics literature, or in game theory, has been seen as a poor strategy (Frederick, Loewenstein, & O'Donoghue, 2002).

However, in recent years the discipline has evolved towards a much broader set of tentative answers to economic questions as varied as financial investment decisions or social choice. Reading articles that deal with interest rates and the propensity to save classified with the keyword *behavioural\_economics* is not uncommon; even macroeconomic variables make their appearance in models of individual behaviour that are put to test experimentally. After the golden age of behavioural biases in the 70s and 80s, researchers started to question the breadth of applicability of those biases and the limits of previous experimentation. Examples of how behavioural economics is going beyond cognitive biases are from the point of view of how individuals evaluate situations; generally this goes under the name of reference points. Some constructs that hopefully can be tested with material coming from the field are past consumption (something that has to do with memory), status-quo bias (availability bias) (W. Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988), and many others that can be subsumed under the more general label of anchoring effects (Marsh & Parducci,

1978). These are psychological phenomena that follow a pattern of increase and decrease over time and cannot be considered as intra-individually stable.

The fact that behavioural economics identifies many different biases in my opinion does not help; it can on the contrary have the side effect of generating the idea in researchers that many more biases have to be discovered in the same way biologists do with new species. In reality I endorse the view that from an activity perspective, as will be clearer in the final chapter, they can be regrouped in two or three categories defined by the timeframe in which such biases occur.

The regrouping of biases in two classes of perceptual (short-term based) and process based (long-term) has been proposed by McFadden some three decades ago. More recently he explained how economic and psychological approaches to explanation of economic decision-making can be seen as either dynamic process-based or perceptually static: *“psychological views of the decision process are dominated by ideas that behavior is local, adaptive, learned, dependent on context, mutable, and influenced by complex interactions of perceptions, motives, attitudes, and affect. The standard model in economics is that consumers behave as if information is processed to form perceptions and beliefs using strict Bayesian statistical principles (perception-rationality), preferences are primitive, consistent, and immutable (preference rationality), and the cognitive process is simply preference maximization, given market constraints (process-rationality)”* (McFadden, Machina, & Baron, 2000, p. 3). The intuition has had an important development in behavioural economics, the explanation of discounted utility model (P. A. Samuelson, 1937) through the stream of psychological theories known as multiple selves models (Elster, 1987) and the simplified dual-self model (Ainslie & Haslam, 1992).

Building on this distinction, I propose assigning the whole class of perceptual biases to the psychological class of working memory phenomena as their effects are most noticeable inside its decay limit (4 seconds). Phenomena that last longer than this would be other forms of biases that have traditionally be assigned to social and ecological influence but that would need separate screening and updated organization. A different time perspective implies a switch to long-term memory registers: the semantic and procedural. Probability biases, like availability heuristics and hindsight bias, fit within the category of prospective action and thus have to do with projection of action into the future, calling into play the human ability of scenario building.

The difficulties engendered by experimental economics to date can then be traced in the failed dialogue between necessary laws and exceptions emerging from real-life observation. I maintain that it is also a matter of paradigm building that failed to factor in the time dimension. Individual

psychological phenomena develop in time; they appear and disappear, whereas economics lacks the time dimension of individual behaviour. As a consequence is one of the most neglected constructs in economics and behavioural economics is memory.

Continuing to look at utility maximization and perfect information means behavioural economics endorses a fully normative stance of which game-theory is a prominent example (Gul, 2008). If on the other hand, the possibility for the economic actor to have perfect information and to be endowed with intrinsic coherence and time consistent strategies of decision making is rejected, research could swing to the other extreme and become anecdote and irrelevant for prediction (Gordon, 2011). The answer to the conundrum is to acknowledge that real world economic behavior develops in time, while currently the theory embeds a-posteriori information and accounts for informational memory as perfectly superposed to actual economic activity. An instructive outcome of such difficulty is the indiscriminate use of Bayesian probability to explain human deficiencies in discerning between low probability and high probability events. The alternative explanation to such biases could be that two irreducible mechanisms of evaluation and choice are at work in human decision making: short-term and long-term evaluation and that to consider them on the same phenomenological level in relation to an individual leads to these incoherencies.

Behavioural economics and experimental economics both deal with the construct of preference. In a foundational article dealing with this problem Slovic argued that preferences and thus utility are not givens. Not only do they change, but they do so in the course of decision-making, the known problem of preference reversal. The issue is explained by the author through recalling some famous experiments that pointed it out: *"A sizable body of research shows that description invariance and procedure invariance do not hold. Preferences appear to be remarkably labile, sensitive to the way a choice problem is described or "framed" and to the mode of response used to express the preference (Fischhoff, Slovic, & Lichtenstein, 1980; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). These failures of invariance have contributed to a new conception of judgment and choice in which beliefs and preferences are often constructed—not merely revealed—in the elicitation process."* (Slovic, 1995, p. 365)

The problem of preference reversal is further linked to that of opportunity cost. Observation of agent behaviour shows that there is inconsistency of behaviour between two different experimental conditions, one in which the subject has to choose in the short-term and the other is framed in the long-term. The classic example of intervals of preferences based on sums of money attributed either in the short- and in the long-term is found in (Ainslie, 1992); more functional

examples pertain to dieting, saving for retirement or giving up smoking (Ariely, 2008). The studies point out that economic agents use relative versus absolute reference points for the calculation of utility: the more distant the future the higher the variance of estimation among them. Uncertainty in estimation leads naturally to opt for simplified heuristics. Since then the community has strived to define reference points methodologically without finding a solution. The approach of behavioral economists in defining reference points is still linked to the classical economic view: *“Prior to imprinting, preferences are arbitrary, meaning that they are highly responsive to both normative and non-normative influences. Following imprinting, preferences become coherent, meaning that they are more precisely defined and largely fixed in subsequent decisions”* (Ariely, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2004, p. 132) We can see in this passage the effort to formalize the habituation process in economic terms; it can be argued that it leaves what normative and non-normative influences are to be explained and that it is not about measuring the variance pre- and post-stabilization but the psychological laws at its base.

I maintain that there is need to go through situated descriptions of actual occurrences of activities of such preference reversals. The need is to show how reversal actually happens for material goods and not only sums of (virtual) money. Describing economic interactions at the micro-level seems to be necessary to adopt more solid normative theories, and this seems to be ever more widely accepted. The passage presents some practical and epistemological problems: a serendipitous ethnography delivering the wished episodes and the generality/specificity dilemma.

## 2.3 Summarizing: methodological individualism versus ecology of decision

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The literature review has attempted to identify the common ground of the many disciplines which deal with evaluation and choice of goods, focusing particularly on consumer behaviour. The main issue that arises in the literature review is the mismatch between expected and observed behaviour of economic actors. A further reorganization of these ideas is required to make this point clearer.

The disciplines above examined all contain one of three methodological attitudes: experimental, observational (or inductive) or theoretical (or deductive). At the methodological level they can end up by applying preconceived models of behaviour on their participants, what plays a role both in the collection of data and in their interpretation. This distinction is not insignificant; let us consider for example the epistemological difference between research in social psychology and research in sociology in the light of this distinction.

Social psychology makes use of several constructs that are partly original and partly inherited from the recent history of psychology. It distinguishes itself from general psychology because it relies more on interpersonal factors as opposed to intrapersonal ones (cognitive determinants). Interpersonal factors in classical social psychology can historically and operationally be attributed to different levels of analysis according to size and characteristic of the groups involved. We might consider three of those levels that seem particularly important in the tradition: organizational psychology, social psychology and societal psychology. I propose this distinction to make the point that each unit of analysis has bearing on the sample and has traditionally called for an appropriate method. Of the three, organizational psychology is the most precise in defining the groups involved in its studies. Generally in fact groups are pre-existing and embodied in companies or institutions where roles and hierarchies have a strong material basis (organograms, contracts, documents, recorded traces of interaction). Not by chance, it is inside organizational studies that group dynamics were outlined for the first time (Mayo, 1949). Notably also microeconomics takes its material from organizations. Units of analysis in this sub-discipline typically include individuals acting in groups, or, on a larger scale, small organizations inside bigger companies, small communities and other social entities. At this level of analysis individual behaviours are often linked to the social context resulting in a much lower degree of abstraction thanks to the preservation of the interactional dynamic (George A. Akerlof, 1970).

Social psychology is a more general discipline that can deal with groups at all levels of interaction, but interaction is a necessary condition. The size of groups can range from dyads to crowds and very large communities provided that the components of the studied entity enter into direct contact. It follows from this that many subdivisions of groups have been emerged throughout its history; primary and secondary groups are a key distinction. The two differ in spontaneous versus institutional origin and by thickness of relationships, high in the former, low in the latter (Cooley, 1962). The study of groups in social psychology has revealed basic dynamics of categorization, identification and social comparison that allow distinguishing human aggregations such as peer-groups, reference-groups, in-group and out-groups based on the notion of social influence. Naturally the definition of social influence was at first possible only in the presence of actual interaction between the members of groups (Asch, 1951). Although foundational research in social identity theory was very careful to include actual interaction in its protocols, generalizations of its findings today no longer refer to the precise dimensions of groups making it harder to state if the necessary condition of interaction is still present.

Sociology on the other hand does not presuppose interaction as a necessary condition to define its constructs. The dynamics by which members of a social category share their characteristics are initially undetermined in the discipline. The most important modality of social influence studies in sociology is information diffusion, usually included under *communication*. This word however is a general term that introduces significant ambiguity. Most social communication

in fact takes place uni-directionally, so that it should not be confused with a two-way dynamic always entailed in interindividual interaction. Forms of unidirectional information diffusion are institutional communication and propaganda, advertising, company communication. To these, another huge class has to be added, that of material forms of social influence (social installations) that in themselves are also clearly unidirectional.

There are several ways in which society and institutions exert power on the individual and a few of them entail reciprocity or dialogue. Social class, cohort and social category are constructs representing individuals in terms of values, interests, roles and cultural background that can be acquired in both ways: interaction and unidirectional social influence. Individual change can in fact be obtained through socialization (interaction) but also through unidirectional communication, mere exposure to visual stimuli, material installations (habituation) and also with more violent methods like indoctrination and isolation from interaction (Zajonc, 1968). The practice of deducting typical behaviour of individuals from aggregate data referring to cohorts and classes is often flawed by not recognizing the very different origin of individual characteristics. It makes a difference whether consumer habits are acquired through interaction or through social persuasion in that reversibility might not be possible in the same manner. This fact has been very well explained by Kurt Lewin in his research on consumer habits, in which he discovered that influence on individual habits can be obtained through a change in the social installation supervised by the gatekeepers (1943).

Like sociology, other disciplines address the problem of consumer decision making at the level of macro-aggregates. Consumer behaviour and marketing infer typical economic behaviours of whole classes and cohorts demonstrating a similar pattern of thought and sharing some of generalization problems with economics. Some other disciplines like consumer culture delve into micro-sociological analysis by means of ethnographic methods.

One of the aims of this study is to address the concerns that sociology entails, but it will also try to reconcile individual and group preferences in aggregate models. This could be done by recognizing that the average is constructed on individual cases that are usually there is great variance among them and they are dishomogenously distributed in both space and time. Many of the problems with economic forecasting could be reduced by taking into account the structure of social groups as the institutionalist program has suggested (Blundell & Stoker, 2007). The historical point of view of institutional economics in fact includes sociological concerns, with the advantage of drawing on centuries of wisdom that conveniently has already separated the wheat from the chaff.

A contemporary economist could profit from institutional thinking by recognizing that many concepts used in mainstream economics have a weak ontological status because they obey the laws of societies that promote them. Any scientific paradigm changes with the values of the social

groups defining them and institutional economics does the job plausibly, a method to achieve a long lasting paradigm shift in the theory of economic value can be developed from the traditions of cultural psychology and pragmatism (Klamer, 2003). These schools advise to overcome these limitations on a different level of reasoning, by accounting for individual behaviours stemming from micro-level interactions that are the only way to account for the constructionist character of real-life economic transactions (Mäki, 2002). A grounded approach in observational economics is then a methodological alternative in order to find economic laws beginning from individual cognition.

Another problem for consumer behaviour research as a hybrid discipline is its empirical grounding in individual observation together with its claim to deliver results at the aggregated level. Such a step, implying interactional research, would however require fulfilling additional conditions compared to research based on aggregates: sample size and a reference theory that starts from correct generalizations. In other words research has to produce aggregate data of critical size through valid sampling procedures and be able to map class and social categories onto interactional group behaviour as well. Since we do not observe social classes in the open, empirical observation has to refer necessarily to the interactional dimension. To understand why people decide in a certain way when purchasing and consuming a product, research has to be scaled to the level of interaction in existing groups and yield thick description.

The contrast between the two methods explained above helps formulating the core epistemological assumption of this research: we have no guarantee that observed behaviour (psychology, ethnography and ethology inspired research) maps exactly on expected behaviour (sociology and economics inspired research).

Utility, evaluation, choice and decision are ultimately general constructs used in very different ways in these disciplines. To summarize the different ways they have been used, I propose to cluster them in two classes, adopting Herbert Simon's system: substantive rationality versus procedural rationality (or bounded rationality) (H. A. Simon, 1976). He suggests that much of the failure in prediction of economic theories was due to the failure to recognize that economic agents can only enact an adaptive course of action and never an absolute judgement abstracting from the time dimension. Notably the notion of utility is the main victim of the substantive view of rationality because it cannot come to terms with the social, habitual and cognitively limited origin of our notion of utility. Also, substantive rationality is embodied in Bentham's average utility and it is responsible for the flattening of behavioural variance in social groups. The average might really be just an abstraction that does not mirror any observable behaviour making it impossible to refer back to typical habits and ultimately cultures (communities). As recent theorists in institutional

economics have noted: *“Very often, the chosen rule or short-cut [in consumer decision-making for ex.] will result from conventions, based on the choices of our relatives, our friends, our social class, our culture. Procedural rationality is a social phenomenon, linked to institutions. In short, in most of our decisions, optimizing is impossible either because of a lack of information and fundamental uncertainty or because of an overload of information and deficient computational capabilities”* (Lavoie, 1994).

So utility in behavioural economics and psychology has acquired two added connotations, regarding its short- or long-term value. The definition of utility in psychology is from the onset more dynamic because it entails affective and cognitive dimensions that are generally the two extremes of a psychological cycle as exemplified by reversal theory. Furthermore, utility in the psychological sense can acquire two values according to a short- or a long-term perspective. If measured on the short-term as hedonic experience it would assume the connotation of pleasure; if measured on the longer term it would acquire a more general character of motivation or goal-seeking activity. Accordingly, utility in economics has been classified as rational if it has a long-term connotation or as irrationality if the accent is on the short-term. Generally then, short-term factors would fall under the master role of affective states, while the long-term factors would fall under the cognitive, meaning that decisions can be met on either set of conditions with different consequences.

Considering human behaviour to be either short-term or long-term characterized seems to engender an implausible model for decision-making; economics and psychology should agree on which human to consider at each step of analysis. Simon gives again guidance in describing how human's cognitive misery is responsible for actions that take place inside a time vector. The ideal case of reconstructing the steps of decision-making can succeed only if all the accompanying conditions are known, which is virtually impossible. However, a different introspective method for understanding the strategies that individuals enact to satisfy needs and wants on different time scales could address the problem. If the same method is also able to account for ecological and social constraints of action the picture could become dramatically clearer. The challenge for a consumer behaviour research with economic theoretical grounding is then to account for the emotional, cognitive and heuristic steps that lead to the final decision as well as for some of the external conditions that direct action. The composition of hedonic principles, long-term rational factors, shortcuts, habits and ecological influence could contribute to a more complete picture of individual utility.

Another way to improve the use of the utility construct in economic theory is to borrow constructs used in psychology for the dynamic model of procedural rationality. Conation, as well as cognition and affect must be called in as a link to the time dimension. However, since there is no tradition in measuring conation, consumer behavior has to start from what is available and convert existing tools for this use.

Compared to the research program started by Simon in the 1950s these factors are no longer completely unobservable. Hedonic utility is less unpredictable because technological advances in real-time physiological measurement have been achieved on real-world participants: blood pressure, skin conductivity, ocular dilatation, saccadic eye movements, etc. For the same reason behavioral economics is discovering how technology is producing new and abundant data. The change in methods, particularly explicit in consumer behavior, is driving the move out of the laboratory and into the real world (Ariely, 2009).

Of all the individual factors in decision-making models, the internal constructs of memorization and habituation are the new candidates for exploration. It is also quite apparent that memory and habit are still particularly underexplored in consumer choice due to the difficulty of tracing their origin, development and persistence in real world activities. Apart from pure cognitive and experimental approaches, ethnography can help disentangle the influence of ecological factors on consumer habits. To achieve this goal the notion of behaviour must be first of all removed, then that of activity must be embraced.

This chapter gives a methodological overview of activity theory. I will first outline a history of the theory and then will point out what can be retained from the sparse literature for its application in consumer behaviour.

The chapter is divided into the following sections and subsections:

- Section 3.1. Definitions of activity.
  - Section 3.1.1 Russian activity theory (RAT) and its classical constructs. How motivation and intentionality was accounted for by the seminal authors.
  - Section 3.1.2 How situated approaches connect with activity theory.
  - Section 3.1.3 How perception is relevant for this study and how it has been dealt with in activity theory.
- Section 3.2: Ethnographic observation as a way to describe participants' activity and how an external observer might interpret this. This leads to the method of content analysis to identify meaningful sequences in the subcam source footage.
- Section 3.3: The method of replay interviews. Face to face vs. cued interviewing and how it relates to memory types. Also how different kinds of memory have been associated with different activities in older and more recent literature; why this is relevant for this study.

### 3.1 Activity theory

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Activity theory is the methodological spine to this research, informing both the collection and interpretation of data. The theory has historically been more of a philosophical effort than a scientific research project conducted by empirical psychologists; that is why it appears as an unstructured field of inquiry, drawing from different streams of studies in psychology and in philosophy and industrial organization as well. Further, researchers interested in activity come from different cultural backgrounds that barely communicated with each other in the past century. The multiplicity of meanings that activity has acquired over time makes it a concept that is rather different from the modern psychological constructs found in the cognitive stream such as attention or attitude. Activity in fact expands to objects and contexts that enable human action suggesting that the individual is part of the larger set of events and material surroundings.

Although many definitions have been given to activity theory, I consider von Cranach's the most coherent and exhaustive even if not the most recent: "*Activity theory has as its object human goal-directed behavior and its social basis. A complete definition of action includes the following characteristics: it is consciously planned and goal-directed, it is motivated and voluntary, it is accompanied by emotions and it is socially brought about and steered.*" Furthermore he proposes to consider the implicit aspect of activity that he ascribes to the social element of activity: "*In action, manifest behavior is guided by cognitions which are in part conscious and, in part, of social origin; so that society generates and controls the action of its individual members through their cognitions, while at the same time those individuals, through their actions, create the societal structures. All this happens, within the framework of a social origin which influence all other contributing factors; all individuals are each other's environment*" (Von Cranach, 1983). In a different work action is defined as: "*a unity of activity that happens in a socially defined setting and is goal-directed*" (von Cranach & Morris 1998). Notably these definitions link the two aspects of classical activity theory and situated approaches and do not preserve Marx's concern about the object explicitly. The author seems nearer to the classical definition of activity theory as it can be found in the Russians, but he is also interested in including the societal setting in which activity takes place although he does not specifically mention the material aspects of the context.

By comparison to other psychological frameworks, four main aspects stand out in activity theory: 1) activity embeds goal-directedness and thus constitutes progress when compared to towards the concept of behavior; 2) it is hierarchically organized; 3) in humans it implies the presence of complex motivations and alternative courses of action. Motives can range from the instinctual to the cultural. 4) It addresses the problem of linking actual action with mental states

such as attitudes, motives and lastly, 5) activity is a comparative psychology concept because, as a sequential organization of operations, it pertains to some extent to all animals.

Activity is distinct from behavior on the theoretical level because it implies the presence of goals originally stemming from the actor; Skinnerian behaviorism went so far as to exclude every presupposition of cognitive constructs, even motive. Although goals and motivation belong to the psychological category of unobservables, it is incontrovertible that in a context where the actor is free to operate, as daily life is, motor action is organized to follow a plan to have an effect on the environment. It is also apparent that unlike other animals, humans show much more variety of behavior when placed in similar situations. Using behavioristic vocabulary we might say that responses to the same stimuli vary greatly and cannot, in principle, be predicted. Such variety of responses cannot be justified only on the basis of external stimuli without room for self-organized of behavior.

Russian activity theory is the main source for the concepts involved and it is traditionally traced back to a few names, all linked to Vigotsky's historical-cultural school: Rubinstein, Leontiev and Lomov. It should be recalled that activity theory was born as a theory and turned out to be of practical use only later. This is the reason why I propose to distinguish between the more theoretical classical approaches as opposed to the situated approaches that can be considered inductive because they stem from the practice.

The modern stream of research in activity theory is separated from the Soviet tradition by an obvious cultural and political barrier that lasted for decades. For this reason activity theory was almost unknown to western psychologists until the 1970s when Russian activity theory (RAT) was brought to light thanks to two independent streams of research. The first is the Finnish route whose academics had a privileged relation with Russian theorists because of their country's political neutrality. It was thanks to the Scandinavians, Kapitilinin and Kuutti, that Russian activity theory came to be known to French (Samurçay and Rebardel) and Swiss (von Cranach) scholars. Subsequently the Scandinavians came in contact with the CSCW community (Computer Supported Collaborative Work) in Santa Monica. The second stream was due to Nosulenko, a Russian scholar who directly influenced Californian scholars, bypassing Scandinavian mediation. He started work with the Americans Michael Cole and Don Norman in Paris at the RAS. These were active mostly in ethnography and were able to bring back to California insights gained from the French collaboration by pursuing further research in the cultural-historical psychological tradition (Cole & Engeström, 1993).

Due to the slow development of activity theory, RAT and the subsequent European stream (Scandinavian and continental) represent two distinctive stages of what could be called classical approaches to activity theory. These two were the ones that received inspiration from the Russian tradition first-hand. Situated approaches can still be connected to activity theory but, since they were mixed with ethnography and ecological psychology, they introduced slightly different constructs than classical activity theory so that the same words no longer represent the same phenomena. This partition has some other consequences for the contemporary model of activity theory that researchers have used in digital ethnography, to which this study belongs.

As has been remarked by a historian of psychology the absence of constructs like motivation and activity have been a problem in general psychology for about 50 years (Hjørland, 1998). Perhaps this is the reason why a new sensibility pushes today's research towards topics related to activity theory. Of the many research projects that are interested in such constructs, three research groups are relevant for this study: the Goallab in Utrecht with Gollwitzer and Dijksterhuis specializing in goal setting; the Max Planck Institute in Berlin; the LSE group in London lead by S.Lahlou. This study is inspired by Prof. Lahlou's work that can be considered a modernized version of activity theory based on the microanalysis of practice. His personal view of activity theory benefits from a diversified career which has led him to combine notions and methods from ethology, Moscovici's social psychology and situated approaches to cognition.

Research in activity maintains today a relationship with the Austrian ethology school (Lorenz, Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Grammer) for the reason that continuity between human's activity and animal behavior can be identified. One common ancestor is to be found in von Uexküll, a theoretical biologist at end of the nineteenth century of Darwinian inspiration. The ethological antecedents in activity theory follow a coherent line that can be traced from Darwin through von Uexküll, Lorenz, Eibl-Eibesfeldt and von Cranach; the last two were both Lorenz's students. I trace this long line in order to show that ethology is closely connected to activity theory and that research strategies like ethograms that have been successfully used in ethology (Johnston, 1985) are also applicable to the human realm (Weisfeld, 1997).

It is debated how much ethology and psychology can have in common; it has been argued that animal behavior can indeed be observed but this is not completely true for humans in which observed behavior only serves the purpose of revealing inner mental processes. To paraphrase Chomsky, psychology would then be a science of competence, whereas ethology would be a science of performance. Clearly this position mirrors the opposition behavior/cognition examined

above; the idea of a new etho-psychological discipline promising to bridge the two opposing views is however ever more widely accepted (Le Camus & Cosnier, 1986).

The distinctive feature of activity theory compared to ethology is the ability of joining behaviorism with socio-cultural psychological inspiration. It is behavioristic in the ethological sense because of the strictly observational inspiration used to describe animal activities. On the other hand, the distance from cognitivism is huge. The theory in fact gives up using classic attitudinal or psychometric methods that are popular in psychology schools around the world and both do not attribute external behaviour to antecedent inner mental processes, but at most states their concurrent production. Much more significant are links to early physiological psychology (Wundt, Titchener, James) as those to the physiology of vision (Gibson, Goodwin).

Vigotsky's heritage encompasses the first forms of cultural mediation on which human skills are built. His theory holds that activities are not only influenced but depend strictly on the socio-cultural context in which they appear. Daily activities, repeatedly performed, require a phase of learning that has a very material substance, the scaffolding structure. On one hand, the physical setting of the context in which the activity is performed is the guide where development can occur (the zone of proximal development) and on the other language and examples delivered by human interaction instruct the individual to internalize the ability to self-directed activity. These elements suggest that the theory is related to social constructionism as it founded by Berger & Luckmann (Berger, 1966) and also to language acquisition theories based on gesture (Bruner, 1975; Lenneberg, 1967).

The reason to use activity theory in this study is its complementary relationship with cognitive theory and its promise to explain phenomena at the societal level that currently are only descriptive. The categories that von Cranach envisages to form a bridge between descriptive and normative models, are hierarchy of actions, systems, organization and directedness. As has been observed by Contarello and Mazzara, such constructs have the ability to link the two extremes of the cognitive/societal spectrum in psychology due to their multilevel articulation. Citing von Cranach, Contarello points out that activity theory allows research to be done from dyads through small workgroups, up to groups at the societal level and to social influence in general, reaching a level of abstraction that is proper only to social representations theory. It is this combination of adherence to the materiality of the social world and embedding multiple levels of social interaction that makes activity theory a very different and powerful framework compared to more traditional approaches in social psychology (Contarello, 2000).

### 3.1.1 The Russian school of activity theory

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Even if activity theory is considered a modern field of psychology, reflections on action have an ancient ancestor in Aristotle and a more modern one in Kant. Aristotle had been the first philosopher to bring forward the idea that action is goal-driven, and first distinguished activity in two types: *poiesis* and *praxis*. *Poiesis (actio transiens)* can be equated in modern times to the progression of work activity, a goal-driven action that is aimed at a definite object. The end-state to be reached is the distinctive trait of this first type of activity, whereby the result (the object) acquires the focal meaning. In Aristotle *technè*, tools and artistic production, is a form of *poiesis*. In *praxis (actio immanens)*, it is the form of action that matters, as happens in all activities that entail a subjective development like sports, meditation, expressive forms of arts. These forms of activity find their value not in the final product but in following the rules, understood in an ethical sense. Here it is worth recalling the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which Aristotle defines *poiesis* as being goal-directed: “*This indeed is the moving cause of productive activity (poiesis) also, since he who makes some thing always has some further end in view: the act of making is not an end in itself, it is only a means, and belongs to something else. Whereas a thing done is an end in itself: since doing well is the end, and it is at this that desire aims.*” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, 1139b)

The framework of Aristotle’s system can be identified in the classical stream of activity theory in the Soviet tradition deriving from Marx’s heritage. The notion of objective activity (*Gegenstaendliche Taetigkeit*) has been recognized as the most important concept in Marx’s system: it relates the workers to the object produced. The notion is present in Russian culture whose language foresees two words for activity, *aktivnost* (the German *Aktivitaet*) and *dejatelnost* (the German *Taetigkeit*), the former denoting activity without an object and the latter object-directed activity. In Leontiev’s words: “*The basic, constituent feature of activity is that it has an object*”. *In fact, the very concept of activity (doing, Tätigkeit) implies the concept of the object of activity. The expression “objectless activity” has no meaning at all. Activity may appear to be objectless, but the scientific investigation of activity necessarily demands the discovery of its object.*” (A. N. Leontiev, 1972, p. 181)

For precision it must be said that *praxis* in Aristotle contains a different end than *poiesis*, it is not without end in the absolute sense: the end is contained in the activity itself. The *telic* and *paratelic* activities found in Apter clearly echo the distinction explained (see above 2.1.2).

A more general definition of activity theory is found in Harré and Lamb's encyclopedic dictionary of psychology "*It is in fact the part of human behavior that relates individual, social and material environment and other subjects. Activity encompasses socio-historic determination, relation to an object, being goal-oriented and consciousness*" (Hacker, 1983, p. entry: "activity theory").

Russian activity theory is founded on the triadic construct of subject-object-activity; interpretations of the importance to be given to three components led to the different streams of the discipline, each associated with a different scholar. Rubinstein, the grandfather of activity theory, maintained that the subject was the central component of activity in that it is through the unique personality of the individual that operational conditions for action and objects are linked. In other words since there is no unique action that can deliver a result, it is the subject's personality that has to make the choice. Rubinstein, however, like Leontiev assumes that the object exists independently from the subject and subordinates its activity. Finally, the representation of the object is the result of activity.

Today Leontiev's theory of activity constructs is considered the best structured, probably from his charisma as the official founder of the first psychology department in Moscow in 1966 (Baker, 2012). In dividing the concept of activity in sub-concepts, not much difference is found between Leontev and Rubinstein: act, action and operation are in both authors the main subdivisions. Act is a term that is found especially in Leontiev and is used as a synonym to activity; in some passages it seems to find a place between the concept of activity and that of action. Since its status is controversial I will refrain from using this term further, preferring sometime to use it as a synonym of operation and task. Action, on the other hand, is a central term in the theory. Actions are the material instantiations of activity, those that can be observed and described in the real-world. The characteristic of an action is its conscious state. Operations are actions that become automatic by virtue of repetition. It is after a successful repetition of voluntary and explicit actions that the subject eventually internalizes them. Their enactment becomes automatic. Some authors call operations tasks.

Other terms used by the two Soviet authors are motive, motivation, goals, aims and instrumental conditions of action. Motives are the causes for the subject to act; they are produced by needs and wants. It is not possible to be particularly clear on the notion of motive since not even real-world participants appear to know how to describe them; it is indeed the most uncertain word in the whole theory. *Motivation* is a neologism coined in post World-War II organizational

research and it describes managerial strategies used to obtain the emotional involvement of workers. Today it is considered a synonym of *motive* and so I will use it in the same way.

Environment appeared in the Russians in the strict sense of the context of work. According to Leontiev the context is the product of the subject's activity. Environment is produced by conforming to the instrumental conditions available in relation to the object of the activity. Modern activity theory has produced a much richer differentiation of the environment that today is seen as key to activity. Clearly the technological landscape is incomparably richer than in Rubinstein's or Leontiev's times: this is also one of the reasons why modern activity theory falls under the label of situated or ecological approaches.

As action is to activity, so goal is to action: it is the material instantiation of motives. In this way it is possible for the activity theorist to observe representations of end-states of individuals' activities.

A diagram helps to convey the elementary model of an activity sequence for Leontiev:

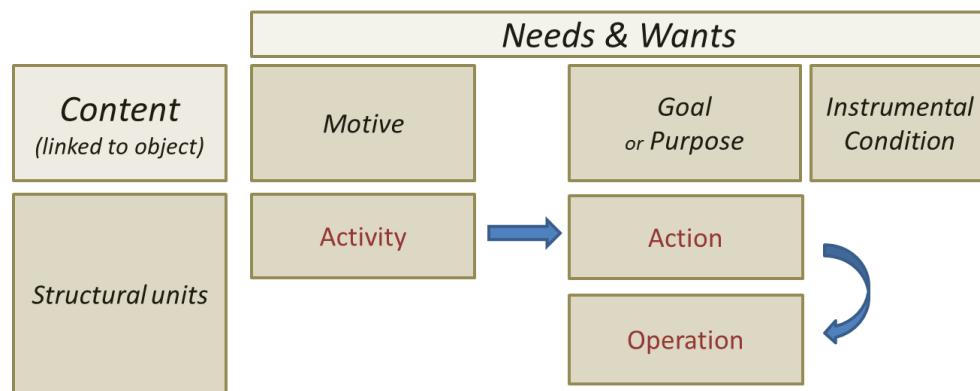


Figure 5 Activity theory constructs after Leontiev - adapted from (Barabanchtchikov, 2007)

The most difficult point in Leontiev's theory as in others is the connection of motive to the structure of activity and furthermore the differentiation between motives and goals. Motives are elusive both for researchers and for actors; the main reason is that explicit accounts pre- or post-action are poor descriptors of them. His words help to shed some light on possible misunderstandings):

*“Thus the concept of activity is necessarily connected with the concept of motive. Activity does not exist without a motive; ‘non-motivated’ activity is not activity without a motive but activity with a subjectively and objectively hidden motive.... ...We call a process an action if it is subordinated to the representation of the result that must be attained, that is, if it is subordinated to a conscious purpose. Similarly, just as the concept of motive is related to the concept of activity, the concept of purpose is related to the concept of action.”* (A. N. Leontiev, 1972, p. 99)

Leontiev asserts the necessity that motives must be conscious to the subject on some level; clarifying the difference between motive and goal is central in activity theory. Kapteinin gives a clear account of motives and goals according to Leontiev: *“Moving up the hierarchy of goals we finally reach a top-level goal which is not subordinated to any other goal. This top-level goal, which in Activity Theory is designated as “motive”, is the object of a whole activity. Basically, motives correspond to human needs. They are the objects which motivate human activities while goals are the objects human activities are directed at.”* (Kapteinin, Kuutti, & Bannon, 1995, p. 193).

Leontiev suggests that motives are implicit whereas purposes (goals) are necessarily explicit to the actor. Purposes must be conscious because the actor employs the best means to reach a goal only by careful choice:

*“Genetically, the point of departure for human activity is the non-coincidence of motives and goals. Their coincidence is a secondary phenomenon: either the result of acquiring a goal of independent stimulating force or the result of recognizing motives and converting them into motive-goals. As distinct from goals, motives actually are not recognized by the subject: When we carry out one action or another, at the moment we usually do not give ourselves an accounting of motives that evoke the action.”* (p.172, cited)

Motives are to be interpreted then as prior to the action-goal dyad, and at a higher level of causality. Their connection is an added factor that would correspond to volition but that is not described as such by the author. It could be tempting to add constructs to the scheme (volition, for example) in order to bridge the enduring gap between causes for action and actual observable action, but the danger of an uncontrollable regression is clearly there. It might be a better proposition at this stage to keep in mind that in activity theory we are dealing with the conative dimension of the psychic unity and that it is advisable to follow the path of its description from real-world occurrences instead of always trying to revert back to the other two dimensions of cognition and affection. However, from a theoretical point of view I propose a revised diagram that summarizes the two dimensions that seem most important to any model of activity: sequentiality and hierarchy.

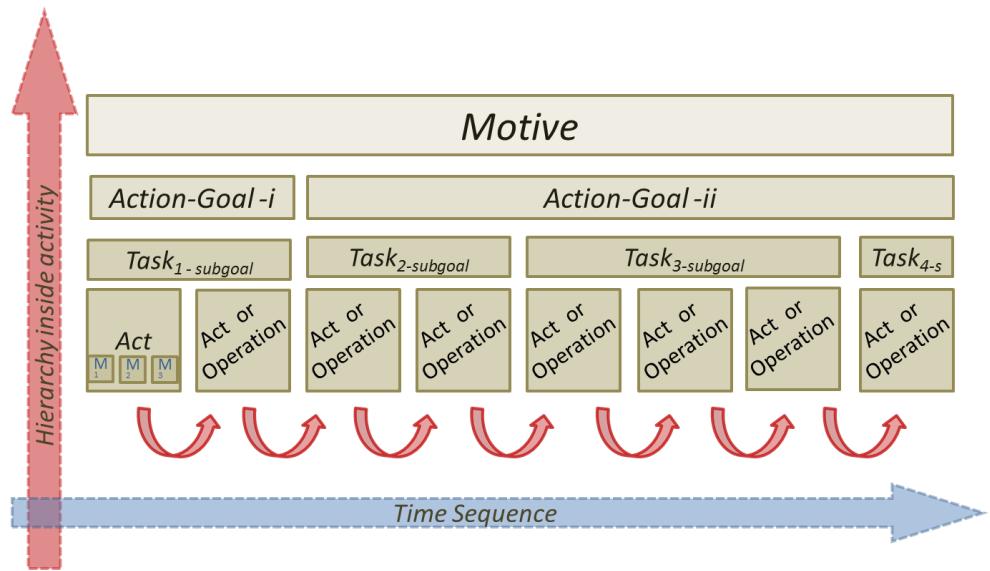


Figure 6 Scheme on the hierarchy of Activity components

The two ideal axes vertically combine the organization of motivational factors that for clarity we can attribute to affection; horizontally their sequential organization in successive actions is conative oriented. Cognition in this scheme intervenes both in the passage from motivation to goals and in the different steps of the action. The temporal dimension of activity is the critical property of this process-model and constitutes the real difference between it and the usual cognitive models of behaviour, including models of consumer behaviour. By keeping in mind that activity happens in time it is much more comprehensible how affective states contribute to the progression of successive conations because of their regulatory character of outwardly directed actions.

The combinations of linear, hierarchical and feedback sequences built into this model allow for complex cognitive remapping of real-world activities. End-state effects like cognitive closure become explicit from a sequence of actions coupled with their assigned emotional values (Rosenbaum, Cohen, Jax, Weiss, & van der Wel, 2007). The question of hierarchical and sequential ordering of activity has been researched even at the lower level of motor acts where it appears to be highly routinized (Guerra-Filho & Aloimonos, 2010).

The rather unsystematic field of activity studies could be then better served by a taxonomical metaphor to retain an important characteristic of activity: *"The arrangement of entities in a hierarchical series of nested classes, in which similar or related classes at one hierarchical level are combined comprehensively into more inclusive classes at the next higher level."* (Mayr & Bock, 2002). As amateur biologists we are entitled to analyze action at the level of leaves and boughs but only with the aim of the psychologists, that of rendering the forest, the composition of actions and

activities under overarching motives. An efficient taxonomy of motivation-activity-action- goals, invites to another step in the research: regrouping similar chunks of activity of different participants. If in fact each participant has incommensurable motives for his activities, like, for example, the acquisition of a product for personal consumption, it is at a more elementary level of action chunking that similarities might be discovered.

The two classes of cognition and affection are found in the application of classical activity theory to psychiatry with the labels of rationality and compulsion (Nordenfelt, 2007). The traditional dichotomy recalls that rationality is the realm of planning, where long-term planning and consistency rule; on the other hand, compulsion brings in emotion, inconsistency of behavior, short term psychological phenomena. Goals in classical activity theory are assumed to be conscious, thus they relate to rationality and deliberation: little room is left to short-term non-deliberative behavior.

Classical activity theory offers a valuable framework for systematizing the material from observation (chapter 5) and from replay interviews (chapter 6). Chunks of continuous actions will be aggregated according to overarching categories of motives and activities. Cutting the sequences into goals and actions will help classify participant behavior into a topic of consumer motives; hopefully helping to disentangle the overly complex picture of natural decision making.

### *3.1.2 Situated approaches: focus on the social dimension of activity*

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Multiple areas of research in social psychology today make use of the construct of activity. As a consequence its definition is not as univocal as it was in the days of Russian activity theory. New streams of study in activity have demonstrated an increased interest for situated approaches and micro-interactional factors and can thus be considered to be characterized more inductively.

The only inspiration that refers directly to activity theory is the cultural psychological stream mentioned above, mainly referable to Michael Cole. Many other situated approaches have relationship to activity theory in a looser way. Suchman and Nardi's situated action, Lave's communities of practice, Hutchin's distributed cognition share many concepts with activity theory, other streams have a weaker relationship mainly through their focus on micro-interactional factors: Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, Schegloff's conversation analysis, Latour's actor-network theory and Glaser's grounded theory to name the most well-known. It should be noted that apart from

Suchman and Nardi these approaches do not even refer to the Russian theorists and their constructs.

Situated action models (Lucy A Suchman, 1983), distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1991) and communities of practice (Lave, 1991b) are the three main situated approaches that have contributed most in empirical and theoretical terms to rejuvenating activity theory. Nardi defines situated action models as: "*situated action models emphasize the emergent, contingent nature of human activity, the way activity grows directly out of particularities of a given situation. The focus of study is situated activity or practice, as opposed to the study of the formal or cognitive properties of artifacts, or structured social relations, or enduring cultural knowledge and values*" (1996, p. 71).

The reaction to the individual cognitive stream is explicit. Suchman's PhD thesis at the Palo Alto Xerox research laboratory addressed the difficulties of accounting for action planning on the basis of individual cognitive representations. Her alternative focus was to contrast planned action with situated action and point to the poor predictive power of verbally formulated plans for future action when placed in unforeseen circumstances: "*Reconstructed retrospectively, plans systematically ignore the necessary ad hoc-ness of situated action in favor of an account of the action as in accord with the plan. As ways of talking about action, plans per se neither determine the actual course of situated action, nor adequately reconstruct it.*" (L. A. Suchman, 1987, p. 13).

Obviously the practical needs of the developing field of human computer interaction (HCI) were very different than those of the Russians, concerned mainly with factory work. This difference might also be one of the reasons why in classical activity theory goals and also motives are presupposed as conscious and present to the actor, whereas in the inductive stream goals and motives are assumed to be implicit. Suchman solves the problem of the implicitness of goals with the notion of system goals that is "*similar to the activity theory notion of object, except that a system goal is an abstract system concept that does not involve individual consciousness*" (Suchmann, cited, p.27).

The cultural background of situated approaches is in anthropology studies and ethnography. From the observation that in many traditional societies and in language use observed activities are developed predominantly in a pragmatic register, researchers formulated the idea that contextual factors might also supersede planning in a world dominated by western technology. Such appreciations led situated theorists to discover that learning is largely unintentional and participative, the *legitimate peripheral participation* process of Lave and Wenger, an intuition that has clear connections with the psychology of social influence studied, for example, in organizations.

Inductive streams of activity theory go beyond the distinction between intentional and unintentional (or partially intentional) action. If contextual factors are prevalent then activity is to a high degree unintentional. On the other hand, classical activity theory starts from the assumption that activity is always intentional and that action is then rational if it conforms to initial deliberation or a deviation from rationality if not. An action is intentional in the psychological sense if it is generated intrapersonally.

If the explicit goal of the action is unintentional (or automatic) as assumed in inductive approaches, the only option the researcher is left with is to infer it from the cues and indications that can be collected empirically. Accordingly, purpose and intention to act have to be defined in a different way: how is the coherence of actions created if the goal is not conscious? Lacking conscious deliberation, it is in fact impossible to define actions based on the desired outcome (goal). Coherence as an empirical construct must then come from some other sources like repetition or heuristics, renouncing conscious deliberation about the appropriateness of means to an end. Regular repetition of actions is then supposedly the source of habit and its study would lead to the typification of similar situations that lead to its creation. In the adoption of automatic routines, customs, habits, traditions as explanations for human rationalization processes, situated approaches are strongly connected to the phenomenological program of Alfred Schütz (1996)[1940].

The strong connection to the social setting of action is also found in the contribution of von Cranach, who brought activity theory closer to European social psychology with a dialogue on social representations. While von Cranach started from a definition of activity theory that had much in common with the classical Russian approach, he noticed as well that all approaches until then nearly always relied on cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects of action regulation. Social influence and social meaning did not find an adequate place within a more complete theory of activity, not even in the inductive situated approaches. The author directed attention to a level of explanation that was not included in any of the attempts of activity theory to explain individual action: situated forms of social control, forms of cultural influence and also very general individual motives for action like ethics and values.

Situated forms of social control are all forms of purposeful material influence: these can range from urban-architectural settings to organizational protocols. Naturally also organizations and companies embed such installations; a long-lasting influence on individual behavior is part of the strategies of organizations to preserve their identity and be successful. It is not by chance that apprenticeship has often been researched by activity theorists. It is by interacting in a specific

community and organizational setting that the neophyte becomes an expert, for whatever kind of activity. The dependence of apprenticeship on community embedding implies that specific activities cannot be considered as innate or independently acquired through self-accruing cognitive faculties. Activities have to be learned in a group in which it is suggested that motivations to attain specific goals can derive from the group. Suchman adopts the Habermasian term of *arena* to define the social setting of situated activity; also the premises consumers habitually visit become thus a subset of the possible social space: *“at the same time, for individual shoppers, the supermarket is a repeatedly experienced, personally ordered and edited version of the arena. In this aspect it may be termed a “setting” for activity. Some aisles in the supermarket do not exist for a given shopper as part of her setting, while other aisles are rich in detailed possibilities”* (Suchman, cited, p.151)

Forms of cultural influence are generally abstract and can be appreciated on the sociogenetic level, so on the very long-term. They modify habits and are often surreptitious; since they are more implicit, they are necessarily difficult to account for due to their very loose connection to explicit activity. The progression in social influence from material artifacts to very long-term routines and habits leads to the construction of the most abstract and general individual motives of values and individual ethics. Such constructs are the more distant from observable goals of action, but they are also the more phenomenologically consistent. From an operational point of view the identification of occurrences of social influence present a particular challenge. The Bernese group devised strategies of interpretation of activity based on multiple interpreters. This consensual approach has been applied in this study as well.

The challenge of modern activity theory is to establish a more solid link between general and abstract individual motives with the material aspects of the environment. To reconcile symbolic interactionism, social representations and social influence has become since the Swiss theorists a research program that is the actual state of the art in activity theory and that can be recognized in Lahlou's approach of social installation theory (2009). The boundary between deliberate motives and unconscious motives is a question dealt with in this research as well. Consumer behaviour literature mentions wants and desires along with needs and motives as interchangeable constructs; however also in a mundane procurement activity they shall point to different levels of individual and social acting. It is argued that desires, wants and needs have a long-term sociogenetic origin, but that they are met in the materiality of ordinary social settings.

The construct of instrumental conditions of activity introduced by the Russians has to be adapted to new more complex situations. The adaptation of means to reach a goal is a very important factor in this ecosystem because of the complexity of situations that we are immersed in.

Because of the richness of environmental affordances and resources, it is conceivable that at each node in the action the agent might change the means employed to reach the goal or adapt his goals to the means. For this reason it has become even more difficult by simple observation to understand why certain means have been employed for a specific action and what the goals may be in each moment.

### *3.1.3 Perception of the environment*

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The field of visual perception is a specific contribution from Anglo-Saxon academic milieu since World War II. The construct underwent a thorough reconsideration thanks to Wilding's empirical reappraisal (Wilding, 1983). Perception is particularly relevant in consumer psychology and in this study in particular since it is concerned with the relationship between human perception of the environment and its replication in form of hard-data.

Two main meanings of perception come to mind in relation to consumer psychology, physiology and semiotics. The first deals with elementary percepts as they can be acquired through sense organs and analyzed temporally and physically. Semiotic perceptions have to do with communication, hardly a field of measurable entities; images, symbols, indices and signs are the objects of communication and cultural studies. In-between there are many other levels in which perception can be understood with their related constructs. Perception is useful to understand an actor's ability to produce socially relevant communication in support of her own activity. However, since communication is ever more complex, it is necessary to refer to a more organic embedding of perception of environmental stimuli to understand how situated activities connect organically to the social realm in its physicality (social installations).

Von Uexküll's model of animal behaviour contains the notion of *Umwelt* (literally, *the world around*), the organism's own universe of sensation and action. The idea seems quite philosophical with an Heideggerian flavor; the author also distinguishes in fact a perceptual world (*Merkwelt*), an action world (*Wirkwelt*) and an inner world (*Innenwelt*). The environment acts on organisms through the neurosensory system that in turn reacts according to its internal world with specific actions modifying the environment. Von Uexküll's vision is indeed a behaviouristic vision, but with an important difference from behaviorism: this theory has been achieved through the observation of different species. This first scheme applied to animals implied that enacted behaviours could be selected from a limited repertoire of functional cycles that are species-specific. The author's system is summarized in the figure below where a functional cycle distinguishes receptor organs

from effector organs. This distinction generated a fundamental model in ethology that foresees appetitive behaviour prior to consummatory acts.

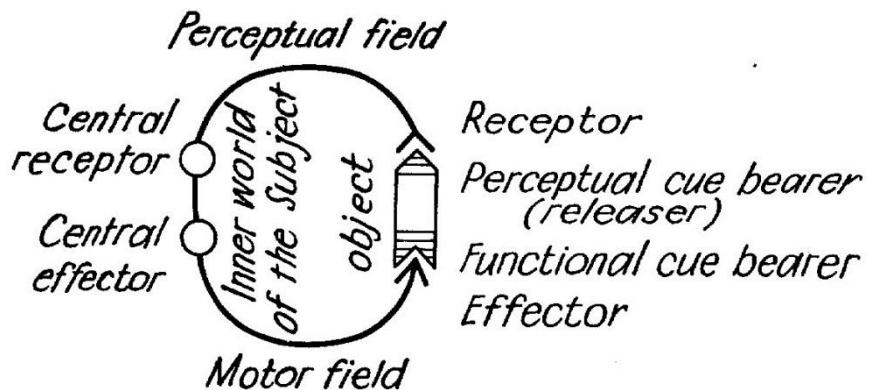


Figure 7 von Uexküll functional cycle of animal behaviour (from Eibl-Eibesfeldt)

The ethological school has long professed that along with the structural complexity of the organism observed, the pattern of activity increases in complexity as well. Tinbergen observed that lower organisms show two types of stereotyped behaviors: kinetic, or non-oriented, movements, and taxic, or oriented, movements. This latter type builds a set of Fixed Action Schemes (FAS) (Tinbergen, 1951). More complex organisms show a chain- or hierarchical- behavior that while it appears to be stereotyped, it is endowed with learning capabilities. This distinction in animals suggests that a differentiated set of phylogenetic purposes for both sensorial faculties and for activity faculties could have correspondent facilities in humans.

One of Lorenz's students, Eibl-Eibesfeldt proposes a model of hierarchical organization for animal activity that has been particularly well accepted as a model of human activity and that also inspired von Cranach's goal-directed activity model. The first feature of the model is the presence of a temporal line in which successive behaviors are triggered by hormonal changes in the organisms that in turn are dependent on circadian or circannual cycles, and on environmental conditions. These actions are sequential. But at the same level of action different repertoires of responses are possible and these depend on environmental cues. The coordination of such behaviours in animals follows a rigid hierarchy that is paralleled by the hierarchy of the central nervous system (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1970).

Ethology makes use of a construct of behavior with a distinction between reflexes and learning discussed above. Reflex is a notion that points to the internal reversibility of the process of stimulation. In this case, the environmental stimuli are constant and are controlled by the researcher: after the individual has received the stimulus, the situation reverts to its initial state. This fact is true for lower level animals where ethologists speak about drives and scripts. We might thus consider innate responses to be species specific or genotypic. The other inspiration is operant conditioning that points towards the learning factor. These stimuli engender learning in the individual and cause a structural change. Furthermore, it is accepted that humans have an indefinite capacity for learning, so that change induced by learning would bear long-term effects differently than for lower-level animals. Their character is then sociogenetic in the same way as they are phylogenetic in animals: they do not belong to the species but to the cultural environment. The picture for humans is also complicated by the influence that superordinate social systems can exert on individuals through unidirectional semiotic communication (persuasion or influence) as mentioned above.

As has been seen perception is the first stage of every consumer behaviour model. It can be safely assumed that perception is also the first stage of a consumers' observed activity. Activity theory partly deals with the physiological aspect of perception. In psychology, physiology is referred sometimes to the *proximal stimulus* as opposed to the observation of the *distal stimulus* that pertains more properly to psychology and ontology. The main feature of this relationship is perceptual constancies. This term refers to the perception of an invariant object even if the proximal stimulus (its image on the retina) changes (Sherman, 1996). The property of identifying a distal object under the condition of changing proximal stimuli is not exclusive to humans; animals are able to identify moving prey or fixed object in the same way humans do, provided they have a similar binocular vision (this occurs naturally in primates more than other species). Gibson introduced the notion of direct perception taking into account this last element together with the notions of optical array and image texture. In essence he maintains that information caused by environment change is generated essentially at the level of perceptual organ instead than at the level of cognition (Gibson, 1979). This makes of visual perception a part of the afferent organs. Gibson explains that there are two orders of data responsible for perception: variant and invariant components and it is the invariant component that allows the human understand where the object is positioned in the context. This is made possible by the relationships among the objects in the perceptual field that are directly perceived as invariant when the observer moves. In essence it is the observer's movement that can suggest what is invariant and not the position of the objects themselves. The theory is called ecological for this reason, because information for action derives

from the environment and not from internal cognition. It is debatable if direct perception is learned or if it is phylogenetic; recent research seems to corroborate Gibson's theses by having identified specialized sets of neurons in specific parts of the nervous system (Rookes, 2000). The relationship between the perceiving organism and the specific environment it inhabits defines the ecological niche of that organism. The mutuality between ecological niche and organism defines further the range of actions that the animal in question (human or other) is able to employ; Gibson calls such properties of the environment *affordances*. They are defined as elements of the environment that are invariant or as an invariant combination of variant elements. Animals do not make inferences but perceive, grasp invariances, mainly in the optical field. The process happens by a resonance of their neurological structure of perception with the environmental affordance.

Gibson's theory is particularly fascinating because it echoes gestalt theory from a physiological point of view. It is also parsimonious because it refers less to inferences and the mind as a black box (Eysenck, 1991, p. entry: "*direct perception*"). Some important things can be deduced from this theory of direct perception: first the ecological order is key to understanding an organism's behavior in a specific environment. Mental elaboration of information together with other cognitive theories on perception seems to lose importance because of it. After Gibson, other studies in visual perception have confirmed the importance of movement for categorizing objects correctly. The consequence of those studies is that static retinal images are not the atomic element of perception, but the optical flux is. The existence of optical flux lattice has been confirmed by experiments that allowed participants to reconstruct human motion from the perception of few significant points (Johansson, 1973) and the method is used today in many studies, especially in evolutionary psychology.

That movement is a fundamental characteristic of vision has been suggested also by an experiment involving physiological nystagmus, or saccadic movements. Jarbus first demonstrated that vision is not photographic but a series of focused states of attention on small and precise areas of the vision field. Saccadic movement is involuntary and answers the need to distinguish a figure from its background. Moreover these fine movements are dependent on the task that the observer proposes to perform and is in the end attentional; if someone is implicitly interested in recognizing faces he will look more frequently at faces, if he is interested in reconstructing participants' actions then he will oscillate among several focal points available to the actor (Jarbus, 1967).

The cited works on vision introduce the important idea that the organism judges the suitability of a situation by the changing perception and not by conscious mental representation of it. From the ecological stance, this is particularly important because movement in the end is one of the main

factors for the meaningful perception of the world; this obviously represents another nail in the coffin of cognitivism and the importance of internal states.

What can safely be assumed through these theories of perception is that vision is an active sense, far from the passive character that is attributed to it in the whole western tradition.

Perception as the passive faculty that made the empiricists equate the eye to a still camera is misleading in the activity theory paradigm.

### 3.2 Activity observed: first-person ethnography versus classic video ethnography

Subjective evidence based ethnography is a method of accounting for activity in the real world. Its use is rather new and specialized. A recent series of seminars and talks at the London School of Economics with the title "*First Person Perspective Digital Ethnography – 2013 Seminar Series*" has helped clarify methods and fields of application from a wide range of perspectives ([http://psych.lse.ac.uk/digital\\_ethnography/](http://psych.lse.ac.uk/digital_ethnography/)).

Subjective Evidence-Based Ethnography's (SEBE) connection with activity theory relates to offering a method to identify chunks of continuous action in participants from their own perspective. Typical activities recorded with SEBE devices range today from minutes to hours (a more technical discussion is found in chapter 5). The limiting factors of the method today are not so much the autonomy of the hardware or availability of material but analytical methods and software platforms available to conduct such analyses.

Knoblauch, a researcher in video data analysis proposes to distinguish this method from a more traditional kinds of ethnography by calling it *focused ethnography* to stress its short range and repeated intensive collection of material. Indeed the characteristics of the present research make of it a focused ethnography (Hubert Knoblauch, 2005).

The task of activity reconstruction using video recordings is not new to social psychology; the Bernese group of researchers in activity theory started by highlighting the special challenges the task entailed: "*Films of alert human beings in their everyday life are for the most part of human goal-directed actions. The filming of physiological or biological processes often requires some additional techniques for monitoring these processes. Processes of larger social systems, on the other hand, could be easily represented on film, but would not often be easily depicted*" (Valach, Von Cranach, & Kalbermatten, 1988). To these pioneers of video recorded activity, portraying

larger social processes seem to be easy in theory because of the accountability that video recording promised. The main difficulty for them was the analytical stage, in which actions and environmental constraints had to be categorized for its social meaning.

Collection of video material for ethnographic purposes goes back to end of the nineteenth century when the first “portable” video cameras became available. Authors like R.J. Flaherty and Bronislaw Malinowski are known as the pioneers of a method that produced a first form of objective documentation obtained by participatory observation (Dion, 2007).

The exercise in the old days implied moving around with clumsy equipment and entire troupes of assistants that could compromise the participatory stance of the anthropologist. Video ethnographers had choices to make in collecting the data: either use the camera themselves, give it to a second researcher, to an informant, to a participant or place them in a fixed place, or even recreate an artificial set on site (for example, for interviews). These techniques resulted almost invariably in the use of a third-person point of view or off-set camera perspective. The three authors to consider in this regard are Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead on the anthropology/ethnographic side and Jean Rouch on the filmic/documentary side. The pair Bateson/Mead had been active already from the mid-40s', but it was only in the 70s' that they became more aware of the third person point of view problem, calling it the *observer effect*. They bypassed the problem by making the use of cameras conscious, explicit and visible. Mac Dougall observes that notwithstanding their efforts the edited form they adopted did not enable “*the passage from word-and-sentence based anthropological thought to image-and-sequence based anthropological thought. Visual anthropology can neither be a copy of written anthropology or a substitute for it*” (1999).

One big problem in ethnographic verisimilarity was however given by indirect sound. As noted by Dion (cited) when synchronous audio became available the problem of participatory filming started to be addressed more consciously. It was only beginning from the 1960s that video ethnography was developed further by coupling audio and video in a synchronous way, while before this innovation sound was added on the film documentation just afterwards. Indirect sound implied that ethnographic filmmaking dramatically cut back the potentiality for interaction documentation: the result was that the method was directed at behaviors that did not necessarily need concurrent verbalization (for ex. rituals.)

Jean Rouch developed further Mead's approach and began experimenting with the video camera to try to recreate a first person perspective. The succession of his documentaries in the

years testify a crescendo in reflexive techniques that appropriated and transposed on video psychological methods like psychodrama (*Jaguar, 1954* and *les maîtres fous, 1955*), cultural re-expression with his invention of *cine-trance* a first-person inspired notion, (*Tourou et Bitti, 1974*). Rouch's films taken in their complexity are an exhaustive inventory of the reflexive possibilities of both third person perspective and first person perspective camera documentation, from autobiography, to observation passing through interview and interchange of observer and observed (MacDougall & Castaing-Taylor, 1998).

Notwithstanding his efforts, the kinds of data collected with an external camera counter-intuitively are still not very objective in an ethnographic sense, first because they constrain the making of the film by who handles the camera, and second the camera can always be seen as a foreign intrusion in the field.

Visual anthropology is however more than a method; because it entails intellectual challenging environments, negotiation of parties' positioning and richness of collected data it can be considered a metamethod for the ethnographic researcher in consumer behavior. In the consumer research literature a classical study involving video and photo-elicitation on a massive scale is due to Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry who embarked in a journey throughout the US in the '80s to reconstruct rituals and sacredness involved in consumer practices. Their method cumulatively called *odyssey*, entailed a naturalistic methodology largely inspired by the Glaser and Strauss paradigm in order to reconstruct processes rather than representations. They specifically cite non-mainstream methods like natural settings, emergent design, multiple sites, purposive sampling, across context testing for transferability, depth and intimacy in interviewing, triangulation of data across researchers and data collection media, and triangulation of interpretation across researchers. Particularly relevant for this research is their use of perspectives of action: "*video captures informants' explanations constructed in responses to researchers' inquiries, called "perspectives of action", as well as informants' actions in their social setting, called "perspectives in action". It provides rich temporal and nonverbal detail reminiscent of Bateson and Mead's (1942) early work with film and still photos and Leahy's photo ethnographies in the 1930s*" (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991).

Similar methods had been used in one more foundational study in consumer research by Wallendorf and Arnould who resorted to a simpler protocol consisting of depth interviews and field participant observation plus some secondary data sets. The added value of that research was to introduce a more stringent sequential description of actions in the fieldnotes taken by research assistants in order to insert cultural habits into the broad cycle of the Thanksgiving yearly family

feast. By triangulating interviews with photographs and secondary data sets like surveys they were able to recover the mentioned perspective of action introduced by Mead: "*Depth interviews provide a perspective of action. Depth interview informants explain their perspective of action they recall and its meaning to them. As with surveys, this perspective of action is distinct from action observed. Depth interviews are about how things are remembered*" (cited, page 15).

The anthropologists cited until now had a conflictual relationship with cinema for which they produced but to whose rules they did not want to be subordinate. Collier observed long ago that in anthropology (and thus ethnography) the temptation to please the market is high: "*Because film is so popular a form of entertainment there is always an artistic and commercial temptation to distort the data to conform to more popular taste. The clinical psychologist is not so tempted to strive for artistic effect as is the student of cultures. The clinical observer has more defined reasons for filming whereas popular commercializations have long since invaded the scenes of African villages and established concepts of how an audience film on exotic life should look*" (Collier, 1986, p. 122). The author however, as a pioneer of photoelicitation, also recognized that visual methods in anthropology are much nearer to material culture with its documentation of human interaction with a socially produced array of material objects and installations. For this reason he warns researchers to always use the camera inductively.

The caveat in using ethnographic methods is that recording is not immune from cinematic elements that can originate not only intentionally but also inadvertently. For one reason or the other objective documentation of participant activities is seldom achieved. Placement of the camera, starting and stopping the recorded sequence, aural (surround sound) or directed audio recording (directional sound) are only some examples of the many technical constraints. This is why the continuous and fixed eye-level perspective of SEBE devices corresponds much more faithfully to human experience.

Literature on multimodality points to particular features of first-person compared to third-person recording and professional cinematic techniques. The notion of mode comes from film studies and is used to refer to the variables that the director can manipulate. A distinction between contributory modes and orchestrating modes has been proposed in the literature to define the specific variables involved in filming, be it a feature film, a documentary or an amateur video. Examples of contributory modes are: movement, lighting, costume, objects, sets and so on whilst framing, editing, lenses, shutter speeds and everything that modifies the perception of space and time are examples of the second (Burn, 2013).

In first person recordings the task is to eliminate these completely and control against their bias. Contributory modes for example are by choice and necessity not controlled: recording has to be as natural as possible to catch all the aspects of the context. Orchestrating modes can be introduced but only in editing, thus the researcher can decide what to show of the experience but in no circumstances should the recording be edited and mounted with the purpose of modifying the natural sequence of events. It is an ethical commitment of SEBE to show only activity as it originally unfolded. First person recording also preserves the field of view, in that it does not exclude the background or it crops the image in any way. First-person cameras further are always on and follow every movement of the head to capture quick actions. This takes from the actor any need to decide what and when to film.

Previous examples of first-person recordings exist, although not so structured for research purposes as the ones we have today and they do not integrally preserve the subject's perspective because of technical difficulties. Examples include entire films recorded with the point-of-view (POV) technique like *REC* by the Spanish filmmakers Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza. First-person recordings are now rather faithful to experience since the camera has a similar angle to the human eye thus follows the its orientation and solving problems linked to the optimal depiction of the actor's perspective. Naturally it is possible for the actor to look in another direction without moving his head, but for the purpose of memory elicitation the tool works.

What differs is the camera's fixed focus that does not allow distinguishing between different depths in the field of view as the human eye does. A distinction in the quality and power of the available equipment today has overcome many previous problems such as weight, limited autonomy of the batteries, size of the device that made it too invasive in many social situations.

First person perspective does not change the width of the field of view or zoom, so it does not allow the participant to orchestrate recording in anyway. The accompanying turn of the head is actually what contributes to avoid inserting an orchestrating mode and reveals the original perspective of embodiment. The actor can however still frame the image by facing in a direction they naturally would not, but this seems to be the only bias that still remains with subcams; from personal experience this does not happen with any significant frequency, and in any case it is matter for interviewing. A counter weight to the advantages a subcam offers is an intrinsic limitation of the perspective in that it is always moving with the person thus it does not follow any particular occurrence in the environment apart from the actor's movement and manipulations. From the point of view of adherence to reality (human physiology of vision) the video collected with subjective cameras is clearly still quite different from the human eye. It shares with it the

perspective but it cannot imitate saccadic movements, and most of all it does not reproduce the double focus that our eye-fundus produces, focal and peripheral vision (Bruce, 1985).

By the absence of modality, first person digital ethnography is in other words the anti-cinema protocol. The reconstruction of the action through subjective camera videos is so conceived that a sequence of visual fields in a faithful replication of experience can be reasonably attained in all circumstances (Dinkelaker, 2009).

Visual modes are the most obvious, but audio modes are relevant for different reasons. Subcams are equipped with microphones that help recover aural experience. It has been noted that auditory modes can be either actor-centered (causal listening and semantic listening) or environmental. Two important types of environmental sound for this study are interactions and environmental noise proper coming from other consumers engaged in similar activities to the actor. The former is an example of the conjunction of both causal and semantic listening, whereas the latter is a case of causal and reduced listening in which the actor focuses on the physical sound more than on a message. Either way the accent on the auditory modality is on its passive character in accordance with past research on the positive association of product preferences with implicit auditory stimuli (Gorn, 1982).

First person recording of sound has another story to tell in its own right through its connection to the fortunate methodology of talk-aloud concurrent descriptions of activity.

This method refers to a form of introspection that makes use of verbal data to acquire insight into mind's mechanisms. By accompanying her own activities with speech that is recorded, the actor can fix a description of what is going on. The protocol is not immune to problems; four of them are particularly taxing. First, interference between the main task and verbalization; second, training the participants; third, different levels of competence among the participants; fourth, strategic avoidance of conflict (Ericsson, 2006). Another drawback is the timespan that can be accounted for with this method. The description of concurrent activity cannot be longer than the activity itself, because it would overlap with subsequent activities. In comparison first-person video data is a repository of nuanced pragmatic accounts that can be retrieved with ease and rescreened repeatedly (Pea, 2006).

Video recording does not produce analyzable data automatically but must be given with additional qualities, first of all orderly collection and repeatability (of the method, not of the setting). The most important characteristic of first-person recordings as data is that if used continuously they preserve the sequentiality of the action (Hubert Knoblauch & Schnettler, 2012).

For this reason they need to be gathered, selected and archived differently than classical ethnographic material. There must be a previous appraisal of the field to decide if the action can be recorded in its entirety; an interrupted recording would be much less useful. Selection of the participant is also important because not every participant is a good first-person recorder: she needs to speak clearly so that the performance of actions is duly described. After archiving the recordings must preserve the timeline on the file itself. Also it is necessary to make working copies of the original file that can be edited and made available for specific purposes.

Due to the low cost of these devices, large quantities of data can be collected from individuals. People are also increasingly eager to share it for research purposes (Moto, Authographer, GPS tracking devices, Go-pro, body sensors, etc.). Participants can now co-construct the research actively, so researchers are losing their monopoly in data collection, and as we will see below also in analysis. Clearly this has led to a veritable arms race in psychological research so control of the amount of data both in quantity and traceability is no longer at hand. Also roles can easily and inadvertently shift, requiring enhanced reflexivity: this research is probably one of the first examples of these new methods. The first-person approach has been developing quite swiftly for four or five years, to the degree that the neologism "*life-logging*" has been coined. The word preserves the idea that the complex of data produced are truly a record of a continuous part of an individual's life in her real-world context (Lee, Smeaton, O'Connor, et al., 2008).

The recording of interactions has been challenging since the beginnings of anthropology. Since the 1970s the Palo Alto school directed its attention to discovering how the pragmatics of human communication can shed light on real-world communicative exchanges by including a much wider range of communication phenomena such as involuntary or unintentional communication and situations of incomprehension. The implicit cues that speakers enact in face to face interaction are a target of subcam filming. In a joint subcam recording both persons are clearly visible; the orientation of camera renders the subjects stance faithfully and allows for the detection of intentions and micro actions much better: we are nearer to pure data than interpretation. This particular kind of ethnographic data also comes out of a process of selection: data is something the researcher chunks up, catalogues and stores after collection. In practice to get data, the researcher must first construct a representation of it (Pink, 2006).

Since the procedure is observational, repeatability and falsifiability of the hypothesis has to be achieved differently than in experimental conditions: in the latter it is achieved by controlling the context, whereas in observation it is achieved through saturation. Video analysis is fundamentally different from still images in that the basic unit is dynamic versus static; in other words through

video one can appreciate the subject's activity, whereas with still images other aspects of the situation become explicit, but the activity's gestalt is lost. It follows that the moving image can only be analysed in part through traditional methods as for example semiotic content analysis. A new range of constructs has to be invented to appreciate what happens over time. This leads to the problem of understanding and formalizing actions as gestalts (Banks, 2001). The protocol used in the collection of data aims at controlled iteration in order to let activities and contexts emerge homogeneously from the data across participants. In order to do this one has to understand what the new method brings with it. Then if such gestalts that are to be appreciated at the individual level, will they then be shared by other participants as well? A comparison of activities entails that sequences of movements can be appreciated inter-individually. Tracing this kind of commonalities would ideally point to elementary component parts of the activity.

Due to the inherent continuity of the recording and the enhanced field of view, two aspects have become particularly apparent in first-person recordings: simultaneity and sequentiality. I consider the presence of these two temporal coordinates a new feature in observational ethnographic research. Susanne Friese proposes a framework for the analysis of ethnographic video material that deals with the different possible activity sequences: 1) sequentiality, 2) simultaneity, 3) sequential simultaneity (different individual actions at the same time), 4) simultaneous sequentiality (different persons doing their sequences at the same time) (Friese, 2012). The first and second dimensions refer to the individual level whereas the third and fourth are seen as allowing the insertion of social contextual events.

Sequentiality refers to the sequence of actions that an individual performs and that in our case are faithfully recorded with the SEBE method; this is the simple case that is depicted in Figure 13. However, individuals can perform various actions at the same time and also have different motives for the same actions at any one time. Activity possesses then an inherently simultaneous structure because several processes take place at the same time, all the time. That an individual is conscious primarily of just one motive or one goal does not authorize us then, under the current activity theory paradigm, to speak of a sequence of isolated actions because the human biological machine performs innumerable unconscious processes that concur in the production of the only conscious one. It is a matter of the analytical framework to decide of how many simultaneous actions and simultaneous motives it deals with. Reconstructing all simultaneous actions (or motives) promises a comparison of sequential simultaneities in one participant and across participants.

Like in experimental conditions, the individual level is of course the starting point in SEBE, but the method can be easily expanded to the social level of analysis. The camera by definition renders

only the sequentiality of the subject's perspective even if more actors are involved in concurrent action. Simultaneity of actions has to be reconstructed through observation and replay interviews whereas simultaneity of motives can be reconstructed almost exclusively through replay interviews. Analysis of groups of actors can indeed be taken into account by giving them other subcams for separate replay interviews to reconstruct their actions and goals on the same timeline as the recorded participant. In this way the activity structure of each participant has to be reconstructed separately and then aggregated in some form. This would be the level of simultaneous sequentiality. What gives structure to the research is the common timeline and the shared space of interaction.

The presence of time dimensions allows a first person recording analysis to be compared to discourse analysis. In fact actions and operations as units of analysis can be compared to utterances and their sequential organization. It is also obvious that in the same way as discourse can be subdivided into words and phonemes, actions can also be dissected into smaller acts like motor ones

Due to its ability of zooming in and out of nested and sequential structures, SEBE seems to hold promise as a valuable method for spotting repetitions and routines. The feature is enhanced by the possibility to screen video recordings repeatedly; invariances can be further classified for meaning by extending the observational loop until saturation of categorization. The theoretical multiplication of the process for a large enough number of participants suggests that the method could reveal group patterns. The critical mass of subjective data that the digitalization of life brings with it seems to indicate that this research goal is fast approaching.

Especially with regard to consumer behavior, subcams can be used to explore paths taken by participants in areas and shops. Data can then be analyzed with methods already developed for consumer ethnographies. First-person recording can be integrated in particular with photo-elicitation and with itineraries method. The last one implies recording consumers' decisions along the life of a consumer product. The example of the itineraries method (3<sup>rd</sup> chapter in Dion's book) shows how food acquisition, consumption and disposition can be reconstructed: focus groups can be used when discussing buying decision in the family before purchase, individual interviews during or after purchase, ethnographic observation when cooking or eating and content analysis when disposing. By merging such different techniques a more coherent picture of consumption is obtained. Several other case studies are proposed in the same book, especially regarding food: Fleury with the butter case, Pink with family visits, Heisley and Levy with photo elicitation applied to food preparation. (Dion, 2008).

The method I develop in this study also fits in the methodology track of recent research in marketing on consumer cultural values that looks into subjective experience of shops layouts, advertising and setup as has been described in (Peñaloza, 1998). A thorough account of consumers' sensemaking of buying environments through the assessment of consumers activities conducted with ethnographic participant observation was the result of the mentioned study. The author emphasized directly observable behavior to contrast it to more traditional cognitive accounts in form of interviews. Updating the methodology allowed the researcher to get to constructs like interspatial design (mapped paths of consumers through sites) and experiential consumer behavior entailing bodily and visual activities. Similar to my attitude for this study the researcher put emphasis on "*visual methods to provide detailed and complete physical records*", although she envisaged to do that by: "*integrating the study of culture through investigating images and text and communicating the context of phenomena*", citing Mead and Bateson as antecedents (Penaloza, cited). The resulting classification of activities, though showing surface similarities with the present study concerning categories of consumer buying behavior, was ultimately conducted with a very different epistemology.

It is clear that coupling subcam method with replay interviews can be considered full in line with the above methodologies. SEBE however implies some innovative features for the reconstruction of activity that were not at all possible before and they regard the possibility of detailed mnemonic reconstruction of consumer experiences as I will explain in the next section. Also SEBE puts a stronger accent on the recovery of cognitive elements on new research premises that the old in-depth interviewing techniques could not reach.

By recording the participant's paths, older research focused on the material setting and measure distances in the recording could be recovered. By comparing activities and blueprints of paths a much more structured picture would emerge; a classification in terms of spatial short- and long-range activities could be derived. Reconstruction of activity can today produce a detailed account of the time structure and the physical environment. In this study, the time structure will be considered for content analysis, whereas spatial coordinates will not be taken into account.

The limit of the analysis of sequentiality goes past the level of macro actions down to the level of motor acts in the order of a twenty-fourth of a second, the standard frame rate of a subcam video (50 frames for HD filming). This level of analysis may however be more suitable to ergonomics and physiology, whereas my interest is to keep to constructs that are able to reveal the transition between explicit and implicit behavior. I assume thus that if an act is macroscopic, it is more likely to be explicitly initiated and brought forward. This level, according to own observation,

can be measured in seconds. Consequently a method to discriminate between acts that are explicitly motivated or automatically triggered is needed. As for automatic acts, they can belong to the innate or learned cognitive dimension: retrospection during replay interview appears as one of the few possibilities to attain their explanation.

*table of features comparison between video ethnography  
and first-person ethnography*

	VIDEOETHNOGRAPHY	FIRST-PERSON ETHNOGRAPHY
1	Time-selective	Time-continuous
2	Abstract	Realistic
3	Fragmented	Organic
4	Context reducing	Context enhancing
5	Possibility of Staging	Reduction of staging possibility
6	Manipulation of Context	Reduced manipulability of context
7	Difficulty in time reconstruction	Easiness in time reconstruction
8	Overt goal of outward filming	Implicit goal (operational)

*Table 3 - Scheme of comparison: visual ethnography vs. first-person ethnography*

From the characteristics explained above it follows that only certain aspects of activity can be appreciated in first person perspective digital video data prior to the replay interview. Such recordings lend themselves first of all to a sequential content analysis of events.

The tradition of content analysis (CA) began with the need to measure public attitudes. It originally focused on measuring the semantic elements in newspapers articles and assumed the name of public opinion research (Berelson, 1952; Lippmann, 1922). Today CA is well represented in the methodology literature (Bauer & Gaskell, 2009) and encompasses data of many different kinds. Video recordings in first-person modality, largely produced unintentionally by lay people wearing BWV cameras, are in the process of building a corpus that contains a new kind of message structure. The decision to contribute to research and to open up a collaborative interpretation of self-generated data is in fact not only an intentional generation of data but a conscious contribution from the participant. This decision is the source of meaning, not originally present in the first person recording.

As originally pointed out by Cicourel (1992), sticking to the explicit linguistic dimension of conversation analysis would confine the researcher to a limited zone of the social event. Part of the pragmatics of the conversation and most of the material context with its affordances would remain unknown. This is even truer for shopping locations where the modalities of interaction are atypical and where interactions (simple intersubjectivity) are often undirected (one to many and also many to one, plus from an anonymous individual to a known individual (announcements). In such a setting intersubjectivity would become a broader concept that would create a special class of social interactions that, whenever the spoken part were disregarded, would be hard to classify. Undirected interactions, one to many or many to one, are a problem: how should related actions be classified if seen on video in the absence of a verbal account? One to one interactions (simple intersubjectivity) is in fact easier to identify using the pragmatic component.

In this study we are confronted with the problem of action recognition at the theoretical level: why is it so easy for humans to recognize intentions and give the proper name to their peers' actions (Bem & Allen, 1974)? Why is it just as easy to subdivide activities in micro sequences of goal directed actions?

To reconstruct the buying activity implies putting together a set of typical actions performed by most of the participants. In order to understand the reach and breadth of the constructs I am proposing here it may be useful to consider how actions and goals are considered in the literature about market oriented ethnography. Arnould and Price for example propose a distinction about micro-, meso- and macro- orientations in market-oriented ethnography. The author defines the first as research on the individual consumer towards the product, the second as an interest in consumer as intentional actor in a cultural life world and the third as directed to cultural templates for action (Arnould & Price, 2006). The present research starts clearly from a micro-level approach and goes into the fine details of it, producing, if possible a micro-micro-level ethnography in that goals are considered first of all at the individual level. In so doing the present study detaches itself from the current conception of ethnography to find a place between this mentioned level and the level of behavioural observation. I maintain however that the proposed method is much more efficient in describing situated practices because of the deeper analysis of individual goals.

Macroscopic acts are the easiest to classify; this happens as a rule when the participant gives enough cues about her intentions and goals. In such cases we can assume that the goal is rather explicit when the action involves some sort of social performance. If on the contrary, actions happen rather quickly without giving clear hints to their purpose, we are entitled to assume that they are triggered automatically. Leaving aside for the moment if this type of action is innate or

learned (habits), the problem is how to establish the plausibility of interpretation of the pragmatic aspects of communication, an old problem in interpretation of ethnographic data (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1983). The transcription of verbal utterances in ethnography is to establish the value of social influence among other things. To reach this goal we need a much broader framework than conversation analysis; interaction studies must bridge a gap in order to reach the level of social semiotics.

Content analysis of the filmed material in this study is understood as a sequence of macro-actions that can be interpreted by the researcher autonomously, the above mentioned intersubjectively recognizable activities. The problem of detecting people's actions is not new to consumer behaviour. The pioneering study of people's buying habits in supermarkets by Paco Underhill had the aim of describing what happens in the shopping space mainly for marketing reasons. Besides using ceiling cameras his specific observation protocol used ethnographers inside the shop to track consumers' movements. The consumers' activities would then be cross-sectionally compared with the impersonal third person perspective recordings (Underhill, 1999).

The study involved does not make explicit use of activity theory for its findings. Technological change has since then made huge progress from the point of view of shop surveys; one recent proposal has been to automatically identify human activities in such a consumers setting (Popa, Koc, Rothkrantz, Shan, & Wiggers, 2012). While I do not currently ascribe to computerized activity classification, it has to be conceded that computer science has made great in automatically categorizing human activities from video data (Ballin, Munaro, & Menegatti, 2013; Gupta, Chia, & Rajan, 2013). Indeed, in the future there will be devices that recognize and give names to what people do, automatically. A mechanized method of making the implicit explicit, may exploit the pragmatic level of communication more than the verbal level.

Segmentation of actions in consumer behavior is currently still interpretive. In order to help the researcher in this task, different programs for qualitative analysis of video have been conceived (ELAN and TRANSANA among them) which is preferable depends on the different levels of analysis. After trying out these two programs, I opted for a simple screening of the film through a video editing program, KDN-Live, that allowed me to cut the sequences to the length I wanted and to comment on them with subtitles and overlays.

Indeed this way of editing and reconstructing the subjective camera recordings produces a specific genre. To establish a parallel between video annotation and ethnographic verbal transcription is already embedding a theoretical presupposition into the task. As Kress says, video

transcription becomes transduction and less of a transcription (2010). For example by dividing the transcript or the speech into episodes, it is not really clear where one episode begins and ends: selection of the cut is in fact the first interpretation. Transcription then turns out to be a complexity reduction exercise in which the interpreter chooses how to represent actions.

The process developed to analyze the first-person videos is described empirically in chapter 5.

### 3.3 Activity, memory and verbal accounts

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Activity theory includes constructs that have a long-term, short-term and cyclical value. Motives by definition have long-term value because they guarantee consistency of action from the onset of an activity through its accomplishment; the length of activities phenomenologically does not have a standard measure although the ultimate limit is obviously the organism's life span. More plausibly, the longest activities the theory can envisage are those related to personal and social accomplishment that typically encompass portions of a life span (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). Goals on the other hand are short-term and are characterized as they arise in the course of situated actions. In the latter class RAT foresees a construct of operation for actions that originate as conscious but that by repetition become automatic. Operations retain thus both a short- and a long-term value because on one hand they are triggered by situated instances and on the other because they are replicated almost invariantly throughout the lifespan. Kaptelinin describes operations in the following way: *"Moving down the hierarchy of actions we eventually cross the border between conscious and automatic processes. The latter, which individuals are not aware of, are responsive to actual conditions. They do not have their own goals, they rather provide an adjustment of actions to current situations. According to Activity Theory terminology, they are "operations." If we stick to the situated activity school we derive the picture that motives remain largely implicit and even unknown to the actor."* (Kaptelinin et al., 1995, p. 193). I argue that this notion of operation is too restrictive and that we have to broaden its meaning to include repetitive actions that do not pursue conscious goals and are not the outcome of conscious operationalization; we might call these actions routines and habits.

Interviews and participant observation are generally well suited to extraction of long-term motives, because by using ethnographic approaches they implement the cultural and social dimension optimally. They might be well suited to identify some forms of habit but they are poorly suited to spot short-term operations. The method works especially well when the researcher is allowed a period of apprenticeship in the community where the study is carried out. Through this the researcher acquires the double status of expert in the theory of the activities observed, the etic dimension, and in the practice of those same activities, the emic dimension (Pike, 1971). The notion of experience-near and experience-distant is an alternative description of this process of knowledge acquisition (Geertz, 1974). In participant observation the dimension of long-term motives of activity is acquired by slow osmosis, a trajectory that allows the researcher to approach the native's experience. Nonetheless the nature of this process generally lacks analysis of short-term operational goals because of a general disinterest for one-off situated activities that cannot be

easily typified. As for the construct of operation, it might be better addressed with the conceptual tools of material anthropology. This discipline unfortunately does not describe goals in activity terms.

Subjective evidence based ethnography addresses these concerns through a detailed ethnography of the context and an account of activity with reference to both long-term motives and short-term goals. This happens through the distinction of hard-data document (the subcam recording) from the replay interview. The former focuses on situated short term goals, whereas the latter focuses on the long-term explanation of those. The two phases of documentation, however, do not coincide at the epistemological level of explanation. Just as participants had to be trained in concurrent talk-aloud protocols to explain their deeds, so the replay interview has to find a way to make them explicit during rehearsal. It is obvious that a person does not have two separate dictionaries for daily interaction and for introspective data; to translate implicit motives and action phases in terms of another (theoretical) language a further step has to be made, one entailing a form of reflexivity. This hermeneutical problem is the main reason why ethnographers have methodologically sought informants' help. The SEBE method in a way bypasses informants and at the same time makes participants informants on their own experience. Participants can be seen as natives in their own niche (Uexhuell's life-world) so that they are empowered to act as translators of their own experience. However, in order to obtain this sort of explanation they would need to develop a language to describe their own activities. The method tends to let the implicit emic dimension to become an explicit etic one in the same person through a reflexive process. The exercise is quite new to ethnography (Lahlou, 2011) and involves the two empirical phases explained in chapters 5 and 6.

In the literature alternative methods to the one I am proposing have resorted to some methodologies revolving around note taking from the participant: diary writing (Wood, Quinn and Kashy, cited) and (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003), the Day reconstruction method (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004), Experience sampling method (Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007). I see those methods as having a very similar goal to the method I propose to develop, a systematic phenomenology: *"it departs from pure phenomenology by combining a focus on lived experience with an attempt to use the tools of empirical-investigation including available technologies, research design and statistical analysis"* (Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, cited). Nonetheless SEBE introduces a revolutionary advantage compared to those, because it does not distract the informant from his activities. Also it does not collect differed verbal or written data on those activities that strictly cannot be considered simultaneous

to those. Similar considerations can be made for the concurrent aloud protocol reviewed below. There are few examples of studies on consumer habits in experimental social psychology. Recent research by Murray and Häubl (2007) proposed to ascertain the validity of the asymptotic performance curve to describe repeated experiences in habitual goal-activated automated behaviours. Admitting the interest of such experiments I point out that their definition of habit is associated to just one type of behavior, a skill-based one relating to computer activity. Such activity does not relate to individual purposeful activity extended in time, social environment, and normal bodily activity.

The long-term connotation of activity constructs versus the short-term connotation of behaviour constructs, suggests that accounts given by participants should contain a mix of descriptions of long-term together with short-term motives.

The interviews aim at eliciting the participants' accounts from a flow of questions and answers administered face-to-face. Since these interviews are carried out at a different time as situated activities or typical activities they do not constitute a description of activity but a reconstruction of it or of expectations of how future action will be carried in a typical situation. Activity theorists have pointed out that such introspective methods give access to a conscious cognitive level that is bound to specific remembered chunks of activity and as such they impinge on different memory registers (Tulving, 1972).

Let us first of all consider the cases of situated activities. Already from the 1930s the answer to the problem of concurrent description of situated activities had been to try to reduce the time between the moment of action and its verbal report, even to the point of trying to make them coincide. In that period, Claparede and Duncker proposed verbalization of concurrent activity as a method to attain this result (Claparède, 1934; Duncker & Lees, 1945). The proposition was later developed in the IT community by Ericsson and Simon (Ericsson & Simon, 1998). The self-confrontation interview of the Bernese group is a further development that built on these ideas. Von Cranach and Kalbermatten were among the first who saw how, combining video recording with an interview, the cognitive level of activity could help reconstructing the cognitive level of activity in its more elementary parts.

Sticking to Leontiev's view that actions are consciously pursued, von Cranach and Kalbermatten wanted to reconstruct the stream of action-related cognitions like goals, alternatives, decisions, plans, rules, values, emotions, knowledge. They stress that their kind of interview is theory-guided, structured, based on concrete actions, subject to content analysis and, finally, considered together

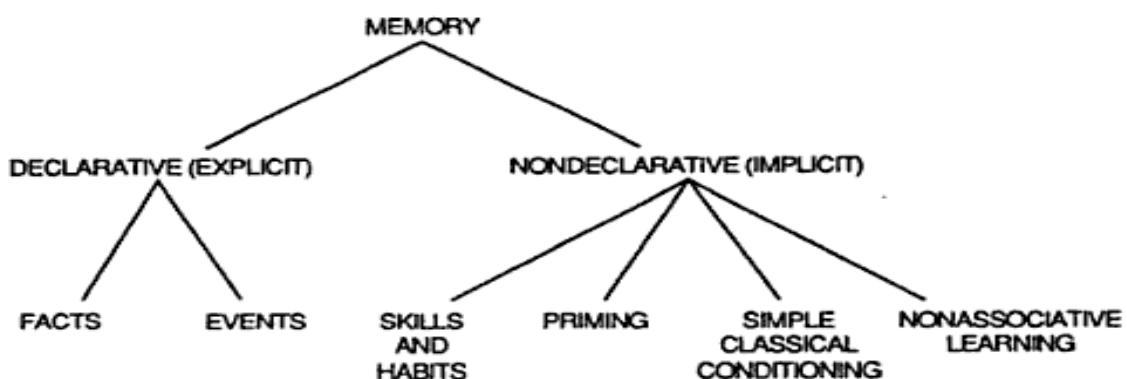
with the associated observation. Essentially the authors strove to control every aspect of the interview in order to avoid collecting useless narratives. In their revised definition of activity they put more focus on the socio-genetic framework of activity. As a consequence since actions are socially steered, it would be possible for observers of the same recording to give them a comparable social meaning; I endorse this view and implement it as shown in section 5.4.

The replay interview used in this research is a development from previous methods of activity reconstruction through confrontation interviews. The replay interviews share with the normal process the presence of researcher and interviewee in a room talking together. The main difference lies in the forced self-reflection induced by the video recorded in first person. Unlike Kalbermatten's confrontation interview narratives they can contribute valuable information on the episodic or habit content of action. To address long-term motivations, the method allows participants to go beyond the descriptions of situated activities towards heterogeneous comments on those activities. Since in fact participants are completely free in their explanation, they often revert to general comments and evaluations. It will be shown how such diversions from situated descriptions enrich their accounts especially at the level of habits.

From previous and pilot studies the verbal data generated show different discourse registers than most open-ended interviews which are not recognizable with alternative methods. By virtue of the enhanced use of visual cueing, a mix of actual situated descriptions, episodic accounts and narratives emerges and calls for a more structured identification of the narrative flow (Abell, 1989; Bauer, 1996). The distinction between explicit and implicit activities seems to parallel a distinction that researchers have proposed for two types of long term memory used one for autobiographical narration (episodic) and the other for general discourse referring to abstract categories. For these authors, the two main classes seem to point to a different elaboration of information: *“Thus, episodic information about a word refers to information about the event of which the word is the focal element, or one of the focal elements, while semantic information about a word is entirely independent of the word's occurrence in a particular situation or its temporal co-occurrence with some other words.”* (Tulving & Thomson, 1973). One has to notice that the origin of the qualification episodic and semantic is not referred to different brain structures but to two different linguistic registers, a distinction that I plan to keep along this study in order not to incur in unwarranted objectification.

The authors further distinguish declarative memory as linguistically more structured and richer in representations, from implicit memory that should show higher degree of motoric and proprioceptive qualities. More updated accounts of memory types do not agree with this

distinction but I maintain that the querelle was actually originated from a misunderstanding of Tulving's restrictive epistemology. It is worth considering how this classification was studied and formalized by Tulving (cited), Schachter (1987) but also criticized and alternatively developed by Barsalou (2008) and Glenberg (1997). In Tulving's words: "*Procedural memory is concerned with how things are done – with the acquisition, retention and utilization of perceptual, cognitive and motor skills. Semantic memory – also called generic or categorical memory – has to do with the symbolically representable knowledge that organisms possess about the world. Episodic memory mediates the remembering of personally experienced events*" (Tulving, 1985, p. 2).



**Figure 1** Classification of memory. *Declarative (explicit) memory* refers to conscious recollections of facts and events. *Nondeclarative (implicit) memory* refers to a heterogeneous collection of abilities whereby experience alters behavior nonconsciously without providing access to any memory content. (From Squire & Zola-Morgan, 1991.)

*Figure 8 Memory types (Squire, 1992; Squire & Zola-Morgan, 1991).*

Since some decades research among memory theorists has set out from Tulving's model of memory types to explain much more in detail how memorization works in different realms of knowledge representation, activities but also of habitual action and biographical experiences. Tulving's model has been increasingly seen as inadequate to explain all those human knowledge phenomena that go under the name of embodied cognition and that cannot be separated by the spatial, bodily and orientation experience of the subject.

Since activity impinges on processes, the interview needs to meticulously reconstruct how specific actions impinge on the moment of action (present), repeated (past) or continuative in their nature (prospective). The contention of this procedure pioneered by Kalbermatten (1982) and called self-confrontation interview, involves asking the participant how and why she did certain things in the recording (I refer generally to episodes when they involve deliberate activity or events when they do not) and then calibrating further questions to comprehend similar past and also prospective activities. Since the interview looks at situated episodes and gradually expands into

repeated actions and habits, it involves systematic activation of the memory for one-off episodes but also for repeating cyclical episodes.

Contention of this research is that cued recall of sequences enhanced by the recreation of a recognizable context can push the participant to better access similar or repeated past activities. Since no general topic guide is foreseen for replay interviews, a series of tactics must be developed to attain both episodic and semantic register if at all there.

It has been shown that confrontation interviews built on first person recordings dramatically increase recollection of work routines and gestures; procedural memory is in fact particularly involved in the such tasks (Sophie Le Bellu, Lahlou, & Nosulenko, 2010). In the present study situated descriptions, accounts of episodes and larger narratives are supposed to refer in a coherent form to the related registers of declarative, semantic and episodic memory. For the non-declarative register the method envisages that skills and habits can be reconstructed through their description, so through declarative memory. It is in fact possible that through memory of episodes and motives related to habitual and routine behavior participants are able to describe those as well, if they occur within the recorded sequences.

Subcam recordings can be defined as a section of the subject's life as the limited timespan of recording divides events in a rather artificial way; this procedure should be contrasted to that of life-logging ([http://kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2007/02/lifelogging\\_an.php](http://kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2007/02/lifelogging_an.php)). Specific meaningful events have to be identified in the recording by finding their starting and end points. In prior research on memory when asked to give an account of specific events subjects have been found to reconstruct them based on summary accounts that draw on a semantic *gist* representation (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). The reason is that episodic memory usually decays fast and semantic memories take their place. Notable exceptions to this natural pattern of memory decay are emotionally charged episodes that would impress the so-called flashbulb memory (Pezdek, 2003). Replay interviews can effectively help to counterbalance the usual pattern of episodic memory decay by rehearsing events with a small delay and in front of visual data from the episode. Eying future research, it has been tested if participants develop different memories of the event after a delay in the reexamination of the filmed material in a later interview (chapter 7).

Phenomenologically consciousness of events that do not affect the subject and consciousness of individual episodes appear to be different; Tulving introduced the concept of *autonoetic consciousness* to account for the specific salience of affective episodes and for the cognitive capacity of correlating autobiographical events over time (Tulving, cited).

The fact that activity spans between past actions and a planned course of action (expectation) brings with it cognitions that can refer both to the past and to the future. Memory has in practice its counterpart in expectation. Memory would equate to the faculty to evaluate and judge facts post-hoc, whereas expectation would mean building an emotional state directed to the future, engendering the intentionality towards future action. Prospective action is the condition for hypothesis building and evaluation the means to that end. The topic guide of replay interviews will then also encompass this dimension of planning that will be ascertained by asking participants questions about their future actions at the moment of the recorded action.

As for the relationship between past and prospective action, the focal point of decision making in the process of buying may or may not be possible to reconstruct by referring to the two different time dimensions. How the decision pans out is in fact a question of observation and there are no presuppositions in this regard. Memory of past actions on the one hand and the build-up of motivation for prospective actions on the other do not necessarily coincide with what occur and this is as true for the past as it is for the future. The similarity of memory to planning, how they are manifested in individual accounts and how they can theoretically connect them to the decision is an open question that will be investigated in this study through ad-hoc prompts.

As mentioned above a neglected aspect of activity both in Russian and in situated approaches is that of routine and habit. Habit is a notion that was in fashion among American pragmatists in late nineteenth century. James notoriously describes it as the enormous fly-wheel of society; he was probably the first author to call attention to the causality between repetition and automaticity of behavior: *“Any sequence of mental action which has been frequently repeated tends to perpetuate itself; so that we find ourselves automatically prompted to think, feel, or do what we have been before accustomed to think, feel, or do, under like circumstances, without any consciously formed purpose, or anticipation of results.”* (James, 1950, p. 112)[1890]. It is important to read the passage keeping in mind the difference between habit (the old Aristotelian concept) and habituation (the pragmatist principle). Peirce stressed the connection between belief and habit (Peirce, 1877), while for Dewey it was an acquired predisposition. The latter draws a fundamental parallel between habit and future action that is worth citing for its connection to action: *“Every habit creates an unconscious expectation. It forms a certain outlook... ...A habit, a routine habit, when interfered with generates uneasiness, sets up a protest in favor of restoration and a sense of need of some expiatory act, or else it goes off in casual reminiscence”* (Dewey, 1922, p. 75). In these authors habit and routine were not distinguished as modern institutional approaches propose; Hodgson makes the point that habits are individual repetitions of actions whereas

routines are their organizational and social analogue. However, he notes that routines presuppose habits; it is because a layer of habituated individuals exist that routines are possible in society (Hodgson, 2010). That habits contain both instances of past activity and the capacity for future activity elevates the notion to a superior level compared to behavior: a habit cannot be a behavior because it necessarily implies (ecological) goals. This is why the identification of habits in individuals allows saying that those humans have acted in the past and will act in the future; indeed the circular definition takes back to pragmatism. It is however not peregrine to attribute to the concept of habit full status on the same level with activity as will be clear below.

Habit has evoked some interest in neoclassical economics in the case of voluntary unemployment (G.A. Akerlof, 1980); it is argued that if customs of established social groups are strong enough, individuals engage in the uneconomic behavior of refusing a job paid at the market price. This would preserve reputation as a social value. The case is interesting as an example of projection of individual habits on the level of community and the market in general. It is implied that there is not just one market but that the number of markets is as great as the number of communities and their shared habits.

Related to the notion of habit, is automaticity as unconscious or pre-conscious action. The construct refers to all activities and motor acts that are not deliberate; from very low-level reactions that would be better assigned to the physiological realm (the limbic system) to higher level working-memory routines triggered by learned situational responses. Once again the distinction is between biologically determined acts and learned habits.

For a long time, habit has been equated simply with frequency of behavior. More recently it has been noted that the main factor responsible for habit building is the dependency between frequency of behavior and stability of the context (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). The most apparent phenomenon accompanying the process is the disappearance of conscious intentions: once repetition occurs in constant contexts they are triggered as automatic operations. Moreover it has been noted that if just one of the two conditions varies, a disruption of the habit would occur if not supported by a strengthening of intention (Danner, Aarts, & Vries, 2008). Another point is that habit is triggered by the presence of goals. It is in fact not enough for the actor to possess the acquired automaticity of behavior but there must be a set goal to be engaged: it is not because I take the car that I go to Rome but generally the contrary. The question is how the goal is set and obviously there might be a correspondence between repetition of behavior based on stability of environmental conditions in favour of goal-setting as opposed to explicit repetition of explicit episodes of individual deliberation. Regarding the triggering of goals, Dutch researchers from the

goal-lab in Utrecht have proven that simply by being exposed to others purposeful actions, so ta say containing a goal, a process of imitation ensues. The important part to this is that goal contagion occurred pre-consciously and engendered complete activities, not merely imitation of parts of behavior (Aarts, Gollwitzer, & Hassin, 2004).

If we keep in mind the very comprehensive definition of habit given by the last mentioned authors, it becomes obvious that detecting habits is a very difficult task for the social sciences. Everyday habits cannot be simulated or elicited at will in an experimental setting. It seems unavoidable for a researcher in situated habit behaviour to observe their occurrence in the natural habitat of occurrence, something nearer to what anthropologists do.

Eventually, the two modalities in which humans respond to goal cues appear then to be either conscious deliberate activity or implicit habitual operations that have been learned in a very long time and automatized. Consumer behavior as a composition of the two types of goal-directed activities described cannot in my opinion be studied without referring to the community living in a specific ecological market niche developing across a complete pattern of human temporal cycles.

## SECOND PART: Data gathering and analysis

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### 4 Face-to-face interviews: representations of decision making processes

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The fourth chapter digs into the second sub-question presented in section 1.5 relating to the two knowledge circles of practitioners and ordinary people (questions 2.1 and 2.2 in section 1.5). In this empirical part I deal with third party representations of behaviour, ideally encompassing the two sides of the market equation, supply and demand. There is a collection of twenty-two semi-structured interviews. Transcripts amount to 27,000 words with an average of 1,200 words per document. The purpose of the analysis is to create a table of choice factors for the interpretation of the subcam recordings during the replay interviews. The question of this chapter can be rephrased in two smaller questions: *“How do practitioners and consumers represent the factors of choice for consumer products?”* The question is restricted to garments, shoes and accessories due to the sample selected. The question *“What do consumers think are the main factors of product choice?”* dominates the interviews. Theoretically, the question asks how the stakeholders in distribution and the stakeholders in consumption represent buying behaviour. The results are compared to the factors described in the literature review in section 2.1.3. The researcher wants to see if real world participants see the factors in the same way as experts in consumer behaviour and to gauge how these cognitive, internal, and situational factors are linked to the activity.

The twenty-two interviews were split into two groups of eleven each, to elicit accounts of the choice factors through questions about their work. Other questions asked how participants represent what they or others do when evaluating, selecting and deciding on a product.

The chapter is short and summarizes a larger work that is reported in Appendix 4. I retained here three sections that account for material, methods and results.

#### MATERIAL

4.1) Interview procedure, topic guide, participants.

#### METHODS

4.2) Overview of the summary table. The main two groups of codings resulting from analysis on the unified corpus of 22 interviews: processes vs. attributes.

#### RESULTS

4.3) Discussion on factors of evaluation from interviews to consumers and experts.

#### 4.1 Material: topic guide and participants

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The twenty-two interviews were made at two fashion fairs in London in February 2011. The first group of eleven interviews was made at the London Fashion Week, the most important in London that takes place twice a year, in February and August. There I met and chose a sample of professionals from the fashion industry and interview them on the spot. A similar procedure with slightly different questions was adopted 10 days later at the London Fashion Weekend, a fair for consumers, where I recruited participants who were willing to be interviewed about the purchases they made during those very days. I followed a semi-structured pattern of ten questions that on average produced 12 minutes talk, so a quick interview procedure.

The setting was the public spaces of Somerset House, its cafés and internal court. The interaction began as a discussion on the current business climate that I used as a way to introduce the participants' activities. The stage of familiarization with each participant was quite straightforward as they all appeared quite happy to be interviewed, probably because of the informal setting combined with the massive presence of the media. My impression regarding dynamics of the role-playing during the interview was quite natural and establishing a relationship with the interviewee was not difficult.

The topic guide divided questions into blocks. Questions are designed to elicit two narrative registers: representational and situational/contingent; the idea was to lead the participant to describe their representations of their distribution/buying behaviour and how things were panning out at the fair separately. In other words I want to elicit two different accounts, one long-term one short-term.

The topic guide was the following:

1. Can you please introduce yourself.
2. What kind of activity do you do and for how long?
3. What is the product you are interested in today?
4. Do you often buy fashion items? Or: Have you bought any item for yourself recently?
5. When I say the word *value* what comes to mind?
6. When you think of an item you bought recently or something you may buy, what are the main physical characteristics that reflect value for you?
7. How are the products you find here today different from what you can normally buy in a high street? Or 7b) How did you choose the product you bought today?
8. Is there any added-value to buying here today?
9. How do you decide if something is worth buying?

10. What is your favourite brand? Why?

Questions 1 and 2 refer to background and demography, where, besides collecting age, gender, occupation, they aimed at establishing the level of expertise of the participant to rank her/him on an ideal scale; the idea was that being in the sector for a few months is different to having been in it for many years.

Questions 3-4 aim to lead the participant into the topic by referring to their impressions of the situated experience in that place.

Question 5 is representational and it is aimed at a direct elicitation of the factors of evaluation.

Question 6 is of the situated type and looks into the ecological setting of the moment. I also tried to elicit the same aspects but from a more behavioural perspective by shifting the attention to the interaction with the material product itself. The prompt sounded like: "*what are the main physical characteristics that you consider....*". The intention at this stage was to account for ways of perceiving objects and environment.

Question 7 is situational and tries to link what has occurred in the short-term (just an or more hours earlier), to episodes that have occurred over a longer time span (recently in Question 6 is subjective and can refer to yesterday as well as to a month ago). This refers to the time perspective of the participant and how the evaluation takes place over time.

Question 8 is both contingent/situational and representational. It could pan out in a description of a recent episode as well as a representation of the participant's factual knowledge and level of awareness of a particular field. This relates to the level of declared expertise and one could infer the appropriateness of the participant's knowledge to the situation.

Question 9 aims to reconstruct of the evaluation process. This is aimed at the description of an activity hopefully in a narrative in episodic form.

Question 10 is also indirect; it is representational and refers to status and social image.

As is usual in semi-structured interviews I prompted the participant when I felt comfortable to do so, noticing that this happens as a rule after the fourth question. Since some participants seemed more interested in certain issues I decided from time to time to pursue their favourite topic, mainly to get new directions of exploration and more focused questions for the future participants. To give them the freedom to talk as they please also helps to gain their trust and to foster a better tone in the conversation. This kind of interview keeps some central questions fixed for each participant and leaves space at the beginning and at the end of the interview for digressions or narratives that the participant might offer about profession or on related episodes.

The topic guide was aimed at eliciting descriptions of past, present and even future evaluations. However, it was impossible to know the form of participants' answers beforehand. Answers may contain indirect narrations, detailed episodes or general statements; participants might refer to recent events or to something that occurred long ago, making this method of data collection a rather fuzzy exercise. However, I always find it interesting to start the inquiry with real behaviour through interaction with participants, in order to start constructing a timeline for the succession of events and ascertain if similar occurrences of behaviour can be identified in this way.

Since stakeholders in economic transactions are usually distinguished in supply and demand, I deemed that the activities characterized by this division are very different if not opposing. Roughly I advance the idea that producers and distributors have homogenous aims in that they work to bring something to the market, so they are engaged in a specific goal-oriented activity. Consumers on the other hand are engaged in a procurement activity, which leads to a range of sub-activities and motivations that may vary greatly.

A main concern of these interviews was to what the supply side knows about what the demand side does and the other way round. Although consumers are generally not interested in how the supply side brings products to market they have an opinion of production and distribution and I thought it be included to have a better picture of the choice process.

The professionals involved in producing and supplying a specific good to the market could be assemblers, designers, prototypes developers, traders, advertisers, consultants, buyers, and retailers; at the fair it turned out that especially experts in distribution were present. I also consider journalists and bloggers to be professionals, their activities include elements of theory, and this makes of them a bridge to the esoterics (economists and social scientists).

Although interviews had no demographic aim, I kept in mind that both experts and consumers are differentiated among them in terms of professional skills, product familiarity, shopping strategies, knowledge of the market and expertise in performing product-related tasks. It has been noted that similarly to laboratory memory tasks where the power law of practice stands clearly out, repetition of consumer experiences in real life situations should lead to increased performance and thus to increasingly successful strategies (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). The challenge will be however to find a method to measure consumer expertise in the wild.

## [4.2 Levels of coding: Activities versus Attributes](#)

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In this section I describe the final organization of the code used on the first level, the global theme which is the most comprehensive. Details about single codes and two tables for the second and third level coding are found in the appendix (appendix 4.2).

The analysis used a typical three level structure obtained by cycles coding (Gibbs, 2007). The third level is a basic typification or descriptive coding (basic theme), where the chunks analysed are close to verbatim responses. The second level is a reorganization of the chunks in thematic groups: this is often called interpretive coding or organizing theme. To give an example the verbatim response: *“I mean that when I worked 4 years long”* would be assigned on the third level to the basic theme of *“expertise”*; on the second interpretive level the organizing theme *“Actors typification”*; at the first level it would be ascribed to *“activities”* because it relates to what the participant has done during their professional life. A table containing the three levels of themes highlights the partition between activities and objects on the level of global themes.

Activities, or processes, as a global theme find their justification in their relation to the research framework. This global code is actor oriented and ideally would refer to the conative dimension. It encompasses one off episodes, habitual activities and other events that have the characteristic of happening in time. Finding of repeated activities is useful when compared to the replay interviews. The code also subsumes properties of the actors and events that depend on ecological constraints independent from the actors, but which influence their actions in a continuous manner. Accounts of activities are ideally tied to life experiences and describe how customers enacted evaluations in the past or alternatively how experts construct value in their own profession from the point of view of professional practice.

Attributes mirror the category of object in activity theory. It classifies mainly perceptual and affective factors expressed by the actor towards the objects. Products and their characteristics (material, abstract, affective, social) are the main focus of this classification that consists mainly of representations. They also classify definitions of evaluation that actors gave during the interview as well as definitions of typical occurrences of social interaction. Internally to the class I identified two other interpretive categories, cultural and experiential, in the table. The former is related to the societal sphere of influence and enculturation of the individual. The latter pertains to the individual interactional history, plus the material and affective factors that have shaped the respondent by his experiences of consumption.

Table 4 Table of the division of codes in 1st and 2nd levels

 <b>Code System</b>	<b>730</b>
 <b>PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>0</b>
 Representation of Activities	99
 Actors typification	144
 Situated descriptions	45
 <b>ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS</b>	<b>0</b>
 Economic Factors	63
 Developmental Factors	3
 Abstract factors	62
 Social Factors	110
 Micro-interactional Factors	33
 Feeling/Emotion Factors	53
 Material Factors	93
 Definition of Value	25

Cultural

Experiential

The categories under “Activities” are divided into three macro categories: representations of activities, actors’ typifications and finally situated descriptions of activities that can be drawn from episodes about work experience or some habitual activities. As for the typification of actors this can refer either to the interviewee or to third parties described by the interviewee. I also propose to distinguish into representations of producer’s activities and customer’s activities.

*Representation of activities (99 coded segments):* This code classifies references to one’s own activities and points to purposive behaviour. Representation of agency is a final stage of activity construction; agency can also refer to descriptions of behaviour of other agents.

*Actors’ typification (144 coded segments):* This category refers to the speaker and to the actors that one cites in her descriptions of activities. Specific characterizations of the actors help to reveal what are the relational and professional factors linked to activities that add value to the product. The presupposition is that there are numerous factors that are immaterial because they refer to expertise, plus many other factors that can be classified as cultural/relational. Moreover expertise is related not only to single agents but to the actors belonging to a company or organization.

*Situated descriptions of activities (45 coded segments).* This code refers more to the discursive modality used to describe the activity than to content. This is to code whether the accounts collected in the interviews already point to different types of memory, be it semantic or procedural. The semantic level would be split into representation of a general activity versus episodes describing actual experiences. Here proximity refers both to the spatial and temporal dimensions. The episodes are the ones reported by participants as having a personal focus, so facts that have the participant as one of the actors. Episodes do not necessarily stem from the participant purpose but the participant plays an integral role.

The categories under “*Attributes*” are divided into seven macro categories: economic, abstract, social, educational, micro-interactional, material, affective factors. Definitions of value and evaluation are a different class that includes the answers to the question about a definition of value; in fact, it was answered in an abstract, declarative way.

*Economic Factors (62 coded segments):* These codes refer to direct descriptions of economic exchanges and their modalities. In this class some mechanisms that have been described in the behavioural economic literature can be recognized, so that this could be mistaken to be as the only real class of interest in the research for a direct comparison with the literature. Naturally, since the research taps into the field of activities and social interactions, it has to recognize that not every definition of economic exchange is directly linked to explicit verbalizations.

*Abstract factors (63 coded segments):* This is a category difficult to relate to any situated or broadly social aspect of choice. They may be very general definitions or evocations of patterns, shapes, aesthetic values. The problem that arises with these values is that they have a strong social connotation; for example, to what extent aesthetics is a social rather than a subjective phenomenon? The choice is in such cases to keep a low profile across the research and keep codes strictly functional to the research aims.

*Social Factors (113 coded segments)* are typically instances of cultural influence. For example, social positioning and social desirability are factors taken into consideration by the literature that can be translated into economic behaviour. Veblen goods, preferences for luxury articles, are good examples. This code also collects references to media and advertising that influence consumers.

*Educational Factors (3 coded segments):* These are truly social factors and they have been coded together with those above, as there is a limited number of them. However, they cannot be considered merely social or abstract factors because they retain a special valence for the individual. The construction of personal expertise is a long process that produces embedded knowledge; sometimes the individual is conscious of this and is able to articulate a representation of the own career or educational path.

*Micro-interactional Factors (33 coded segments):* This code is at the intermediate level of interpersonal relation; it comprises face-to-face as well as interpersonal relationships with small groups, such as peer-groups. I distinguished these from large social interactions where the others are an indistinct mass of individuals with which the actor has no direct relationship.

*Material Factors (93 coded segments):* These are recognized in the products of interest. Material factors point to the expertise of the respondent either in producing the items or in consuming them. These factors are indicators from practical experience and craftsmanship and thus are highly cultural and play a role in the transmission of tacit knowledge.

*Feeling/Emotional Factors: (53 coded segments):* Here I include emotional factors coming from the product, as well as originating in environment and social situations. It encompasses both individual as well as social factors as long as the verbatim response refers to the affective state of the individual.

*Definitions of Value (25 coded segments).* This final code focuses on how the respondent explicitly thinks value can be defined. I made this question simpler from time to time by asking the participant to define value for a specific good considered. This category requires a formal definition of value and is more general than theoretical notions of economic value. For some participants it was not strictly related to the goods.

#### 4.3 Summary on semi-structured interviews: representations of evaluation

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Starting point for this chapter was the division in classes of stakeholders in the production-consumption process. I identified at least three main groups of which two were considered for the collection of open-ended interviews. The two groups of respondents identified in professionals and lay people (or producers and consumers as detailed above), appear indeed as distinct groups after analysis, confirming my theoretical presupposition that they would answer differently according to their focus of interest. The following table contains the details about their different answers; although the topic guides were very similar among all participants it appears clearly that consumers feel more interest in explaining personal motivations in purchasing behaviour and in narrating about themselves and about precise episodes. There is for example a clear divide in the first bunch of answers relating to professional background, where consumers have answered more extensively referring to their personal achievements. Also consumers seem to be less focused on the product itself and on general topics of merchandising (sales, media, brand).

Producers also seem to have a stronger focus on product characteristics like price and brand, style or positioning. This class of answers suggests that producers and commercials are focused on aspects that are not immediately obvious to consumers and might even not be relevant for them. Of course it is their mission to theorize what aspects can influence consumers' purchase both in explicit and implicit ways, so that a perfect correspondence of themes between groups is not mandatory. In fact, judging by the simple correspondence of themes, producers' interests superpose with consumers' ones very limitedly.

Producers seem moreover to deliver a critical perspective on consumers whereby their answers appear as efforts to understand and classify consumers' behaviours. They exclusively cite for example habits (habitude) and scenario building (repisodic future thinking) as possible behaviour in consumers. The opposite attitude in consumers (understanding and classifying producers) is not relevant.

## Breakdown of codes for Experts towards Consumers

Code-ID	Code	Total number of segments coded	Experts	Consumers	Number of documents coded	Percentage towards all codings %	Parent code	
							PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification
2	Expertise/Education	45	5	40	16	6.16	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
1	Profession	35	11	24	21	4.79	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors
46	Quality/durability	34	16	18	15	4.66	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors
29	Price & Positioning	30	20	10	18	4.11	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
25	Irrational or affective behavior	30	16	14	15	4.11	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
16	Brand	27	18	9	14	3.70	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Social Factors
47	Uniqueness (of a specific item)	26	13	13	12	3.56	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - ACTIVITIES\Social Factors
4	Definition of Value	25	6	19	13	3.42	Stand-alone code about a subjective definition of value	
3	Craftsmanship	24	9	15	13	3.29	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors
11	Typified social Behavior	23	6	17	11	3.15	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
12	Evaluation process	20	9	11	11	2.74	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
33	social trend	19	15	4	10	2.60	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
15	Company	19	0	19	8	2.60	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification
22	Customer	19	1	18	9	2.60	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification
44	Design - Style	18	15	3	12	2.47	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors
14	Social interaction	15	4	11	6	2.05	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-Interactional Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-Interactional Factors
36	Media	15	11	4	12	2.05	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
63	Ratio	14	13	1	9	1.92	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
39	Comfort/Fit	14	12	2	9	1.92	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors
78	Seasonality	14	13	1	6	1.92	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
40	rational decision process	14	11	3	8	1.92	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
8	Feeling/Emotion Factors	13	2	11	6	1.78	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS
24	Product of Interest	13	7	6	10	1.78	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification
65	Material	11	9	2	6	1.51	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors
69	Self Image	10	7	3	7	1.37	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors
43	overall mood	10	5	5	6	1.37	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling/Emotion Factors
57	Motivations & Interests	10	4	6	9	1.37	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Actors typification
13	one-off intentional event	10	3	7	8	1.37	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Episodes	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Episodes
64	Function	9	9	0	6	1.23	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors
59	Image/Shape	8	6	2	7	1.10	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
73	Color	8	8	0	5	1.10	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
48	Exclusivity (social)	8	5	3	5	1.10	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
81	Tradition	8	5	3	6	1.10	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
38	Culture	7	2	5	6	0.96	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
50	Taste	6	4	2	5	0.82	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors
66	Bargaining	6	5	1	5	0.82	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
67	Sale	6	6	0	4	0.82	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-Interactional Factors	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-Interactional Factors
31	Environment - Shop	6	3	3	4	0.82	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions
58	Reepisode	6	2	4	6	0.82	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions
21	social episode	6	4	2	4	0.82		

## Breakdown of codes for Experts towards Consumers

72	Habitude	6	0	5	0.82	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Reepisode
56	Advertising	5	2	3	0.68	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
26	expectation	5	1	4	0.68	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
34	Event condition	5	4	1	0.68	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Episodes
9	Micro-interactional Factors	4	0	4	0.55	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS - FACTORS
76	Contingent need	4	2	2	0.55	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling\Emotion Factors
49	Marketing	4	2	2	0.55	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-interactional Factors
30	Service	4	0	4	0.55	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Micro-interactional Factors
55	Origin	4	2	2	0.55	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
28	situated evaluation	4	4	0	0.55	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Episodes
5	Material Factors	3	0	3	0.41	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS
75	Budget	3	2	1	0.41	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
84	Choice	3	3	0	0.41	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
52	Accessories	3	1	2	0.41	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors
77	Understatement	3	3	0	0.41	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Social Factors
7	Actors typification	3	0	3	0.41	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES
68	Addiction	3	2	1	0.41	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
79	Behavioral Dissonance	3	3	0	0.41	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
27	perception - feeling	3	0	3	0.41	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Episodes
71	Repetodic Future Thinking	3	3	0	0.41	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Reepisode
45	Abstract factors	2	0	2	0.27	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS
74	Detail	2	2	0	0.27	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Abstract factors
83	Education	2	0	2	0.27	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Developmental Factors
51	Sex	2	0	2	0.27	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Feeling\Emotion Factors
70	Memories	2	1	1	0.27	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Situated descriptions\Reepisode
82	Age	1	1	0	0.14	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Developmental Factors
80	Substitution	1	1	0	0.14	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Economic Factors
53	Technology	1	0	1	0.14	ATTRIBUTES - FACTORS\Material Factors
41	competition	1	0	1	0.14	PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES\Representation of Activities
		363	367			

Open-ended interviews stand out first of all for a high frequency of utterances referring to representations. Participants seem to speak about factors of decision-making abstractly. Since semantic memory is closely linked to cognitive representational faculties as is suggested by Tulving's pioneering studies. This result suggests that long-term semantic memory is the first resource when referring general intentions or general descriptions of possible evaluation and choice. Reference to real episodes through episodic or procedural memory is indeed occasional and random and is more typical of consumers than of professionals.

The two types of input factors in Howard's model, perceptual constructs and knowledge constructs (cited), appear quite consistently in the participants' answers. The second group of factors (*attributes* in the thematic organization) in fact mirrors Howard's perceptual factors (in the list of factors, *material* ones). These factors of choice are cognitively near the perceptual level and appear more frequently and apparently are easy to state. A minority of the participants however seem more willing to talk about abstract factors than low level perceptual factors. At first, this seems to depend on the job and level of expertise so that a parallel between experience and the abstractness of answers can be made. This result is found in the experienced photographer and the experienced Russian stylist who both spoke quite extensively in abstract terms.

Many abstract factors like patterns, shapes, aesthetic values appear to be a specialist interest; this is something that occurred mainly while speaking with designers.

Some of the variables explicitly formulated in marketing research like attributes or part-worth utilities, were also apparent in exploratory interviews. Consumers might have knowledge of the product based on the exchange of information (advertising, word of mouth) whereas producers and designers may have a more formalized technical type of knowledge.

One finding in the interviews is a clear division of some factors either belonging to customers or producers. Generally material factors are referred to more often by consumers, whereas abstract and relational factors are referred to more often by producers. At this point, I can advance a hypothesis for why this is the case: it is related to the very different activities of bringing something to the market and consuming it. In other words, throughout these interviews it becomes clear that producers and marketers have a different thinking about decision making than consuming. Consumers are focused more on object factors like material and social factors of choice because of their procurement oriented attitude. Producers focus more on prospective factors for choice and on the global theme of activity. It can be advance that these factors derive from their objectifying attitude that is related to their daily activities and routines. In other words, an expert in the production chain is motivated to speak about organizational factors, production related activities and by-products of organization, such as brand reputation or aesthetic value as stemming from corporate culture. These aspects are not necessarily recognized and appreciated by consumers.

A direct comparison of what one group says what the other says is not possible both because of sample size and register. Experts and consumers do not seem to share common representations. Although the distinction between experts and consumers is generally confirmed at the level of representations of productive and procurement activities, the two groups possess a different level of reflection about the processes they enact.

Consumers represent their own evaluation and choice processes quite easily and are able to describe them explicitly. Some of them engage in the description of the behaviour of others in general terms based on own observations. Experts also have their own representations of consumer evaluation and choice processes, but such representations are informed by their professional experience; this fact means that their knowledge of those processes is filtered through the experience of colleagues and of the organization in which the expert is embedded. The influence of the organized setting in which experts work could be also a cause for more crystallized and less variant representations of consumer behaviour held by experts: in fact they also seem to be characteristics of expert discourse in these interviews.

An interesting consequence found through their different constructive process of representations is their reciprocal ignorance of issues relevant to the other group. Consumers generally are not interested in knowing what are the issues and interests for experts. Experts, on the other hand, build models of consumer behaviour for professional reasons, but such models seem to be limited by the special perspective they take based on their function in the value chain.

A general remark on the style of description found in both groups is the reference to habitual and one-off events. The sample is clearly too small to state which style is used more by a group, but two registers were found. The fact that some consumer processes are described as episodes, while other as episodes and habitual behaviour, offer comparison material to replay interviews. After analysis of these interviews, the suggested relation between description of activity and memory registers gains strength.

The relation between long-term and short-term descriptions of the evaluation processes suggests that differences may also exist at the level of goals and motives. A research venue can indeed be identified by the relationship between enacted processes of evaluation and choice and their description. . The question is strengthened by the reconstructive character of memory. If in fact memory is in no way a faithful depiction of facts but a reconstruction, how are activities and related memory traces (procedural or semantic) translated in common language? Always following the paradigm of the different types of memory found in Tulving and introduced in section 3.2, I expect that typifications used in qualitative analysis such as narrative, episodic, declarative, dialogical etc. appearing in participants accounts may no longer be considered accidental but

related to the type of activity that participants are describing. A conservative perspective on the method lets me assert that the interview could at least reveal the use of different registers for description. Description of behaviour could in turn be useful to assess their similarities with actual behaviour in the next phase of observation.

An interesting variable emerging from expert views is about the size of the group in which the participant operates. This characteristic becomes important to assess the type of organization the participant is usually working in and/or has been socialized in. For future work, this might indeed be a predictive variable for specific modes of evaluation and choice. It could be also useful to make the type of exposure to a specific professional and organizational culture explicit (Lave, 1991a).

Group size is also relevant when it comes to the reference group. The hierarchy of expertise does clearly have an influence on the group size. To be an expert in fact is ultimately the exception and this is gained through long and complex layering of experiences in working environments. It follows that expert groups are necessarily tiny in many fields. Experts then constitute minority groups. The interview process also revealed of how a person becomes an expert and how to reconstruct individual developments of expertise (Littig, 2008). It was not possible to state however what are the explicit motives and factors that lead producers to design products and bring their specific product of interest to market. In other words motivations for starting a job remain buried in the past and seem to supersede current professional activity.

As for experts, a level of expertise in being consumers can theoretically be considered in terms of experience with their own purchase activities.

It is challenging however to describe consumer expertise in terms of a learning process because being a consumer is not a job. The consumer side of the equation is what the next part of the study will focus on in order to see how activities actually pan out.

Chapter 5 contains the first phase of the ethnographic fieldwork, a report on the subcam recordings prior to the replay interviews. Interpretation is a long process in this study; we can understand it better by considering this chapter on the subjective camera recordings (the second stream of data) as containing the objective interpretation of activity whereas the subjective interpretation of those recordings is ideally reconstructed in the next chapter on replay interviews (the third stream of data). I explain in this chapter how subcam recordings have been collected, divided in phases and interpreted through a simple form of content analysis. The data generated in the two phases are of different natures. Subcam data are hard-data; if properly carried out they will serve for multiple interpretations by other researchers in the future. They are also rich in two ways: contextual data in an unlimited amount and, less obviously, data dependent on the special subjective perspective that the participant develops in the course of action (Lahlou, Nosulenka, & Samoylenko, 2009). The reflexivity of this kind of ethnographic data can be developed in different ways depending on who is asked to do interpretation. The procedures are based on a combination of visual document (hard data) and comments on them (soft-data). Naturally comments can be turned into hard data as well if recorded and can be further analyzed in their own right as well as providing future material for analysis in a recursive way.

The chapter is organized as follows:

- 5.1 The collection of Subcam recordings. How participants were recruited, material collected, videos secured and catalogued.
- 5.2 Methods of analysis. Classical content analysis of events on recordings (time and counts).
- 5.3 Grouping similar actions into phases of buying activity. Content analysis extended to macro events. How subjective cam films have been edited to highlight the decision phase homogeneously.
- 5.4 Validation test of the robustness of the coding system done in a joint interpretation session.
- 5.5 Summary of the findings from content analysis with a tentative interpretation of cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of decision.

## 5.1 Material: subjective camera recordings

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This section describes how participants have been recruited and how subcam recordings have been collected and organized.

Participants in this study had to cope with a novel and challenging protocol. I asked them to perform a complete buying experience involving a final purchase carried out as they usually do, without any monetary compensation for participation. In other words observation entailed that the action had to be performed as naturally as possible, while at the same time recording the activity wearing the subcam. They were also interviewed just afterwards or on another day but no more than a week after the experience.

Recruitment was by convenience or snowballing sampling, where the prerequisites were: 1) to really need the item; 2) willingness to wear a subcam throughout the buying activity; 3) able to do the after-purchase replay interview. The study was advertised in the department, through colleagues and graduate students. I also distributed some leaflets around the LSE campus and personally distributed some ads in other public spaces. This last method allowed me to complete the sample with 3 more participants. Since the protocol was demanding, there was no other way than to sample participants conveniently by their willingness to undergo the whole process. Nevertheless, as here understanding of the nature of the process rather than representativeness or statistical study, the important thing was to have a varied sample and a guarantee of the naturalness of the process.

As a result, the sample is as follows:

Table 5 Participants in the subcam experience

	Name	Surname	Gender	Nationality	date of observation	date of debrief	Status debrief	place and shop	price paid	Occupation
001	Bankie		M	Nigerian	12/06/2011	18/06/2011	✓	Oxford Street - Debenhams	25	PhD Student
002	Nathalie		F	Swiss	18/06/2011	19/06/2011	✓	Covent garden - Geox		BA student
003-a	Anonimize	Anonimized	F	Turkish	27/06/2011	27/06/2011	✗	Carnaby Street -		Administration
003-b	Anonimize	Anonimized	M	British	27/06/2011	27/06/2011	✗	Carnaby Street -		Shop assistant
004	Chara		F	Chinese	11/11/2012	12/11/2012	✓	Covent garden - Sketchers	75	MSc student
005	Reka		F	Hungarian	14/11/2012	15/11/2012	✓	Covent Garden - Zara	89	Waitress
006	Serena		F	Brazilian	14/11/2012	14/11/2012	✓	Covent Garden - Aldo		MA student
007	Lucas		M	Brazilian	23/11/2012	26/11/2012	✓	Covent Garden - Neal Street	45	MSc student
008	Lian			Chinese	09/12/2012	10/12/2012	✓	Covent garden - Sketchers		MSc student
009	Charlotte		F	British	02/01/2013	08/01/2013	✓	Oxford st. - Schuh	55	Librarian
010	Sophie		F	French	20/01/2013	no	✗	Covent garden - All Star	65	Researcher
011	Marianne		F	French	21/01/2013	31/01/2013	✓	Oxford St. Russell & Bromley	100	Researcher
012	Dora		F	German	24/01/2013	10/03/2013	✓	Oxford St. Clarks		PhD Student
013	Benny		M	German	24/01/2013	31/01/2013	✓	Oxford St. Vans	45	Photographer
014	Cleo		F	Turkish	21/03/2013	no	✗	Selfridges	230	MSc student
015	Crystal		F	Chinese	10/03/2013	14/03/2013	✓		36 + 68	MSc student
016	Lia		F	USA		dropped observation	✗			MSc student
017	Jacob		M	Danish	21/05/2013	26/05/2013	✓	Clarks	175	PhD Student

Recordings have been collected in three stages of observation. The very first one was done in 2010 with the prototype camera A. This served to know how to orient the camera, appreciate the effect of the participants' movements on the recording, the quality of the sound. The first four observations, which I considered as pilot, were done in June 2011. All of the participants completed the experience successfully. The following cohort of fourteen participants was carried out between October 2012 and May 2013. In total, 20 participants took part in the experience. Of these, two pilot participants were members of staff who wanted to take part in the experience mainly to focus on the method (one was my supervisor), two were not successful in filming, two others withdrew after the successful completion of both subcam recording and replay interview for personal reasons. However, they allowed a content analysis of the buying experience to be performed. Sixteen recordings in total were used for content analysis. Since one participant made two purchases during the same shopping trip the total buying episodes increased to 17; the two were codified 015\_a and 015\_b (see Table 6). Some participants engaged in the buying action as a couple. This was the case with 003\_a and 003\_b that are so codified because their experience is intertwined, having exchanged the camera at a certain point. Two other participants did the experience as a couple but their actions were distinguishable because they wore two different cameras so that they were codified separately as 012 and 013. Another participant was accompanied by another person, 008, though they were not a couple.

Two participants were also interviewed after one year from the experience to check on the difference in their accounts; this was done in the prospect of carrying out longitudinal study in the future.

For this research I used three models of subcam as they became available between 2010 and 2013 (Figure 15). I started with a rudimentary device personally assembled for the pilot study in 2009 (A); I then switched to a subcam embedded in glasses that our ISP workshop produced in 2010 (B). I finally used in 2013 a subjective action camera from Panasonic that can be worn over the ear (C). The common characteristic of these miniature cameras is that they must have a definite angle that makes them point towards the area of manipulation, approximately 15 degrees below the horizontal plane. Devices were worn by the participant at eye level.

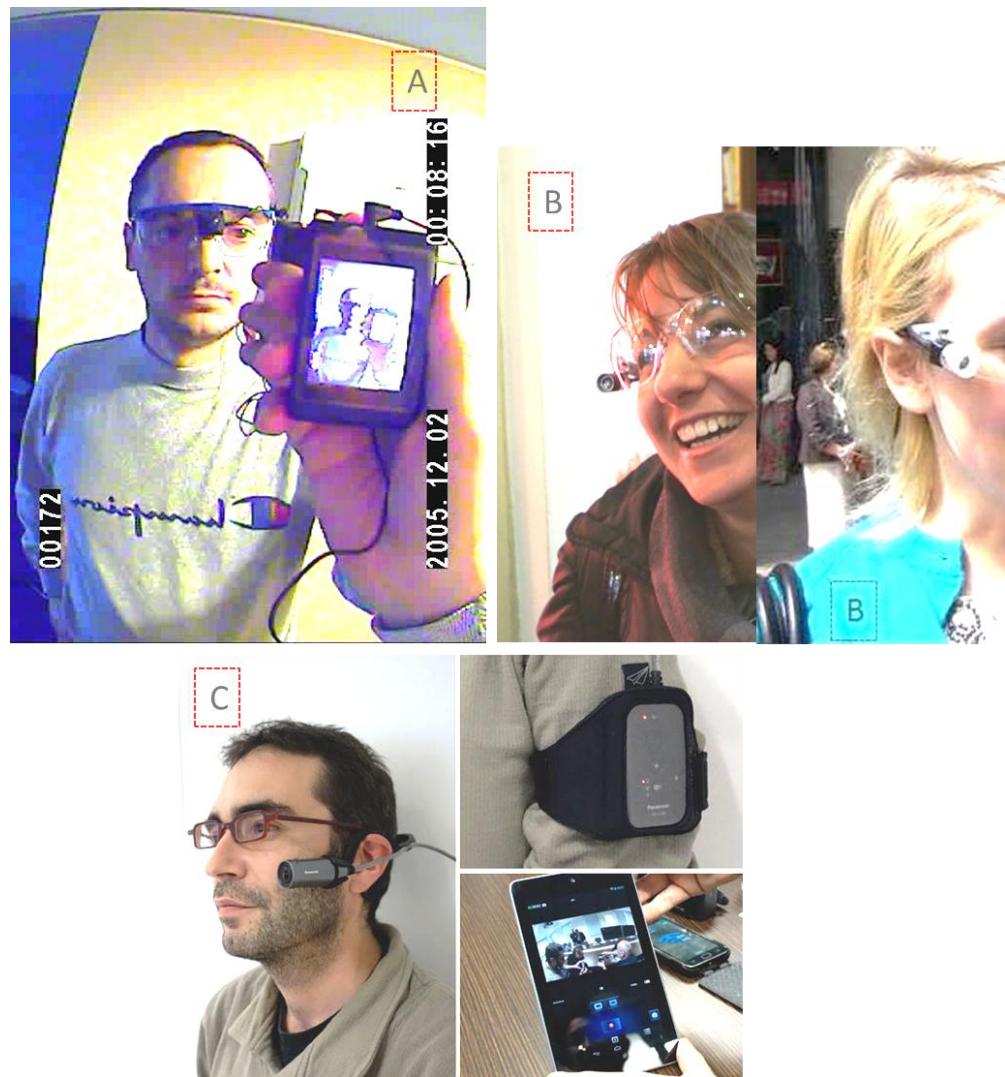


Figure 9 Evolution of the subcams used: a) first prototype, b) subcams from the ISP, c) Panasonic HX-A100

Subcams were given to participants just before going out to a shopping area of their choice. Shopping was considered a habitual activity that through the method of first person recording had to be preserved in its richness of tasks and acts. The problem of the presence of a bias in the recording has been raised by some participants and many researchers as well. There have already been some answers to this criticism pointing usually to the quick forgetting about wearing the tool in most cases (Rieken, 2013). In this study and following preliminary results from several pilots, subjective digital ethnography from a certain point onwards (approx.10 minutes) during the experience does not interfere with well-established routines and habit. So I deemed it justified to use this technique to answer the questions of the study. That the procedure is not cognitively invasive is corroborated by participants as well; at several points in the replay interviews they were asked about their consciousness of the tool and their answers are available in the edited video.

The experience began either at the LSE campus or a central shopping area of London (WC2-WC1); often Covent Garden. The participants took all the time they wanted to shop, as they said very much replicating their habitual way of doing it. The recording time varied between 15 minutes and 2 hours (considering the journey back and forth). Afterwards the subcam was recollected by the researcher in the same place where the experience started.

## 5.2 Content analysis of subjective camera recording

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This section explains the method of content analysis developed specifically for the subcam recordings of shopping experiences.

I found it useful to stick to the classical content analysis introduced in section 3.2. In this case it is applied to chronological events. Events are generated by the interaction of the participant with the physical and social environment, so that in this phase we are bound to consider the special ecological nature of the exercise and less the individual cognitive dimension that is also there. This choice allows us to focus on the direction of the events considered: events can be considered either active, stemming from the actor and directed towards the environment, or passive if the other way round. In other words, I assume intentional activity of the actor to his proximal environment can be spotted by looking at events on video and they can be distinguished from the environment's influence on the actor. The criteria that allow us to describe the activity or passivity of action is related to the combinations of sense modalities in different phases. In the orientation phase sight seems to be the most important because shops are spotted from a distance. What happens in the field of view seems to have a more passive character, because no particular action is

required to be affected by a shop window or a brand apart from coming into view. In the exploration phase, hearing becomes equally important as participants seem to take orientation inside the shop from other shoppers as well: for example distance from other persons is kept constant also by hearing (passive modality). Moreover interaction seems to be initiated with a combination of proxemics and sound (passive if the assistant intervenes). Handling the footwear and trying them on seem more active components of the activity; deliberation in fact seems to be required to initiate the manipulation of objects. Since the main claim of the content analysis approach is validity and reliability (Krippendorff, 2013), the material to be classified needs to acquire a stable character. This property qualifies the empirical material for future testing by different researchers to verify the plausibility of the research. At this stage of the analysis however I emphasize reliability more than validity, leaving the discussion of the validity of constructs in activity theory to the discussion chapter. This choice makes sense in the economy of the study in that validity is a theoretical matter of interpretation that is pursued by hypothesis building and that needs repeated analysis to be pinned down.

Methodologically speaking the effort to identify objective events in a subcam recording is flawed by definition: this is why the method has the two interpretation stages, content analysis and replay interviews. However, it is useful to restate this point so that the consistency I am going to ascribe to activity events is not misunderstood. At this point, I am looking at some basic actions performed by the participants. Basic actions are obviously a fuzzy category, but guidance comes from Leontev who considered acts as the elementary units of actions that contain a single goal and thus a single intention. Such elementary units are nearly simple gestures, in which the interpretation of the embedded goals takes a very low profile.

If events identified in the recording of each participant result as clear and elementary, they are suitable for objective frequency measures. This will hopefully lead to the identification of a plausible hierarchy of activities that will be discussed in chapter seven.

As is customary in CA an interpretation grid summarizes the events identified. This framework allows a table containing the events of the participants to be constructed and then to do statistical tests on them. At this stage the kind of events I have been looking at had to be as unambiguous as possible for a third party; this is the ideal criterion of reliability. Although the real disambiguation of recorded actions occurred during the replay interview, this stage of content analysis had to be constructed as a sort of yardstick on which the next stage could build. In other words the two stages had to be complementary. The kind of acting upon the world in this first content analysis however cannot already be qualified as a modeled activity in that the items recognized by the

researcher might not be meaningful to the participants. Moreover, the identified actions could change their meaning in relation to the context. Countable events are ultimately potential markers that will facilitate explanations of the participant during the replay session. Ideally these events should be objective facts, if such a construct is legitimate at all.

Events acquire objectivity when they belong to the usual countable, ordinal, and continuous statistical scales. Touching the first item, asking for assistance, first trying on a shoe, touching the focal item, time to decision, time to payment could be counted by the time between them. The continuous measure in this case begins when entering the first shop. Some other events have been counted: products touched before focal one, products touched in total, shoes tried on, and shops entered in total. Events identified are clearly not exhaustive. Following activity theorists, activity is divisible in a hierarchy of micro-acts and there is no theoretical limit to how many acts one can identify in each timeframe. The optimal span of the event considered depends on the specific purpose of the study and has to be established through piloting. The events identified in this study have however been measured against three yardsticks: the researcher own scheme of interpretation, the participant's feedback and external validation. For this purpose one recording has been jointly interpreted by two distinct groups of researchers (section 5.4). The following table summarizes the definitions of events and their validity status for content analysis.

*Table 6 Template for content analysis of subcam recordings*

Type of event	1st Shop entered	Touching the first product	Asking for assistance	Touching the focal item	First fitting of a shoe	Fitting of last shoe before decision	Time to decision	Time to paying
Content value	Objective event	Objective event	Event clear-cut; Goal not always explicit; also not clear who starts the interaction	Objective event in retrospection	Objective event	Objective event	Event clear-cut if the shoes are given to assistant; otherwise not always obvious	Objective event
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Type of event	products touched before focal one	products touched in total	shoes tried on	Shops entered in total				
Content value	Objective event	Objective event	Objective event	Objective event				
	K	J	I	L				

For the constructs A to H, the figures express time-to-event: how long does it take for the participant to touch the first item? How long to ask for assistance? How long to try on the first shoe? How long before finding the shoe that will finally be bought? How long to the decision point? How long to paying for the shoe? These are all largely objective facts. Events K to L are countable. All events considered are objective to a high degree, with two exceptions, C and G: asking for assistance and the decision. Asking for assistance is not always clear because a social interaction is

visible, but it is not possible to state why it is enacted from watching the subcam film alone.

Further the approach can have two directions; it can be initiated by the assistant or by the participant and could depend on environmental cues.

The decision is the most problematic construct as the literature review has made clear. Moreover as will be summarized in the discussion, decision making starts long before the filmed buying experience, even months before. To play it safe at this stage, with decision I will refer to final action that the participant seems to perform at the end of a sequence of events in this case. This turning point seems to begin and end in a few seconds and is generally referred to as "making up one's mind". This moment is generally visible, although it seems rather difficult to pinpoint a specific moment: it is easier to speak in this case of decision period, where the participant slowly moves toward the critical moment when the motivational boat capsizes. I include decision points in the count, keep in mind that a more finely tuned interpretation is given to the participant during replay interview.

Finally, touching the focal item is not obvious the first time of the video is seen, but in retrospect it is, that is, when we know what the focal item (the pair of shoes bought) is.

Following the template for the content analysis of the events above and after lengthy screening of the recordings, it has been possible to construct a table summarizing the seventeen buying episodes. The time appears even if it is always 00, the reason being that timing is computed by difference. This table is in fact derived from the one that appears in appendix 5.2. The time begins when the first shop is entered (not reported in the table because it is always 00:00:00); from that point the time has been measured relatively, in minutes and seconds. It ends on the final exit from the shop, although the post-decision phase theoretically can vary considerably, depending on the emotional profile of the participants (relaxation time).

The following table contains in detail the timing for events for each successful participant. The column headings are the event categories. Each cell contains the time between events. contain a measure in minutes of the distance between events. The columns on the left are timed-events; on the right they are countable-events.

Table 7 Raw counts of events from subcam recordings for content analysis

Event	Touching the first product	Asking for assistance	First fitting of a shoe	Fitting of last shoe	Touching the focal item	Time to decision	Time to paying	products touched before focal one	products touched in total	shoes tried on	Shops entered in total
Prt. 001	00:00:24	00:19:04	00:21:08	00:21:08	00:16:37	00:23:58	00:29:59	32	59	1	4
Prt. 002	00:01:01	00:21:43	00:25:06	00:33:56	00:20:36	00:35:44	00:37:37	9	27	3	8
Prt. 003-a	00:05:25	00:05:47	00:07:16	00:21:49	00:20:46	00:23:23	00:26:10	10	12	4	6
Prt. 003-b	00:00:07	00:05:00	00:06:59	00:07:17	00:04:43	00:15:04	00:16:59	14	19	3	1
Prt. 004	00:08:45	00:11:22	00:19:54	00:31:23	00:10:22	00:34:34	00:36:09	6	26	2	3
Prt. 005	00:02:44	00:02:38	00:05:58	00:38:41	00:27:41	00:41:23	00:42:08	21	31	9	3
Prt. 006	00:00:31	00:05:03	00:05:34	00:17:10	00:04:15	00:18:30	00:36:40	2	21	3	3
Prt. 007	00:01:36	00:04:21	00:05:24	00:10:11	00:06:07	00:11:54	00:12:42	10	12	3	3
Prt. 008	00:00:25	00:05:09	00:09:43	00:20:40	00:04:23	00:25:05	00:51:10	13	44	3	6
Prt. 009	00:02:31	00:03:24	00:05:35	00:10:57	00:02:31	00:14:38	00:27:34	1	38	5	1
Prt. 010	00:00:06	00:44:00	00:46:12	00:51:02	00:43:28	00:56:46	00:59:47	31	40	3	9
Prt. 011	00:00:26	00:08:02	00:19:56	00:28:25	00:23:36	00:30:28	00:33:52	20	39	4	4
Prt. 012	00:00:32	00:01:34	00:02:46	00:22:01	00:01:24	00:25:42	00:30:01	2	2	2	1
Prt. 013	00:00:56	00:26:05	00:06:10	00:33:10	00:10:00	00:38:39	00:46:19	13	34	4	6
Prt. 014	00:04:44	00:22:43	00:18:57	00:23:43	00:04:55	00:38:01	00:38:16	1	30	5	6
Prt. 015-a	00:01:09	00:16:54	00:17:46	00:17:46	00:15:51	00:25:25	00:26:08	10	15	6	5
Prt. 015-b	00:01:09	00:07:36	00:11:04	00:34:26	00:04:00	00:42:02	00:46:09	1	2	3	5
Prt. 017	00:00:07	00:02:36	00:05:10	00:10:42	00:00:07	00:13:00	00:13:57	1	6	2	1
averages	00:01:49	00:11:50	00:13:22	00:24:08	00:12:18	00:28:34	00:33:59	11	25	4	4
STD	00:02:19	00:11:13	00:10:48	00:11:29	00:11:27	00:12:07	00:12:38	10	16	2	2

Through this procedure the reconstruction of the buying process goes decidedly in the direction of a behaviour survey, very much in an ethological sense. It is indeed an application of the principles used in the literature for filmed sequences from a subjective perspective.

### 5.3 Regrouping similar activities: phases in the buying process

The fact that activities in this CA appear to be homogenous does not completely solve the problem of their partly subjective status. Modern ethnography makes the point that expertise in a field of human activity is the only method we have both as researchers and as others to understand the division of activities and actions. For my part, it was the experience with consumer behavior accumulated working in the shoe industry that allowed me to untangle the actions involved in looking for shoes. Observing the participants during this study has revealed well-known routines that however I knew implicitly; based on this I can claim confidently that what has been performed and described by the participants can be really connected in its phases and form a Gestaltian structure that can be defined in its integrity shoe buying behaviour.

Between the events that have been described as objective, I now propose a sequence of phases that draws from the distinction that Leontiev saw between explicit vs. implicit actions. At this stage explicit would mean that action-phases are readable by an external observer unambiguously like these. If they remain implicit it means that they are not obvious and thus are unrecognizable for both observers and perhaps the actors themselves.

There is then a problem with the actors' intentions. If we can reasonably suppose that everyone engaged in buying behavior is sincere in her/his own behavior, there is always the possibility that an actor consciously conceals something. There might be some ritual aspects, traditions, or subjective procedures that are enacted in going around shops with the purpose of self-representation (Goffman, 2002). This aspect would be compatible with the paratelic part of the activity. If the activity in which the actor engages does not have a material goal (the consummatory act of ethologists), an alternative goal has to be constructed in its place. For the moment I do not go into the purpose of the phases described below, leaving it to the discussion.

*Table 8 Division of phases for content analysis*

phase	Orientation phase	Exploratory phase	Consideration phase	Involvement phase	Post-decision phase
timespan	between entering the shop and touching the first shoe	between touching the first item and fitting the first shoe	between touching the focal item and fitting the last shoe before decision	between fitting the last shoe and decision point	between decision and paying
	1	2	3	4	5

The phases identified in the footage go through some noticeable moments that are characterized by specific gestures delimiting the span of those specific actions. In a sense we are now coming to the distinction that Leontiev made between actions and activities. One phase would ideally mirror an action, where the specific gesture delimiting the action is a sub-action with specific psychological meaning, in this case a boundary act.

For this reason I follow current propositions in ethnographic digital research that suggests analyzing action flows taking into account particular signposts (noticeable gestures). The gestures included here are not only hand movements but also walking within the environment, what is looked at and other distinctive behaviours that have to be evaluated case by case. Why and how a gesture becomes notable can at this stage only be based judgment with the expertise in the field being studied on a human.

Participant\_004 - Successive significant frames from the different phases of buying action

 <p><b>Orientation</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Touching the first shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop entered</p>	 <p><b>Discovering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Exploratory</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Considering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:44:22 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Involvement</b> Absolute time: 13:55:02 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Receiving the focal shoes</b> Absolute time: 13:55:58 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Fitting the focal shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Looking into the mirror</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Standing down to forecast and touch</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Final look into the mirror for comparison</b> Absolute time: 14:00:04 2nd shop</p>
 <p><b>Orientation</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Touching the first shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop entered</p>	 <p><b>Discovering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Exploratory</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Considering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:44:22 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Involvement</b> Absolute time: 13:55:02 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Receiving the focal shoes</b> Absolute time: 13:55:58 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Fitting the focal shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Looking into the mirror</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Standing down to forecast and touch</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Final look into the mirror for comparison</b> Absolute time: 14:00:04 2nd shop</p>
 <p><b>Orientation</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Touching the first shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:23:55 1st shop entered</p>	 <p><b>Discovering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 1st shop</p>	 <p><b>Exploratory</b> Absolute time: 13:43:17 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Considering the focal item</b> Absolute time: 13:44:22 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Involvement</b> Absolute time: 13:55:02 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Receiving the focal shoes</b> Absolute time: 13:55:58 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Fitting the focal shoe</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Looking into the mirror</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Standing down to forecast and touch</b> Absolute time: 13:56:55 2nd shop</p>	 <p><b>Final look into the mirror for comparison</b> Absolute time: 14:00:04 2nd shop</p>

Figure 10 Frames from content analysis part\_004

Notwithstanding the fact that the phases outlined above are arbitrary, some more description can further enhance their operational value. The following comments will build more guidance for the next phase of analysis in in the replay interviewing.

I will now examine in more detail the separate phases of buying behaviour: orientation, exploration, consideration, involvement, post-decision.

*Orientation phase.* Shopping in the physical world, (online shopping is excluded from such observations), walking from a point towards a shop or a shopping area is unavoidable. This first activity thus involves movement within an environment, which is the same thing as orientation in a known or unknown environment. During the content analysis it is not obvious if the participant finds her/his way through prior knowledge. Some participants seem to be more certain about the direction they take while others seem to wander more. The amount of prior knowledge of the shopping area is thus one of the factors to be established in the replay interview in order to divide participants accordingly and to understand if they may have made a habit of it.

At the level of content analysis not much can be said about different activities performed in this phase apart from walking and looking around. Conjectures about the mechanics of such actions, which seem largely automatic, may be stimulated by the presence of cognitive attractors in the environment. Higher variance between participants in the length of these actions, may indeed indicate that orientation activities are quite heterogeneous. Another hypothesis that I posit about the motives of participants is that some seem to be more purposeful, whereas others seem less directed. Thus participants may explore the environment serendipitously, just collecting information that could be used in the future to construct a choice, or they may purposefully move towards objects or areas with a goal in mind, i.e. to achieve something. Attractors are more effective in the first case, while in the latter case they are regularly ignored because of the telic conative nature of the action.

*Exploratory phase.* The final stage of movement in the environment entails choosing a smaller area of action. Usually it is achieved by going inside a shop and moving around the displays of shoes. I suggest to operationally describe the orientation phase as distal and exploration as proximal. Actions that happen inside the shop are proximal because the environment is much more "at hand" than on the street; the objects of interest inside the shop are often readily available and can be grasped and manipulated: affordances are at the level of manipulation instead of visual. The exploration phase is about the emergence of the intention to consider the product with other senses: exploring the proximal environment seems to be the natural bridge to the consideration

phase. In terms of duration the exploratory phase is the longest in the consumers observed and also the one with the highest variance. Despite the small sample it seems from the recordings inside the shop that getting to know the arrangement of the furniture and products and looking at the different models takes indeed more time than doing other types of actions.

*Consideration phase.* The presuppositions about the distinctiveness of this phase from the others are bolder from the researcher's perspective. I start this phase in the shopping activity when the actor reaches for the first shoe and starts to use other sensory modalities. The consideration phase is then characterized by a series of product manipulation episodes. In the first participant this phase is paramount because he touches 32 models before finding the one he will buy.

The phases entail an escalation in the use of the senses and more complex actions. The use of different modalities implies an increase in cognitive load. This is also a subject discussed in the replay interview: spying and considering visually is not the same thing while manipulating the object. Also looking around is a browsing activity (wandering through the environment) seems to be very different from looking over an object in the consideration phase. This action seems to be more functional to picking up the object than just to remember its image for future use.

*Involvement phase.* This modality sees the introduction trying on the shoes. This entails a difference from touch, proprioception. I decided to let the involvement phase start with the trying on of the focal shoe. It is then an event that can be appraised in retrospect by looking at the completion of the action. I end the involvement phase with the point-of-decision that is the least clear in the whole sequence. The lack of clarity comes from the fact that decision seems to be a cognitively characterized effort. A participant does not really seem to perform anything special just prior to deciding. However what comes next, for example, placing shoes by the cash register, handing them back to the assistant or leaving the shop, can signal a decision had been taken in retrospect.

Trying on a pair of shoes can be seen to trigger a shift in affective-conative interdependence; it seems that the moment of proprioception is accompanied by some sensation that causes conation to overtake on to cognitive attention in relation to environmental attractors. The shift would then be from denser cognitive activity to lower cognitive activity and from low conation to heightened conation. The behavioral signals are different actions occurring in a flurry. In the shopping activity recorded a sort of climatic burst can be noted (quite notable in participants 001, 005, 008). A word of warning in this shift of activity, it is about individual differences in the proneness to touching.

*Participant\_007- Succession of significant actions from the buying experience*

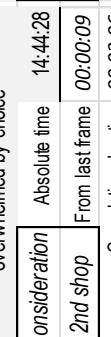
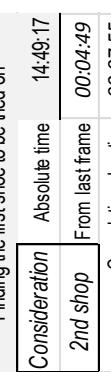
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
 004265 2012.11.23 14:41:22	 008440 2012.11.23 14:44:09	 008691 2012.11.23 14:44:49	 010634 2012.11.23 14:45:37	 015914 2012.11.23 14:49:08 Asks for assistance for the first shoe FNKH-0011	 018265 2012.11.23 14:49:11 Entering the first shop	 023817 2012.11.23 14:54:24 The assistant canvas back with the size FNKH-0011	 024656 2012.11.23 14:55:58 Comparing two versions of the focal shoe FNKH-0011	 026646 2012.11.23 14:56:17 Waiting for the size: discovering the focal one FNKH-0011	 027221 2012.11.23 14:56:55 Trying on the focal shoe FNKH-0011
Orientation on the street	Orientation on the street	Discovering the first shop to visit	Exploratory	Overwhelmed by choice	Consideration	Consideration	Receiving the focal shoe	Decisive	
Absolute time 14:41:22	Absolute time 00:02:47	Absolute time 14:44:09	Absolute time 00:00:10	Absolute time 14:44:19	Absolute time 00:00:09	Absolute time 00:00:06	Absolute time 00:00:17	Absolute time 00:01:36	
From last frame	From last frame	From last frame	From last frame	From last frame	From last frame	Cumulative duration	Cumulative duration	Cumulative duration	Cumulative duration
14:41:22	14:44:09	14:44:49	14:45:37	14:49:11	00:00:10	00:02:57	00:03:06	00:01:36	00:07:55

Figure 11 Frames from content analysis part\_007

However, from a frequency point of view it is when the involvement phase comes to its end that the participant starts looking around and touching other models of shoes without intending to find anything to buy. Why this might be the case will be discussed below.

Another notable aspect of the involvement phase is the presence of mirror sequences. All but one participant looked in the mirror at some point, with some of them looking repeatedly before deciding to keep the product. This phase appears to be consistent in all participants, both sequentially (they all occurred in the involvement phase) and in duration. Looking in the mirror are quite short episodes within the economy of the activity. Some participants engaged in this activity in a burst, the most notably in participant 017.

*Decision and post-decision phase.* Although it is difficult to determine exactly the starting point of decision, after viewing the recording of the whole event the endpoint seems clearer: the point of decision coincides with an action that the actor performs immediately afterwards. An example is when the participant hands the shoes to the sales assistant, e.g. participants 007 and 017. This is an added feature to the decision that signals the unequivocal end of the action that was happening before, an action that is perhaps conscious. Asking a few questions about that moment would help to disentangle the decision making process. The analysis of the subcam recordings helps to develop a guide for the replay interview that integrates such intuitions with the participant's introspection guided by the same moving images.



Figure 12 An example of typical gesture caught with the subcam: handing the shoes to the sales assistant as marker of decision

Based on the identification of visible gestures and pivotal points of the phases, it has been possible to calculate the duration of each phase. Below a table summarizing the duration of each phase is found, which includes a breakdown of each phase for each participant. The table below

includes the mean and standard deviation of each. Appendix 5.3 includes the exact procedure used to derive them along with descriptive statistics that have been used to test the variance among phases. Though the results from significance tests (chi-square cross-tabulation and comparison of means) do not provide any insight because of the tiny sample, it must be noted that the consideration phase seems to be the least varied among the participants whereas orientation and post-decision phases have the greatest variance.

*Table 9 Duration of activity phases by total duration*

Participants	Orientation phase	Exploratory phase	Consideration phase	Involvement phase	Post-decision phase	total activity duration
Part 007	00:01:36	00:03:48	00:04:04	00:01:43	00:00:48	00:11:59
Part 003-a	00:05:25	00:01:51	00:01:03	00:01:34	00:02:47	00:12:40
Part 017	00:00:07	00:05:03	00:10:35	00:02:18	00:00:57	00:19:00
Part 003-b	00:00:07	00:06:52	00:02:34	00:07:47	00:01:55	00:19:15
Part 005	00:02:44	00:03:14	00:11:00	00:02:42	00:00:45	00:20:25
Part 015-a	00:01:09	00:16:37	00:01:55	00:07:39	00:00:43	00:28:03
Part 011	00:00:26	00:19:30	00:04:49	00:02:03	00:03:24	00:30:12
Part 009	00:02:31	00:03:04	00:08:26	00:03:41	00:12:56	00:30:38
Part 012	00:00:32	00:02:14	00:20:37	00:03:41	00:04:19	00:31:23
Part 001	00:00:24	00:20:44	00:04:31	00:02:50	00:06:01	00:34:30
Part 006	00:00:31	00:05:03	00:12:55	00:01:20	00:18:10	00:37:59
Part 002	00:01:01	00:24:05	00:13:20	00:01:48	00:01:53	00:42:07
Part 013	00:00:56	00:05:14	00:23:10	00:05:29	00:07:40	00:42:29
Part 004	00:08:45	00:11:09	00:21:01	00:03:11	00:01:35	00:45:41
Part 014	00:04:44	00:14:13	00:18:48	00:14:18	00:00:15	00:52:18
Part 015-b	00:01:09	00:09:55	00:30:26	00:07:36	00:04:07	00:53:13
Part 008	00:00:25	00:09:18	00:16:17	00:04:25	00:26:05	00:56:30
Part 010	00:00:06	00:46:06	00:07:34	00:05:44	00:03:01	01:02:31
averages	00:01:49	00:11:33	00:11:50	00:04:26	00:05:24	0:35:03
STD	00:02:19	00:11:02	00:08:25	00:03:17	00:06:57	0:15:12

#### 5.4 Increasing validity and reliability: Joint coding sessions

The validity of constructs and variables and reliability in their application to analysis are important concerns in social science research. These problems are addressed by a score of treatises that point out how problems can arise at the beginning of the research where the wrong categories of empirical analysis are chosen. This can be seen in the incongruences between constructs that are considered fundamental in the theoretical part of the research and constructs [152]

that are identified in the empirical part. As pointed out by O'Shaughnessy, this would be the case for a mismatch between meaning of a construct (at the theoretical level) and its referential/operational-meaning (at the empirical level) (2013, cited). In essence researchers sometimes endorse ontologies that are only aimed at confirming their own agendas. Problems may also arise during data collection, when empirical material gets the wrong categorization. This problem is slightly different, usually being seen as a problem in the validity of mapping data onto theory. The solution to this problem in qualitative analysis has been to clearly distinguish between reliability and validity of interpretation.

One method to enhance the validity of research is to rely on a multiple codifiers of the same material: he literature suggests that this is best done through joint interpretive sessions (Kalbermatten, cited). This method has a history of its own and goes back to the early 70s when researchers in social psychology began to interpret material that had been collected in the field without unsupervision.

The material to be screened by colleagues and student volunteers had been taken from participant\_006 because of the quality of the video and sound and the straightforward nature of activity performed while looking for and buying the product (often there is loud music in the shops, and it is more difficult to understand what participants say). An easy case was also justified because this was the first joint interpretation session. The material consisted in 8 clips each 2 minutes long, taken from the subcam recording that was in total around 30 minutes long. The excerpts have been put online on the Ethnoshoes.com site on a separate page. YouTube was the preferred platform to upload the material for the task for two reasons. First, it allows the material to be protected by a link that is not publicly shared (there are 3 levels of privacy for content on YouTube). Second, it was managed with Gmail accounts that allow comments on the excerpts, while tracking them chronologically and by author. This feature allowed me to go back to the comments afterwards to compare participants' insights with my own.

The division of the recordings has followed the template for content analysis above although I took care to insert ample time before and after the focal activity in order not to influence interpretation. Almost all of the participants did not know anything about my research and this was the starting point for understanding the clarity of the task proposed.

The interpretation sessions have been distributed over two days in two different working environments, the ESCP (Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris) London campus in February 2013 and the Institute of Social Psychology (now Department of Social Psychology) LSE in June 2013. On

the two occasions, there were 21 participants in the first round and 16 in the second; the participants were organized in 4 to 5 smaller groups (3 to 5 persons each, see the photos).



*Figure 13 Joint interpretation sessions at ESCP and ISP*

Each smaller group was asked to comment what the actions were about and to interpret the participant's intentions. The task was obviously steered by the desire to check if the constructs of activity theory can be formalized despite subjective impressions. If there was consistency in the interpretations, then the researcher would be confident that the constructs are intelligible and a source of agreement.

Below there are the excerpts of the interpretations. To follow them well one should refer to the recordings online at: <http://ethnoshoes.com/escp-workshop> (password on request). The complete transcripts of the comments are in Appendix 5.4. Following are some remarks on the process and end result of interpretation.

One general observation on this step of the analysis is that comments are varied in their style. Since no precise task was given, each group produced personal interpretations of the recording. The first option for the interpretation was to stick to the activity that the participant was performing in the recording. A second option has been more meta-analytical in which they tried to understand the researcher's intentions when he edited the excerpt. The third option was to stick as much as possible to the description of activity and try to dissect the activity in smaller actions and tasks. In this way interpretation is optimally postponed to the end of the exercise. The fourth option was to focus on the methodology of analysis. The different propensities to use the cited registers can be ascribed for sure to different research backgrounds; the participants came in fact from various academic backgrounds and were at that time all enrolled either in master or research courses in the two universities cited.

Descriptions of activity include: "*Window shopping & getting an overview of the shops available*"; "*Selection of the type of product (boots).*"; "*First contact with the sales person followed by first product selection and trial.*" The register used in these comments is based on brief definitions. Such brief descriptions occurred more often at the beginning of the task in both groups. The shorter length of comment can be attributed in my opinion to the slow process of becoming familiar with the material and the fact that getting into the video interpretation takes some time. In fact at the end of the process participants felt more confident and their comments tended to be longer.

Some participants gave a rather neutral interpretation of the recording, sticking to what could be seen, i.e. they refrained from inferring actor's intentions: "*looks for a shoe shop by looking at windows, in Covent Garden, and inside shops through open doors. In two instances hesitates to enter the shop, stays on the doorstep, decides not to enter, then continues to other shop. Always focuses on same side of street (on the right)*". Another comment that we may define as behavioral is the following, where the interpreter is able to state that a change in attention has occurred: "*Once she found a prospective shoe on the second shelf from bottom, she mainly focuses on the this particular level of shelf.*" Notice that attention is here interpreted as an unconscious change of modality and is not ascribable to intention or motivations that remain what they were.

As the interpretation session advanced, the groups tended to give longer descriptions of activities. This more complex register includes attributions of intentions. The interpretation became mixed in that it contained both descriptions of acts and possibly routines, as well as interpretations of why they were performed. This passage is naturally sensitive because it must be ascertained on what basis the viewer works this out. The first interesting comment of this kind is: "*What is she doing (disagreement within group). Interpretation 1: window shopping in Covent Garden. Interpretation 2: looking specifically for shoes. What is she thinking: Who knows? Probably thinking about something unrelated to shoes and shopping, but glancing incidentally at windows.*" Another group of participants wrote: "*Shopping for shoes, explicitly boots seem to be her target.*" In this statement the start of the interpretation of motivations can be seen in the identification of a target. This kind of comment up to this point however are still similar to the earlier ones in that they still reasonably stick to describing what can be seen in the recording. Another example of a mixed interpretation is: "*She goes back to a shop she'd already seen, and she finds the right shelf as soon as she walks in: she knows where to go. She is evaluating the alternatives within the chosen shop: she watches, she touches, she checks for the price, and put the shoe back. All of the 3 samples are light brown so she probably knows the colour of the shoes she wants to buy. The process is*

*interrupted by the shop assistant's arrival.*" In this statement we observe that interpreters draw on previous actions: it would be impossible to state that the actor went back to a shop had they not seen the previous episodes. Also the inference that the actor is looking for brown boots is an inference that is made possible by reconstruction of action. Intentions are attributed not only to the actor but to other people appearing in the recording: *"Assistant speeds things up: without really doing anything she "pushes" the customer to try the shoes. She didn't need any help from the assistant since she finds the right size on her own."*

The participants realized that the actions can be counted as I did in the CA: *"Third fitting. Goes back to the original features she was looking for. Analyses the product while looking in the mirror. Reaches the conclusion that they don't fit."* In addition, the participants assumed that behaviour is recursive as actors tend to repeat actions and recall places where they performed such actions. However, at this stage none pointed out that participants could be using routines or habits. The participants also confirmed the existence of a particular phase at the end of the buying process during which the actor engages in heightened browsing activity: *"She wanted a pair that was not a display, but those were the last pair. She decides that she still wants them. While waiting for the assistant, she did a lot of heavy/intense browsing - picking up boots, looking at other styles, sale shoes, and non-practical dress shoes. Maybe she's killing time or making a mental note of shoe options for another shopping trip."* This statement is emblematic of the increased reliability that this exercise adds to the interpretation of activity.

Methodologically based comments include: *"We can look at number of seconds spent in front of each shop"; "We can measure the time she spends on a particular eye level."* Such comments relate to the interest of the participant in developing a frame of analysis based on behavior.

The usefulness of these joint interpretation sessions for the development of a content analysis framework is high. They complement the collection of open-ended interviews with professionals because they point to a different kind of analysis. Experts give validity to the process of analysis because they know well the practice and categories of interpretation that would be difficult for joint sessions to devise. Joint interpretations on the other hand seem to provide reliability in that constructs get trimmed and fitted to specific recordings in real-time; reliability is thus assured in real-time as previous research in activity theory has shown (Cordelois, 2010).

The joint sessions also seem to be quicker than what a participant can do on her/his own. Finally, increasing inference as the analysis progresses is a characteristic shared by individuals as well as groups. This finding may be obvious, but it is interesting for activity theory because it

implies that activities, although with some differences depending on individual research interest and background, demonstrate a Gestaltian nature in every approach to interpretation.

These joint sessions of interpretation have proven particularly interesting for testing the self-explanatory power of activity theory. The level of agreement in the sessions was surprising; this method seems to be a reliable tool for research involving first-person ethnographic material.

## 5.5 Summarizing the findings

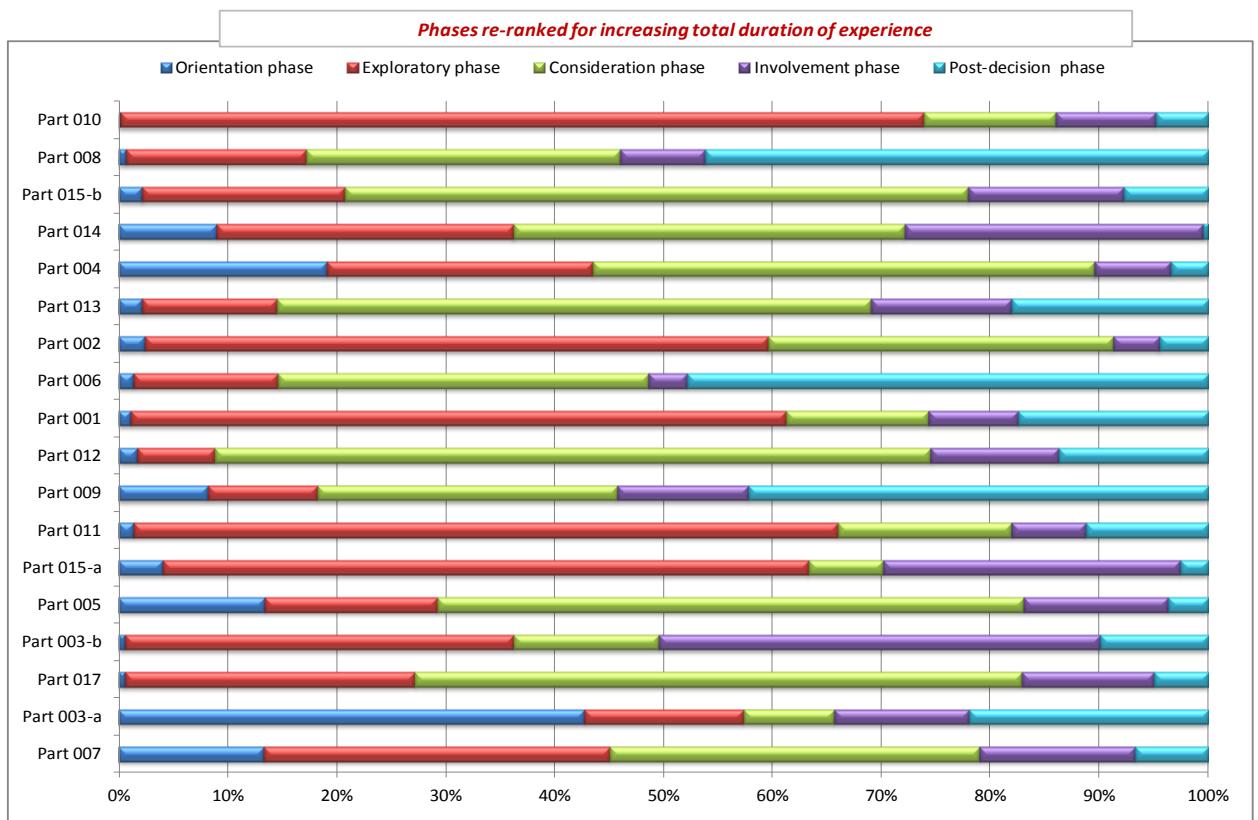
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Subcam recordings show that the decision to buy a pair of shoes is a process that extends in time with a substantial variance among participants that, however, in absolute terms ranges from few minutes to three quarter of an hour. To speak of a *decision* is actually misleading because of the concept's implied absence of extension in time; the term *decision activity* seems to be better proposition because it does justice both to the complexity involved and the goal-directedness of it.

At the stage of content analysis not much can be said about affective and cognitive states of the participants. The conative part on the other hand seems to be more explicit. This is signaled by the rhythm of the different acts involved. A description of activities seems to be the starting point to any further discussion with the participant. Without reference to hard data it would be very difficult to agree on what and when something happened and to elicit explanations of acts that are not completely clear from individual screenings.

The following table shows what the different phases look like for each participant.

Table 10 Distribution in participants of phases of buying behaviour from content analysis



In general one can see that orientation and involvement phases are short whereas exploratory phases are both long and varied. Post decision phases also are interesting for their variance, even though two participants (006 and 003-b) skew the picture notably; such anomalies are grounds for more careful observation of previous actions, the hypothesis being that a distinction between paratelic and telic activity could be the answer.

It is somehow far-fetched at this stage to advance a psychological characterization of the phases, but it might be useful to propose a template of interpretation of phases that will help to prompt participants during the replay interviews. These remarks are provisional and will be revised after the analysis of replay interviews.

Table 11 Interpretive template of phases for guidance in replay interviews

		Cognitive disposition	Conative character	Emotional value
1	Orientation phase	2 possibilites: either going for the usual path (HABIT) or leaving room for discovery (COGNITIVE ATTRACTORS)	Inside the shop; browsing from a distance; walking in a restricted area + touching products	low affective involvement
2	Exploratory phase	Cognitively demanding. Considering either products or areas in the shop. High relevance of affordances.	PARATELIC. Ambulation; goal is general; first focus on areas and then focus on products	Low anxiety, possibility of boredom.
3	Consideration phase	Slow focus on products and own body. From visual to other sensory modalities.	Inside the shop: touching, manipulating, harvesting products (more than one in hand)	Slow progression of involvement; increase of arousal (excitement or anxiety)
4	Involvement phase	Sensing, using vision for products and own body. Mirror episodes: shoes and the whole body.	TELIC. Trying them on. Engaging with mirror. Moving inside the shop.	Proprioception: heightened level of anxiety due to performance seeking. Mirror: self-image vs. social image of the self; factor of anxiety?
5	Post-decision phase	Cognitive closure; if succesful shift to other cognitive tasks; if not successful source of dissonance	Moving around the area where the previous actions have been performed or in the whole space	Two possibilities: release of tension, frustration or unease from dissonance

The psychological value of phases characterizes them according to the three dimensions of cognitive, affective and conative discussed above in the literature review. The inspiration to treat phases in this manner comes from the literature on marketing that proposed to use attitude labeling for consumer phases of interest and actions (Krugman, 1965) and (Ray, 1982). Ray notably introduced the idea that the three psychological dimensions of cognitive, affective and conative intervene in the buying process in different ways and established for this reason a hierarchy for which cognitive, affective and conative were exemplary. This scheme allowed him to speak about low- and high-involvement in the decision process. Notably this led to the distinction of low-involvement goods like consumer staples and high involvement goods such as luxury items. That phases of interest and action in consumers follow this order is corroborated by classic consumer models. As we have seen above they generally entail that the consumer first learns some facts about a product; then she/he develops attitudes about a product, in line with Ajzen's model and finally the consumer actions are based on deliberation and feeling. However, this normative model is justified in the literature by qualitative research that is mainly done ex-post by interviewing customers outside of the context and cannot be referenced directly to market observations. Moreover, as mentioned above, the process of interviewing can in fact induce implicit guidance to the consumers' answers.

In contrast, O'Shaughnessy proposes that the three phases of cognition, affection and conation can be theoretically combined in the 9 possible ways. The observed phases in the case I am

considering do not presuppose a model, but are tracked quite faithfully in the empirical material I collected. I decided to give a characterization to each phase in order to start disentangling the process from the perspective of activity. I do not maintain at this level that the phases are the only ones possible and suggest that they be considered operational definitions. I will then use the three main psychological characterizations as sub-specifications of the general conative dimension that characterizes the shopping of each participant.

Replay interviews do not have to mirror the interpretation I propose above. It is through the replay interviews that the raw subcam footage can be turned into different sequences from the above content analysis. To constrain participants' actions in a single direction such as conation or cognition is simplistic, there may be back and forth between explorative and consideration phase. It is also plausible that participants could retreat from involvement even when on the verge of deciding. It has to be noted that since I retained only participants that actually bought a pair of shoes, the involvement phase had to proceed to the end.

The sequences constructed can be used to test the correspondence between chunks of performed action and declared motives (Chapter 6)

This chapter deals with the method used for the replay interviews. In the previous chapter a model of the buying activity was built according to plain observation of the first person recording generated by the subcam. With that method, however, it is usually difficult to deduce the motives behind and goals of individual activity just from watching people doing things. While some actions, especially brief ones, are clear cut, the majority of them are ambiguous as to the motives that caused them. Such motives may be implicit and unclear even for participants themselves. Hence there was the need to reconstruct those motives in a different way, and the post-hoc verbalizations of the replay interviews have proved to be particularly effective. The verbalizations collected during the replay interviews are the material for a second analysis of the footage. The raw footage at this stage becomes the material from which participants build an interpretation of their activities, in a crescendo of description and representation. Essentially the replay interview enables the passage from what the participant appears to have done to what the participant understands and is able to explain of what she/he did. The method strives to collect explicit representations of activities and most of all tries to make the implicit motives explicit.

The protocol foresees projecting the footage on a large screen and commenting on it. The interview is in turn filmed as well, producing the cited third stream of hard data. The data are then edited and partially transcribed in order to divide the phases of turntaking and explanations in definite interview episodes.

As in all interview techniques the researcher gives prompts to the interviewee; it is the modality of prompts generation that characterizes subject evidence based replay interviews. Interpretation of activity is in fact built as a joint exercise by the participant and the researcher, through repetitive watching of the first-person film and shifting levels of commentary. The different levels addressed are based on the cognitive (e.g. perception), affective and conative constructs examined in Chapter 2.

The main difficulty in this task is the researcher's lack of expertise regarding the participant's pattern of activity. Many actions by participants remain implicit to the researcher's and to the participant's eye mainly because they differ from participant to participant.

The theoretical framework in activity theory explained in 3.1 largely justifies the original method of interviewing and analysis used here. In the end the analysis aims at a typification of

actions, larger actions and perhaps evaluation/decision styles. Having participants reconstruct the buying activity by commenting on their own video, makes of the replay interview a text with specific characteristics. The syntactic structure of the verbalizations and the registers used during the interview should mirror the structure of the activity in some form.

The chapter includes:

- 6.1 How the replay interview method was developed specifically for this research unlike other research. The description of the pilot interview with the first participant and development of the method of analysis based on the registers of description (narrative and episodic). What the replay interview demonstrated in terms of registers (episodic, narrative and representational). How the descriptions of (micro-) actions and (macro-) activities by the participant allowed the overarching motivations to be traced. Some quotes from each participant are reported in the text. The edited replay interviews contain the participant's comments in form of subtitles.
- 6.2 Summary of two replay interviews of a complete buying action: participants 006 and 008. They refer to edited replay interviews that can be found on the ETHNOSHOES.com site. Some frames from the footage are included as examples of interview development. Each edited version is an extract of a recognizable explanation of actions found to be significant either by the participant, usually, or by the researcher. They ideally produce descriptions and narrations of what the participant did.

## [6.1 Replay interviews: developing the method](#)

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The replay session is a joint review of the subcam recording done by the researcher and a participant. This entails going through the recording of the activity typically a few seconds to minutes at a time in front of a large screen with the original audio in the background. The commentary on the succession of events produces a dialogue that is in turn video recorded and subsequently transcribed: it is on these transcriptions that this analysis is constructed. As a result the replay session does not follow a strict topic guide; it can be seen as a question and answer period in which the researcher tries to elicit the memories of specific sequences in the subcam recording. The debriefing session works in two principal directions: 1) as a spontaneous description of the situated activity performed by the participant and 2) as an expansion on

implicit goals and motivations prompted by the researcher. It seems necessary to distinguish between these two parts, because the description of actions seems preliminary to understanding implicit goals. The two parts seem to relate to different things; the former to recognition of movements and environmental perceptions and description of the area of activity, whereas the second delivers explanation of motives through a process of memory and recall. It is by interfacing every single recorded task with a post-hoc reflection that the participant is able to reconstruct higher goals and, finally, general motives. It will become very clear that the result of this interpretation is quite different from watching the recorded material without the participant as was done for the content analysis.

The transcripts from the replay interviews are analyzed in a similar manner as in discourse analysis, looking for narratives, episodes, common expressions, keywords and roughly followed the following steps:

- 1) Classifying the accounts given by the participant using the framework on memory types as in chapter 3: procedural, episodic, representational, narrative,
- 2) Revealing the points where sub-goals change in the course of the recorded activity based on what the participant tells the researcher,
- 3) Compiling a list of factors involved in the evaluation process as was done with open ended interviews, pointing out the specificity of the accounts elicited by the method as compared to free recall,
- 4) Finally, identifying overarching motivations that may give an overall meaning to actions and subgoals identified in the recording,

In this chapter I start by illustrating the analysis of the first participant who was retained as valid; his interview was the pilot one. Based on it I worked out the method of replay interviews based on subcam recordings used in this study.

As is reported in table 6 (page 157) twelve replay interviews were completed successfully, and in the following sections I report a summary of the analyses; the full analysis of the interviews is in the appendix section 6. However, since I consider videos to be the real evidence of the method, I produced 12 edits that are essential material to understand the method. The clips were uploaded to a protected page of the site *ethnoshoes.com* ("research videos" on the menu, password on request).

The process of interviewing followed a broad topic guide that was adapted for each participant in relation to her/his willingness to talk. First, I asked the participants about their shopping, why they decided to buy that very day and how they chose where to shop. I then asked if they remembered what they did during their buying activity. Beginning a free recall

task with the participant was to fix a point of comparison with the process of activity recognition and reconstruction that was the proper aim of the replay interview. Since the replay interview is essentially a recognition task coupled with a guided reconstruction of motives, it was important to clearly distinguish what was explicitly recognizable in the recording and, at the other extreme, what could have been wildly fantasized. The validity of the method lies precisely in the tiny region just beyond the explicitly recognizable event. My effort has been to classify explanations by distinguishing between what was recognized and what was reconstructed; in practice the division between memory recognition and memory recall has been the starting point, while trying to classify what could have been reconstructed as well. The reconstruction of motives that recognition triggers has to be handled with care: I had to make sure not to expand the reconstruction of motives much beyond what the participant was willing to explain. I mean with this that it is not really possible to apply the same metrics to all buying episodes. A solid identification of regularities among participants could well strengthen the interpretation of motives to a significant degree, however, the tiny sample in this research does not allow for such a step.

Replay interviews strived to recognize goals as distinct from motives. Goals as contingent motives can often be recognized by an external observer and are tied to the material activity performed by the participant. Long term motives can only refer back to memories of needs and wants. The latter thus entail greater complexity in that the participant is required to link actions and thoughts and thus reconstruct them. Motives, in their proactive dimension, entail not only a memory of the past but also a prospective memory, in other words, since they are directed to future activity they must demonstrate motivational content for future action.

The verbatim of the pilot interview reflects the nature of these processes. The speech generated by the participant in describing the scenes mirrors different registers of memory, which will be cited in the analysis. Here again the use of episodic situated references compared to abstract representational references may relate to the past or the future dimension of the participant's activity.

The process of content analysis in comparison with a joint interpretation has been satisfactory in several ways; however, the researcher must diligently maintain the order of events and not go back and forth in order to avoid misplacing actions in a sequence that shows something radically different from what has really happened, very much like in a feature film. Since independent content analysis can still misrepresent what really happened, co-construction of each step by the researcher and participant should help minimize any arbitrariness.

## 6.2 Replay interviews: applying the method

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The following sections contain a detailed analysis of each replay interview. As illustrated in the previous section the method originally developed is a mix of thematic analysis, introspection (retrospection) and a special form of analysis based on activity theory that I suggest to call *processual analysis*. Each significant interview excerpt can equate a narrative episode, a visual description or a simple turn-taking; the criterion to isolate longer or shorter excerpts is thus based on relevance for the description of one action or activity unit, be it a one-off, repeated or habitual one. As such the reader might struggle to identify in the following excerpts traces of more established methods one can encounter in qualitative analysis handbooks. Interviews summaries are elaborated from the edited video that has been put online (again, visible under <http://ethnoshoes.com/links-to-resources/>, password on request). Interviews were collected either on the same day of the buying experience or shortly afterwards with a maximum gap of one week from the event.

### 6.2.1 Participant 004

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Participant 004 is Chinese, 22 years old and a student. The participant bought a pair of booties in the Covent Garden area. The replay interview was made on the same day right after purchase.

Edit 1. First significant episode from debrief. An absent reference person can work as substitute customer in the participant's mind.

The participant tells that she started the shopping experience with the idea of finding a pair of walking shoes for herself. We start the replay interview by watching when she already is inside the first shop. I needed in fact to introduce the method to her: the first ten minutes have been devolved to a rather informal chatting where no original information emerged. These minutes were mostly about the orientation phase.

Edit 2. Comment on the salesperson

The researcher in this case accompanies the participant to the shop where she will then browse around looking for her shoes of interest. By approaching the shop floor she notices that the sales assistant has a small booklet in her hands probably to take notes on customers and events. What she says can be actually seen on the subcam recording.

Edit 3. Asked about the modality of current evaluation (specific motivation)

She tells that the current activity inside the shop was about screening the offer in order to select shops firsthand. If she found something interesting she would come back afterwards. She further says that she does that “*always*”. Of course it is difficult to say if this really occurs every single time but this is the expressed recall and prospective intention.

#### Edit 4. Asked about social shopping

I ask now if she does this sort of shops survey only when she is accompanied (she just mentioned shopping often with a friend) or if she does that alone as well. To this she answers it is her habit to rank shops according to a 4-5 levels scales; she does not mention how she constructs this ranking so that the factor of choice seem to remain implicit. Asked about that she tells that she gives the rank according to her preference, what still does not explain the process in detail. However the next turn-taking reveals that she remembers her ranking even after months she made the visit by associating brands to symbols or words. in this case it is not clear if she does that mnemonically or by writing them down.

#### Edit 5. Considering a shoe proposed by the shop assistant

At this moment she is interested in finding a shoe that does not get wet. She is approached by the saleswoman and she profits from that in order to ask about the easiness of care of two models. Her approach to the product is very much rational by weighing the main factors of choice (waterproof material or less, absence of heel, thickness). Such an account, based on physical characteristics of the item, can be effectively contrasted to an explanation based on feeling, extemporary impressions or social influence. Also it is very different from an explanation choice based on own experience because it is performed on abstract characteristics (they are told by the assistant), in other words it does not imply a process of sensory selection. In fact the reaction of the participant is not believing the assistant and going forth by selecting shoes by herself.

#### Edit 6. Sequence on the evaluation of an item.

In this edit one can watch a typical sequence in which a consumer switches from a visual modality (visual cues from far) to a more complex sensory modality involving touch (sensory and visual cues from near). I provide a slow-motion of the moment when she discovers the inside heel of the boot she sees from far; it is a crucial passage for the final model of buying behaviour because it was the first recorded instance of what I called “the wow-moment” or the discovery of a physical characteristics that answers to a need and evokes some emotion (possible future uses or scenarios?). In fact she performs a two steps evaluation: she first

squeezes the boot counter with left forefinger and thumb and then she looks inside the shoe to make sure that what she perceives by touching is not stuffed paper but a real heel. The focal shoe will have this kind of hidden heel.

#### Edit 7. Encountering the focal shoe

Here the participant grabs a shoe after having seen it from a distance; she says in fact having been attracted by the color that inspired happiness to her. However she first attributes to the product a “positive image”, a rather abstract factor that she expands further saying that it reminds her of ice skating shoes. This shoe, like the previous one has a hidden heel inside. She drops the shoe after just one minute and goes on to other displays; she will go back to the focal shoe only after 15-20 minutes.

#### Edit 8. The exploration phase still goes on. 11:03

Since it is the first time she enters that shop she says she would like to see more shoes on offer. The remark hints to the need of performing a different activity than the telic one; it is not enough to find one best shoe but it is also important to have the complete overlook of the display. Then ask how many shop she would like to visit, to which she answers she has no fix list of shops and that in order to find a bunch of shops to choose from she relies on what I would call an environmentally-aided listing. She explains this way of choosing shops with the example of one among the biggest malls in London, Westfield in Shepherd's bush; all major brands are represented there. She tells further that she does not remember names easily but that she knows where they are in Westfield. This is a typical stratagem for shoppers to memorize where they can find products and it is clearly consistent with the already evidenced shift from a route map to a survey knowledge of the environment.

#### Edit 9. Criteria for shop choice

She now explains how she visits and ticks shops inside the mall; it is a ranking procedure. She starts by giving a negative factor, 1) she does not like shoes that are too strange and that are too decorated. 2) Quality must be good and 3) price should be commensurate to that quality.

#### Edit 10. Narrowing down choice

At this point she goes back to the display where she found the focal shoe and grabs the same model in a different color: she wants to see other colors to expand the choice. At this

point she asks for assistance; getting assistance is usually a crucial moment because it delimits the passage to the trying the shoes on and causing proprioception, an added sensory modality.

Edit 11. Waiting for the size.

Now she is waiting for the right size and while waiting she engages in browsing activity; asked if she does that always she says not with every product but she also adds: "*sometimes I don't want to buy things but I just go with my friend accompanied and I will also do things like these. It is very important for you to have experience and judge which shoe or clothes is suitable for you*".

Edit 12. Trying them on. And Edit 13. First mirror experience.

Now she wants to check if they are comfortable. She tries them on and goes to the mirror. I ask her if at this point she would like to buy them, if in other words the interest towards that model has changed; she answers that at this moment she starts to think about buying them. The mirror episode is once again a trigger for a different consideration of the model she tries on. Below I prompt her to tell more about that.

Edit 14. Second mirror episode, & Edit 15. Building momentum towards the final choice.

At this moment in front of the mirror for the second time she is thinking about the color and if they are easy to match with other clothes. Afterwards she sits down and looks at the sole to make sure they have enough grip for London's wet pavement. She then looks at the price that is underneath the sole. I explicitly ask at that point if she had seen the price before and she says she did not know about it until then. This puts the factor price towards the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> stage of choice factors as in the majority of participants. Asked to give a ranking of factors she confirms this list: 1) type of shoe (she uses the word image), 2) color, 3) hidden heel inside, 4) matching style and color with garments, 5) resistance to rain, 6) gripping sole, 7) price. On the subcam film she further touches the shoes while trying them on; she refers doing this in order to ascertain if they get wet easily.

Edit 16. Still considering alternatives

She now goes to the display again and starts touching shoes steadily: she explains she wants to check if other shoes are warmer. This behaviour is consistent with the proposed model in which beyond the watershed moment between consideration and involvement there is more interest for the physical characteristics of objects and more complex sensory modalities are activated. She finds interesting that the boots on display are similar to UGG boots but that they

have the added feature of having the internal hidden heel. She says: "it's the same as UGG shoes, but it has the heel inside; the same function but it will make you look higher (taller)!" We can advance that she wants to strike a compromise between practicality and need of social image. She says she is making the last comparison with this boot.

Edit 17. Asked about the initial motive that led to consider the shoe she will finally buy, & Edit 18. Final evaluation before the decision point.

She consistently retells that she was attracted to the shoe by the feeling it conveys: energetic she says, "*it looks like making you want doing some sport.*"

She finally looks again at the material and wonders if it can get wet quickly or less so; she would like to find a qualitative material that doesn't break easily.

Edit 19. Replay interview episode.

Now I ask the participant to summarize the decision process by thinking back to the subcam recording she just watched until that moment. She gives a summary plot of the process by saying that first she looks at the shoe from far; if it is good, then she will go to have a further look from near; then she will touch it in order to ascertain if it is soft; then she would look at the quality the quality not that bad, then try it out if comfortable then I will look at the mirror, then if it is nice to see if I need a new pair and if it is easy to match clothes she already has, if she can wear it in every occasion every day, then try again to feel if it comfortable. Price is not mentioned.

Edit 20. Decision point.

At this point the participant has decided and she accompanies her decision with an expression of satisfaction "I have new ones, am very excited about this". The accomplishment of a complex activity like buying a pair of shoes is perceived by the participant as a satisfactory event. Other participants express as well their satisfaction in a more or less open way by smiling, relaxing or other facial and body expressions.

Edit 21. After the replay. Insights into the process of interviewing, & Edit 22. Episode in which the participant reports a difference in saliency between actual and replayed action.

Since the participant seems particularly collaborative in the interviewing process I go on to ask some insights for that. One first effect of reviewing the subcam film had been the realization that she touched and checked the shoes in the mirror several times. She further adds that watching the subcam video during interview she realized she did not look at

alternative shoes very carefully, contrary to what she thought beforehand. In other words the subcam video delivered saliency to her own activity when rehearsed, enhancing objectification of the own behaviour.

Edit 23. Final comment on the environment.

I then posed a more complex question: if she did not use the time to check for other shoes as she thought she did, what did she use the time for? She answers that she was busy feeling safe inside that environment (referring for ex. to leaving the bag unattended) and that it also felt friendly. Now these characteristics are hardly objective aspects of the environment and they pertain to the emotional/mood dimension of the experience; it is a very interesting observation that implicit knowledge of some hard to describe characteristics actually fill the time of experience and distort the perception of time and of frequency of other activities.

#### *6.2.2 Participant 005*

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Participant 005 is female, Hungarian, 26 yo, living in London since 1 year and half.

Edit 1 and 2. Starting the subcam recording straight away and how information is retrieved before shopping

She starts the interview by referring to “window-shopping”; this is a way of getting knowledge of fashion trends by looking at shop windows regularly in some preferred areas of London. For this particular shopping experience the participant says she plans it like a journey. This is not new for her and it is essentially a method of time and effort optimization based on a mental map. She is the only participant who explicitly refers planning the experience in such a systematic way. She further explains that the geographical collocation of the shop has priority vis-à-vis the brand. The shopping plan is further integrated by an app that reveals real-time on the mobile which brands are available in shops nearby while also telling models and price. Notwithstanding the possibility for everyone to use such apps I found that this participant was the most organized in this respect.

Edit 3-A. Description of a survey map derived from a route one

Further the participant tells about previous knowledge of the area, acquired through repeated strolling around the area. Asked about the motive at the origin of such repetition she refers having done some work shifts in the area (she worked in a restaurant chain) and thus having taken the same path over and over. Repetition in this case promotes the buildup of geographical knowledge of the area. Specifically this is obtained directly by activity in the

environment and slowly mutates from route knowledge to survey knowledge, a map-like representation of the area. Essentially this is a movement of abstract categorization.

Edit 3-B and 3-C. Giving reasons for the preference of that specific area

Since the participant however could also have taken a different path around the area, I asked why in those months she took always the same route. The answer hints to social elements of preference; she cites the “*vibe*” of the place, the fact that it is full of people, it is a nice area and she likes to stare at people. Such elements point to the paratelic character of the experience; the participant does not do this activity with a utilitarian goal in mind but for a loose interest in information gathering. The character of such activity is conscious but it also implies a playful attitude. She further declares an interest in looking at people generally and “*trying to figure out what they are doing*” and “*spot some interactions among them*” to understand what kind of group they form like a family, a group of tourists and so on. This passage suggests that interest in interactions is not only a methodological one for the researcher but also a learning activity for participants; indeed learning to live in a new culture goes through the observation of habits and customs.

Edit 4. Reconstructing how the shop selection is built

Asked if she had an idea of the shops to visit she says having shortlisted four of them. As other participant she first checks online what is available in stores and then goes personally to the shops: she does not like to buy shoes online.

Edit 5. From orientation to exploration phase

The participant starts to explore the area on the backing of a good knowledge of shops position and display arrangement inside. She also fits her products discovery on the geographical organization of the shopping trip, in other words she does not divert whimsically.

Edit 6. Reflexive episode.

The participant is here in exploration phase and enters the second shop. She immediately interacts with the shop assistant in order to get a shoe from the shop window. She also asks for permission to film and does not obtain it so she leaves the shop after having thanked the salesman.

In this action it must be noticed that the screening of the products on display is guided by prior knowledge gained online: this learning process began some days before. The exploration phase is in this case modified because a goal is introduced by the previous online browsing; she

engages in looking for something she saw online thus changing the goal from discovering something new to recognizing something already seen. It is an interesting case of superposition of a telic sub-action onto the overall telic activity of the shopping trip. In this participant the shopping activity seems to be rather telic and less paratelic.

Edit 7 ad 7-B. Exploration phase. Entering the second shop. Selection process.

In the first part the participant asks for permission to film, what is granted without difficulties. Further she explains what she is looking for and accepts some suggestions from the sales assistant. Just shortly afterwards she goes to a shoes display to continue to look by herself for the items she saw in the shop window. She then grabs a pair of boots she saw online. It can be clearly noticed how most part of shopping is nowadays based on recognition of items and much less on discovery: this is obviously due to the massive availability of digitalized images of products both online and in public spaces that transforms the buying experience.

Edit 8. Reference to impulsive buying

This edit introduces uncertainty in the choice process. By reviewing on the subcam film the action of grabbing additional items the participant feels the urge to explain that sometimes she might deviate from the initial goal of getting exactly what she is looking for in terms of factors of choice. Deviations happen because some new product appear nicer and attract attention and this is especially apparent in reviewing the subcam film. She further says she might end up buying something completely different.

Edit 9. Ranking the factors for choice halfway through the interview

As with the other participants the researcher now asks to rank the factors for choice. This question became part of the protocol after the pilot interview and is repeated at least three times in the replay interviews according to the main phases of buying (orientation phase, exploration phase, involvement phase) The participant cites first quality and then design. Price is cited only on request also because the range of this type of shoes is already above budget, so that trying them on is performed mainly in order to acquire knowledge about the product. Price as in other cases is not a discriminant factor for action; in other words shopping activity does not depend strictly on previous choice of a price range.

Edit 10. Fitting as the main factor for decision

On fitting the shoes. This participant shows a preference for fitting the shoes early on. She wants to try on as many shoes as possible, in contrast with the majority of the participants.

However this insight must be integrated by the observation that the participant has already started to choose online, freeing time to do the fitting on the shopping floor so that we can consider this action part of a planning and optimization strategy. The participant at this point says: "*in the end you are wearing those shoes, so for me this is the most important thing: first how it fits and then how it looks*". Fitting for this participant is very important and the intertemporal value of this factor must be fully appreciated. For a consumer thinking about wearing the shoes for a long time in the future is a sort of inversion of the usual criteria one would put forward for choice (aesthetics, style, brand, colour, matching a trend). Long-term considerations are about discounting the utility of the product in the future by adding the cyclical character of wearing the shoe many times. In this equation the value of the product is also given by the qualitatively different occasions in which these shoes will be used.

#### Edit 11. Description of a mirror sequence

This passage is interesting because it points to a particular feature of the subcam recording. It is automatic for the participant to try to explain the non-visible part of the experience; here the participant tries to explain proprioception, what she feels inside those boots and how they fit. Another interesting observation is that these episodes in front of the mirror are usually described without prompts from the researcher. Participants are eager to explain them maybe for an innate drive to tell own perceptions and feelings or it might have to do with efficient communication or with trust building.

#### Edit 12. Leaving a shop, orientation, walking, entering a third shop.

She leaves the shop and now she has to decide whether to go to Oxford Street to check the same shoes in a different shop or to see two other shops in the surrounding district. She gives the idea to be rather confident in this area. She enters M&S to see shoes she already screened online.

#### Edit 13. Autobiographical episode.

She enters M&S but also claims that it is not really for her. This appreciation triggers further questions from the researcher to which the participant answers giving autobiographical reasons: she probably does not like the shop because it was the favorite one of the potential mother-in-law with whom she did not have a good relationship. She then goes further into the huge assortment of the shop. She finds the boots she saw online confirming once again that exploration of shops is driven by recognition of products.

#### Edit 14. Mirror episode

This episode is different from other mirror episodes in that the product under scrutiny is openly described as non-suitable for buying; then why does she engage in a long mirror watching? She explains that this action is aimed at perceiving if this particular type of shoe is really not suitable for her so that if she encounters it further times in different shops, she already knows they can be discarded: another example of time and effort optimization strategy.

#### Edit 15. Before leaving the third shop.

Asked if she changed her mind about M&S, she refers that she feels reassured because she already knew the shop was not for her. In this sense spending time inside a shop can have a reassuring function on the participant. In this visit she learned for example that M&S could be a shop for her only on special occasions and that she will never be a regular customer there.

#### Edit 15-B. Deviation from the initial goal.

She now tries on a pair of boots with heel; this constitutes a deviation from the goal she set for herself to find a pair of comfortable boots with low heel. She refers doing this out of curiosity and that this action confirmed her non-preference for M&S. On why she does that we might infer that this is part of a paratelic activity and that this participant generally engages in a long telic activity with interspersed paratelic episodes, rather than dividing paratelic and telic parts clearly in two.

#### Edit 16. Prompting the participant to summarize the selection process. (16:41)

In this part of the interview the researcher wants to understand if the shoes just tried on became part of a shortlist for the immediate future. The answer is no, based both on the general motives we have seen in the previous edit as well as a reasoned screening of factors that the participant is able to articulate in form of tickboxes (fit, look on the person in the mirror, style).

#### Edit 17. Reflexive episode on the shop layout

She says it may be convenient to some people to have everything in one space but she also adds: "it's almost like Tesco", implying by her prosodic that she does not particularly like the idea. From a marketing and selling point of view it might be a good strategy to force customers to walk through the whole store in order to catch a customer disappointed by one product with an alternative one with a substitution. Interestingly she makes the case of chocolate as a substitute for shoes.

Edit 18. Exiting the third shop and heading for the fourth one.

Now she has fix goal, Zara, and it is the last one on her list. She left this shop as the last one because she checked online and she found already some interesting items on their site. The fact that this more promising shop is left as the last one is consistent with a telic approach to shopping containing a compressed, formalized paratelic part: I mean by this that she consciously left the exploratory phase for the first three shops in order to get some sort of preemies information on trends and products, to go much more aimed to the last shop and perform a focused activity that will probably be much more telic in its nature. She also expresses some disappointment on the arrangement of shoes with clothing in the Zara shop because they usually place shoes underneath, making them difficult to reach.

Edit 19. Finding the focal item.

After entering Zara she goes around in the shop and finds quite early the shoe she knew from the internet. She is much more aimed and quick to decide at this point. The action triggers my question about what she has been doing before in the other shops if she was already sure enough that she will like this pair of boots. She answers that anyway she wants to have selection to choose from and that she feels like she has to take the time for that. This action is indeed common to other participants and I can state that it is around twice to three times longer than the actual phase of finding, trying on and deciding for the focal item when they find it. Asked why she wants to have a broad palette to choose from she answers that it is essentially a backup need if anything goes wrong with the desired item.

I further lead her to imagine the reverse scenario whereby she starts from the most interesting product to end up with the least interesting. She says it is a strategy to minder disappointment; in a sense if she went directly to the preferred item she would risk a higher shock, whereas by backing up the final choice with previous browsing she runs a smaller risk of shopping frustration.

There is here an almost conscious construction of a cue-reward mechanism; she builds a climax mechanism towards the final product that may or may not correspond to the expectation. If it corresponds then the participant will allow herself a treat as a form of reward for the right choice. If not, then a safety mechanism has been set in place in the previous half an hour to compensate for the emotional downturn.

Edit 20. Consideration phase. & Edit 21. Assistance to find the right size.

The last scenes on the subcam are watched together in order to reconstruct decision of the last moments in a procedural way. The participant tries on the shoe of interest which is in a bigger size than needed; she thus asks for the right size while at the same going in front of the mirror and watching herself for a complete image. She is able to recall quietly neatly how she proceeded to look for the right shop assistant; she first saw some shop assistants that seemed stressed out and did not look friendly enough so that she had to skip 3 of them before finding a woman shop assistant that looked friendly and competent enough.

Edit 22. Waiting for the right size.

In the usual waiting moments while the shop assistant is getting the right size, the participant engages in alternative activity than that of finding the right shoe. Since at this point the participant is rather confident having found an interesting item (see also participant 007), she might conceivably do a rather different activity. It seems however that this participant engages in a very similar activity to the previous one, were it not for the absence of a specific goal: I see in this the characteristic form of paratelic activity where the activity is similar but the goal is absent. She says in fact: *“you see this is another model, similar, because, you know, I have some time to kill”*.

Edit 23. Trying on one final time.

While in front of the mirror she notices on the subcam recording her own movement of the right hand fingers while watching herself into the mirror: she reports doing this sort of movement often when she has some decisions to meet and at the same time she likes something. We might interpret this as a gesture denoting excitement.

Edit 24. Final check before deciding.

Just before deciding she goes back to the product and scrutinizes it quite thoroughly for the quality of material and stitching. She then looks inside the label that is a closed one so that it entails opening it: she wants to see the “made in” writing.

Edit 25. Final comment on the service.

She is now at the till. During the reply interview, watching the video she lays back in the armchair; this part corresponds to the post-decision phase on the subcam recording and obviously the interview is going to its end what might be interpreted as a relief of tension. She gives here a detailed account of the service provided during the buying experience and

expresses her disappointment to its regard. Especially the payment moment delivers a sort of disenchantment about the whole experience because the cashier does not show any involvement in the work she is doing and above all towards the just completed activity of the consumer in front of her. Indeed this is a great finding of this research about the completion of the shopping activity. It seems that shoppers want to have recognition for what they have brought about, i.e. a successful complete activity and, especially on big surfaces this is not the case: especially cashiers are never sympathetic to the customer simply because the company does not recognize this as the most important moment to create customer's fidelity.

### *6.2.3 Participant 006*

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Participant 006 is female, 21 years old and a student. The Brazilian participant bought a pair of boots and performed the whole experience alone in a shopping area she knew rather well, Covent Garden area. The replay interview was made on the same day right after purchase. As stated above the fact of doing the interview with little delay might influence the recall process. The following account is based on editing of replay interview that can be watched in its entirety on the Ethnoshoes.com site. I report my comments along with some verbatim extracts functional to the explanation.

Edit 1. Before starting the recording: general motivations.

The interview starts by asking for an account of what her general motivation was at the start of the experience. This is the orientation phase before entering the first shop. The participant refers to thinking about the product, specifically what type of boots she might want to buy. Then she mentions having seen some shops before and wanting to have another look at those.

Orientation in this case is effortless since the participant says she knows the area quite well having walked through it many times. Although she does not say precisely how many times, we can infer that the number of episodes of window-shopping produced a habitual activity.

Edit 2. First episode going near to a shop entrance.

This is identified by the participant as a potential shop to enter but not really because she still had in mind to go to another shop. This is an interesting passage because it shows in considerable detail how this took place this brief loop goal-task-action happens: it occurs between 01:21 to 01:46 she notices the shop, glimpses at the window, looks inside from the main door and then diverts her attention to the overarching task of going to the other area. It takes 15 seconds to check if there is anything interesting and some 30-40 seconds to explain in

the replay interview what the action was about. The researcher then probed her participant's memory of the details of shop and its offerings, in order to ascertain how much information was taken in so quickly. The memorization of information does not seem to be lasting, probably because of the automatic discarding of irrelevant information.

#### Edit 3. Still in the orientation phase

The researcher induces the participant to explain what the action before entering the first shop was about. The description of the action is straightforward: aiming at one shop but on the way looking at the windows from a distance. Here we can notice a typical added feature of the replay interview: while she walks she directs her head towards the windows just to confirm her blurry preference she has about brown boots. Seeing some similar items, or maybe just colours in the windows, strengthens her predisposition towards her initial preference. I would assign this type of account to preference construction. We can also note the absence of conscious reference to social trends, although obviously these are implied by the shop windows that act as social signalling.

#### Edit 4. Orientation phase; going down the street

At 04:10 of the edited film, the participant is able to reconstruct what the activity was about retrospectively: she saw some interesting items in the window but she did not enter immediately, preferring to continue down the street to see all the other shops. Eventually this became the shop where she bought the pair of boots. This passage explains how replay interviews can function in giving reasons for past actions that were performed quite automatically, it also makes clear the level of complexity of post-hoc reconstruction allowed by the re-screening of the action.

In this same edit she continues to comment on preference construction by saying that she wanted to complete the task of looking at all shops in the street: she seems always conscious of the path to follow and the number of shops to visit. She also adds that this was done in order to clarify own preferences to herself: "*because this street, they have 3 or 4 different types of shops and I knew that... and I wanted to go to these shops to have more of an idea of what I really wanted to buy*".

At the end of the excerpt she says that she entered the shop because of the general style it expressed. Nothing seems to attract her attention but the participant gives an account of how levels of judgment are enacted. Product selection does not occur directly by looking at the items

on sale but by selecting the shop first: if its style is appealing than she enters, otherwise she skips it.

Edit 5. Entering the first shop: beginning of exploration phase.

Inside the shop under examination the participant describes how her initial attraction to the style of the shop is revised through the inspection of one specific item. She goes through the anchoring factor of the heel of the shoe considered. Indeed the heel is a detail but it allows the participant to first discard the shoe and then to draw a conclusion about the shop itself: a shop that offers such heels is not worth visiting. Another point is that the ranking of factors in this excerpt places price as the most important factor after the overall style of the shop and the detail of one item; price seems to be indicative and not the main factor of the decision in this phase.

Edit 6 & 7. Mention of repetition of similar actions in the past: repisodes.

First mention of repeated episodes about the shopping area. Digging into the knowledge about the prices of shoes in that area of London triggers an account based on repeated window shopping which occurred in a timeframe of several months while the participant was studying in a language school in the area. She also bought a pair of shoes in a nearby shop the year before.

The short narration just points out that the participant passed by several times, but it is not explicit about whether she intended to look at the prices or if the process was more gradual and implicit. The question is whether she saw prices in the shop windows and built the knowledge about prices or she wanted to learn about prices and so she decided to look at the shop windows. Although the question seems artificial, it would make a big difference in terms of motivation building and in the former case it would imply that motivation is built through social installation that delivers the information in a subliminal way.

Edit 7-b. Consequences of repisodes building

This passage is of fundamental importance for the explanation of habit building. The participant's wording is: *"I like to buy in places where I know I can find things I like. I mean, I don't really like to go to places where I have no idea about the shops; I usually go to places where I know, so... usually I tend to go to... this place for instance, where I knew there were different types of shoes and I would find something I liked, but I wouldn't get the tube to go to some place to get off and just find out what I like"*. It is quite clear from the narration itself that habit is preferable to new efforts of discovery; it is impossible to say why this is the case directly, but during the interview the participant gives hints and defines more precisely the

dimensions of this habit both for the past, in terms of episodes about building it, and in terms of future action, in the number of shops she plans to visit.

#### Edit 8. Discarding a shop based on scarce choice

In this turn taking we discover a further aspect of the relation between individual items shown in shops and overall selection of shoes offered in that shop. The participant discovers one shoe that she likes, but asked if she would go back to that shop for that shoe she says no, advancing the explanation that she needs to have more shoes to choose from. The choice process seems to be more important than the item and having options is a fundamental part of the whole experience.

#### Edit 9. Exploratory phase implying a different distance from products

The exploratory phase continues in this bit. It is clearly noticeable how the participant abstains from getting involved with the product and prefers to look at the shoes from a certain distance, what I would term the consideration distance. The interest in this passage is given by the different involvement that can be noticed by the distance to the product; this variable is clearly implicit and pre-conscious.

#### Edit 10. Beginning of consideration phase

The participant enters the focal shop where she will buy the boots. In this edit the shift from the exploratory to the consideration phase occurs. Here the participant is more confident with regards to environment and shoes on display; it is already clear that the disposition is different. The speed of her movements become quicker with less episodes of hesitation. Moreover there seems to be a higher frequency in ballistic movements, or movement that are performed by simple kinesis. The presence of such movements can be considered an index of expertise in a specific activity performed in the chosen environment.

Furthermore the participant explains how browsing is not just for purchasing: browsing has two values, the decision of the moment and collecting information for future use. Until the decision is taken the swing between the possibility of a final decision and option of a feedback loop (see discussion section 7.4) remains. This fact is verbalized in the form of a description of an action although no participant seems to have an explicit theory about it, revealing that this dual processing of information occurs almost automatically.

There is a further reference to the fact that having options for choice is more important than finding one perfect shoe. Particularly in this participant, creating a broad enough palette

for choice leads to the optimal saturation of the cognitive field. It is implied that the best choice occurs as a situated comparison of similar products and not as an abstract process that can be performed without the physical products. The particular behaviour outlined in this edit has interesting implications for online buying behaviour that I will discuss in chapter 7.

#### Edit 11. Manipulating shoes for the first time

In this edit the participant passes the first threshold towards consideration; she grabs a pair of shoes and manipulates them thoroughly, signaling that visual cues are no longer enough to make a choice. Notice that the participant does not describe the act of picking it up but hints at the effect: *“the reason because I chose the other model is that it had the wool inside, and as it is Winter now, the next season, I deemed it useful, because it's cold”*. Feeling the property of being warm is something more costly from the cognitive point of view because it is performed by touch. In the content analysis above the researcher chose to let the exploration phase end with the trying on of the first shoe but also let the consideration phase begin with the touching of the focal shoe; the overlap of the two phases is allowed because there seems to be a time lapse in building the resolution of using tactile perception (touch) and tactile proprioception (trying on). This occurs between discovery of the focal item and deciding to try them on; in between many participants touch many other shoes, sometimes keeping the focal shoe in one hand. Interestingly this action occurs without the participant being conscious of doing it.

#### Edit 13. Mirror episode

This is the first mirror episode that usually occurs during the consideration phase (between touching the focal item and trying on the last shoe before the decision). In itself it does not seem to mark any pivotal point, but it is indeed an important moment in which attention shifts from looking at the isolated product to looking at one's whole figure with the new item as part of it. The participant says *“this is the moment when I start thinking to the clothes I have”*. The researcher now tries to elicit associations about use of the shoes in question with places where they could be used. It appears that this is not the case in that moment but she sees as possible; she refers to having in mind using those shoes to go to university and for travelling. In other buying occasions she would give a more serious thought to possible social environments whereby we can suppose that the replay interview of the processing in front of the mirror would produce a different type of account.

#### Edit 14. Second mirror episode

In this bit of interview the researcher tries to probe how long it takes to recall in front of the mirror of all her clothes that match with the shoes she currently tries on. She says she can scan her entire wardrobe in a matter of few seconds (not large though, about 10 items). *Res: "...and in your memory, how many pieces of your wardrobe can you scan with those shoes?"*

*Part: "almost all of them, all pieces, because it's a quite neutral colour and the style of the boots are not very different from the clothing style I have".*

An interesting insight from this passage is that the similarity of the item under consideration to her existing wardrobe enhances memory in terms of speed and completeness of recollection. This might suggest that consumers go with matching items as a time saving strategy while preserving their self-image and face keeping. In time this strategy can assume the connotations of a habit. Thus habit extends beyond activity towards what we might call pattern recognition or style recognition, a more eidetic dimension of memory.

#### Edit 15. Memory probing

In this edit the researcher probes the participant to help her recall her feelings and thoughts. *Res: "Does the film help you to remember the feelings that you had at that moment?"*  
*Part: "Feeling? I don't think so... No, I can remember what I was thinking, but not really what I felt when I wore the boots, no..."*

Now this passage links the vision of the action with the recall of what the participant was thinking; it can be cautiously advanced that recognition of actions (re-enactment) triggers memory that might not be semantic. Very cautiously, recalling "*what one was thinking*" might be a new kind of introspective process in front of the subcam film, something that places the task in between the two forms of procedural and declarative memory (Tulving, as cited in 3.2).

#### Edit 16. Third mirror episode

Here a third mirror episode is surveyed. The participant refers to be checking for size, but also she does that by looking in the mirror. So the researcher asks how the boot has to appear to her to be the right size, to which she answers that it has to appear tight. Technically size is more a fact of proprioception of the foot inside the shoe, so that looking at the shoe indirectly in the mirror seems to be more directed to seeing the complete image of the person wearing the shoe. As we have seen in other participants the mirror is a tool to gauge social acceptability by consistently building a hypothesis about how others see us.

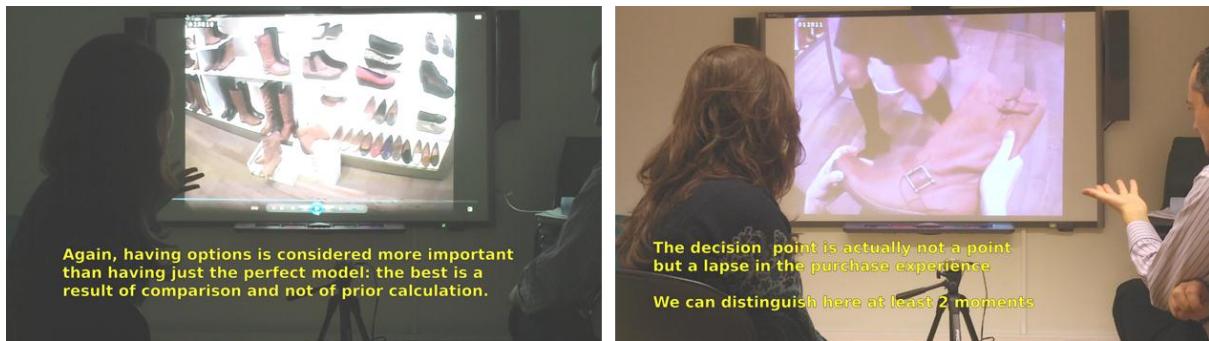


Figure 14 Part\_006 – replay - Building options

#### Edit 17. Eliciting a ranking of factors for choice

In this part the researcher is probing the participant for a ranking of factors for choice. This is done for every participant and it is intended to see if the models of consumer behavior in the literature are consistent with what participants reconstruct watching their actions.

She refers to having checked the price right before looking into the mirror but she ranks the factors in a procedural way by saying what she did in the order: *"I look at the shoes, and then I see if I like the shoes; and then I touch the shoes, I check the price; then if I think the price is reasonable I look again and, yes, I like the shoes, I can try it"*.

#### Edit 18. Description of some features of involvement phase.

The participant is now roaming through the larger area where the focal display is located: this entails one large room of the shop. The behaviour is consistent with other participants and is usually explained as a last look *"to make sure"* everything has been seen and considered. There seems to be a need for cognitive closure of the whole experience, whereby the participant will not have any regrets. The participant herself says: *"yes, because I saw that shoe and it was the only one I had not seen before, so... Because I was already thinking, oh I can at least try another one and then I can take my final decision"*.



Figure 15 Part\_006 – replay - Nearing the decision point

#### Edit 19. Building alternative options of purchase

In this case the participant finds an alternative shoe to the focal one she was wearing and had almost decided for. She seems to need a term of comparison to be sure about the other one, especially its length. Verbatim: "*and also, when I'm buying shoes especially, I like having two options at least, so that I can be sure this is really the shoes I want to buy.*" It is in essence a confirmation of the option mechanism started a minute before, whereby the participant decides what is best by building a ranking of items even artificially in the case that the selection did not imply enough alternatives..



Figure 16 Part\_006 – replay - Mirror episode and checking the ranking of factors

#### Edit 20. Decision point

It is about the decision point that occurs 18:30 from entering the first shop. It is achieved by comparison with the last pair of black boots tried on, but they did not look as good as the previous ones, so the participant goes back to the brown ones, looks into the mirror and then sits and takes them off. The participant agrees with the researcher that the decision is made by mnemonic comparison with the others that she had already taken off some 30 seconds before.

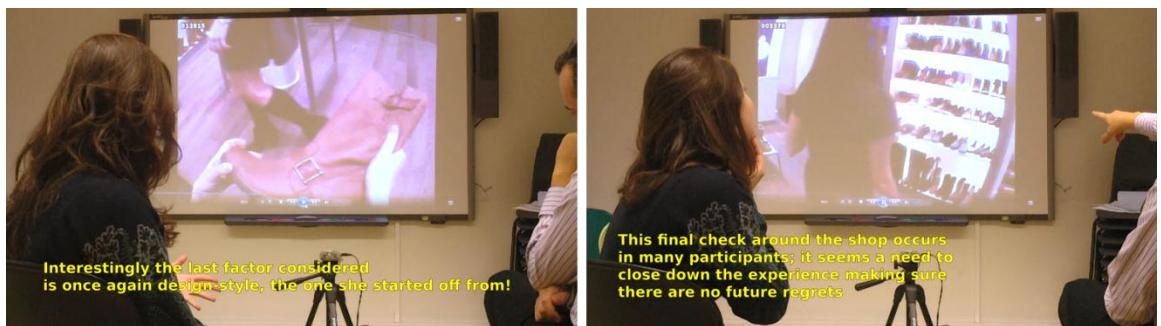


Figure 17 Part\_006 – replay - Looking again at the shoe before the signal action of decision

#### Edit 21. Moment of hesitation prior to giving the shoes back to the shop assistant

The participant has already been asked if she had decided about the purchase and answered affirmatively. Now she takes a further look at the shoes by keeping them on her lap

for a few seconds. When asked what the last look was about: “*I had a look, I thought about the model, design, yes, well it's nice I like it. I had already checked it was comfortable, it matches with my clothes, yes, and then a final look, yes it looks nice*”...Res: “*but why did you do that?*”, Part: “*I wanted really to be sure about the design, I wanted to be sure about that*”.

The interest of this account resides in the re-ranking of factors for the decision. Design is again mentioned as the last factor, coming back to the first one. It is really interesting that a factor one starts with is also the last one to be considered after all of the other factors have been weighed, price included. It is a curious cyclical pattern whose interpretation I would like to leave open.

#### Edit 22 and 23. Post-decision phase

The decision is taken. In the final two extracts the researcher asks for the timing of the experience to have a sense of how the participant sees the length of today's experience. She refers that on average she might spend more time choosing a pair of shoes and that today it was shorter than normal. This could be seen from the beginning because she chose an area she knew well and also because there were sales, when it is usually easier to decide due to lower prices.

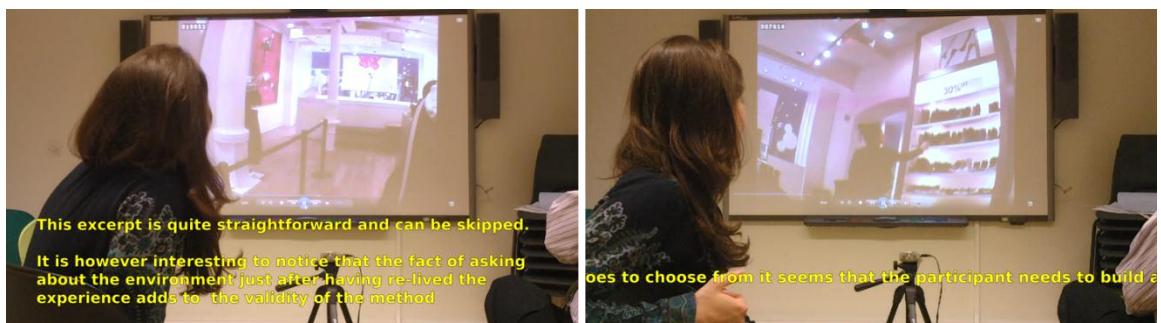


Figure 18 Part\_006 – replay - Description of the environment

Some questions about the environment followed. For the participant the environment is very important because she says that if the environment had not been conducive to the decision she would not have stayed inside the shop for the whole experience. This is followed by some remarks about the furniture and arrangement of displays. Descriptive remarks once again seem to be facilitated by the first-person recordings in front of us.

#### *6.2.4 Participant 007*

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Participant 007 is male Brazilian, early thirties, living in London temporarily for his Master in organizational and social psychology.

Edit 1. Before starting the recording. Participant's recall of motivations and goals.

A lot of guidance is delivered already from the beginning. The participant sets off telling the main factor moving him to acquire a new pair of shoes is the desire to have something in a bright color to contrast the somehow dull choice of shoes he has in the wardrobe. He further gives a timeframe for the period of incubation of this decision (2-3 weeks); it seems this period is shorter than for most of the participants. Noticeable is the use of the word "purpose" in completing the description of the beginning of his action.

Edit 2. Expanding on pre-purchase motivations.

Just afterwards the participant puts forward a disclaimer, a sort of reservation regarding the buying activity. If he is not hundred percent sure about the item he will not buy it and go back home. The reason for this warning concerns the long-term fruition of the object: he does not want to risk regretting his purchase for many months to come.

Edit 3. Mentions past purchases, both positive and unsuccessful ones: regret and learning.

Although not explicitly asked the participant gives further hints on the past episodes that contributed to his buying learning process. The main reasons for poor decision making are recognized in availability of time and economic resources; implicitly he also recognizes that being immersed in the proper situation is essential to be tempted into buying. It also seems that a precise behavioral pattern must be enacted in order to shift into "shopping mode" as he says.

Edit 4. Orientation phase; start of the shopping experience.

In this section the participant sees the subjective camera recording for the first-time. Being particularly interested in the method he engages in a thick description of the scene. An interesting Episode is the one in which he bumps into pedestrians and recognizes himself looking at their shoes; this reflective episode is hardly something that can be imagined with a different method like surveying or interviewing without cueing. The episode triggers my question about social trends and his interest in others' shoes in connection with his present activity; he refers gazing at others' feet only in the occasion of shoe shopping. This might be one of the ways consumers have to absorb social trends on fashion.

Edit 5. Orientation phase. Gazing at people's outfits.

He continues on the previous note and refers gazing at what people wear. Asked what he is more interested in he refers colour and only in the second instance he tells about style and other characteristics.

Edit 6. Orientation phase. Approaching the area.

The participant interacts with the subcam video particularly actively, clarifying the path followed by gesticulating and hinting to the direction taken. In this edit it can also be noticed how his goals are leading the environmental description and not the other way round. The replay interview emerges here as the most faithful method I can imagine of to track the constant presence of motivation in one's actions. As it was described in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter for subjective activity, the same can be said for the description of the activity from subcam film: continuity of action there corresponds to continuity of intention and motivation here.

Edit 7. Orientation phase. Explaining how strolling around builds habit.

Here the participant gives hints to how habit can result out of repeated episodes of walking a certain path instead of another. He refers having the alternative between Long Acre and Seven Dials (two streets of the Covent Garden area); he prefers the latter because of the scale of shops and of the overall quality of those. We might classify these choice factors as personal aesthetic preferences, keeping in mind that they exert a crucial influence on his environmental cognitive exposure. This is also an example of how episodes happen: from a first choice, through a first repetition, reinforcement, up to outright habit.

Edit 8 & Edit 9. Orientation phase. Habit is built unintentionally and digging into the subliminal.

I am here prompting the participant on the frequency of visits to the mentioned area. The participant refers having walked those streets almost every day in the last 3 months of being in London. Although being able to tell the frequency of exposure he also adds that normally he does not pay attention to the environment. His statement prompts my following question on what might have been absorbed subliminally in order to make environmental cues explicit. He says that nonetheless he is able to spot what is new and becoming trendy. This learning process is achieved through a strategy that he learned through his own experience and that relates to the similarity of shops one another. It is much easier for him to spot trends by contrast because

when a shop has something different in the window then this might be the novelty worth examining. Since this knowledge is achieved by contrasting patterns it appears as less effortful.

Edit 10. Orientation phase. Showing how similar the offer is in different shops.

In this edit the participant stands up and backs his argument by pointing at the shop windows recorded on the subcam footage; once again a specific feature of the replay interview method. He claims that offer is very homogenous throughout the street and indeed his claim is supported by the images on which he is willing to discuss. The possibility to point directly to the different instances of gazing makes this method very reliable for the reconstruction of repeated actions as is explained in the previous chapter. Here it also integrates the participant's intentions.

Edit 11. Intentions and habit.

My question is now towards the buildup of buying intention based on trend discovery. He answers that he first looks for novelty in color and shape. After becoming reassured about the trends of these two factors he would then consider usual brands or usual shops for his purchase. It is interesting that after looking for novelty and difference he then would swing back to habitual behaviour ("*I am not willing to try something out of my comfort zone*"). However when it happens he will get an often positive surprise.

Edit 12. Orientation phase. Still exploring the area. 08:22

Here the participant looks from the outside at different shops he knows already, even if they do not fall into the range of selection. His confidence of the area is revealed by the detailed citation of shops and brands. Further he says being surprised by the location of a shop he saw many times before; he did not link precisely the brand to location before doing this very shopping trip. This utterance suggests that the presence of a goal allows the participant to link two chunks of knowledge (brand, shop) into one gestalt (that brand in that location).

Edit 13. Still exploring the area. Talking about sales.

The participant tells now that he noticed an effect of sales signs on his behaviour. It is unclear when he noticed that, if just before uttering or during the shopping experience. I advance that this appreciation of the own behaviour is probably a reflexive byproduct of the replay interview; it seems that participants become more aware of their own behaviour little by little during the interview.

Edit 14. Exploratory phase. Entering the first shop & Edit 15. Episode about a shop opt-out.

The cue to enter the first shop is colour: he first sees the color of the shop walls from the other side of the street and then he notices it is a shoe one, deciding to enter. Just after having done a few steps inside he realizes that it does not have the type of offer he is looking for. The action is mundane, being occurred in many participants: it is a usual part of preliminary exploration. This participant however has a different style of explanation, particularly clear and complete. Noticing a certain type of shoe model that he describes as a hybrid between walking and sport shoes he builds a small autobiographical narration of about 54 seconds. It deals with repeated episodes that occurred to him on the flight from Los Angeles to Sidney at least 20 times where flight attendants used to wear that type of shoe. He found their outfit particularly unprofessional and inelegant because, he explains, they used to step into the airplane with elegant shoes but then changed to the other type after one or two hours of flight. Since then that style of shoe is for him irreparably unprofessional.

#### Edit 16. Exploration becomes more focused

Now technically the participant finds himself in the exploration phase, the one following the entering of the first shop. As a matter of fact it seems that his recognition of shops becomes more focused; he becomes also more talkative with regard to the offer in the shop and the actions undertaken in exploring them. He now describes his action inside the shop consisting in a recognition task: he wants to find a specific model he saw before in other shops and on the internet.

#### Edit 17. Exploration inside the shop.

This edit is particularly interesting because it illustrates how the participant devises a strategy to deal with an overabundant choice; the subcam recording offers the scaffolding to explain with detailed actions how he cognitively cuts the visual space in zones that he can manage much easier. It seems also that the movements he performs in front of the big screen are re-enactments of the original actions he performed in the shop. This mimicry movement of own actions delivers a great tool to the researcher to study the layout of the shoes display.

#### Edit 18-A. Strategies of selection.

In the Converse shop the participant finds the right environment for his purchase and starts to look around actively to find the right model in orange however not finding it alone. Comments on own actions in exploring the shop follow each other quite rapidly showing a high reaction speed and also great precision of this participant in recalling what he had been doing on the day. He further engages in a detailed reconstruction of the choice process. Notice that

this chunk of the replay interview is produced autonomously by the participant without need for the researcher to prompt him. I advance that explaining a process in this detail might have to do with the realization by the participant that the motives and the process of choice are not easy to understand by an external observer.

Edit 18-B. Ranking the factors after the first item touched.

Following the protocol of the replay interview, I ask at this point the participant to rank the factors for choice concerning the shoe he just found; even if this is not the focal shoe it is nonetheless important because it delimits the phase exploration to the phase consideration, so somehow it is at the watershed between the two activities outlined in the final model (paratelic and telic ones). He comes up with his personal ladder of factors: 1) colour, 2) style/brand, 3) material 4) "something that stands out" (might be novelty, detail or design following other participants), 5) price. Notice that for him style and brand are interchangeable, a rather interesting notion because this entails that certain brands produce just one style.

Edit 19. Asking about alternative conditions.

I now ask the participant to make an effort in figuring out a scenario in which he will buy a more expensive type of shoes in order to understand what might change in his choice process. His strategy would change at the beginning in selecting the area to explore; he would look for a different more restricted area and he would build a reduced list of shops before leaving home. This obeys a need of time optimization.

Edit 20. On cognitive effort.

The participant goes forth saying that this experience is particularly tiresome for him; he relates this with a cognitive effort that does not allow him to focus more than two hours. He claims that this is the reason why in fact this experience lasted really short (in fact among the 3 shortest ones). His explanation of the cognitive effort is paramount of the type of activity he engages in, and that in my opinion falls into the telic class. In other words the participant seems to renounce paratelic exploration that might be relegated to watching the public on the street or to the phase of walking past shops in the morning while going to university. Paratelic activity might also occur in any other moment he does not mention here (possibly internet browsing or leafing through magazines). Cognitive effort is also proportional to the amount of items on display so that overpopulating a shopping area with items is actually counterproductive because, as he says, customers cannot map the offer and might feel tired just after viewing a small section.

#### Edit 21. Exploration of more shops.

He goes out and resumes his walk on the shopping street. He sees a shop from the other side but classifies it as a female shoe store. The categorization of the shop is actually incorrect and though he seems to realize it, he prefers to go forth and see other shops in order to overcome exhaustion from the last shop he visited. At this point he explains how he approached the next shop. After looking at two different shop windows he entered the second one rather spontaneously. Asked what he found interesting in the shop he explains that he found himself rather unconsciously attracted while at the same time feeling averted by the other one. The explanation is utterly interesting because it deals with the arrangement of the entrance doors of the two shops and reveals that at least this potential customer has been deterred from entering by the environmental installation.

#### Edit 22. Exploratory phase. Recognizing trends.

He grabs a shoe and asked why, he says it is because he had seen a lot of people with that style in the last two to three weeks around London. Notice that the participant does not need to build knowledge of a trend since he seems to know that well from daily experience in public. Two observations at this point are maybe enlightening: since he knows the trend, what really makes him choose is the availability and arrangement of shoes on display. In order to catch the customer it is then necessary for the marketers to provide the right cue near the entrance, whereby the customer is led into the shop almost unknowingly. He states that just one of the factors is enough to lead him into the shop, either color, material or price.

#### Edit 23. Start of consideration phase.

Inside the current shop he sees converse shoes on the background wall, far from the entrance. He targets these ones and finds his shoe of interest quite quickly. Notice that this will not be the focal shoe (the bought one). In essence the whole shopping trip is a discovery process, because he knew the style of shoe he desired and also the colour. Notice that even if he has a clear idea about the shoe he wants it still takes some time to find it out; obviously having clear ideas about the product to acquire does not absolutely facilitate the task and it might even slow it down. At this point he resolves to interact with the shop assistant to find the right shoe in the right size. Since he is very much focused on a specific shoe with minimal diversions from the goal set, I consider the overall style of this shopping trip as definitely telic.

#### Edit 24. Considering the model.

He advances some doubt on the model because he already had several and they look always the same by his own admission. However the participant explains that he goes further with the action because he already invested a lot of effort so he feels compelled to finish.

Edit 25. Consideration phase, Waiting time.

Asking for another size interrupts the flow of action and opens up a time window in which the participant can have a rest from the engaging task. At this point a pivotal episode takes place: he gazes in front of himself and sees some Adidas shoes on display. Since by own admission he feels bored (notice that boredom is the opposite state to arousal in Apter's model of telic activity), he grabs the shoe. Then he puts it down and grabs the one immediately underneath it, a Onitsuka Tiger model. When the shop assistant comes back he asks for the right size of this one.

Edit 26. Shift of preference.

Then gradually the participant gets interested in this new model. He describes how he weighs up the characteristics of this one. The shift of preference does not happen immediately, he needs some time to get acquainted with it. At this point I ask him to rank for me the different factors for choosing this shoe. He comes up with this list: 1) weight, 2) softness, 3) color, 4) price, 5) match with garments he already owns. The ranking is different with the insertion of the first two factors tied to sensory characteristics (not just visual). This is obvious because they refer to the manipulation of the shoe for real. Also new is the reference to garment matching. There is at this point the confirmation for the final model that a shift between visual and tactile modality occurs also in this participant.

Edit 27. Trying on the first shoe selected. 28:28

Here the participant tries the shoes on and looks into the mirror. He says he does that because he wants to see the effect to dark-blue jeans. Mirrors provide a third person perspective to the participant that otherwise would always be confined to a first person one that lacks objectification power. I further sound him out about his interest in the third person representation of himself to which he declares being evenly balanced between individual identity and social image. Although mirror episodes can potentially open up lots of questions regarding identity I prefer not to go into them in order not to lose the main focus of the replay interview that is more towards recollection of short-term and long-term motives.

Edit 28. Replay turn-taking on proprioception

Very interesting episode where the participant spells out how re-enactment of proprioception works with a first person subjective recording. Although in the preceding replay interviews this particular kind of re-enactment was only sensed, this participant gives a much clearer description of it and allows me to state that it actually occurs at various degrees in all participants.

#### Edit 29. Towards saturation of selection

In this edit the participant tells something extremely important for the whole research. In the moments just prior to decision (in the order of 1 to 2 minutes maximum) he re-scans the environment in front of him; the area is what the view field can encompass with minimal head movements (180 degrees +/-). Asked what the motivation is to do this action the participant explains that the selection process actually continues until the last moment (remember he is engaged in proprioception by wearing the focal shoe on the left foot and an alternative one on the right foot) because you always have the doubt you could have missed something. Asked further how he can tell if he had really missed something (re-scan is actually very quick) he answers: "you cannot really tell", which means that rescanning is not done in order to discover new shoes but for some other cognitive/activity reason. The reason has clearly to do with a sort of saturation of activity, of goal attainment and the participant is once again key to understand it. Participant: "probably if it something different, something I missed". Researcher: "If you missed anything how would you perceive that?" Participant: *"Actually you cannot really tell, because honestly it is just more of the same (repeats the last words). So it is just finding something good enough for your needs and that's it"*. We can conclude that the buying process is based on a form of saturation of activity space: it is by attaining that level of saturation (exhaustion of cognitive resources) that the action is brought to its end. This implies that consumers do not necessarily buy the best possible item based on their explorations of the shopping environment but that at a certain point they opt for an acceptable item. By consequence environment and mood play the most important role in the equation because at that very moment whatever minimal disruption of the delicate disequilibrium the consumer finds himself into (he is at the top of the arousal curve) can let him fall on the opposite side of buying rejection never to be recovered again for the day.

#### Edit 30 & 31. Consideration phase. Always trying the pre-focal shoe on.

The participant is here waiting for the focal shoe to come back. In the meantime he looks again at his All-stars shoe and engages in more visual selection from the opposite shelf; then grabs another shoe from the display.

Edit 32. Re-ranking the factors for decision.

I do a final check of the factors for decision at this point. He insists on style as the main reason to prefer a shoe; he would then check color. He remembers having given the two factors in opposite order beforehand so he spontaneously says that the shift happened because he already renounced the factor color by trying on the white shoe just before (remember he is always waiting for the white shoe to come back in the right size). Price is not important at the moment and remains at third place.

Edit 33. Involvement phase. And Edit 34. Building up decision.

At this point the participant tries on the focal shoe and discards the first shoe he was looking for from the beginning. The interest shifts to the Onitsuka Tiger model, something he did not consider until two minutes before. This is a clear example that deliberation about a product (here different style and color) is not necessarily steady and can change significantly very near to the moment of decision. The participant however is able to reconstruct the process of getting to this very decision by remembering the fact he saw a pair of white leather All-star near the orange ones he was looking for in the first shop. He says that unconsciously he might have shifted his preference towards a pair of white shoes.

A more detailed observation about this bit, but somehow not provable, is that actually the participant started to consider the shoes with the perceptual organs (vision) but ended up buying those shoes because he used the effectual organs (sense and touch). This supposition is confirmed by the inadvertent addition of comfort to a ranking of factors for decision in the 34<sup>th</sup> edit. I advance that the two different sensory modalities lead to quite different decision processes.

Edit 35 & Edit 36. Involvement phase and final moments of the involvement phase.

In this edit the participant engages in some unusual movements that trigger his own laugh, a feature of subcam recordings that can be appreciated in other interviews. He comments on the behaviour by saying that he would never do that in public and he does not fully understand why he does that; I suggest it resembles a small dance, maybe a ritual? He says many other people do that as well.

Edit 37. Decision point. Edit 38. Exiting and questions about mood and activity completion.

Decision happens on the recording with no particular emotion and is not commented by the participant, what suggests that actually what is described as the decision moment afterwards is

really beyond the threshold of commitment that is to be looked for well in advance. In chapter 7 this will be discussed in relation to the final model of composition of different activities.

Asked about how he feels after the whole process he refers being tired; afterwards he adds that before entering the final shop he was getting impatient. I then ask him to hypothesize not having finished the a hopping activity with a buy. This question was in order to get aimed answers to 1) ascertain the presence of the Zeigarnick effect and 2) corroborate the final model that foresees the division in two macro phases of paratelic and telic activities. The participant tells that he would probably feel frustrated if had not the chance to finish his shopping activity positively because he would feel having lost his time.

#### *6.2.5 Participant 008*

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Participant 008 is a Chinese male, around 30 years old. He lives in London since just two months as a master student. He performed the buying experience accompanied by a female friend in an area of London he did not know well and where he did not feel confident.

Edit 1. Before starting the recording: on participant's intentions.

The participant starts off by declaring his intentions to buy a pair of boots that has two functions: use in the mountains and in town. The balance he intends to strike is between function (warmth) and style.

Edit 2 & Edit 3. Pre-purchase information gathering. Questions to discover his purchasing habits.

The participant refers to not having done much research for information. He seems to have enacted a different strategy from the other participants: from the need (or motivation) he developed some weeks before; he waited until the day before going shopping to ask a girl friend to accompany him. This strategy is not new in participants and seems to happen mainly in male participants who generally find the opposite sex more knowledgeable about fashion.

This participant is paradigmatic in this regard because he explicitly renounces pre-purchase information seeking. He says he feels he is not a good shopper. This is the reason why he prefers waiting until the last moment to get some help from a competent companion. As a consequence of his renunciation the participant it seems that the participant avoids paratelic activity with regard to shopping.

Edit 4. The start of the recording: orientation phase

The participant describes the area he is familiar with for shoe shopping in London. He also refers to knowing parts of the UK where shoes are more luxurious and cheaper than in London. During the orientation phase he prefers to be led by his friend. The telic phase of shoe buying seems to start passively; he prefers to economize cognitive resources and exploit his companion's knowledge.



Figure 19 Part\_008 – replay - Orientation phase

#### Edit 5. Orientation phase: asking about factors and characteristics of products.

The participant starts by looking at the video rather intensely; this seems a characteristic of all participants in the orientation phase. One could argue that a more demanding phase in the real activity corresponds to a more demanding phase during replay interviews.

The participant does not mention any brand or specific shoe models but he mentions function and material characteristics. When asked about price, he refers to a range from 30 to 60 GBP. The participant compares prices with models he usually finds back home in China and finds that prices are rather high in the UK. Brand names would however cost almost the same in the two countries . It is interesting that every participant demonstrates a different framework for evaluation and choice; this participant is very conscious of price comparison.

#### Edit 6. Orientation phase.

When asked about reference points in the shopping area, the participant demonstrates good knowledge of the area but he also says that the companion has a better intuition of where to go. The telic action continues but the sub-goal of shop finding is entrusted to the companion.

#### Edit 7. Questions about habit building and paratelic behaviour.

In this passage there is a first reference to needs. When asked if he engages in window

shopping he says he does not do it for pleasure, just when he needs to. This is an explicit negation of paratelic behaviour.

#### Edit 8. Previous episodes of shoe buying.

In this edit I probed the participant to find out if he was uncomfortable with the area and know if it was the reason why he did not seem engaged in the orientation; I asked: "*did it happen that you bought shoes before in London?*" Part: "*yes I bought shoes before, it was around some corners around Oxford street, it was on the way from Covent garden to Oxford circus; I really cannot remember which shop*". His answer tells that the main reason he delegates orientation to his friend is his lack of interest in the activity and not ignorance of the place. I could say that this participant does not enjoy shopping as a paratelic activity. The answer points, like for many participants to a place based answer; the specific register is triggered by the recording, the participant is in a place based mood.

#### Edit 9. Focusing on a type of shoe.

A brief reference to a type of shoe that the participant has seen on others; he mentions the Singapore style shoe and says the price was 50 pounds. The participant's reference to the anchoring category *Singapore style* is not really important he just remembers that that shoe was comfortable. However, this indicates that giving names to products is not only about brands; it is indeed possible to discriminate not only by brand but by style. The problem is also to understand how consumers are able to discriminate unambiguously products without referring explicitly to a brand or a common point of reference.

#### Edit 10. Social orientation in shopping.

Based on my experience with earlier interviews I asked the participant if before going shopping he looks for social orientation on the street in terms of trends. The answer is unexpected because he does not mention this before buying for orientation, but afterwards for confirmation. This dynamic seems to reverse the usual progression of involvement, because higher involvement is observed after the choice and not before. Usually the literature reports high involvement before the purchase with a relaxation afterwards; it has to be discovered how this dynamic plays out in this participant and why.

#### Edit 11. Entering the first shop.

This passage is a very simple example of how the replay works: the participant sees the

recording and first describes his intentions. Note that if the participant is not cued with images, he is more likely to describe intentions than actions; it is easier for the participant to remember goals than actions: the goal is looking for men's shoes and the process is conscious throughout even if he is not watching the recorded sequence.

Edit 12. Referring to the dyadic progression of choice.

Inside the shop the participant describes what he was doing by adding that he did not engage in the whole selection process on his own but was helped by the companion. In this edit a negotiation spanning the whole buying experience starts. The participant seems to use his friend's experience to discover his own preferences; it is a dialogue on a trip to the Swiss alps and a process of persuasion directed by his friend. Until this moment the biggest shared effort seemed to be in locating the shop. Finding the item is probably also perceived as requiring effort by the participant and he seems to delegate it completely.

Edit 13. Acquisition of trust.

In this case the companion accompanies the participant to a part of the shop where the shoes she bought some days before are displayed. This movement is not necessary for the main goal so it has to be interpreted accordingly. In my opinion it can be interpreted as an attempt to acquire trust because it does not directly impinge on the buying experience. I asked "*was she happy with this purchase?*" He answered: "*I think girls always like shopping*". This remark can be interpreted as attributing paratelic behaviour to the opposite sex; it is a general statement and other male participants could be tested for the same representation. Furthermore the participant considers another boot; he says he consciously considers this browsing behaviour as a swing between his own and the companion's goals. At the end of the sequence he says he is convinced by the higher boots? (He will refer to them as *high-end from here on*, meaning a *high shaft*).

Edit 14. Finding the focal item: start of the consideration phase.

This action marks the start of consideration phase that begins with touching the focal shoe. In this participant as well the main drive to touch the focal shoe is said to be the colour combination. Note that the participant finds it natural to point at shoes and to describe its characteristics of interest.



Figure 20 Part\_008 – replay - Finding the focal shoe

#### Edit 15. Ranking the choice factors .

The protocol of replay interviews contains three moments for explicitly ranking of the factors for shoe selection and buying. I first asked if he had an idea of the price of the focal shoe. He said that the first thing he did was to look at the style of the shoe; second he considered trying them on. Only finally, as the third step of the evaluation did he consider the price range. The participant refers explicitly to a price range not to a fixed amount to spend; he discarded the model if more than 60 pounds worth (20 to 60 pounds range is quite wide). I asked for confirmation of ranking factors and got the same list.

#### Edit 16. Social comparison episodes.

This participant says he consciously pursued a specific cognitive action that it could not be detected in the content analysis. He made a post-purchase comparison with others outside the shop when selecting his shoes. As mentioned above this action is in contradiction with what was seen in other participants; usually comparison is done pre-purchase. The participant describes this action as a habit, in other words he consciously recognizes doing this all the time. The justification for this action is reassurance from observing the tastes of other people, which is a very different action when compared to pre-purchase information seeking.

The participant says that he needs to do this because he considers himself a poor shopper and he knows he makes the wrong choice. This point is mentioned several times and the participant seems to be convinced and he needs to seek confirmation to the mainstream taste. The thought reported is obviously an anxiety reduction strategy.

We might also surmise that the difference between the two actions (pre-purchase and post-purchase social orientation) have to do with the different telic content; in this case the telic action of shoe buying comes first and then the confirmation action that might or might not

contain a paratelic component (reassurance from watching others). In pre-purchase information seeking the paratelic component can appear before the telic component of shoe-buying.

#### Edit 17. Consideration phase.

In this instance the participant mentions the action that is required for the passage to the next phase of involvement, trying on the shoes. This is perceived as an effort and in this participant it is passive. He waits for his companion to tell him that he should try them to get to see how they fit. When asked about the time that lapsed between finding the item and trying it on, the participant says he considers several factors in that moment: first style, then colour, then price. He mentions also several comparisons with other products in order to decide to try on the shoe that he would eventually buy.

#### Edit 18. Asked about the trying-on episodes.

I also asked why he did not try on the shoes earlier; his answer was that he did not do it for two reasons. First the process is long and tedious, confirming behaviour found in other participants. The second reason was more unusual; for the participant it was not a good idea to put his foot in shoes that had been tried on by others. It was not clear however if he said this thinking about himself or if he reckoned it was disrespectful to others. In any case this consideration was found only in this participant.



Figure 21 Part\_008 – replay - Episode of social interest

#### Edit 19. Trying the focal item.

He now asks for the size; he does this by having his foot measured with a special tool (see video).

#### Edit 20. Shifting to involvement phase.

The participant at this stage, just before trying on the focal shoes, begins looking around the environment, and says he does it to see if he had neglected some shoes before committing to this pair.

Edit 21. Questions on his perception of single items.

This sequence is about the process of selecting one item, and it is particularly detailed. The process of replay interviewing makes very detailed accounts of selection processes possible by rehearsing the sequence of actions several times. One episode is when the participant first looks at all of the shoes together but then stands up of a chair and sees a specific shoe. The researcher in such moments can see something is happening and can ask for details by pausing and replaying several times the clip.

Researcher: *"you fix your gaze for a moment, it seems you are looking at all shoes together but then you choose one"*. Participant: *"yes, first I will cut off all the black ones, so I focus on some brown ones; and then... (.2) .. probably.. (he stands up and goes to the screen) I saw this shoe (pointing at a bootie he tried on later). This is a high-end shoe. At this time I was still struggling whether I should buy a low-end and then I checked again on this shoe (a higher shaft one)"*



Figure 22 Part\_008 – replay - Perception of items on display

Edit 22. On the selection processes.

In this passage the participant does not recall an action he performed rather unconsciously: he went to the display to pick up a lower shaft shoe. When asked why he picked up that particular shoe he says: *"it's the style"*, meaning that he was attracted by the style of the shoe. We note that although the participant some minutes before had said that he was from that point on only considering higher shaft shoes, thanks to the subcam recording I saw his behaviour was contradictory. This passage makes clear that even if the behaviour might seem conscious to a third party, it has to be checked with the participant to know what really

happened: this action is an example of automatic behaviour, done absent-mindedly. There is a component of faulty memory and a component of conscious/unconscious activity; some actions shift to the subconscious.

It seems that his explanation of the contradictory process is constructed while watching the recording; in other words the participant did not have a ready explanation for it and he had to resort to building one. I can also say that in this case it was not about retrieving from his memory, but constructing the motive for the action. This is an example of how changes in preference happen without deliberation. Consumers go through phases of attention to certain aspects of activity while discarding other aspects. It is not about the importance of those aspects for the final decision: it is impossible to state at each step what the aspects will be important in the final decision; it is about the level of consciousness in that section of activity.

The difference between conscious and unconscious is not about their complexity, it is more about the selection of the level of consciousness. Actions can thus be considered more complex than the consciousness of them because one can do many different actions at the same time and be (verbally) conscious of only one of them.

Edit 23. Reasons to continue considering the low shaft boots.

During the selection after having discovered the focal one, the participant continues looking at low shaft boots, even if some actions before he declared having switched his preference to the high shaft boot. When asked what he is considering in a specific sequence, the participant answers: *"I am Checking the thickness of the shoe; and I am checking the bottom: if the bottom is high enough I can stand above snow and probably the chances are the snow is not getting into your shoe even if the shoe is a low-end. Was considering in theory the possibility of that, but I was trying to see this, if it was high enough"*. The participant explains his earlier action by reconstructing a succession of motives: 1) he needs a pair of shoes that are resistant to snow, 2) but he likes low shaft shoes, 3) so he tries to compromise between something suitable for snow and one he can use in the city as well. 4) If the sole is thick enough then it can work on a snowy ground as well as in the city and he would have fulfilled his need. The difficulty of the action is this latter compromise; this is a typical problem in buying behaviour, striking a compromise between two opposing goals.

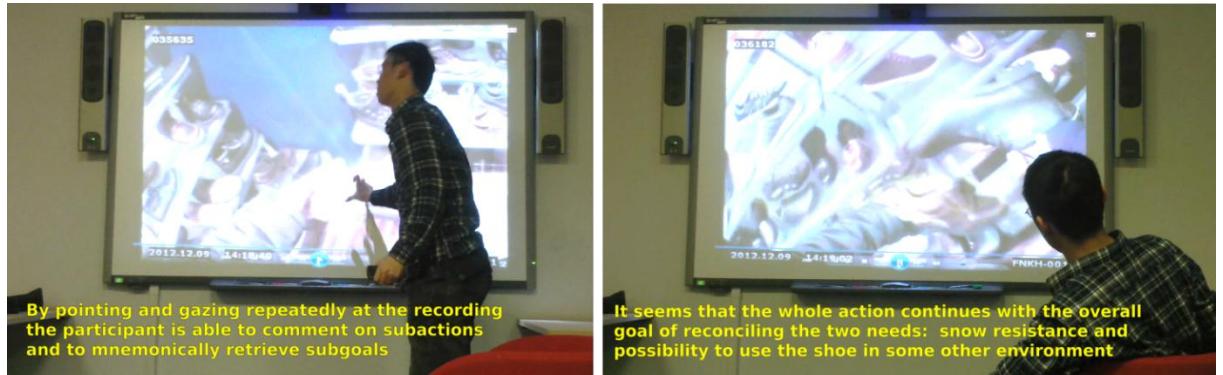


Figure 23 Part\_008 – replay - Negotiating the function of the shoe

Edit 24. Still in the consideration phase.

In this instance there is intensive interaction with his friend. The joint action can be described as disambiguation of motives. It seems that the whole action continues with the overall goal of reconciling the two needs: snow resistance and use in other environments. The reason he gives for this heightened browsing is regret avoidance. The participant is moved by anxiety; he does not like having regrets. This is in reversal theory: telic activity contains the sentiment of anxiety.

Edit 25 & 26. Fitting the focal shoe and mirror episode.

This passage contains an action that unites tactile and visual sensations. Looking into the mirror is more complex than the usual viewing. The participant says that by looking into the mirror he sees the shoe *directly* and when doing so it becomes even nicer. The term directly is interesting because looking in a mirror is indirect; it was direct when he was looking at it while holding the shoe or trying it on. Looking into the mirror strengthens the participant's decision: "*in that moment I thought I really want that shoe*". However, many minutes will pass before he finally buys.

Edit 27 & 28. Episode on cultural influence.

In this case, the participant is asked how many trainers he owns. At this point, he makes a distinction between what he would wear in China and what in London: "*Before high school it was 100%; but then when I came to University I bought some leather shoes. In China if you wear this kind of shoes it means you go to the office, you are working. But here in London everyone wears those shoes, even if they go to school or the pub. Now wearing trainers looks for undergraduates*". This part of the interview does not make use of the first person recording; the

topic was introduced during the previous action. The participant hints at a change in tastes and habits that occurred at a turning point in his life, when he came to London. References to long-term changes and motivations may intervene at any stage of the interview without warning or specific introduction. He maintains it has been a kind of cultural shock. It is certainly a change of habits and pertains to the life-cycle structure of the experience. *"I am trying to combine my preferences and culture here in London. This is maybe why I ended up making this choice"*

Edit 30. Interaction with sales assistant

This edit is about an interaction with the sales-assistant motivated by the perception of having made the choice too quickly.

Edit 31 & 32. Final ranking of factors before the decision.

When asked again to rank the factors for his decision the participant now thinks the first motive for buying the focal shoe is thickness. The second is the style. Price is not given much thought at this point and is considered as a range. He goes to the mirror again to try on a new pair of shoes. These are an alternative: trainers. He says he likes the shoes, but he also says that no one in London wears such shoes: *"In China I will probably buy them, but not here in London!"* Again a representation of social appropriateness makes him discard them, an important factor in not considering a shoe further. The selection process is gradual: the participant does not have all of the factors in mind at once but discovers, adds and subtracts them step by step.

Edit 33 & 34. The participant is back in the shop, after being outside for several minutes.

He goes back to the sales assistant and recovers the shoes he decided to buy. He tries them on again. Now he just wants to see if the size is correct because he wants to see if the assistant gives him the same shoe he saw before. *"I'm just checking the size here".*

Edit 35. Checking again: post-decision phase.

He sees one more shoe that he likes the style of; he considers it a shoe he might come back to buy for the summer. Then he tries them on once again.

Edit 36. Signal action of decision: handing the shoes over to the sales-assistant.

In this edit we see him giving back the shoes to the assistant. Since this action occurs in other participants it can be supposed to be a marker of decision. He finally shifts into a relaxation mode: he no longer has to worry about snow. The telic phase is finished.



Figure 24 Part\_008 – replay - Considering an alternative model and handing the shoes to the sales assistant

### 6.2.6 Participant 009

Participant 009 is a British woman from London, librarian, 28 yo. She performed the shopping experience on Oxford Street in an area of London she was obviously very familiar with. To this regard it must be noticed that this participant is the only one who has complete familiarity with the environment being born and grown up in London, a quite rare case nowadays.

#### Edit 1. Asking about previous information collection.

I start by asking about her intention to buy shoes awaiting an answer in form of episode, i.e. a fix time point back like days or weeks. Instead she answers she always has the intention to buy shoes what plunges us directly into habitual mode. It follows logically that since she always has the intention to buy, the triggering factor must be external to her. An interesting shift of agency is implied in this participant who attributes the right circumstances of shopping to some other factors than her personal motivation. In fact she cites three reasons for deciding to buy shoes in those days: 1) the weather was particularly wet so that she needed replacement for the current shoes, 2) as we will see she received some extra money in those days.

#### Edit 2. About the area and shop to visit.

Her approach to shoes selection starts from the area and not from the product, one of the two main modalities in all participants (either they know what to buy or where to look for). After having chosen the Covent Garden area however she went on the internet to browse the

offer of shops she knew in that area; so the selection procedure is like this: area → shop/brand → product → shop inside the predefined area. It is interesting to follow this line of selection because this is actually what very often happens today with the ubiquitous presence of the internet: consumers can browse everywhere in every moment for the availability of certain brands and products before setting off to buy. However conceded that they might get clearer ideas of where to fetch their product, when they decide to personally go to the shop, they are confronted with their knowledge and movement possibility around the area. There is in some ways a back and forth from geographical knowledge to knowledge of brand and product that is for that matter always updated by the flow of online information.

Edit 3. Checking on browsing behaviour, & Edit 4. Checking on the ranking of factors to buy a product. & Edit 4-B. Expanding on the factors for choice. & Edit 5. On the price paid the day before (during the shopping experience).

She went online to see two shops she knew in the chosen area and that also have an internet site. The information gathered is not much in order to buy but in order not to come unprepared to the shopping area.

What she looks at in the first place she refers being drawn to outlandish things; only afterwards she would look at the price. However inside the shop her strategy is to look first at sale items and only afterwards, if necessary, at fully priced items. She adds that this might be a poor strategy because she might skip much better quality in this way. She ranks the factors for choice in 3 steps at this stage: 1) design, 2) price, 3) material. She reiterates the possibility that buying sale items is probably a bad choice because "*obviously they tend to break quite quickly*". In this occasion she spent 55 pounds on shoes that had been reduced from 80£.

Edit 6. Start of the replay interview on the subcam film

She seems to aim directly at ankle boots; on the right of the inside display some 3 metres inside the shop. Since from the subcam recording it was quite clear that before going there she saw something else I prompted her to tell me what she saw at the very beginning. By rewinding the recording we were able to pinpoint the first glance she threw to sneaker shoes at the entrance (converse) and state that it took less than a second to see and decide they were not interesting. This passage is not trivial in that it shows that subcam based retrospection can effectively be used to measure with enough detail even the tiniest steps of action; in this case it

is noticeable that a consumer can select with such speed.

#### Edit 7. Categories inside the shop.

It is obvious to her that shops are organized into categories; while this is conceptually obvious it is much less so from an activity point of view: it requires deliberation (or habit) to go inside the shop and process the offer first by broad categories and then by single items. We can easily imagine that someone could process the other way round.

#### Edit 8. Navigating the shop. & Edit 9. Identifying areas of interest.

This edit is interesting because it offers a glimpse into the reconstructive character of replay interviews. Since often the participant is unaware of her own goals, most of them remaining implicit, she engages in their reconstruction based on the subcam recording. It seems there are two concurrent goals when browsing shoes by categories and looking at displays: as said she categorizes but at the same time she looks for shoes previously seen on the internet.

#### Edit 10. Refining on the two types of concurrent goals.

In this tiny bit of action (in the subcam recording 18:31:26 to 18:32:04, 40 sec.) it emerges that the participant is looking at two different types of shoes, one flat for everyday use and one with heel. She usually gets low heel shoes but today she is aiming at boots with heel. She wants to have something different today, referring to the heel, "*because I like those but have no reason to buy them*", meaning that for everyday use she always go for flat shoes. I interpret the presence of two concurrent types of shoes as practicality versus self-representation need.

#### Edit 11. About shops layout.

Asked about her preferences about shop layout she gives an account of possible displays inside shops, from the more sparse (more expensive) to the more dense (mid-low priced) to the densely populated in the foreground and sparse in the background (ultra-cheap). Personal preferences about the layout might also reflect patterns of habitual activity, by which a mechanism of reinforcement leads to prefer the already experienced. The shop layout is then linked to the price and service levels.

#### Edit 12. Finding the focal item. & Edit 13. Asking and waiting for the size.

She attains the area of interest just after 20 minutes of browsing inside the same shop, a rather long time-lapse. Among the items on sale she also finds the shoe she saw online, the bootie with heel. She accompanies the shop assistant to the monitor where she will find the right size and then returns to the previous area. Here she engages in browsing and touching other shoes in what seems paratelic behaviour as is frequently the case in the waiting time. That the activity becomes paratelic can be told also by the different type of shoes she touches, a

sparkly low heel shoe (outlandish?) that she puts back down as soon as the sales assistant comes back. Asked how many shoes she would like to consider before deciding she answers no more than three: more would be stressful she says.

Edit 14. Explaining the mechanics of choice.

Choice is here very consciously built on an optimal range of items to choose from. She says: "*I'm gonna be picking up other things to try and be convinced to picking something else*", meaning that she needs some sort of saturation in the choice palette to get convinced for the focal shoe. The focal shoe can be whatever shoe comes up during the process, not necessarily the first one selected or the one she saw on the internet although these seem to have a higher probability to be the focal ones. There is a very important implication to this fact regarding availability of objects. If she needs to build a ladder for choice then this might be attained with whatever objects found on the activity path. In fact it seems that participants grab shoes that appear as easier affordances on their shopping journey. Consequence is that shoes are selected (and bought) according to their availability, by which the environmental disposition becomes a key factor.

Edit 15. Re-examining how situated choice pans out.

A surprise for both me as researcher and for her as participant is the discovery that she is actually looking at the common denominator *patent leather*. She says she does not normally like it and finds the discovery rather funny. Such discoveries show that situated activity is fundamentally different from the representation and memory of it.

Edit 16. Checking a shoe that had been seen online. Edit 17. Online vs. in person shopping.

She stops the recording to tell that by considering the focal shoe she had in mind the online unflattering reviews. Now this bit suggests that consumers more and more go to brick & mortar shops with the backing of online reviews of products. Retrieving info on the internet builds a thorough knowledge and thus probably a reduced dependence on point-of-sale marketing strategies. Asked if such reviews can be trusted she explains that one has to cross compare the multiple sources and verify the source.

She then tells that she would not buy such shoes online because the price difference is minimal so she would anyway prefer to try them on before buying and pay the small difference. The proprioceptive experience is considered essential.

Edit 19. Instance of interaction. & Edit 20. Asking about a mirror episode. 17:11

As own actions are re-enacted by means of subcam recordings, interactions are as well. Here for example the participant recalls how the shop assistants were attentive and helpful there. I further ask about the first significant mirror episode to which the participant answers

that she probably wants to make sure the shoes are flattering, or in other words they enhance tallness and leg shape. I interpret this assertion as an introjected form of social acceptability. Also she wants to get an impression of the matching possibilities with clothing.

#### Edit 21. Triggering of a habit narrative

Noticing that she tried both shoes on I asked her if she always does that. She answers that she was brought up doing this because as a child she had wide feet and often, if she did not try the shoes properly she ended up rubbing her toes inside. This is an example of how something learned through repeated episodes has become a habit since childhood and has never been forgotten. To go with that is also the habit to look for good quality in shoes, also a procedural kind of knowledge that has been learned through repeated activity. Notice here as well that the participant is perfectly synchronized with the recording: she points at actions exactly when they appear on screen, hinting either to effortless re-enactment or even to mnemonic anticipation due to what she sees in the flow of action.

#### Edit 22. The decision point.

Although in the content analysis (fifth chapter) the boundary to consideration phase is when the participant finds the focal shoe and the boundary to involvement phase is when the participant tries the focal shoe on, it is never clear when the exact point of irreversible decision is met. With this participant it was not particularly clear and I asked her when she felt she decided for the item she bought. She however confirms that the moment of decision is when she tried the shoes on and felt they were comfortable.

#### Edit 23. Post-decision phase

In this participant the last phase identified in the model of buying behaviour is particularly long: 13 minutes. She now reverses here her modality of search; she says: "*I think I am just hanging around trying to convince myself to find something else because she has taken them [the focal shoes] away and she has put them safely behind the counter*"; I interpret this bit as a clear hint to a relieving of anxiety: she is now free to look for shoes in a paratelic mode since the telic part has just been completed.

#### Edit 24. Final browsing.

Here the participant confirms the previous intuition "*this is more browsing I think because I have pretty much made up my mind*"; she even says "*pressure is off I suppose, so I am free to look at things I would not normally buy*". She goes further and says that she is interested in the display as people normally are, wandering around, looking at things; she adds: "*now I can enjoy the shopping a bit more, sounds weird, because they all lay down there in front of me*". She also suggests that the paratelic part is an intimate kind of activity that is best enjoyed without intrusion from the sale's assistants. She adds that if anyone came over to ask her if she

needed help she would say no and would walk away. She finally says that she finds this part easier because she knows she is not going to buy anything. Translated in reversal theory terms this means that the activity does not imply a goal (the goal is implicit) so that the behaviour can be subsumed under playful/paratelic activity.

#### Edit 25. Still expanding choice in the post-decision phase

At this point she expands the selection in this latter paratelic part of the buying activity. She goes now for more usual things, a move that I interpret as a reassurance after having seen more unusual stuff. She also uses the word boring however, hinting at two facts here: either boredom is due to the end of the paratelic part (reverses from excitement to boredom) or maybe she finds them boring because they are worn habitually in everyday activities.

#### Edit 26. Browsing and added goals

She looks further at "more sensible" shoe models; probably done in order to get confirmation about the shoes she has already chosen. This is compatible with an homeostatic process of cognitive closure. However digging a bit more she reveals that she is looking into the possibility of changing her mind because she feels guilty about buying something expensive and possibly looking silly, so she looks for more sensible items in this phase, though knowing she will never find them as she reports. Moreover she adds that she is also aware that a lot of people will find the shoes distinctive because of color and style.

#### Edit 27. Paratelic phase.

She gives one more confirmation that this phase of browsing has the character of the paratelic phase. She says: "*This is not serious shopping, this is just trying things on for the hell of it, 'cause you are in a shoe shop*". Another interesting point here is that she uses exactly the same description for paratelic behaviour as the one I found in participants 004 and 005: "*waiting to be wowed but knowing that you probably won't be*".

### *6.2.7 Participant 011*

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Participant 011 is French, academic, 33 yo. She performed the shopping experience in the Regent Street-Oxford street area of London. She was familiar with the environment having been many times before in those same shops she visited on the day.

#### Edit 1. About the area of shopping – Orientation phase

She starts by telling the main factor she started with was brand; she did not know the type of shoe though. She also says that she has a preferred area for shopping, remaining around the area where she lives. Asked why, she says this must be connected with the travelling time in London and with the uniformity of offer in fashion in town, whereby any one area equals the other in terms of product and brand availability. Further, since she travels a lot

for work she tells liking to shop in other countries, what naturally decreases the need of shopping inside London.

Edit 2. Starting the subcam video.

In the orientation phase she plans to go around the corner and does not look at shop windows meanwhile appearing rather focused on the activity and suggesting she is engaged in a telic phase, what actually was not the case according to what happens next.

Edit 3. Asking about her ideal product.

She states once again that she has no preferred product in mind; she declares starting from the colour and more or less a shape, not too extravagant. I then ask for examples and she comes up with very broad categories of colour and type, preferring abstract descriptions. Going further with questions and descriptions, she reveals wanting to obtain certain stylistic effects. She would also like to wear classic, basic shoes with many different sets of clothing.

Edit 4. Entering the shop: exploration phase.

By entering the shop she tells that she is annoyed by the sales personnel in the UK because she finds them not very competent, not knowing what they sell, how things are made. From the point of view of the re-enactment this participant is very quick and constant in following and describing every action she undertakes. She likes to follow the action in real time and does not stop the recording to explain. For this reason it is slightly difficult to halt her and tell the different factors for choice; however one can notice very clearly that she goes to shoes according to style/appearance and then reverses them to look at the price. For this reason we have a succession of Brand → style (or color) → price. This is for now just tentative and will be confirmed later.

Edit 5. Price range.

She tells the price range for the shop; she knows that already from previous visits.

Edit 6. Eliciting a list of factors.

I am now asking for a list of factors explicitly. First factor is for her Aesthetics, something she likes, that pleases her. Naturally this factor is somehow not verifiable and also cannot be contradicted because it does not refer to any objective characteristic of the prospective shoe. Other factors are all referred to in a negative modality (they should not be like..., they should not have that...) what again makes it difficult to abstract factors for choice outside the situated experience. In a sense the whole description of purchase becomes in this experience an extreme oscillation between abstract and indexical type of description, character that is very difficult to evaluate at first.

Edit 7. Expanding on the definition of style.

On the few hints I received until that moment I proceeded with a more open-ended style of interview, asking about her concept of style. She answers she finds having developed her own style, a very basic one, very much in the last years in accordance with her economic independence. She also states that it would be naïve to think that one is not influenced by media and one does not comply with fashion, the reason being that exposure to such phenomena is massive. Anyway she finds the big change is between adolescence when one is more prone to consumption and quick change and working age when by virtue of economic independence one is driven to invest more.

Edit 8. Exploratory phase. & Edit 9. Noticing other shoppers. Edit 9-B. Developing further explanation.

She starts by touching a shoe toe; she refers wanting to feel the material and seeing the price as well. In more or less the same action (matter of 2-3 seconds) she glances on the left and notices another female customer touching some shoes at two meters distance. It is indeed normal for participants to look at other human beings in the shop, after all it is a space where everyone engages in more or less similar activities so that a sort of social imitation process comes natural. She reports having looked at the customer quickly and having understood that that part of the display is not interesting for her. Now the question for me as researcher is why does she make such an indirect inference as to what part of the display is interesting for her? Why does she not look directly for herself the shoes in that shelf?

I advance a hypothesis here that is however difficult to confirm or disconfirm. Consumers sometimes switch to a social comparison modality in order to infer from the external appearance of a person if they would be interested in what they wear or select inside a shop. If they don't like the look of the person they would also discard what they are selecting, touching, trying on. At the end she actually finds interesting one of the shoes that very shopping colleague is considering, saying they are not the shoes she is looking for but that she likes them actually.

Edit 10. Going forth with exploration.

She now goes on touching a shoe model that she says does not respond to the Shopping trip goal. Touching so different items seems to correspond to a paratelic phase.

Edit 11. Paratelic phases can be nested in the main goal seeking phase & Edit 12. Trying to understand paratelic phases.

At this point, while touching a pair of shoes on the shelf, she says she might have dreamt of the shoe she was considering. She finds this event very curious and so did I as

researcher; in fact I ascribe this event to a *déjà vu* episode triggered by the subcam film. In this bit of action indices of paratelic activity are clear, because paratelic phases are characterized exactly by the participant giving attention to details that do not pertain to the main explicit goal. This paratelic part was the last moment before deciding to leave the shop. I interpret this with the character of paratelic phases to delimit telic ones.

Edit 13. Before leaving, going back into telic mode.

Contrary to the intention, just before leaving the participant diverts towards the booties she saw when she entered the shop. She also appeared surprised by the action and apparently did not remember about that. I interpret this action as the experience just acquired feeding back into the telic process. The phenomenon might happen because of 1) incubation time, 2) seeing again the product by virtue of the installation, 3) alternation of paratelic and telic phases in an automatic way with the function of lowering the cognitive demand of the telic task.

Edit 14. Changing shop. Exploratory phase.

Now she exits the first shop and begins a walk with steady pace in Oxford Street. One can see that the path taken is familiar so I ask her if she finds orientation based on a list of brands or else. She refers that she does not reason in terms of brands or shops here but that she is driven by the route, the implicit knowledge of the area. This assertion hints to habitual knowledge of the macro-installation that is composed of streets, places, buildings etc. She does not find surprises at this level.

Edit 15. Entering the second shop.

Asked why she enters this shop, she refers not even remembering the name and doing this just because you never know. This action is compatible with paratelic activity, when participants are more prone to be surprised by events in the environment and by products (*"just to be surprised by something"*). Here the goal of buying a pair of useful shoes stays in the background. Subsequently I ask her how many times she went in that very shop and she answered that she had been there two months before. In this case we can reconstruct a episodic chain for this shop because the participant remembers about and is able to give dates of the visits. Further the participant tells that she does not expect to be wowed by anything in that shop and that she visits it just to look for simple products. In a way discovery and surprise is here overridden by expectation; in fact during the replay interview she looks and sounds rather bored by the recorded visit.

Edit 16. Exiting the 2<sup>nd</sup> shop. Continuing the exploratory phase.

She now goes down Ofrod Street without much conviction or excitement; she seems to be driven more by the knowledge of the area than by a goal. Since she is not particularly engaged by what she is doing I consider this kind of behaviour rather habitual and thus

installation driven. She enters the shop R&B, where she is rather disappointed by the arrangement of the products at the entrance (it's sales time). At this moment she thinks the background of the shop might be more organized and appealing because you can visualize things much better.

Edit 17. Reconstructing the episodic chain. & Edit 18. Elements of a shopping routine.

At this point the participant remarks that she has the feeling she will find something in this shop. The utterance may refer to the implicit knowledge she has built in prior visits of the shop; she refers having been in this very shop at least 10 times before. She considers such a frequency enough to get familiarity of the environment. I interpret this assertion however slightly more understatedly and consider the succession of visits a episodic chain. I then ask her if she has a sort of shopping routine. She answers something like that exists and names 6 shops she usually visits, although she does not reveal how often and how many times until now. Indeed if one does not mention the times visited the perception is that of having done this long enough to consider it a habit.

Edit 19. Explicitly asking about the existence of a shopping routine.

She says that actually she would start always from the same brand but then she would feel flexible to visit each time different shops. I ask her what she thinks about shopping habits: she answers that they are reassuring and time saving and that even if one goes always to the same shops the novelty is looked for among the things offered there and not necessarily in new shops. From that it follows logically that novelty is circumscribed and possible surprise is somehow prepared for.

Edit 20. Finding a new product.

I ask the participant what is new for her. She says it is something she does not already have and that the public would recognize as unfamiliar. The profile of the early adopter in the theory of innovations adoption seems to be the right one here. She further tells that she is actually satisfied with her wardrobe and that she has already enough things to wear; so if she is going to buy something it has to be surprising because in terms of practicality she has already a lot. Surprising is then the main factor here but there is also a further condition to the object: it must be durable in style terms, and this is a characteristic she projects into the far future (5 to 10 years). Further on she finds a first interesting item of which she describes the relevant characteristics for choice.

Edit 21. Continuing the exploration phase.

At the back of the shop she engages in a rather thorough selection of shoes built on browsing from near and always touching the shoes to sense the material they are made of. This phase seems rather paratelic because she cannot refer the kind of goal she has apart from being

surprised. I then ask what kind of order there can be in the browsing activity she is performing and she answers that she moves by visual cues, what we might understand as cognitive attractors of various kinds.

#### Edit 22. Finding the focal shoe. & Edit 23. Reconstruction of a choice.

She now finds the focal shoe that is somehow the approximation of model she saw just two minutes before in another shelf. I interpret this event as a slow focalization outwards the product of interest; in a way she is constructing her ideal type of shoe by adding elements all along: "*I recognize the thing I saw on the shelf*" she says. By describing the process she gives here a very detailed account of retrospection that is worth watching on the video (*Participant\_011* at the minutes 24:27) and that she describes as an internal debate. The reconstruction is a bit long to report in full because very detailed; the bottom line is that she constructs her preference for higher heels little by little in the shop notwithstanding the fact she did not have that idea from the beginning.

#### Edit 24. Trying shoes on.

The final action contains as always the fitting of the shoe; the participant is rather interested in how the shoe fits to the point that she does not even look into the mirror. She says she knows she likes them already and does not need to see them in the mirror. This might be interpreted as a sign of confidence in her self-image. She is the only participant who does not look into the mirror. From that moment on she focuses on the size. However she looks at many different things to which she comments: "*I know what I want, but I am still ready to be surprised*", a strange mix of paratelic and telic behaviour.

#### Edit 25. Reconstructing the passages that led to the decision. & Edit 26. About mirrors and self-perception

The final moments are about finding the right size that she is able to comment in detail once again. She did not remember perfectly that she did not go to the mirror but she says "*it is probably because I don't care how people are going to see me with those shoes: they just have to fit*". I then probe her about her idea that looking into the mirror is a social image move; it seems rather obvious to her.

#### Edit 26. Final considerations.

She finally gives an account of the shoe she just bought from which we might infer what the main factors for choice are for her. She found that the shoe had: 1) good price, 2) exactly what she had in mind, 3) wearable with many different things, 4) something durable, 5) good fitting.

### *6.2.8 Participant 013*

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Participant 013 is German, PhD student, female, 26 yo. She performed the shopping experience in the Covent Garden area. She was familiar with the environment living in London since 3 years and studying very near to the area.

**Edit 1. Preliminary interview on motives and goals**

The participant starts forming the intention to buy shoes some six weeks before; she looked both on the internet and in shops. She reports becoming more active on the intention three weeks prior to the purchase date. In those weeks she went into some shops to form herself an idea of the fashion trends. Online browsing starts from brands generally to expand then to online portals of brick and mortar shops because she would never buy shoes online.

Within the site she would on a lower level select according to colour and model.

**Edit 2. Brand selection.**

In order to find a pair of booties she started from a general internet site she knew but then she restricted her choice following the brand criterion. In the end she focused on a brand, Clark, which was actually suggested by a friend of her: the process is then a combination of word of mouth and online search. She makes the point however that she did not take the friend's suggestion at face value and preferred to go and look for the brand in the shop de visu.

**Edit 3. Checking about factors for choice.**

She gives as the first factor for choice material, the shoe has to be in leather. The Second factor is shape, meaning mostly in this case the heel height. She further seeks coordination for her new pair of shoes with the rest of the wardrobe.

**Edit 3-B. Factors for choice on internet browsing.**

Interestingly the factors for choice are more and in a different order when browsing online: 1) shape, 2) color, 3) price. I advance that this order mirrors an evaluation process based on abstract factors whereas the selection process mentioned above in edit 3 pertains to a situated kind.

**Edit 4. About the existing stack (shoes in the wardrobe).**

The booties she is looking for are meant as an addition to the wardrobe. I inquire about the number of shoes owned (12) and currently used (5). The structure of her wardrobe is so conceived as to have at least 2 similar shoe models in order to alternate them and not wear them off too much.

**Edit 4-B. Expanding on durability.**

Asked about durability of the product she says that for good quality products shoes should ideally last for a lifetime! Or at least ten years if you have six pairs (not clear if all similar or a rotation of six pairs at any one time). She says that in the last 10-15 years shoes lost quality and are no longer very durable.

#### Edit 5. Starting to speak about the situated experience (subcam recording)

She looks at the screen and starts to describe what the setting was and where she intended to go.

Before going to the Clark shop, cited as a second choice, she would like to check some alternative options. She points the finger at the street where in that moment she wanted to visit a shop (not visible in the distance yet). This is an example of re-enactment with a correspondent image on screen. At the beginning it is impossible to say if she will engage in a paratelic or telic phase, although going into alternative shops points to the paratelic modality.

#### Edit 6. About the walking attitude.

I ask her: "*do you always walk like this on the street when you go shopping?*" It is deliberately a fuzzy question in order not to direct the answer; it is aimed at understanding if she has a clearly aimed telic attitude or if she is in a more playful modality where the goal is not strictly pursued. She answers "*I always go like this, I have an aim in mind, I always go to a particular shop, I am not a big window shopper*". Notice that this answer was not induced in any way and that the participant spontaneously distinguishes the two attitudes.

#### Edit 7. Re-enactment. Edit 7-B. Further re-enacting.

In this edit it can be noticed that re-enactment can be anticipated with a few seconds in relation to what happens on-screen. The participant here recalls having gazed to the left noticing a shop she will subsequently visit. Asked why and how she recalled this event she reveals it being salient because unplanned up to that moment "*I remember it because it was an extraordinary event*". She explains further that she planned to go to the Clark shop but that she probably remembered on the way that there might have been two or three shops in that area (implicit knowledge).

#### Edit 8. Inside the first shop. & Edit 9. Interactional shopping.

She enters the first shop (Office) and goes to the right in the direction of ankle boots. I ask the participant if she always goes shoe shopping with friends and she agrees. She likes to go accompanied at least for shoes because she is able to ask for a second opinion. The same is not so important for clothing. Without me asking she further adds that it appears different for her to look at shoes from above than it is to look from far. So an accompanying person helps to make a more informed decision in that she delivers a third person perspective.

#### Edit 10. Navigating a shop in the exploratory phase. & Edit 11. Unpacking situated memories.

By looking just at the subcam recording one can notice that the participant is undecided about the route to take. I then ask her to explain how she decides to go further into the shop or retreat. She confirms that she had an hesitation at that point but that she decided to go further

inside because she saw a sale sign on the right that made her remember they had a big sale section at the back of the shop where she figured out were ankle boots. On the film it is very apparent how memories get reconstructed by reliving the visit. One can also notice very clearly by the movement and pointing gestures she makes on video that the material installation inside the shop is inescapable for mnemonic anchoring of the action. She explains for example having thought about the sales section because she first saw the bench on which the partner sat down on a prior visit in that shop (meanwhile bringing her left index to her left eye). She says that just afterwards she sat down on the same bench.

Edit 12. Situated memories of far episodes. & 12-B. More prompts for memory testing.

Inside the description of the selection process she nests a narration with very fine details about the first time she visited the shop (*"it was very hot on the day... ...I remember I was sweating, I remember it was crowded; it must have been a Saturday,"* and so on.) I suggest that also episodes far back in time might also be easier triggered by viewing a similar recent episode. If this were true, but has to be tested more extensively, it would mean that similar episodes far apart in time can be easier recalled by viewing the more recent episodes on a subcam recording. I then ask if she could remember whether the first visit was one or two years before: she was not able to surely remember that, but she recalled details about how she was dressed.

Edit 13. Another instance of joint shopping.

At a certain point of the browsing around inside the shop she decides to leave, but turning around she sees men's shoes and shifts her goal to finding shoes for the partner. They then spend some minutes looking at VANS shoes. There are two aspects to notice in this edit: the former is that the shift of focus in the action is without notice and based on the material arrangement of the display, the latter is that the two actors exchange the focus between her and his needs tacitly.

Edit 14. Exiting the shop, continuation of the exploratory phase. & edit 15. Goal diversion. & Edit 15-B. Example of a cue based recall.

The goal is now the former one to go to the Clarks shop; she seems decisive but just one minute afterwards she notices some sales in a clothing shop and she makes an effort to convince him to enter because he needs a jumper. She then sees a hanger and tells the anecdote about being undecided in taking or asking for it, an example of cue based recall that for its triviality would probably never have been told.

Edit 17. Goals and activity.

I now ask her about the progression of the activity and its nature. The two actors have a different style of shopping and this is by now quite clear. She describes her style as more

focused and goal seeking whereas the partner would be more flexible and could ideally not complete the activity on the day and instead distribute it across many days in many smaller episodes. We might interpret the two types as being mostly telic for her and mostly paratelic for him, although this must be discussed under the light of the situated instances.

Edit 18. Entering the focal shop.

They are now in the Clarks shop looking for the shelf with the right size (during sales shoes are organized by size and not by type). She now tries to remember a past visit when she saw a specific type of shoe; we have to keep in mind that under the interpretive framework of this study a past visit constitutes a past episode potentially part of a repisodic chain. I then asked why is it important for her to remember exactly what she has seen before (in a past visit). Her answer is a very important passage for the whole research: *“because I kind made half of the decision before. And I think I just want to make the other half right now. After having seen them again;... It becomes easier ?... to... to filter? Whereas to accommodate to a new pair of shoes, to a new style... would be hard work again”*. She points out she saw those shoes not in the same shop but in a Clark's shop in Richmond (the shops arrangements are very similar in the whole London). I advance that the essence of the repisode, the reason why people implicitly seek repisodes, is facilitation of decision making.

Edit 20. On the mechanics and purpose of repeated shop visits.

I now ask her in more detail how many times she might have seen those shoes before and another episode of a Clark's shop visit comes to the surface. She does not remember if before or after the Richmond episode but there has been one more episode: a third episode makes the event a repisode in my opinion because the setting repeats and also because she is consciously seeking repetition of same stimuli (same product). I ask: *“and why didn't you buy them then?”* She answers: *“I didn't feel... I think I wasn't ready to buy shoes”*, an answer that reveals the need for a period of incubation. She also adds how long it takes for her to decide to buy shoes, a few weeks she mentions: *“it's a process, I kind of get used to the idea that I'm gonna buy shoes; I start talking about them first, I need shoes, I browse the internet and I go into shops then”*. In this participant the decision to buy shoes is progressive and not at all impulsive.

Edit 21. Nearing the decision point.

Now she finds the focal shoe. Since the product is displayed in three color variations she has to make an effort to remember the one she liked most in the prior visit. It can be noticed how important it is for this participant the exact reconstruction of past episodes; it would be in fact in principle the same to choose them once again. On the contrary she spends some time doing this effort of remembering. This passage is in my opinion very important although I cannot see a plausible explanation to this behaviour other than memory being more vital for the

human being than new experiences.

Edit 22. Unpacking the process of decision.

In this edit an interesting episode of “memories negotiation” takes place. She did not remember well if she saw a brown or a grey one in the previous visit so she tries to reconstruct the memory by looking at the price. Notice here that the cues price, color, design are brought into connection in order to reconstruct what shoe she half-decided before. However the partner is there with her and he tells as well his own version of what shoe she saw on the previous visit; in a way they engage in a memory negotiation episode during which the reconstruction of the right memory is more important than deciding for a pair of shoes!

Edit 23. Narrating the final phase of decision. & Edit 24. Checking size. & edit 25.

Dispute about a fault in the upper.

Now she asked for the right size in brown but the right size was only in grey. She tries them on and likes them; however she finds that the upper has a small fault on the leather and would like to have the pair changed. At this point she experienced an episode of bad service where the sales assistant suggested to brush the leather with a dirty rubber thus probably worsening the damage.

Edit 26. Final decision. And Edit 26-B again on the decision point.

In the end she took the shoes with the faulty leather anyway and received complimentary material for their maintenance. I then ask when she situates the decision point. She answers three minutes before paying but we don't have to take this answer as the one that sheds complete light on the process but only as its climax: from the whole interview we actually see that the decision is a matter of more weeks.

Edit 27. Re-ranking the factors for choice. Edit 27-B. Adding a factor.

I now ask her for the factors for choice a last time. She retells the same ones as in the beginning but interestingly putting price at the first place. She further mentions comfort. This is not surprising and on the contrary consistent with the model elaborated because tactile and proprioceptive factors come usually at the end of the experience so that they are not mentioned at the beginning before re-enacting the whole experience.

Edit 30. Fitting and mirror. Edit 31. About the shopping partner.

According to the model many participants find the final push into deciding for the shoe by looking into the mirror, so I ask her if she decided during one of the last mirror episodes. She answers that this was not the trigger for her. I then ask her how the partner looked at her shoes and how he switched from and to the mirror. This instance is very interesting because it builds a sort of perspectives play: he first takes her perspective by looking into the mirror from her side; he then moves away and looks at her and her shoes from a third person perspective and

encourages her to choose for those. She interprets this move as he assuming the perspective of a stranger.

Edit 32. Perspective taking as habit.

The participant now tells the learning of this process of perspective taking from the mother. She remembers her mother first taught her to go to the other side of the room in order to judge how clothing or shoes sit on her figure. The participant has then tried to transfer this habit to her boyfriend.

#### *6.2.9 Participant 014*

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Participant 014 is German and Turkish, photographer and student, 25 yo., living in the UK since three years. He has some knowledge of the shopping area.

Edit 1. Setting off.

As for the majority of participants also participant 014 has a certain style in mind, by which we can interpret also type or category of shoe. He hints to a sort of substitution need; he wants to find an improved design of a similar shoe he already had.

Edit 2. Going inside the first shop. & Edit 3. Taking the first shoe in hand: exploratory phase. & Edit 4. Commenting on the shop layout.

The participant sets off to buy shoes with the partner. It is relatively common for participants to go on a joint shopping trip with someone else who can be partner, friend, and relative. In this case the two would like to find shoes for both. In this edit they visit for example a shop that has on the same floor the female section and the male section distributed on a sort of circular space divided in half.

They go on dialoguewise, where she suggests the shoes and he comments on them, for example describing how the toe of the shoe should be like. It is noticeable for example that he says: "*I want her to have comfortable shoes*", signalling a merged shopping experience. He has the perception and explicitly says that the activity is interactional; for this reason I advance that this form of joint shopping is actually a form of paratelic activity.

Edit 5. Interaction between the two. & Edit 5-B. Form explanation to situated description.

He appears explaining something on the recording so I ask him what he was talking about. He says that he was talking about his next trip to Istanbul where it will be raining in the following days and where streets will be rather muddy. Subsequently in order to explain the point to her he points to the shoes on display, switching from an explanatory modality to a descriptive modality. He is able to describe to the interviewer the content of the discussion by showing what he was pointing at and manipulating in the environment, giving an originally

situated description of the scene.

The current participant could see the shoe of interest in many different contexts because the brand is quite common. For this reason we can interpret each instance of encountering this particular shoe an episode in a episodic chain.

Edit 6. Factors for choice: substitution need & Edit 7. Going back in the years to the first buy. & Edit 7-B. Unpacking the additional reasons for buying them.

He reports having had this type of shoes already several times. He can say a lot about the shoes in question so describing in detail what the physical characteristics are. The main reason to continue buying them however seems connected to the first time he bought this type because back then he discovered they were wide enough to solve him a problem with the fitting internally a made-to-measure orthopaedic insole. The value of the insole is twice as much that of the shoes so that the main product of interest for his posture and comfort is actually not visible.

Edit 8. Considering various factors.

At this stage he describes what he is looking for in the shoes; he seems more interested in style and design than anything else. The rest of the factors are expressed in a negative form ("*I don't want too narrow laces or I don't want canvas*" for example). Price comes well down the process and is not perceived as particularly important, also because such shoes move in a tight range of about £60.

Edit 9. Getting info on the internet before buying.

He had a very clear idea about the shoes to buy because he declares having searched for information a lot online. Consequence of that is the non-discovery nature of the shopping trip but a rather mechanical selection based on what he figured out already. One has to notice a marketing feature of such shoes: to an outsider they seem all the same, whereas the huge number of slightly different models (for colours, details, combination of materials) are actually recognized by the young consumer. He goes on saying that he looks at the shoes on the internet also in order to go more aimed to the high street shops and spend less time there. He reveals in fact *hating* Oxford Street and all the consumerist buzz surrounding it. Such declaration suggests that he might not like the paratelic part to the activity but this would be a coarse interpretation of his attitude. More probably in my opinion, and the idea seems confirmed by his narration, he probably shifts the paratelic part of the activity to a different level. In relation to shoe choice the activity he talks most relates to watching people on the street

Edit 10. Remarks on time spent shopping. & Edit 11. Shop visit for her.

Above he says that he does not like spending time for browsing and purchasing shoes. There is however the other dimension of consumerism rejection. This would be a point worth

expanding because of its social and group identification potential. He finds that the partner is also quite decided in buying her shoes and that she knows where to go to make her quick purchase.

Edit 12. Resuming the orientation phase in Neal Street

He sees similar shoes in a shop window in a different area (from Oxford street to Neal Street now);

The factors he considers to buy shoes remain nonetheless the same. He first looks at the style; then he appreciates the bottom (design/material), then the upper made of leather.

Edit 13. Checking on the permanence of taste. & Edit 13-B. Long narration on self-image.

I ask him since how many months or years he buys mainly brown; he answers 3 years. I then remark that probably the stability of the shoe model tends to give an image of continuity of himself. He agrees with that, but also since this can be mismatched for a skateboarding and hip-hop style he wants to set the accent on his originality in interpreting the style and the shoes help him to cool it down.

Edit 14. Back to the subcam recording: orientation phase

He knows area and shops quite well. He says "*I always go to this shop*" implying a habit out of this activity; it also implies that he does no longer interpret his visits as countable, i.e. they are no longer at the level of episodes. The transition from the non-familiar to the habitual has at this stage been accomplished.

On the other hand it must be noted that for a participant who has already restricted his choice in the central area of London to four shops it comes easier to construct a habit out of his shopping activities because of his stable product preferences. Since he is focused on one specific type of shop his discovery phase is much reduced compare to other participants.

Edit 15. Exploration phase. 15:10

He is now inside a new shop; he says he looks at different shoes although they differ just by small details, the type being always skater shoes. By the time of the replay interview the shopping experience is some days away but the participant finds that he can profit from the knowledge acquired to go back and buy more of the same. I observed in other participants that such thoughts are a form of time capitalization.

Edit 16. Exploration phase inside the shop. & Edit 17. Exploratory phase; next shop.

He enters the last shop among the four he had in the list and he appears to know the shop well. I ask him if he knows the shop; he answers with a detailed description of how the shop is organized and says that he will go straight down to the basement. He starts to look at VANS skater shoes again, much like in the other shop and says he can buy the shoes here: he

declares the final intention so that if the previous could be interpreted as the preliminary phase (paratelic?) then in this shop the phase should have become telic.

Edit 18. Exploratory phase, considering shoes in detail.

Asked what he was doing in there at the moment (just reached the VANS display), he reports about his interaction with the shopping partner; it is about him talking about details of shoes. Clearly interaction is as important a focus as it is looking for the shoe if not more. He then explains that in the light of the subcam recording he is thinking about optimizing his next shopping experience. He realizes at that moment that he uses one only pair of shoes at a time but that he could use more pairs to rotate them and let them appear newer at any one time. He then finds that this strategy would allow him to go shopping less frequently.

Edit 19. Probing for paratelic vs. telic activity

I now introduces the concepts of paratelic vs. telic with a long question; it is not possible to tell the participant explicitly about the theory of course because it would take long and it might also not be very interesting to him. By telling him that people are in general interested in the shopping activity more than in the product itself I would like to elicit how his activity compares to the more general public (he shifts to the *crowd* denomination). He tells that he hates the crowd on Oxford Street, and not much for the human density but, he explains, for the different kind of activity they perform compared to him when they go shopping. I advance that this utterance confirms he does not share the same kind of paratelic activity as the majority of consumers. However I am convinced that he does not reject completely the paratelic character of shopping but that he shifts it to a different level, probably the one of interaction. This turn taking is very important for the research because without any prompt he observes that people in a crowd are characterized by similarity among individual activities and thus by similarity of their goals. He however does not share the same goals and thus not the same activity and consequently not the same mood either.

Edit 20. Expanding on mood and crowd.

I ask him now why it is important for him to be in the same mood as other consumers in a crowded but delimited public space like a shop or shopping street. He gives a very interesting insight appealing to evolutionary psychology. The probable reason to be annoyed by the consumers' crowd doing incompatible activities is that it cannot be interpreted as collaborative: "*they do not do the same as you*" he says. In practice he sees other consumers either as collaborators or as competitors (or indifferent or free-riding or else). In practice it annoys him that they do not perform collaborative tasks. He makes a funny example of a cave, where everyone should collaborate and not stare at the i-pad autonomously. On Oxford Street he feels estranged by all the people who look into their i-pads (metaphorically) with whom he cannot

connect.

>Edit 21. Consideration phase. Ranking the factors halfway through. 24.58

He then looks at one more variation of the same shoe; he finds in this new one fur inside which constitutes a new different factor. I then ask him to rank the factors for choice once again for me. He cites in the order: 1) Style with its practicality, 2) colour, 3) material, 4) the sole and its material as a compromise between elasticity and solidity.

>Edit 22. Asked now about a possible internet buy

He generally does not trust online purchase for many reasons. 1) Size, since you cannot try them beforehand. 2) Questions if the shoes you receive will really be as they look like on the internet. *"You cannot trust pictures"* he says: notice that he is photographer and art student.

3) The third problem is for the image of the self they will produce when worn.

Regarding this last problem one could object that actually it does not make any difference trying them on in private after having received them per post, or trying them in a shop in public. There are two main differences in the two conditions here. First by trying them in shops one receives an immediate impression of how they look like on the figure and on the style they produce. Second, the presence of the public is something that could influence the decision based on what they are selecting as well. Third, and most important, the presence of a shopping partner who, if the theory is right, could constitute a third person perspective on the self-image. 4) The fourth reason why buying on the internet is suboptimal for him relates to the fact that he has to send them back by post if they are not right, wait for the money to be accredited on the card; that is naturally cumbersome.

>Edit 23. About the urban setting of shops.

He further states that he likes to browse in shops but not in chain shops. That is why he prefers smaller cities where some sort of alternative city centres can be identified. Usually such parts of the town are more historical, cosier, have small cafés and restaurants. Notice once again the connection to food.

>Edit 24. Exploratory phase still. Long digression of shoes as signal of political orientation.

The participant is now in front of a crowded display so I ask him how he can orient himself in front of such huge choice. He adopts a very personal strategy to decide which shoes can be interesting for him based on attaching a sort of social label to them because specific social groups tend to wear certain kinds of shoes. His sophisticated experience in recognizing people according to what they wear is then his compass in selecting shoes in a very quick way. This feature is really amazing in this participant because this happens in a matter of fractions of seconds. He then goes on explaining to me how prototypical individuals of those social groups

look like and what their political inclinations are. The video editing is really worth seeing at (*participant\_014 – Edit 24 – minutes 30:25*).

Edit 25. Exploratory phase entering one of the known shops. & Edit 25-B. Cecking on paratelic activity

He now enters a fifth shop, always belonging to his short list constructed in more years of browsing and purchase history. Asked how many times during the season he engages in browsing behaviour (paratelic activity) in those shops he answers “*never*”. He describes his behaviour as very telic, goes to the shop, finds the shoe, buys and goes home.

Edit 26. On types of shops, display, environment.

He then insists on the difference between independent store and chain store. He says that in the area considered there is some traces of independent store and that is the reason why he continues going there. Indeed the Covent Garden area, which is private by the way, is recognizable as a remainder of the old London. He goes on to show me how the independent shop is different from the chain shop based on furniture, display, visual cues. As an example he says that shoe in the chain shop look like chickens in a cage. The final reason he gives to have a more personal approach to shops is that they “*ease the feeling of alienation*”.

Edit 27. End of the exploratory phase: aiming for the last shop. & Edit 28. Decision to change of shop

He reviews the list of shops he visited. He now enters the shop *office* and he reports to know, just before entering, he will get his shoes there. Since he is still with his girlfriend, they decide to split and brows the shoe display independently in the two different sections, female/male. He finds the shoes, checks the price, but for some reasons he decides to change of shop once again. He goes to the partner and does an unexpected act: he asks his partner: “*Office or Offspring? Which one would we like to support?*” A rather interesting course of decision-making that implies a final negotiation between them. Why that is important to be noticed is clearly the reinforcing nature of the act for the couple bonding and as statement of in-group belonging.

Edit 29. Asking and waiting for the right size.

He is now inside a fifth shop, where he looks at variations of the same shoe: he never changes model but only colour and details which are enough to ascribe the shoe to a different social sub-group.

Edit 30. Trying shoes on. & Edit 31. Final shop.

In this shop he finds almost the right shoes although there is still a problem with laces. He will finally find the model he wants in a shop he visited beforehand and that he knows since

some years. It almost seems that in the whole shopping experience it is more about shops than about shoes.

Edit 32. Interacting with the shop assistant.

He asks for the size 12 but being too big he asks for 11. He then pulls out the insoles he has to fit inside the new shoes and explains the shop assistant about the special need.

Edit 33. Paying for the shoes and leaving. & Coda, Description of routine behaviour.

In the final frames he tells: "*I think now I am relieved*", having found the shoes. The utterance is consistent with the model in that completing a telic action relieves anxiety.

I finally ask him about the consciousness of performing routines when going on shopping trips. He states: "*the way to school for example, if you remember your time when going to school, sometimes you would try to go another way because at some point going always the same street again and again would be really exhausting in the end, like mentally exhausting, because it is too much of a routine*"... "*you know I think routine is quite comforting, and it's very important, and if you don't have a routine, and if I don't have a routine my whole life gets messed up, and if I have a routine I am even much much more productive; but if I have too much of a routine it gets boring.*" The edit is particularly precious because it contains an explanation of the function of routines as a comforting tool that allows planning. On the other hand, and this feature is also contained in Apter's reversal theory, routines can engender boredom, the opposite paratelic state to excitement.

#### ***6.2.10 Participant 015***

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Participant 015 is a Chinese woman, around 23 yo., who live in the UK in the last four years. She knows central London and especially the West End having studied in Aldwych at the LSE as an undergrad.

Edit 1. Starting the subcam recording

We jump straight into the subcam recording from the beginning of the interview. The participant explains her shopping plan referring to three main thoughts: 1) she has in mind several shops; 2) she is also trying to picture the kind of shoes she would like to buy, focusing on an already rather clear idea of them.

Edit 2. Checking on the knowledge of the area. & Edit 2-B. Frequency of shopping episodes.

She decided to go to Covent Garden, an area she already visited many times. Asked about how often she did that she reports about every 3 weeks, not only for shopping though. This is often enough to consider it a habitual stroll in a shopping area. She went several times to the Covent Garden area and she actually bought frequently, half of the times she went there for

shopping (not only shoes of course). By that frequency we can assume that she acquired some forms of habit regarding the different parts of her shopping activity. I calculate that having been 3 and a half years in London she might have had around 30 instances of shopping episodes in the area.

Edit 3. On the preference for the area.

I ask her why she likes the area. She says it is a nice area to shop because it is closely packed with shops, thus one does not have to walk long distances to find what one needs. Optimization of travelling distance is a common denominator in all participants. Also she finds that range of prices there are very similar across shops and that this is practical from the point of view of the shopping experience.

Edit 4. About social learning.

I ask her if she discovered the area alone or through someone else. She refers that the area is near to Chinatown and that for this reason she might have been introduced to it by some acquaintances at the very beginning but she does not remember for sure. Other than that she thinks that the discovery was very much obtained by own discovery motivation.

Edit 5. Shopping and window shopping.

Now the participant makes a distinction between the two activities. She says she returns times and times again to the area because she actually performs two distinct activities, shopping and window shopping. This assertion triggers further interest for me to dig into the distinction of these two activities that might obviously refer to the distinction in the model between paratelic and telic activity. She reports window shopping as an information gathering activity that she can do also in other areas of London, areas like Bond Street where she would never go to buy.

Edit 6. Approaching the shopping area.

Now we start to look into the real action portrayed in the subcam recording. She starts by telling when she exactly enters the shopping area. Mentioning "*entering the area*" is somehow obviously artificial because there are no physical limits to that, so it is a matter of her perception based on perceptual cues. She knows rather exactly where to go, so that at this stage the of activity can be classified as telic. She points out however that she keeps her eyes open so that she could actually look at all the shoes that were on display in new alternative shops.

Edit 7. Orientation phase.& Edit 8. Entering the first shop.

She is now getting closer to the shop she intended to visit first. She has in mind her ideal shoe, confirming that she is in the telic phase of activity. She now sees and enters the first shop.

The first criterion to select a product is a negative one: not having high heels. Pricewise she has a budget of £100 but as we will see she is flexible on that: she would be ready to spend more if the shoe she finds is really good.

Edit 9. Exploratory phase. & Edit 10. Browsing behaviour.

She first finds a bootie that is suitable for the not so cold weather of that period. I now ask if she is browsing or selecting shoes; she gets the difference I mean in behaviour and tells that she is actually browsing, implying that the mode is paratelic. She further tells that she did not do any browsing expedition before because she prefers to concentrate sopping discovery and purchase on the same day. She did not do any exploratory trip to shoe shops before that day. This course of action implies that she will make a back and forth through different shops.

Edit 11. On the choice of that very shop. & Edit 12. Touching the first shoe.

In order to choose the shop she goes for a compromise between choice and price, the former being huge in that shop, and the latter relatively balanced. She then touches the first shoe and drops it shortly thereafter explaining that it is not matching her criteria (toe too round and chunky). She tells that this selection act was like ticking the first box: if it does not satisfy the first condition then it is not really worth considering other factors she says.

Edit 13. Going for the familiar. & Edit 13-B. About innovative shopping

She reports having many shoes already in that style. I then ask her why she goes for familiar items; she answers it is a safer option and that she is not looking for a radical change because her shoes have to be practical and not luxurious. I then ask her to give me an example of when she bought something completely different or new in the past. She says that buying different styles can be connected to social shopping; she remembers having bought some item departing from her tastes when she shopped accompanied. The change of mind happens because you first discuss about the item and then you feel like having to try that piece on.

Edit 14. Continuing the browsing of shelves.

On a different part of the shop she looks at a display; I ask her if she thinks to some different kind of shoe if the model remains more or less the same. This question is towards ascertaining the constancy of goal. She answers that since her first need is to find something practical, that she can wear every day, the kind of product stays the same throughout.

Edit 15. Exploratory phase.

From this edit on we can notice an increase of touching and manipulation events. Even if technically the consideration phase is after having found the focal item I see her behaviour as not being really exploratory because having already clear in mind what she would like to find, she goes directly into the more sensory intensive part of the action. My guess is backed by her referring that she found fur inside the current shoe and that this must be very comfortable. This

part resembles more the telic phase.

Edit 16. A list of factors.

I now ask her to rank me the factors she is considering for the current shoes she is selecting. She states that she is currently comparing the shaoe/style of the display shoes to the ones she was wearing. This first facto is a relational and situated one, so something very different from an abstract factor as many other participants told me about. She then cites material as an important element to the purchase. I interpret referring to the shoes she wears as a substitution need, something opposite to the discovery of some new items. We might advance that when one goes for substitution then activity becomes more telic. Also this fact implies stability of taste.

Edit 17. Trying to unpack how factors are ordered. 14:49

It is interesting to report a long extract of her description of "*I guess, obviously when you browse around, I mean the look of the stuff you are trying to buy is the first thing that comes to your mind; so if it looks good, well, will cause you to actually pick it up, but when you actually hold it in your hand it just automatically I will try to feel, like I will bend the shoe, to see if if it's bendy, like it's not very hard, I feel if it's comfortable, and then I will probably make a judgement if I will try it on*

. She states the almost obvious but this is a clear illustration of the first two of the three stages in the consumer behaviour model I am proposing: visual, sensory, proprioceptive.

Edit 18. Price.

Asked when she would like to look at the price she states that she would look before trying on. However if she does not find it she would anyway try them on. At this stage it is anyway a rough calculation, she would not do a systematic appraisal of the shoe value; price comes in second order compare to the other factors.

Edit 19. Finding the first focal shoe, & Edit 20. Browsing behaviour during involvement phase.

She now finds a shoe she will later buy, just not in this visit. She cannot tell exactly when she came back to see that shoe again. She is holding the focal shoe in the hand. At the same time she is staring around so I ask her what she is looking at and how. She tells that she was probably trying to spot something else because she guesses she has a different benchmark holding the shoe in her hand. I then ask what she means by benchmark and she explains that the shoes in that area of the display roughly matched her criteria, (light, flat, for warm weather) so that by holding a benchmark in her hand makes the comparison easier and it becomes possible to do that from a distance without taking each of them in the hand. She needs to proceed in this way because she mentions being tired from seeing so many shoes and this way is

somehow easing the burden. She knows however as well that this selection modality is alternative and compensatory to the other one and cannot substitute it.

Edit 21. Expanding exploration in the shop and exiting & Edit 22. Looking at shop window again.

She now goes back to an area of the shop where she spotted some other models; in this part of the shop episode she touches and manipulates many shoes. By going out of the shop she spots once again the shoes she touched inside the shop; she likes the shoes and she is almost decided. She says however she needs more exposure to a wider range of stuff to actually make a decision. This assertion is consistent with the paratelic phase and as evidenced in other points of the analysis it leads to a cognitive saturation that can be measured in items seen and touched. Naturally the amount of sensory events varies from participant to participant so that to obtain significant averages one would need a big enough amount of observations (in the order of 80-100).

Edit 23. Number of shops to visit.

I then ask how many shops she had in mind to visit and how long she would stay in each shop. The data obtained through these answers can be used to compare remembered and represented durations and frequencies to the ones measured on the subcam film itself.

Edit 24. Entering one more shop between exploration and consideration. & Edit 25.

Deepening on the social image associated with a shoe

Noticing the she is quite quick in exploring shops I ask her how long it takes to decide that there is nothing to get from a display. She says that in many cases two seconds are enough to judge if one shoe or a group of shoes are interesting. The criterion to make this quick judgement is style and sometimes it is imagining what she could do with that shoe. This last reference is very important because it hints to the salience of activity in the participant's memory, on a par with cues that are often judged as more important by the industry's professionals like trend or fashion.

She says that it can be that quick because the activities referred to are really everyday ones like being at school. She says "*when you see a shoe you picture yourself wearing it*"; this assertion implies that she has a very quick judgement of the possible uses of the shoe. She explain that in saying that she had in mind one specific incident that is somehow emblematic; in any case she says that her social activity is not that diverse so there are very few places where she can imagine wearing it.

Edit 26. Episode of social comparison.

As in other participants, the reason not to buy some shoes lies in the representation of

some acquaintances' style. In this case she wants to avoid imitating someone else's style.

Edit 27. Exiting the shop again.

Since she decided to leave once again the shop although she told me to have found something interesting I decided to ask her explicitly for her thoughts in that moment. She says she was a little disappointed; she explains that if you buy something in a shop you will like it more and if you don't buy anything you will end up by disliking it a bit more. It seems then that positive decisions lead to a reinforcement of all the cues contained in that positive event, environmental ones included. I see in the participant's claim an enlightening explanation of how repisodes are generated: it is by successful past episodes that one decides to go back to the same shop and tries to relive some situations that have been pleasant and successful.

Edit 28. Again on the street – exploration.

Now the participant seems to be in a telic mode because the type of shoe she would like seems to have been focused. The paratelic activity phase slowly gets to its natural exhaustion by cognitive saturation.

In this shop for example she still looks around in order to get surprised by something she says. Notice that the modality is slowly becoming passive (being surprised is definitely less active than looking for new shoes).

Edit 29. Again on social comparison, & Edit 30. Reconstruction of memory processes, & Edit 30-B. Situated example of social comparison.

In the display of a new shop she spots a pair of shoes she saw worn by an acquaintance; she liked how this person was dressed and shoed but she would not picture herself wearing those same shoes with the clothes she has. She knew the shop but she did not imagine going there in order to buy shoes for herself. However, since her acquaintance looked nice with them she decided to consider the offer. She is then able to point exactly at the shoe she meant and give details of the product in relation to the third person. It seems particularly relevant for this participant to compare the offer in shops with representations of acquaintances wearing similar items.

Edit 31. In front of a shop window; hinting at habit

In front of a new shop (Camper) she looks at the general offer and remembers having read (advertising) that those shoes are comfortable there. The first cue is visual from a distance and again it is style. However until now she only looked at this shop from the outside and was never inside. She talks about window shopping specifically at this shop as a habit; at further questioning she tells that she had been in front of the shop windows 3 times.

Edit 32. Digging into repisodic formations, & Edit 32-B Habit is actually confined to a specific action (window-shopping).

Since the participant declares that she had been actually too few to consider this specific activity a habit I pose more questions to understand if this can be considered a episodic chain. She cannot explain completely what the habit is about here; however she knows that there is a clear divide between looking from the outside and looking and manipulating inside the shop. I ask her why she came to cultivate this specific habit of looking at the shop windows of this specific shop. The interesting datum is here that she can ascribe habit to a specific activity even it is confined to window shopping and does not involve going inside and touching, manipulating and trying shoes on. This is a further confirmation that the division in exploratory (paratelic) activity and consideration-involvement phases (telic) is justified.

#### Edit 32-C. Factors linked to habit formation

I ask her explicitly if the factor “comfort” is the important one in order to go to the shop and build a habit out of it. She answers coherently with what she stated at the beginning that comfort *“is one of the factors that I will eventually consider”*. So since comfort cannot be seen from the outside she still has to judge from style and this remains the first reason to go inside and try them on. The shop remains unappealing to her because of not passing the first criterion, style.

#### Edit 33. Referring to telic activity.

She tells now that all the way long until now she has been looking at shops she knew already and only afterwards she would look at unknown shops. This depends on her having *“a very clear purpose”*, another reference to telic activity.

#### Edit 34. Entering a known shop.

I now ask her how she decided to go inside this new shop. She answers she had been in that shop many times before (5-6). Since the visits are countable I classify this succession of episodes as episodes; thus they cannot be considered an outright habit. She has not bought there yet.

#### Edit 35. Browsing inside displays: exploratory phase.

As other participants this one orients herself by broad categories (sneakers) instead than by brands. Inside that style of reference she will look for new designs. It is debatable if a same shoe with new details is a new shoe or always the same as before. Obviously consumes like to have repetition in the models and do not like dramatic changes. It remains to be understood however why they look for small changes: is it a sort of social signal?

#### Edit 36. Ranking factors halfway through.

She distinguishes again factors from far: 1) look (style). Then she cites factors going near to the shoes: 2) heel, 3) touch, 4) flexibility, 5) price. She confirms that the division in factors from far and from near is correct.

#### Edit 37. On the entrance of a shop

She stands currently near the entrance of a shop but she is not deciding to enter it: I ask her why. She tells that at the entrance she notices a long list of brands highlighted right by the door. She finds first that the offer is quite mixed up and then that by looking at the list of brands she might be interested in only one or two of them.

She explicitly says that had she not seen the list of brands she would have taken a look inside: It is an interesting example of how advertising can actually be counterproductive!

#### Edit 38. Going back on her footsteps. & Edit 39. Entering the first focal shop

Before going back to the first shop where she actually saw something interesting, she takes a further look around to see if there is anything new she might have skipped. She then enters a shop she did not know before. She enters it spontaneously because she pictured that one of the shoes in the shop window are worn by one of her friends. She likes his style so she decides to enter and finds a colourful and appealing offer. She notices the advertising stating that they are the most comfortable European shoes...

#### Edit 40. Trying the shoes on. 41:24

She will now try the shoes on; I take the chance here to ask her about the trigger that can lead to the final phase of heightened sensory effort, proprioception. She reports here having decided based on the advertisement (comfort); this is one of the very rare cases in which a participant refers explicitly deciding something based on advertisement cues. She goes straight to the mirror and tells about an episode of explicit social comparison. She first refers wanting to picture herself with different clothes, like shorter trousers and "*if thi's gonna look good on me*"

#### Edit 41. Looking for the point of decision

I try to elicit a direct reference to decision; she cite the timeframe of the consumption decision which is in this case the summer (we are in January here). I ask again about the decision point and it situates just after having seen the shoes 3 times into the mirror (*43:41 in the replay video interview*).

#### Edit 42. On price just before paying.

I finally asked her if she had an idea of the price until then. Curiously she did get an idea of the price by hearing other shoppers near that section speaking about them and she knew it was about £60. At this point in the action all factors have been met and saturation of the action is quite apparent. However the final trigger to buy seems to be the interindividual comparison with the person she had in mind from the beginning.

#### Edit 43. Explaining the final decision

She says she is not 100% satisfied with the choice because she does not have many

clothes to go with this, but since she knows someone who looks good with these same shoes, then they are in the comfort range that fits her criteria. She finally reports that the decision might have been a little impulsive.

The whole decision process is very well reasoned. There is however an element of impulsive buying in the choice of shop more than in that of the shoe. However notice that the shopping area contributed the habitual part.

Edit 44. At the till.

She looks around to see if she sees any dutyfree sign, although she knows she would not get any refund.

#### *6.2.11 Participant 017*

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Participant 017 is Danish, consultant, 35 yo., partly living in the UK since four and half years. He has familiarity with the shopping area chosen (Covent Garden). We ade the replay interview few days after the shopping trip.

Edit 1. Before starting the recording

The participant deliberately gives a first account of the motives of today's purchase. He saw the shoe shop a couple of times before and he already had a look at the shoes without finding the right size

Edit 2. Expanding on repisodes and habits.

He refers living in London since 4 years and half, which is a time long enough to consider he might be familiar with the environment. In fact he passed through the shopping area several times so much that it became almost a habit for him to have a look at the shops.

Edit 3. Habit formation

He highlights that the purpose of passing by in that street was ultimately to go to University and that window-shopping was actually a concurrent activity for him. The participant refers to watching shoes passing by as a second telic activity: it is because he has free attentional resources that he gives a look at the shop windows. This activity seems different from paratelic behaviour in my opinion because it implies a parallel different goal from the one to go from point A to point B but the goal is nonetheless present to consciousness and long-term. Also he describes noticing details and cues on products as an event more than an activity.

Edit 4. Explaining how ambulation habits influence the decision process. & Edit 5.

Shopping strategies.

In this edit I ask him if knowing the area influenced his final shop choice. He engages in a structured explanation of his shopping strategy. Since London is quite big it is impossible to think about covering the whole offer in term of shops or even of shopping areas. For this reason

it is impossible to do a proper search. Then one strategy would be to go to a department store and have a look at many brands in one single shopping trip. He points out that this is only a browsing strategy and that he would not necessarily buy in there. He sees two downsides to this, the "*sensory bombardment*" he gets in those places and so he needs to have not only a lot of choice but also cognitive parsimony in order not to get overloaded.

Edit 6. Comparing department stores and shopping areas.

Although he refers to many shopping areas in London, asked to cite which other he knows he does not really cite any and continues to describe and extol the Covent Garden area. A reflexion on habit here. Habits seem to have an effect also on the representations consumers have of areas of towns. Habits contribute to crystallize and reinforce beliefs about the vocation of certain spaces. Ultimately habits are a categorization process tool.

Edit 7. Orientation phase. & Edit 8. On the timespan of the experience.

On the subcam film we have now reached the shopping area of interest. The participant sees a shop and tells that he is looking for a certain style of shoes. He spontaneously give a series of criteria for choice, showing a developed organization in his decision making process. One must notice however that he already performed several expeditions and that the paratelic part, if at all there must have been exhausted some days before.

Edit 9. On price paid.

He says at this point that he was ready to pay £120-130, considering the type of shoes he wanted to buy. He ended up buying for 170 though so I prompt him to tell why he paid much more. The reason he explains was that he did not get all the criteria to get added up in one shoe; the only type of shoe that went near was the Clark's desert boot but it appeared narrow in the foot.

Edit 10. Getting to the area. & Edit 10-B. Remarks on wearing the subcam.

He says that on the subcam film one can notice that he walks quickly; he says he is checking out if there is anything there (in the shop windows). He says he is also conscious of wearing the subcam at that stage. He gets this perception from people's gazes towards him who clearly notice the tool he wears (he is recording with a bigger Panasonic camera by the way).

Edit 11. Still orientation phase. & Edit 12. Replay interview introspection. & Edit 13. Orientation phase, watching shop windows.

His quick browsing causes my question about what he is looking at; he is in fact glancing for no more the one and a half seconds to windows. He says: "*yes, but you can scan a lot in one and half second*". This triggers a question about goals. He says he is thinking about where the shop is at that moment. This answer implies he is in a telic modality because the activity implies an end-state to be attained. In confirmation of this interpretation he is able to describe very

detailed how to reach the end shop and what he will find on the way. If he were in exploratory mode the chance of him being in a paratelic state would be higher.

On the way he quickly considers similar items to the one he is aiming at. Although such impressions are really fugitive, stopping the subcam recording allows for a much broader reconstruction of thought: the participant is in fact able to construct a small story about the shoes we see on the still frame.

#### Edit 14. List of factors for choice.

In this edit I ask the usual ranking of factors half way through the interview. He starts with colour as the main reason to select the item of interest (not blue and probably green); he then gives material as the second (suede); third is type of shoe (casual); fourth is price. One can notice that the ranking is broadly consistent with the list participant usually give at this point prioritizing visual factors on sensory ones. One exception could be seen in the second factor material but it can also be noticed that he is not focusing on the touch characteristic of the material but on its visual aspect (suede is matt compared to other types of leather).

#### Edit 15. Window shopping. & Edit 16. Orientation phase - shop windows

He is now very near to the focal shop and just before reaching it he stops in front of another. I ask him what he looks at there. He sees here a certain brand of which he had experience in a previous purchase; he was not satisfied with it. He is now in front of the Camper shop; he reveals wanting to see if the shop window is like it was some weeks ago when he checked it and see if there was something new. He says: *“because I have been in this street before, if there is anything I have not seen and on this quick glance it seems that the line-up is the same that I have seen before”*. The mentioned action is possibly peculiar because it seems almost like checking if everything was in the same order as last time. Of course this could be a strategy to spot if anything is new but it also implies a shift of goal: the goal no longer is that of finding new shoes but to see if the memorized previous pattern has changed. The two activities are not equivalent although the end result might be.

#### Edit 17. Prior to exploration phase.

I now ask him how many different shoes he has in his pipeline to try on. He mentions an alternative choice of two models. I also check at this point his memory of the sensory experience he still has of the other shopping trips, asking him how many shoes he touched during the rest of the experience, He refers a total of 4-5 pairs, underestimating the total number that can be seen on the subcam recording itself.

#### Edit 18. Asked about brand impression on others.

He does not want any label on his clothing; the reason is not that he does not like labels or brands but he does not want to make them visible. He is interested in brands only as much as

they are synonym of quality. I then ask if brand and impression management are related for him; he does not refer a direct link but he believes that comfort and appearance are related because if the shoe is not comfortable it would lose shape quite quickly appearing worn out.

Edit 19. Just before entering the shop.

He now says he now wants to verify if the shoes are too “*edgy*” (meaning peculiar). He is almost sure about buying them but since they are quite expensive he feels he needs more trying on. We will see that this intention will impact the mirror sequences.

Edit 20. Entering the focal shop. & Edit 21. Discussing the mirrored recording.

In this replay interview an accident happened with the recording; I inadvertently mirrored the whole recording so that things that appeared on the right now appear on the left and the other way round. The participant told in at least two instances that this mistake made it difficult for him to “orientate himself”. However inside the shop the mirrored image appears more difficult to comment on. It can be advanced that this has to do with the actionability of the projected space as is also confirmed by recent literature in memory re-enactment (Glenberg, 1997). He explicitly says: “*I know I can explain to you but in terms of aiding my memory it would be easier for me if things were in the right place.*”

Edit 22. Probing the difference between street and inside recording.

I now ask him if on the street the sensation was different compared to inside. He says it was odd still, “*because if you know Covent Garden, you walked down, you know that everything is in the wrong place*”. A very interesting insight from this small incident. Probably since on the street re-enactment is just visual it seems that it can come easier, whereas inside the shop it might be more effortful because there are different sensory modalities involved and/or more resistant memory paths are involved. Such appreciations are just incidental and a more proper screening of literature on the relation between memory and neuroimaging is needed.

Edit 23. Commenting on the focal item

At this point the participant spontaneously stops the recording to tell about motives in an episode of detailed retrospection. It can be appreciated how this event is a retrospective one because it is not only a description of what can be seen in terms of objects or sensory cues in the environment but a list of motives in relation to those objects. He focuses at this point on the factor color (visual cue both from far and from near); he then cites matching with clothing and finally price, saying that some shoes in the section he is considering might be cheaper (probably compared to what they used to be in other visits).

Edit 24. Expanding on the factors for choice

I further dig into other motives he might find in selecting these shoes. He cites

versatility and reasonable price. As a third factor comfort, although he did not try them on until now.

Edit25. Touching and manipulating the product. 19:54 & Edit 26. Manipulating the focal shoe

This edit sees the shift between visual and sensory cues. As mentioned above touching a pair of shoes produces a different description. The focal shoe is the first one he touches; the aspects he becomes interested in are flexible soles, soft material on the upper. In this case the factors for choice become focused around comfort, less about colour and price.

Edit 27. Discussing third person perspective (mirror)

He says at this point that he would like to get a third person judgement for the shoes he is going to buy because he is worried that the unusual shape of the shoes might be considered odd by others. Also looking at the shoes into the mirror is not judged enough because he would prefer to get feedback. Further, in apparent contradiction to what he just said, he refers he never goes with anyone on shopping trips because usually he has a strong opinion on what he buys.

Edit 28. On advertising and point of sale imagery & Edit 29. Asking for the size.

At this point the participant is waiting for the right size of the chosen shoe. As happened in other subcam recordings he starts browsing around. This is a paratelic phase inside the overarching telic activity that leads the participant to act in unforeseen ways. In his case he looks and grabs a pair of running shoes that are saliently advertised on the point of sale. He says he is incentivized to have a look at these because the shop even provides a running belt inside where one can run for real. He waited to ask for the size until the sales assistant became available. In the meantime I ask confirmation of my assumption that this phase is a paratelic one. Essentially he seems wanting to try these shoes on because of time optimization.

Edit 30. Interaction about the subcam

In the final moments of the replay interview the participant tells that the sales assistant noticed the camera so that he felt like he had to explain to her what the experience was about.

The very last part with the description of mirror fitting and paying is only on the subcam film itself (also online); the video recording of the replay interview stops just two minutes before because the card was full.

7 Discussion of results

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In this section I summarize the findings of the empirical part of this study focusing mainly on the contribution of subject evidence based ethnography (SEBE) used in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> chapters. I will discuss how the methods of content analysis and replay interviews can be merged to extract a model of activity in the real world. In the light of my empirical findings I will contrast what content analysis as opposed to recall of episodes and narrative accounts of situated activity produces. Essentially this will be a discussion on the possibility of comparing what we see with what the participant says as a result of retrospection. This specific case study in consumer buying behavior will serve to sketch a framework for activity reconstruction that goes beyond this research topic towards developing the first person evidence based ethnography method in accounts of situated activities.

The chapter is organized as follows:

7.1 Discussion of the results from both analyses: how content analysis has been complemented with insights coming from the replay interview and how the activity phases are modified by participant explanations.

7.2 A model of buying activity that incorporates the findings above and that suggests a division in two macro-phases, paratelic and telic.

7.3 Discussion of the results from replay interviews, chapter 6 in order to further strengthen the model. The continuum, of memory types; from procedural through episodic, episodic, to semantic memory. How habits can be possibly explained by considering the effects of memory types.

7.4 Economic behavior under the light of the mentioned findings.

7.5 How subjective evidence based ethnography has contributed to the formulation of a summarizing model of activity in which habit takes a prominent part in the reconciliation of rational and affective views of human behavior.

## 7.1 Phases of buying behaviour revised after replay interviews

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Section 7.1 discusses how the division into phases in content analysis (chapter 5) have been clarified and amended through the analysis of replay interviews (chapter 6).

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter we have seen how the naïve observer is allowed to understand activity from watching others acting in a first person based recording. Observations by researchers of single gestures and actions have revealed some key features that justify the intersubjective recognition of actions at a pragmatic (Kendon, 1980), developmental (Goldin-Meadow, Alibali, & Church, 1993) and evolutionary level (Tomasello, 1999; Trevarthen, 1993). For an action to be objectively classified, a peak structure and some form of boundary for the start and end have to be identified. Since the interpretation of filmed activities in the three different interpretations given by 1) researcher, 2) participant, 3) independent third parties are highly consensual, it can be inferred that the actions seen in the subcam recordings have these properties. The consensus seems to rely on simple recognition by virtue of phenomenological mimicry: the observer knows when the peak of the act is because he would perform the act in the same way. This insight confirms on one hand that the method of interpretation proposed in activity theory by von Cranach and Kalbermatten in the early 1980s was indeed correct (Kalbermatten, 1982). Ease in recognizing and interpreting others' actions also supports recent theoretical insights in intersubjectivity studies that show the implausibility of mindreading or mentalizing theories in favor of direct social perception theories (Gallagher, 2008). Strong experimental evidence in physiology also suggests the presence of specific neural circuitry as the base of such phenomena, building a bridge from 'doing' to 'communicating' (Rizzolatti & Arbib, 1998) and justifying the concept of intersubjective brain resonance (Petit, 2008).

The problem of interpretation in the whole analysis of first-person recorded activity in this study pertains to the distinction of conscious and pre-conscious actions.

Elementary components of action entail an excursive structure, the property of starting and finishing in an end position that is physiologically stable, a property that in ergonomics is attributed to ballistic movements (Plamondon & Alimi, 1997). Larger actions can thus be deconstructed in a series of such smaller movements. Preconscious activity is in my opinion especially situated between kinesic behavior and conscious complex actions; of course one can imagine quite large courses of action in which pre-consciousness plays the main role, very much like sleepwalking. In this study visible instances of pre-conscious activity are the tiny sequences between the end of trying a pair of shoes on while the participant is seated, and reaches for the mirror. The flow of actions in between (a matter of 5 to 10 seconds typically) is more than a

ballistic movement and is less than a complete conscious action. I maintain that phenomenologically the goal is reaching the mirror but that the participant is not conscious of all the action passages that this entails and that from a motoric point of view they are not completely ballistic (although composed of ballistic movements), they are automatic, which is different. Automaticity in Aarts and Dijksterhuis' sense still implies conation to be enacted, whereas the ballistic movement has a physical life of its own (produced by inertia) (2000a). To make the concept clear it would be possible to call these actions automatic deliberations (in presence of a goal) or, to use RAT notions, pre-conscious operations. At stake here is the correct definition of an elementary action and this is matter for a new evidence based phenomenology that would transcend this discussion. I leave the question open for future research.

At this stage for the final interpretation of the subcam recordings, it is important to state the continuity that characterizes preconscious actions. The reason to insist at length onto this point, and I beg the reader's pardon, is because the pivotal points in the division of actions are action changes and they imply a redefinition of the goal: as a norm a different action corresponds to a different goal. Preconscious actions appear natural to us as beholders because of their continuity, whereas what attracts the interpreter's attention are action changes, the boundary conditions. This is obvious because by watching a person doing something the question is not what her movements are but what her goals are. Once another's goals are understood, humans usually feel like they have understood another's actions.

This brings us to the discussion of the categories derived from watching the recording in an unsupervised manner. The inherent non-transparency of motivational constructs and partly of goal constructs, in the case that the object is not in the field of view or is not obvious, define what participants and interviewers can interpret. Operations can generally be seen at once but goals require time to be recognized. Motivations are generally non-transparent. In the case of habits or routines the structure is exactly the same: goals may be visible at once or less so. What changes is the level of pre-consciousness versus consciousness in the individual and this is a factor that is virtually invisible to an outside observer. The methodological problem becomes then: how is it possible for an interpreter to distinguish actions that are performed for the first time from actions that structurally stem from habitual behavior? Replay interviews have efficiently answered this problem by showing how participants were able to describe repeated versus one-off actions. The problem remains about how it is possible to phenomenologically distinguish a habitual action from a one-off action.

The discussion on the phases of buying activity that have been extracted and analyzed, integrated with the participants' comments follows. Here I describe the distinction between the different levels of procedural, pre-conscious and conscious action.

### *7.1.1 Orientation phase*

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Moving around an open shopping area and inside a closed environment is the first activity I considered in participants' experience. It could be characterized as finding the way and arriving to the shopping area. At the level of content analysis it was very visible from a descriptive point of view but not much could be said about the motives and goals that move the participant in this phase because there were no points of anchor for the interpreter. As a result the motivation-goal structure at this stage was particularly opaque and at the beginning a thorough verbal account was needed of the replay interview. This entailed the phase of ice-breaking with the participant in which motivations and goals were discussed openly.

The phase before entering the first shop happens in the open-ended and thus there is a great variance among participants. This is the phase in which it was possible to elicit most clearly repeated ambulation episodes: it was because the participant went through the area many times before that she/he knew the area and took a path almost automatically. Indeed in this phase the installation social structure was largely responsible for the participant's actions because it offered a rigid setting in which affordances could appear to the subject. The space of the discretionality for the subject is in the picking up of cognitive affordances; while the pathway is predetermined it is subjectively determined how long an individual stops in front of windows or advertising. This was an opportunity for prompts during replay interviews.

It has to be noted that disinterested ambulation by participants seems to heighten the power of environmental, especially visual, stimulation. The two types of visual cues are described in section 2.1.2: purposefully put in the environment by companies, and non-intentional communication. In the first case, the participant accepts signals, such as advertising or windows, to be engaging attractions thus unidirectional passive communication. In the second case, the participant has a more critical stance and appears to extract information independently. In this latter case information seems to be collected either to spot opportunities or just to use it in a discretionary way in a more distant future. The distinction between telic and paratelic activity can also be called in at this stage; to a telic stance seems to correspond less possibility to be influenced (participants 007, 008, 010, 015, 017 are manifest in this regard)

### 7.1.2 Exploratory phase: entering shops

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In the long ambulation phase, the final stage is marked by entering the shop and moving around in it. I suggest calling this new restricted space the *proximal* environment. Actions that happen inside the shop are proximal because the environment is much more *at hand* than the street; affordances are at the level of the different sense organs. The exploratory phase is from entering the shop to fitting the first shoe, when a change in the sensory modality is identified. The main sense involved in this phase is again seeing. In the browsing activity from a distance, wandering with the gaze in the distal environment is very different from the intentional watching that the actor performs from a near distance when she decides to grab some object. While this phenomenon is quite clear by watching the video in an unsupervised manner, it is also difficult to formalize and could in principle be justified by a measurement of the distance between participant and objects. The fact that the participant looks at many shoes before the consideration and involvement phases is revealed by a buildup of possible choices. It seems that, with considerable variance, consumers need to have a minimum number of items to select from. The explanation of several participants who eliminated some shops because they declared there was not enough choice is emblematic, whereas a rational approach would suggest that finding the right shoe would be enough. Consumers seem to buy selection and not just an item. Since with the method used it is not possible to say how many shoes participants looked at (for this an embedded eye-tracking system would be needed), I consider the frequency of shoe touching as a proxy for the extension of the phase of information gathering (orientation + exploration + part of the consideration phase).

The objects of interest inside the shop are often ready available and can be touched and manipulated. What is inferred at the level of content analysis is the emergence of the intention to consider the product with other senses and passage to the consideration phase. I decided to insert the touch and manipulative activities in this phase because I supposed, as an operational hypothesis, that the pivotal point in the change of intentions and motivations corresponds to the discovery of the focal shoe. The replay interviews have revealed that this supposition was not misplaced because participants explained a difference level of involvement from that moment on. The passage from the exploratory phase to the consideration phase seems also to be a shift to a more thoughtful mode; I can advance that it corresponds to engagement in a telic kind of activity. Until the end of the exploratory phase participants that were in a paratelic mode shift to a telic one; this invariably seems to be the case as the activity turns into something more serious and involving, from collecting information that may or may not be

immediately useful, to considering an actual pair of shoes for immediate purchase. The shift is from possibility to actuality.

### *7.1.3 Consideration phase: manipulation*

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Consideration phase has been recognized as the third stage of the shopping activity, beginning with touching the focal shoe. In some participant there is overlap between the two phases because there were participants who first found the focal shoe, then tried on others and then after a while went back to the focal shoe to try it on as well. The cited shift in the progression of activity (appetitive/paratelic to consummatory/telic) in fact only occurs when the participant changes her goal from gathering information to buying.

Attempts to elicit from participants a description of the use of other sensory modalities was not a particular problem, it came naturally. Browsing, seeing, considering visually implied distance from objects; picking them up, manipulating, weighing and bending them to test their solidity or flexibility implied on the one hand proximity to the object but also more effort. Gradually the proximal environment becomes smaller and smaller. The decrease in the area of consideration is also responsible for the triggering of the appropriate afferent sensory modality. However, by themselves these different modalities would not be enough to determine a different phase; the phase had to be clearly identified by the participant herself and documented verbally.

An aspect of the consideration phase that is somehow parallel to the use of different sensory modalities in actual action is the use of gestures and acts during replay interview. Because of the use of a large screen for the replay interviews, participants had the chance to interact with the data much more actively than with a standard screen. At this stage it happened often that a participant stood up and went to the screen. I tried to notice if this was correlated with standing up in the original action as well and I came to the conclusion that there might be three factors involved. First, the participant at this stage is more confident with the process of the replay interview and feels more at ease to perform a little. Second, the participant might become involved in the action of explaining the activity. It is as if the participant constructed a motive out of the questions involved in the research protocol: something that started playfully (there was no compensation for the activity) ended up having a goal in itself. Third, there is the possibility of re-enactment of the same actions in the original footage. This possibility has been already used in cognitive psychology to test theories of embodiment for example through the exploitation of the perception-cognition connections (Elder & Krishna, 2012). This venue of research opens up a promising research opportunity also

in a laboratory setting where mimicry triggered by first-person ethnographic video data could be used to cue participants in manipulated conditions.

#### *7.1.4 Involvement phase: fitting and mirror*

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In the content analysis of episodes this phase of the shopping activity was signposted by the decision to try on a pair of shoes. Since the phase entails different physical action than the previous one (the start of action is measured from the foot entering the shoe) the passage is explicit. Importantly, this action did not change the local goal of the activity that was the one of selecting the “best” product to satisfy the need. It was apparent from the film that before this phase participants touched the items on display more often, a repeated action that was quite frequent (25 shoes on average). Trying on shoes, is a less frequent and obviously more demanding action (4 shoes on average). The first modality is characterized by a tactile sensation, whereas the second is proprioceptive, i.e. the sensation comes from a more complex interdependency of body parts (dermatomic, nociceptor, vestibular, kinesthetic senses are involved). The participants were not asked explicitly about this shift of sensory attention, and this was spontaneously mentioned only by two of them (008 and 017). Even if not explained in a direct way, the shift in modality can be indeed inferred from the change to a different mix of actions that accompany it.

At this point mirror sequences generally start. The concurrent shift in sensory modalities and then immediately the use of the mirror implied a definite characterization of the participants’ related motivations. The turning point can be noted in without supervision (change of action sequence) but more commonly during the replay interviews: mirror sequences are very important markers of different utterances during replay interviews (more on that in 7.2.2 and 7.2.4). This turning point determines the most important feature of the model that I report in figure 33. Looking into the mirror is an additional shift to a special visual modality (see participant 007 and participant 017, involvement phase). I would ascribe two orders of phenomena to the mirror sequence: re-enactment of the acts that were performed at that very moment and social identity considerations. The former reaction has little to do with vision as it was used in the exploratory activity and with hard-wired mimicry. The latter is also very pre-conscious notwithstanding the fact that it becomes very difficult and complex for the participant to verbalize it. This finding is quite original in this study and in my opinion it points to a phenomenon that has evolutionary neural causes; it might in fact be an extension of the automaticity of motor recognition discussed in section 7.1.

Now this is a typical case in first person ethnography; for a constant goal (finding the best product) a different motivation sets in (social and self-image considerations). This dynamic is not contradictory and has been noted in other cases; it essentially implies that the situation is judged to respond to another latent need. The final picture is that the phases before this one can be considered a pre-involvement phase, from this point on actions are dictated by a phase of affective and cognitive involvement, there is a real shift in cognition and affection, and probably the most important in the whole model.

This is the case because the turning point is, relative to the rest of the action, the most demanding physically and attentionally. We are of course not speaking of a particularly demanding activity in general (shoe buying behavior can be classified generally as between a leisure and a mildly demanding task), but it contains an important phase of involvement that affectively demands all the participant's resources for a short moment: spanning from the decision to try the shoes on to the moment of paying (4.26 minutes on average). After the replay interviews this interpretation confirms a supposition that to an expert's eye may occur by viewing the first-person recording in an unsupervised manner as well.

Vision in this stage undergoes another change in modality; it now serves the purpose of that kind of perception mentioned in section 2.2.2, perception of the self. Attention shifts from environment and objects (ecological determinants) to latent needs and social comparison that are to be classified among internalized cognitive-affective motives.

#### *7.1.5 Decision point and Post-decision phase*

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The *decision point* is somehow a contradictory term, as the whole activity is the real decision. It is however debatable if the decision did not actually start even before the activity was recorded, for example when the participant left home with the intention to go shopping. The point is that what is normally called a decision, according to the model that is emerging, is mistaken because a decision is exactly a process that builds up and that can at any moment break down and that has no clear beginning and ending. I maintain at this stage that the real turning point is not actually when the participant appears to decide on a specific pair of shoes (usually in the proximity of the sales assistant), but before that, in the passage just explained from consideration to involvement. The interpretation seems to entail a point of no return from the moment in which the participant feels committed. It can retrospectively be considered trying on the focal shoe, with individual variance. Participant 015 for example, who was the only one who did not try on any shoes, showed a similar dynamic when she discovered the focal shoe; from that moment on she kept the shoe with her in her left hand, while touching and

considering the other products on display with the right hand. Clearly there must have been involvement in the action because keeping a shoe in one's hand cannot be accidental but pre-conscious, especially if you notice in this case that other shoes are alternatively grabbed and released with the free hand.

At this stage a final ranking of the factors that led the participant to her final choice were asked according to the protocol. This generally occurred without difficulty; the particular aspect that relates to the phases of the buying activity is that the rankings changed. There was generally a change in them, so that they went up and down the list at the points in which they were asked during replay interview. I noticed that style and design were the most prominent factors among participants and that those factors were ranked higher at the beginning of the experience (before starting or at the beginning of the interview) and very often at this stage, just before giving back the shoes to the sales assistant. In this case design/style, and "*how it looks on me*" reappear as the most important factors, before material, quality, price and other considerations. Price is generally placed among the last factors (the very last in many cases). It seems to become an important factor around the midpoint of the experience. That the factors cited at the end of the experience show a similar ranking as in the beginning of the experience can be considered an original finding of this study that is principally linked to the division in phases of activity. A further examination of the specific patterns of factors that emerge in the course of the buying activity for other products could lead to the discovery of psychological regularities.

## 7.2 A model of consumer behaviour based on activities

The two analyses that resulted in a division of the whole activity in phases can at this point be summarized in a tentative model.

The main division of the model is the left and right division: in the middle is the involvement watershed that separates a macro-phase in which the participant is less involved and to one in which the participant seems having trespass a point that leads to a much higher probability of final purchase. It is important to point out that the first part of the activity (exploration and part of consideration) does not occur only once for each participant; it is much more a repetitive activity and it occurs in the different shops visited and possibly inside shops when the participant switches from one area to another with a different interest. Appetitive behavior is extended. Described as such, the process denotes a circular pattern, where the lack of involvement generates a feedback loop that sends the participant's attention to the former explorative modality. The process is demonstrated by the many shoes that participants touch in

the course of activity prior to finding the focal one and the different areas and different shops that they visit before fixing their attention onto the focal shoe. This circular pattern of activity is very apparent and what the subcam recording makes clear is the shift that occurs. When participants were asked why they did not go further with the selection process they usually describe this phase as information gathering, implying that they were not squandering time but that they were learning.

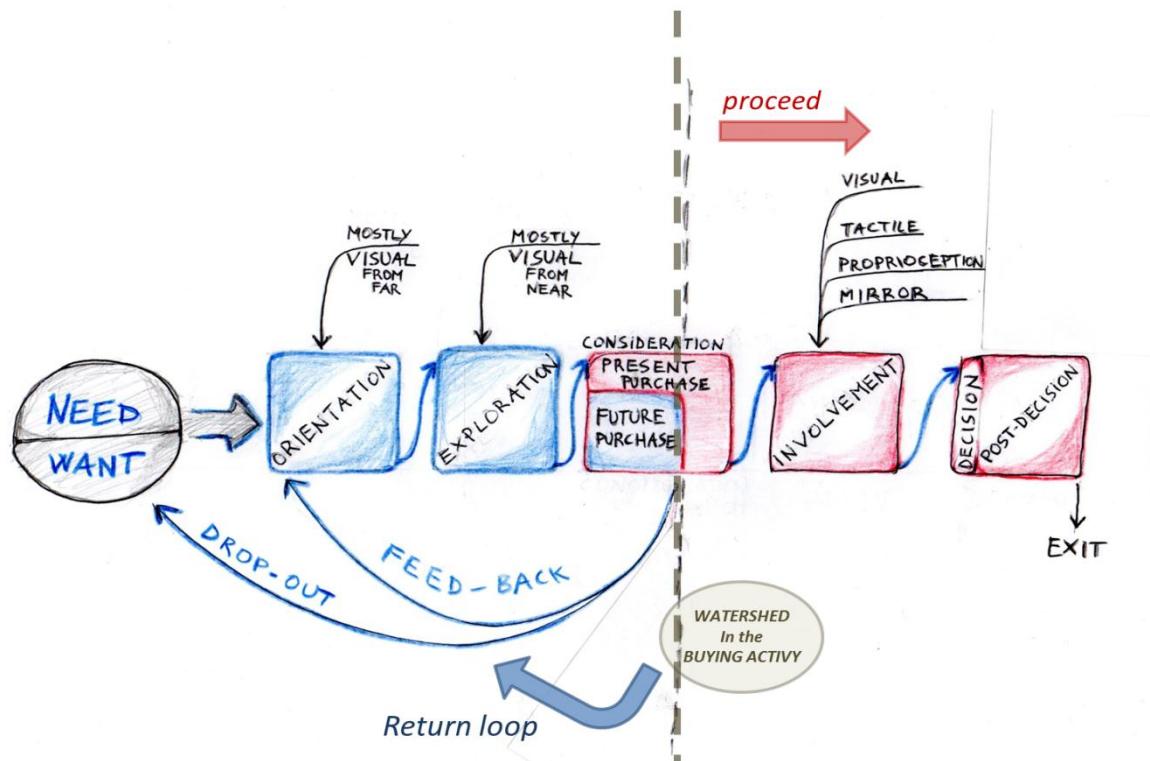


Figure 25 Revised model of consumer behaviour based on phases from content analysis and participants' explanations

The model I derive from my analysis is rather simple and is compatible with Howard's model described in 2.2.3 ; like this one it contains one principal feedback loop. The origin of the feedback is however of a different nature compared to Howard's model; while Howard proposed a deliberate (rational) decision for the opt-out, I observed an opt-out effect that was due to an affective mechanism, affective here meaning emotional or short-term: Kahneman's fast-thinking. The most important characteristic of this divergence is its situated nature. In fact all participants in that moment were acting towards something, manipulating a shoe or engaging at least visually with the item nearby. In other words the watershed seems to depend on an experiential factor, an object, and not just on a thought.

In three participants the watershed is further marked by a specific phenomenon, the "wow moment", in which they utter surprise or enjoyment from the discovery of the focal item. This occurs in participants 003, 004, 005 and 011; I judge this event to be affective and demonstrates

that the watershed moment really triggers a different modality that recalls the ratchet of a bistable mechanism. The two moments of evaluation (visual from far and sensory from near) are quite distinct in every participant. It is in my opinion justified to ascribe them to two different tasks where the final (superordinate) goal is obviously buying a pair of shoes but that it would be simplistic not to distinguish into two distinct activities. The two distinct activities could be ascribed to two underordinate goals, one pertaining to the appetitive sensory system (seeing) and the other to the effectory sensory system (touching, propriocepting).

As for the sensory modalities, in the left phase visual and aural perception play the most important roles: these senses allow orientation from a distance. Sight and hearing play a different role when the participant is inside a smaller, delimited environment like a shop compared to orientation in the open. Reverberation for example offers different cues to orientation in the two settings. In the case of sight nearby items offer different details than the same items from afar: the case of colour vs. texture is paramount. Consideration and involvement phases are more multimodal: touch, smell, fitting in terms of proprioception, visual perception of the self (this most probably implies specific neural paths) are involved.

This model has some old and new characteristics. First, it contains a re-edition of the T.O.T.E. (test\_operate\_test\_exit) process that we saw in the consumer behaviour models in 2.1.3. Further it shows some similarities with the Howard-Sheth model in the steps of selection and choice with one crucial difference: it is not supposed to happen just on the cognitive level but it embeds consumer activities. I state once again that my model derives strictly from observation. Engaging or not engaging with the product is what distinguishes the two macro-phases. The return-loop continues until the participant either concludes the activity or definitely opts out. Continuing the activity entails that the participant restart the exploration loop from any point in the proximal environment with a different product. It is not by the successful completion of the activity (purchase) that the participant reaches satisfaction. Since each phase can be the last one in the activity sequence the whole process must be considered under a different light than satisfying the need to purchase a product because of previously developed preferences. The end of the process must lie in a form of cognitive closure or a homeostatic stabilization mechanism that is not necessarily purchase.

The factors that are mentioned above the model (visual, tactile, proprioceptive) acquire different connotations in each phase. Especially vision can be passive or active in the sense explained in 2.2.2; agents are differentially sensitive to the affordances that the physical space delivers and the reasons are both cognitive (recognition of past cues) and affective (level of alertness). If the agent is actively seeking information for purchase the level of alertness might

be higher, so that vision for example becomes “*looking-for*” more than casually “*seeing*”. It follows that more than the presence or lack of affordances, which are a necessary condition for activity continuity, the inter-individual differences are to be found in affective states. However, it is very difficult to characterize participants based on these because they change in the course of the activity, so that the watershed can be crossed at the end of any exploratory loop in which the participant engages. As made clear above, this study does not provide much insight in real-time affective states in terms of physiological data collection (Mukhopadhyay, 2013). In the future such data are likely to provide insight into states of anxiety, alertness, level of arousal, etc. during activity and could be theoretically interpolated with the visual first-person data. However, the retrospective part of the present study has delivered some insights that are accurate enough to say that the bipartition is also affectively characterized.

The role of conscious deliberation based on objective and stable factors for choice in this model seems dramatically reduced; participants do not set off with the exclusive idea of fulfilling the need for one particular factor. It is more the case that a list of cognitive factors for evaluation is constantly refreshed in a rather pre-conscious way. It is only by asking and after some seconds of purposeful recall that the participant is able to rank them. The class of factors that emerges most often during the replay interview is the material one, in contrast to the symbolic one that is usually abundantly cited in open ended-interviews. One obvious explanation is that the first person recording of the physical encounter with the object (the inside heel in participant 004, touch of the material in participant 005, height of the shaft in participant 008, etc.) recalls the physicality of the product better than its symbolic dimension (brand, social desirability, uniqueness, social trend).

The parallel with ethology is also fascinating at this point. A parallel between my model based on observation and ethology can suggest that the left side of the model corresponds to appetitive behaviour, connected to afferent sensory modalities, whereas the right side would be the initial stage of the consummatory act (that of course extends into consumption for years to come). Furthermore, the feedback loop has resemblances to the reafferent loop that provides homeostasis to the system (Baerends, 1976; Hoyle, 1984). At this point, I see fitting a reconceptualization that I owe to ethology; for their inherent stabilizing nature, goals can be understood not only as the final state to be achieved by an action but as the causal motive of seeking equilibrium states. *“It is often argued that, from an objectivist point of view, a “goal” cannot be a “cause” and therefore cannot be taken into consideration in an objectivist science. This opinion is fallacious. A goal is a “cause” indeed, not of a beginning but of an ending. In this*

*strict sense a goal determines the preceding: it determines the continuation of a process".*

(Kortlandt, 1955, p. 172) Aristotle's *causa efficiens* is back on solid biological grounding.

I propose a simplified version of the preceding model that makes an additional point and that seems particularly important because it summarizes the different theories that have been reviewed in chapter 2 and chapter 3. I deem it is reasonable to attribute a paratelic value to the first macro-phase and a telic one to the second. From the merging of content analysis with participants' descriptions we have seen that phase spaces are separated by switches of modalities that are partly explicit and visible and partly implicit and difficult to observe in an unsupervised manner. The modelization of the process has to give an account of how phases are organized in the simplest possible way and I see Apter's model adapted to the my own as the answer to my participants' behaviour. A main shift can be appreciate at a certain point of the experience; I call it a watershed between the paratelic phase, a less demanding cognitive activity and the telic, a more demanding one.

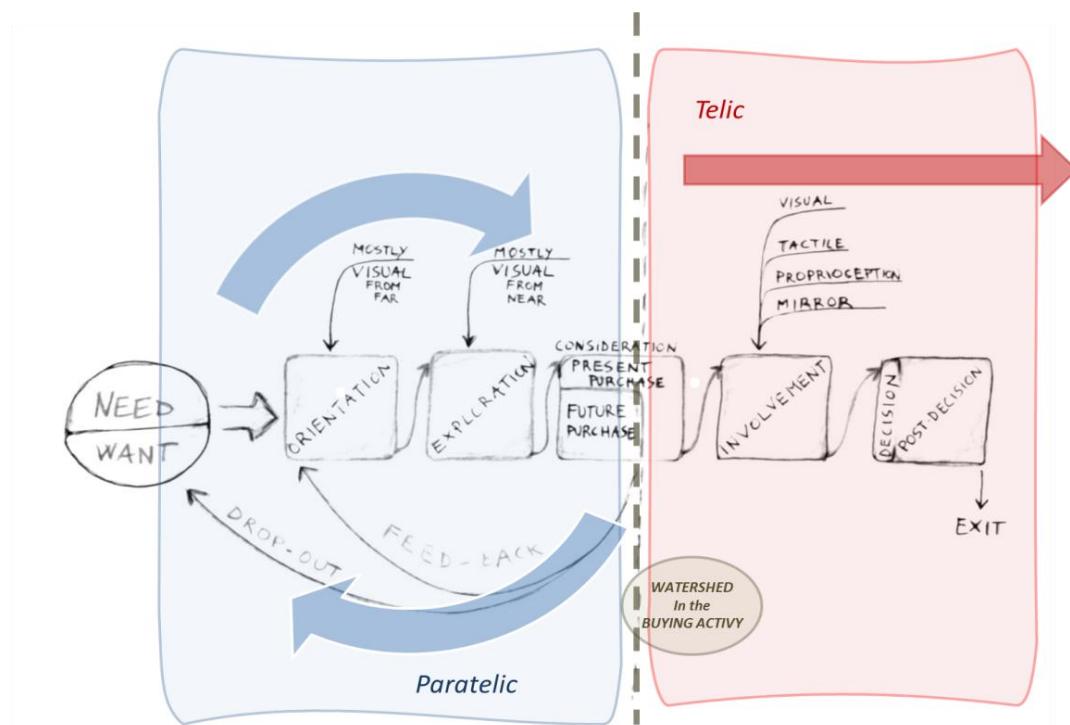


Figure 26 Splitting of the model of consumer behaviour in paratelic and telic parts

The feedback retroaction by which the participant goes back to a previous less affectively demanding modality constitutes a cycle; at some point the participant exits the cycle to engage in a different homeostatic process, the telic one. Buying behaviour is according to this model a succession of two distinct affective states with their own homeostatic equilibrium-seeking dynamic. Furthermore the reversal between these two phenomenological states suggests that the paratelic mode seeks repetition of similar activities in a more or less indefinite

way whereas the telic mode seeks goal fulfilment. As noted above telic activity is characterized by goal attainment, whereas paratelic activity does not contain a definite represented goal to be reached (as is children play for ex.).

But how and why does a switch occur? The switch from one modality to the other in the examined participants carries with it higher motivation; it can be due to higher commitment brought about by the time already spent in the activity. The time span for the paratelic activity is of a certain length at the end of which some sort of change occurs, I would attribute this phenomenon to a depletion of certain kinds of resources, the paratelic ones, which are not strictly cognitive. Clearly the resources we are talking about here are different from the ones in the next activity which calls on more straightforward cognition.

It follows that evaluation phases are not unidirectional in time, but follow a cyclical pattern that is dictated by the oscillations of the participant's affective and motivational states.

During the paratelic phase expertise then is accumulated. Each interruption of the normal flow in fact always engenders a repetition that builds into the participant's expertise concerning the particular situation. It is a special kind of expertise encompassing environmental and social trends. I recall that participants referred looking around at other people while walking in the shopping area and inside the shop. The literature in activity theory suggests that the participant in this way acquires a distinctive awareness of both tasks and environments. Repeating the same actions for different products and in different contexts (or aspects of the same context), can be understood as training that leads to building a more secure and reliable evaluation process for the future. On the other hand, since a participant likes to engage in paratelic activity she then becomes an expert in that specific consumer good. From the results of the analysis we can assume that more expert participants are quicker in selecting products and developing strategies to handle the costly phases of product selection more efficiently.

This interpretation should not to be understood to be valid for every participant because there are participants that denote a telic attitude from the beginning as does participant 008, who does not seem to swing between paratelic and telic behavior, even to the point of delegating the paratelic phase to his companion.

The identification of phases in the buying episodes naturally leads to a systematization that might be over-interpreting related to the sample but that is matter of discussion and research for the future.

### 7.3 Replay interviews, memory and the reconstruction of activity

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In this section I will first describe some insights gained from using this method. Then I will deal with the verbalizations obtained through replay interviews that I claim can be attributed to different types of memory involved in the description of goals and motives.

As the development stage of the method made clear in the pilot interview, the phases of activity, plus the different biographical episodes recalled by situated events, suggest that the ways in which participants make sense of the experience follow some discursive genres that can be mapped onto the type of activity performed.

Fundamentally I would distinguish two main registers in which participants explain the activity, either by situated description or a narrative that entailed a more reflexive mood. For example, situated description is triggered by the exploration of the shopping environment that is largely explained by reliving the path walked and giving a detailed description of what occurred. This finding is consistent with the literature in environmental psychology and its distinction between survey vs. route representation (Denis, Pazzaglia, Cornoldi, & Bertolo, 1999). This register accounts for individual actions that are situated but that cannot be referred to a distinctive event and thus can be ascribed to procedural memory. In this case the participant does things “as usual”. On the contrary when the participant experienced something unusual or worth describing in detail because it was particularly distinctive and affectively striking, then a characteristic episodic narration would ensue. This process probably can be linked to the use of episodic memory. Narratives unanchored by descriptions were much rarer and seem to be highly correlated to the personality of the participant.

The reflexive moment caused by replay interviews turned out to be a characteristic feature of this research. When confronted with the recording, participants were not immediately able to talk about their experience in terms of autobiographical episodes and larger narratives referring to a larger social frame (not strictly biographical). I attribute this feature, first of all, to the need of being introduced to the different form of interview and take hold of the new situation. The real aim of the interview was that participants should have been able to stop and play the recording autonomously and this did not succeed as successfully as planned; also the period of time they engaged in this activity varied greatly. Generally autonomous description began after 10 to 15 minutes of guided description. There were two particularly talkative participants who did not need a prompt to begin with a thick description of their recorded activities and this was clearly the most enjoyable situation for me as a researcher because of the richness of verbal data I was able to collect.

When explicit factors are referred to in replay interviews they can appear at different points, whether at the beginning, in the middle or in the end, even if it seemed that the participant was more willing to state them at the start of the interview. A second major difference between open ended interviews and replay interviews is that the participant in the latter speaks much more about 1) contingent motivations and 2) sequences of actions. This is a specific result of the replay interview and it depends directly on ability to see the material in its original sequence again (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). Referring to the two main levels of ecological installation and social interaction, it can be stated that the replay interview is a necessary tool for their being made manifest.

Recent research in the social psychology of consumer behavior has proposed to use the concept of construal to describe similar phenomena (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak (2007). I identified two levels of object construal for consumer products: low-level construals and high-level construals. In theory such factors are linked to psychological distance. This is to be interpreted not only in terms of spatio-temporal distance, but also social distance and hypothetical-probabilistic actionability (what I can use it for in the future?). In a way they take into account all of the factors I am considering in the replay interview descriptions that try to combine them all in one concept. These authors' framework depicts low-level construals such as: *"relatively unstructured, contextualized representations that include subordinate and incidental features of events"*. High-level construals are: *"in contrast, are schematic, decontextualized representations that extract the gist from the available information. These construals consist of a few superordinate core features of events"*. This distinction superposes quite consistently with my actual framework that foresees long and short term goals with their related mnemonic description. The added feature I am proposing is about implicit and explicit factors in evaluation and choice and these in my theory have to be further decomposed. The breadth of motivations in the individual varies, but all motivations are somehow present in the individual at the same time, although not phenomenologically present; it is the unity of very heterogeneous motivations that hold together the individual's sense of the self (Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2010).

As already proposed, time factors are what should be measured, and already at this stage it can be said that participants are likely to give an undifferentiated mix of short-term and long-term features. Hypothetically it should be possible to devise a systematic method that puts together the two orders of factors by careful classification of the type of discourse uttered, i.e. its syntactic structure. The second order of factors (time related factors) are somehow subordinated to the previous ones (explicit vs. implicit). The whole exercise of the replay

interviewing can be seen thus as the movement towards reducing the implicit factors and make every single step (act) explicit. Afterwards when the description is made as explicit as possible, the time value of the motivations involved can be attributed.

Apparently explicit factors seem to be more clearly articulated at the level of open ended interviews and less frequently, during replay interviews. This impression however is misplaced because these two different realms of description, the evaluative and the pragmatic, are quite different registers that point to different phenomena, the former introspection and the latter (cued) retrospection and they do not necessarily superpose.

It seems necessary to treat higher level motives with particular care. They are an important construct that, as we have seen above, are difficult to reconstruct during replay interviews; activity theory itself has always struggled to get grip on them in a formalized way. Motivations are somehow only inferred, so they do not depend directly on manifest activities. In fact one activity can satisfy different motives at the same time and also one motive can be satisfied by means of very different actions. In this sense reaching a goal through a specific series of actions is not always an indicator of having also reached the underlying initial motivation: there is no direct correspondence. Also, to complicate the matter, and this is probably the most challenging part, motivations are very personal and belong to every individual differently, depending on ontogeny, life-history, culture, education and values in general. However, they are also mysteriously stable.

Motivation and mood are two related concepts. During replay interviews participants appear to have even less insight into short-term swings of moods and are only able to refer to them limitedly because of forgetting. While what I am stating seems obvious, I ground this phenomenon on observation. I have in fact conducted two pilot interviews on participants 001 and 002, interviewing them with a distance of one year from the shopping experience (in June 2012 on the experience done in June 2011). From this trial I learned that emotions and moods were no longer recalled in presence of the same recording; only the gist of the activity and the goals were still clearly identified. I plan to perform these interviews on the same participants again in the coming years.

Apart from the observed sequentiality of the activity, there is the problem to account for the feedback loop in the verbal accounts. The proposed division between paratelic phase and telic phase shows some differences in the way they are described during replay interviews. The difference is noticeable when the participant starts describing the telic part, so after trying the focal shoe on; it seems that the description somehow gets easier and quicker. This fact could be

attributed to the already lengthy process of interviewing that up to that point, has already lasted a long time so that the participant may be tired. The other interpretation is that the participant sees in the description of the telic part a waste of time because once the goal was clearly identified it was no longer necessary to elaborate further on something that had already been decided; from then on the action could have become a *fait accompli*.

Based on the qualitative work done in open-ended interviews, I proceeded to dig into habitual and cultural factors of evaluation. These factors in a dynamic model of consumer choice have been accounted for as experiential factors, so in terms of how they are remembered and retrieved. Learning and memory of past experiences is thus crucial. The factors, that still are not mutually exclusive, could fall into two main areas: again following Tulving's suggestion, the representational and the situational. Some factors would count more on the level of long-term representational memory, whereas the second class on the level of the short-term range behavior. The latter factors could theoretically be dependent on procedural memory and thus recognized in the recordings as linked to specific affordances in the environment triggering operations. The two classes of factors could again pertain to appetitive and consummatory behavior. Appetitive would entail representational, visual, quick to apply, categorical cognition whereas consummatory behavior, would entail more situated cognition: first visual and then tactile, olfactory and proprioceptive.

The model incorporating the bifurcation of choice takes on two other dimensions that become alternatives throughout the activity: it takes one of the two paths, going on to the more effortful, resource expensive situational task (telic activity) or reverting to the lower level of engagement with the environment, paratelic activity. This stage of analysis suggests that this is the main characterization from the point of view of cognition, learning, memory and habit. During replay interviews the two parts of the experience take on a full conative, affective and cognitive description, because of the situated cues that facilitate memory based working descriptions. In open-ended interviews cognitive characterizations are on the other hand dominant.

One final comment concerns the interpretation of explicit vs. implicit activities. It is much easier for an external observer to understand telic than paratelic activity. From a motivational point of view, why paratelic behavior is enacted cannot be known because its implicit goals have been internalized by habit. In a way they can be bent to whatever goal because they do not achieve any concrete goal in the physical space (no purposeful change), what they achieve is probably disinterested re-enactment of previous operations.

This line of reasoning leads me to advance that explicit goal-action events are most probably built purposefully on near-term motivational states that are triggered by changes in the environment. The result is in accordance with Simon's theory:

*Problem solving by recognition, by heuristic search, and by pattern recognition and extrapolation are examples of rational adaptation to complex task environments that take appropriate account of computational limitations—of bounded rationality. They are not optimizing techniques, but methods for arriving at satisfactory solutions with modest amounts of computation. (Herbert A. Simon, 1990, p. 11)*

Indeed we can agree with Simon on this general picture; humans are better modelled by a succession of emotional states that are quite independent from each other. The problem of motivation stability is however always in the background. An action's momentum is another way of addressing the problem; since motivation is a more comprehensive entity, actions are allowed to decay quickly in comparison. This is clearly the case but it is not clear what triggers this; the most obvious answer is discontinuity in perception and subsequent disruption of habit patterns. The stronger habit patterns are, the higher the probability of disruption is, if the frame conditions are not met: a habit of action requires stability in environmental cues in a self-reinforcing process. Habit brings in more habit in unchanging environmental conditions because the process is energy preserving. This fact also explains the presence of anxiety in the telic phase compared to enjoyment in the paratelic phase: since in paratelic activity there is no goal, there is also no need to presuppose anxiety due to disruption of habit patterns. On the contrary, paratelic activity is activity-seeking, as opposed to goal-seeking, so that enjoyment is derived from new situations.

### 7.3.1 From Episodes to Repisodes

In replay interviews participants verbalize and reconstruct actions using different registers according to the events being occurred just once (event or episode) or being a habit. Again such registers can express punctual events in time (episode), repetition (repeated episodes), duration (procedures or prolonged activities) or undefined cyclicity (habit). It has been noted how episodic memory is facilitated by visual cueing of first person perspective bracketed still images (Loveday & Conway, 2011). I advance that subcam recordings empower participants even more to tell about such activities. Having dealt at length with episodes I now focus in a few pages on the remaining constructs trying to elucidate what one of the main contributions of the present research seems to be, that is the description of repeated episodes. For this latter kind of construct I suggest to adopt an old label rarely used, that of repisode due to Neisser (1981). Repisodes can be peculiar actions or chains of events that have occurred more than once but no

more than a certain other frequency. The certain other frequency is dependent on the susceptibility of such actions or chains of events to become habit (which in turn is clearly at individual variance).

The construct of repisode seems then to be situated between the two polar descriptions of one-off episode and the full-fledged habit; replay interviews revealed that participants can describe and recall repeated episodes, procedures and habits in distinctive ways.

Description of repisodes happened in relation to different types of events. The most usual type seemed to refer to repeated explorations of the shopping area for paratelic discovery. Examples of such descriptions are contained in the replay interviews analysis above. I briefly recall six instances that should be enough to make the point.

Participant 005 in Edit 3-A, 3-B and 3-C (*Description of a survey map derived from a route one; Giving reasons for the preference of that specific area*) tells about previous knowledge of the shopping area, acquired through repeated strolling around there. Asked about the motive at the origin of such repetition she refers having done some work shifts in the area (she worked in a restaurant chain) and thus having taken the same path over and over. Repetition in this case promotes the buildup of geographical knowledge of the area. Since the participant however could also have taken a different path around the area, I asked why in those months she took always the same route. She expresses a preference for social life: she cites the “vibe” of the place, the fact that it is full of people, it is a nice area and she likes to stare at people. Such elements point to the paratelic character of the experience; the participant does not do this activity with a utilitarian goal in mind but for a loose interest in information gathering. The character of such activity is conscious but it also implies a playful attitude. We have here the elements of the repisode: a first affective preference towards the first episode and conscious repetition of walking episodes thereafter. Her repeated walks in the area causes then at least two noticeable effects: first she is able to shift her situated knowledge (route knowledge) to a map-like representation of the area (survey knowledge) where to collocate the shops she visited: this is why she is able to plan her visits methodically like a journey (her words). Second she absorbs knowledge of products, prices and trends little by little noticing small changes in patterns of the social installation.

Participant 006 in Edit 6 & 7, mentions repeated episodes of visits in the shopping area where she finally bought the shoes. The account of repeated window shopping was triggered by the request of how she knows the average price of shoes in that shop. She reported having built her knowledge about the price across several months. She also reported having bought a

pair of shoes in a nearby shop the year before, a salient episode that might have triggered repetition of visits (paratelic activity). In this case a succession of episodes is suggested although not described in detail. Based on her narration it is also not explicit if she intended to look at the prices or if the process was more gradual and implicit. In terms of motivation it would make a difference because if the dynamic had been unconscious, social installation must be considered the source of influence for price information acquisition.

Participant 011 in edit 15 (Entering the second shop), was asked why she enters a certain shop. She refers not even remembering the name and doing that just because “*you never know*”. This action is compatible with paratelic activity, because it points to disinterested discovery (“*just to be surprised by something*”). Here the goal of buying a pair of useful shoes stays in the background. Subsequently I ask her how many times she went in that very shop and she answers she had been there two months before. In another edit she also remembered that she had been there more recently (two weeks). In this case we can reconstruct a episodic chain for this shop because the participant remembers about and is able to give dates of the visits, the chain remains so-to-say countable.

It seems a very interesting result of this method that the description of repeated episodes (or episodes) comes easy to the interviewee. Shopping trips panned out to be eminently autobiographical and first-person ethnography is clearly much about recognition of autobiographical episodes.

Participant 007 in Edit 7, (*Orientation phase. Explaining how strolling around builds habit*), gives hints to how habit can result out of repeated episodes of walking a certain path instead of another. He refers having the alternative between Long Acre and Seven Dials (two streets of the Covent Garden area); he prefers the latter because of the scale of shops and of the overall quality of those. We might classify these choice factors as personal aesthetic preferences, keeping in mind that they exert a crucial influence on his environmental cognitive exposure. Asked about the origin of such path preference he was able to tell that this was constructed through repeated strolls: from a first choice, through a first repetition, reinforcement, up to a stable preference that under certain conditions (staying in London for future living for ex.) might become a habit.

Participant 013 in edits 18-19-20, (*Entering the focal shop*) gives an ultimate description of how episodes are engendered. She was with her partner in the focal shop looking for the shelf with the right size. She tried to remember a past visit when she saw a specific type of shoe; we have to keep in mind that under the interpretive framework of this study a past visit (if salient

and remembered) constitutes a past episode that is potentially part of a episodic chain. I asked her why it was important to remember exactly what she had seen before (in a past visit). Her answer is a very important passage for the whole research: *“because I kind made half of the decision before. And I think I just want to make the other half right now. After having seen them again;... It becomes easier ?... to... to filter? Whereas to accommodate to a new pair of shoes, to a new style... would be hard work again”*. She points out she saw those shoes not in the same shop but in a Clark's shop in Richmond (the shop arrangements are very similar in whole London). Although the context of seeing the shoe was different, we are here in front of a repisode regarding the focal shoe.

*Further (edit 20, on the mechanics and purpose of repeated shop visits)*

I asked her in more detail how many times she might have seen those shoes before. Another episode of a Clark's shop visit comes to the surface. She did not remember if before or after the Richmond episode but there had been one more episode. This third episode is in my opinion part of a episodic chain because she is consciously seeking repetition of same stimuli (same product) in a same setting. I ask: *“and why didn't you buy them then?”* She answers: *“I didn't feel... I think I wasn't ready to buy shoes”*, an answer that reveals the need for a period of incubation. She also added how long it took for her to decide to buy shoes, a few weeks. She said: *“it's a process, I kind of get used to the idea that I'm gonna buy shoes; I start talking about them first, I need shoes, I browse the internet and I go into shops then”*. The progression of shoe buying decision is progressive and built on episodes.

A different instance of repisode account is given by Participant 014 (*Edit 5, Interaction between the two. & Edit 5-B, from explanation to situated description*). Because he envisaged buying a quite common brand, the participant could see the shoe of interest in many different contexts (in the order of 5 different shops). He did not mention if he visited the same shops over and over but as in the previous case the various instances of encountering a specific shoe constitute episodes in a episodic chain. The final decision is a product of such a chain thus it is not punctual but distributed in time.

The origin of episodes is then linked to either conscious or unconscious repetition; in the former case the participant deliberately seeks repeating conditions, like looking for the same shoe in different places; in the latter the participant just follows the flow imparted by the social installation (streets, paths, crossings, building distribution etc.). The episode might be repeated for affective causes or not.

The extent of the episodic construct thus has to be identified in the number of instances in which the activity was reproduced. Frequency and possibly timespan is what influences the salience of episodes to memory recall during replay interviews. In the participant 001, for example, his detailed description suggested a fair amount of knowledge about the shopping area he had acquired over about 2 years, with approximately 10 to 15 visits to the shops of interest (4 shops were visited that day). The multiple visits served to weigh the alternatives with wide time lapses before the final decision (in the order of months). I have pointed out that these repeated activities generally show a paratelic component. A more complicated picture about episodes is their different contributions in different times to the final choice. Items, their attributes and place for the final purchase were considered in several different episodes at varying intervals, days or weeks. The repetition of the evaluation is also dependent on the time between visits: the participant does not engage rapidly but hesitates. This is in all probability a pre-conscious process performed by the subject without clear deliberation. It has been observed how cognitive experience in decision making in many cases undergoes a period of incubation (A. P. Dijksterhuis, 2010), (Calvillo & Penalosa, 2009).

There is a growing consensus that the distinction between episodic and semantic memory made by Tulving is no longer as neat as had been thought. The author assumed that episodic memory required recollection of a prior autobiographical experience, whereas semantic memory would draw on thesaurus-like knowledge. Today many interdependencies have been discovered by testing on impaired and amnesic patients in which two neuropsychologists have ascertained the same process I have observed in consumers. This is how they describe it:

*“In other cases, however, the classification [of the two memory types, rn.] is not as clear, as when a participant generates kitchen utensils by imagining what he used in his own kitchen on a daily basis. What kind of memory is this? On the one hand, this memory has no specific temporal date and is not an event; thus it does not quite qualify as episodic. On the other hand, the specific spatial context indicates that it has not been decontextualized and thus is not quite semantic. Similarly, the participant does not seem to be conscious of a particular prior conscious experience, but instead seems to be conscious of an amalgam of several prior conscious experiences.”* (Greenberg & Verfaellie, 2010, p. 751)

The cited passage is compatible with the most interesting theorization until today coming from the stream of embodied cognition. Researchers inspired by that stream of research reject the existence of separate memory systems in favor of a unique ever changing meshing of bodily experiences that produce stable conceptualizations by virtue of frequent memory updating (reinforcement)(Glenberg, 1997). Under this light semantic memory is none other than an averaging process based on frequency of experience (Conrad, 1972) as cited in (Glenberg,

1997); in the author words: “*the distinction between episodic and semantic memory probably reflects a difference in the frequency with which the memories are used, the methods of assessment and the content of the information, rather than any intrinsic differences in memory systems*” (Glenberg, cited)

The modality by which separate episodes become a repisode, is then describable as a progression from a situated behavior, passing through a situated repeated behavior (the seed of the habituation process), to the internalization of abstract instances of those activities. It also seems that activities can be indefinitely repeated and ultimately undergo a habituation process, although it seems that habit is a particularly complex construct that needs separate assessment and discussion.

Having acknowledged the recent debate about the two types of memory, episodic (autobiographical) and semantic (decontextualized) ones, I suggest to still keep the distinction and to use them operationally as the two extremes of a conceptual continuum. An original model of mine contains the 3 discussed stages of repisode formation plus two stages equating to semantic knowledge of future action; abstract model behaviour stays for semantic memory for action.



Figure 27. The episodic chain

The fourth stage of the above model is about the projection of choice into the future. Replay interviews contain traces of such a construct equating to scenario building. Every participant draws parallels both to past experiences and to future shopping. What allows the individual to engage in hypothetical future behavior, for example buying in the coming week, is a representation of the activity that has become largely independent of the context. It is the contention of this interpretation that representations of the perfect decision (from the participant's point of view of course) are constructed through this lengthy distillation of episodes, repisodes, episodic future thinking, and an eventual abstract model behavior.

Another interesting point is that the way future episodes are described is similar to the way participants describe past episodes. This remark is compatible with Glenberg's theory in

that the updating process would substantially modify memory for episodes that would de facto disappear after a certain time lapse: they will no longer serve the purpose of causing action repetition. I quickly observe that the equivalence of far episode and semantic memory for activity seems to map onto sentences' syntax.

Prospective memory of motives is a conscious cognition. On the basis of Elster's work I endorse his view of a rational action that is halfway between the classical concept and Simon's: being able to stick to a deliberation and finding the way to accommodate difficulties along the way to their execution (Elster, 1977). It has been further noted how prospective memory of goals and motives is a conceptually driven top-down process, in contrast to episodic memory that appears to be data driven (bottom-up) (McDaniel, Robinson-Riegler, & Einstein, 1998).

Memory and expectation, especially related to activity, are ultimately interconnected if not the same thing. Memory for action (working memory and recent non salient episodes) decays quickly and is thus not easily reported through introspection.

The actual point of decision-making (present), i.e. what is measured by behaviourists or ideally is observed by ethnographers is deceitful: decision is distributed over time and, with the due distinctions, over space. Action, not decision, takes place in a punctual moment in time and space but leaves traces for future action. Mental activity in a consumer choice operates evaluation (past and future) on such traces of past action as is obvious; however we have to take into account that those traces are not static re-presentations of the same events but updatings of patterns of possible action (Glenberg, cited).

A model of consumer choice (and more generally of economic behaviour) should take into account activity and its traces in form of memory of past activities. Human action is in fact different from the animal action not so much due to the appetitive-consummatory sequence that I hope was duly shown in the paratelic-telic model, but due to the presence of a much more developed memory capability. Hypothesis and scenario building that can be inferred from the retrospective method explained above are in fact projections of past memories.

Inconsistencies observed in consumer choice seem to occur when more demanding tasks are executed and deduction, scenario building, hypothesis are no longer viable due to exhaustion of cognitive-affective resources, the point of reversal. At that point humans seem to resort either to heuristics and instinct driven behaviour or to habit.

### *7.3.2 Procedures and habits*

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Across interviews I pointed out some instances of habitual activity. But how is habit

different from episodic and simple repetition of episodes (repisodes)?

Replay interview analysis suggests that the distinction between description of episode and description of habit is an explicit versus an implicit one. Explicit means that it is verbalized either autonomously by the participant because the episode is salient or with minimal input from the researcher and subsequent description of the episode as one-off or little repeated. Habits are described implicitly if related actions on the subcam recording are not described at all or if the description of the recorded action is effortful, meaning that the participant has a hard time pointing out causes and goals of the action. Habitual activities appear as difficult to isolate from the flow of action.

Two examples to clarify the question. Participant 006 (*Edit 7-b. Consequences of episodes building*), tells that knowledge of the place is connected to pleasurable sensation. She says: "*I like to buy in places where I know I can find things I like. I mean, I don't really like to go to places where I have no idea about the shops; I usually go to places where I know, so... usually I tend to go to... this place for instance, where I knew there were different types of shoes and I would find something I liked, but I wouldn't get the tube to go to some place to get off and just find out what I like*". Here the description of habit is somehow indirect; she starts from the pleasurable sensation to get to the final inference that she went to that place many times before. However the many times are not recollected by number but have already trespassed into habit, somehow uncountable.

Previous research recognized that habit delivers pleasure by cause of anxiety lowering. Habits are preferable to new efforts of discovery: that is documented as well (Wood, Quinn, Kashy, 2002) in the above study; during the interview the participant gives hints and defines more precisely the dimensions of this habit both for the past, in terms of episodes about its acquisition, and in terms of future action, in the number of shops she plans to visit.

It has been observed that self-control can be depleted by conscious acts of volition or decision and that subsequent tasks could be impaired or behaviour become passive. This is documented in (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). From this research perspective, repeated visits to shops have exactly the function of ego replenishing: they can contribute to lower anxiety because consumers are not pushed to decide at once but they would build decision little by little, even not minding making a physical effort to go back to shopping areas and shops. A result is that they build environmental familiarity. Following this connection we might even advance that the first episode in a series of episodes that later have become a habit or a quasi-habit appears as more favorably remembered than episodes that led to no result or to negative experiences.

Another participant narrates about her habit to go to a certain shopping area and observe certain shops just from the window, never visiting them inside: Participant 015 (*Edit 31. In front of a shop window; hinting at habit; Edit 32, Digging into episodic formations, & Edit 32-B, Habit is actually confined to a specific action (window-shopping, & Edit 32-C, Factors inked to habit formation)*)

In front of a new shop (Camper) she looks at the general offer and remembers having read (on advertising) that those shoes are comfortable there. The first cue is visual from a distance and again it is style. However until that point she only looked at this shop from the outside and was never inside; as style can be judged from the outside, the shop remains unappealing to her because of not passing this first criterion. She talks about window shopping specifically at this shop as a habit; at further questioning she tells that she had been in front of the shop windows 3 times. Since this frequency seems actually too small to consider this specific activity a habit I pose more questions to understand if this can be considered a episodic chain. She cannot explain completely what the habit is about here; however she knows that there is a clear divide between looking from the outside and looking and manipulating inside the shop. I ask her why she came to cultivate this specific habit of looking at the shop windows of this specific shop. It emerges that this activity is classified as window-shopping and that she does that in front of many other shops as many other participants do. The interesting datum is here that she can ascribe habit to a specific activity (exploratory-paratelic).

When activities become habitual and implicit, they are no longer seen in the phenomenological consciousness of the participant. It becomes an irrelevant task to describe activities such as window shopping or taking a certain path inside the town installation. This seems particularly true for environmental activities that seem to become easily sedimented, whereby their descriptions disappear. In other words knowledge of the environment becomes implicit particularly easily.

Further there are bearings on to the distinction of expert (skillful) and inexpert participants in this regard. Since Habit is linked to skill building, its presence can be considered a measure of the accomplishment of a specific activity. Inexperienced participants the time sequence of events seemed to be much more important, detailed and effortful to themselves, whereas for expert participants no particular sequential pattern of actions seemed to emerge. I advance that sequence of actions are still salient if the activity is not habitual, whereas when the habit is well formed sequencing becomes implicit and disappears from the description.

As said above, the orientation phase is devoted by the consumer mostly to finding the way to an area of interest. In that case the area might be known to the individual or be fairly

novel. To this regard participants were divided in some who had habitual knowledge of the area since years (participant 006, 003-b, 009, 011, 012) and some who were rather inexperienced, knowing it since few months or weeks (participants 002, 004, 005, 006, 007, 008, 014, 015, 017). One phenomenon that I noticed first was that when consumers did not know the area and shop they relied on signs in the area to orient themselves. In that case the participant more or less knew where the area was but did not remember specific shops, so generally they did not remember names or brands. In this case the common strategy was to choose an area where they knew something, and subsequently to narrow the exploration area. Description of those episodes points at the absence of habit, whereby they still need a succession of episode to get to know the place.

Habituated participants on the other hand, appeared already to navigate the environment confidently also in the subcam recording; this can be noted by the speed and focused orientation of their walk. Moreover they do not need to tell exactly how they orient themselves and do not verbalize that part of the activity.

Consistently with the research by (Wood, Quinn, & Kashy, 2002), I note that verbalization of intentions is inversely proportional to the degree of habit in the activity performed: *“people are not necessarily thinking about intentions or other predictors of behaviour during habit performance. The limited thought about habitual behaviour is consistent with the idea that frequently performed acts in stable contexts are habitual in the sense that they are guided by relatively automatic processes that involve minimal thought.”* (p.1294). It must be noted that the authors' method however was very different from the one of the present research because it relied on a diary study based on hourly reports.

A further consequence of this fact is that habituated participants dwelled more on the description of heterogenous events than the former group during orientation phase.

An important link appears at this stage with another type of memory of more recent theorization: procedural memory. It is essentially considered a sub specialization of short-term memory usually linked to the learning of skills. Working memory has been described as the first stage of memorization for all subsequent memory types and is especially linked to motor events (Baddeley & Hitch, 1974). The important characteristic of the working memory complex according to Baddeley is preserving the serial order of events. The present research refrains from elaborating on memory types with the still anecdotal data delivered here, however my observation suggests that habits in consumers show some procedural aspects especially when inside the shop. Procedures in this sense are again to be distinguished from habits because they are shorter, mechanical kinds of actions, very similar to what Leontief called operations,

however I don't see them as essentially declarative as the author did. Trying shoes on and looking into the mirror appear as particularly procedural so that they are described more than recognized. This might have to do especially with re-elicitation of sensory experiences. One theorist suggests that operating by description means that verbalization is linked to the procedural memory of events, how people do things (usually). Recognition based verbalizations refer on the other hand to what people did and this has to be considered a type of memory distinct from episodic and semantic (Mandler, 1980). In other words procedures as habits no longer contain an explicit goal that in due time has become implicit and this is why they are to be considered parent. The definition of habit given by Verplanken and Aarts seems then appropriate also in this study: "*habits are learned sequences of acts that have become automatic responses to specific cues and are functional in obtaining certain end goals or states*" (1999).

As for the definition of habit I consider the cited instances a further confirmation that frequency of appearance of same actions is not reliable to qualify an action as habit.

#### 7.4 Economic behaviour and habitual activities

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Rational decision making is a central topic for all social sciences. This research adds to the discussion by inserting habit as a main direction in which the analysis of the data panned out. The original contribution to economic theory echoes some of the themes found in institutional economics, first among all that of habit. It is my contention that the special nature of the first-person data coupled with the specific activity that has been screened, buying behaviour, has produced a valuable picture for a furthering of the reflexion on this characteristic venue of interpreting economic value and economic exchange. It allows interpretation of observable activities and moves the focus away from presumed cognitions.

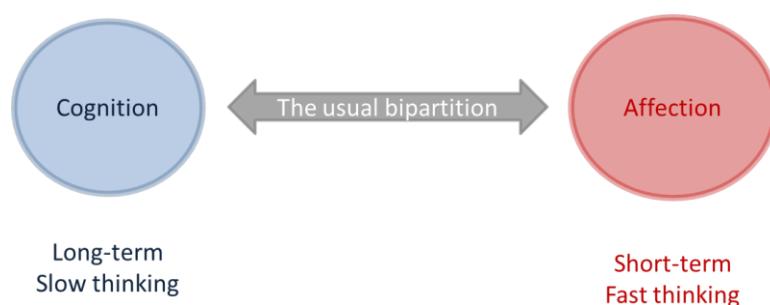
The decisive presence of habitual behaviour in consumer activity indicates that behavioural economics has some important limitations in its current form as there is no way to account for habitual mechanisms that are triggered in the physical environment. The major problem has been identified in the absence of a temporal framework that encompasses variations of psychological states in consumers. Phases of interest and involvement in consumers seem to be highly predictive of choice behaviour: far from being random, such phases have to be understood as fairly predictable homeostatic processes that can be accounted for with the right methodology. Material and social installation externalities complicate the parameters further. Economic models that factor in habitual activities in agents

also have to take into account that activities are not strictly divisible according to the usual social classes studied in sociology, so that the stratifications usually proposed probably do not work and on the contrary could add noise to models. The concept of bias is further in danger in that it focuses on behaviours that do not develop over time: are biases actually explanatory of behaviour if we methodologically assume that behaviour is not homogenous but rather varies across temporal phases?

Habits and routine behaviour are actually what largely determines economic behaviour in individuals, which is increasingly appreciated by practitioners as well (Martin, 2008). Actions that were performed in the past constitute the basis for future action if the situation is recognized as stable. Disruption of routines brings with them the need to relearn the operation and to adapt to new installations.

The fault of considering decisions as occurring in a point in time is not only by economists however; the systematization of the definition came earlier and it is due to the establishment of what rationality and irrationality are: they had been characteristics attributed to both decisions and often to the actors themselves. The shift should then be towards the implementation of activities (and thus psychological time) into the model.

The usual bipartite model of cognitive vs. affective components of the human mind is undoubtedly still embedded in much economic thinking, thanks to behavioural economics as well. It can still be seen as an opposition of rationality versus emotion, the former characterized by slow-thinking and the latter by a short term heuristic thinking triggered by affective responses rather than by conscious deliberation.



*Figure 28 Cognition versus affection*

Economic decisions demonstrate a host of elements that, again, are not simply points in time: even if we understand a decision as being composed by a rational and an emotional part, it is something achieved in time through series of actions and furthermore it is a process that is 1) ontogenetically and culturally learned, 2) internalized through repetition of actions, 3)

enacted over and over by encountering similar affordances and cues in the environment. The conditions of decision usually described in BE do not account on such a flowing composition of phases that is what can be reconstructed through activity theory. Moreover phases of conscious evaluation are intertwined with phases in which pre-conscious evaluation is also present, often at different levels, for example in the case in which a habit is performed without effort leaving resources for an additional activity. We might speak in fact of evaluation by habit.

At the level of cyclical behaviour described in my model decisions can be described as rational as well. The fact that consumers repeat exploratory behaviour is a slow component of decision making; it is by rehearsing and trying out hypothetical evaluation and choice sequences that participants gain confidence and establish their preferences for the longer term. However since evaluation activity derives from repetitions, it is not possible to state from which activities it originates. The model ultimately factors in learning both on the conscious level (the loop task-operation) and on the pre-conscious level (procedural-episodic-habit loop). The repetitive dimension of action is in my opinion the key to understanding why people evaluate and choose in the way they do and not the fact if it derives from slow or fast thinking.

A final more general depiction of my model of consumer behaviour recovers conation (see fig.3) breaking it down into initial repetition and final habit. With a very pragmatic view the distillate of action must in this way be considered habit that feeds into cognition through Bartlett's affective filter. By feeding back into the process, memory allows the actor to start a new activity on a different basis, a deeper more solid one built on the repetitive blocks of successful past activities of a same kind. In this depiction the feedback process takes on a comprehensive meaning of habit and completes a model of activity in general.

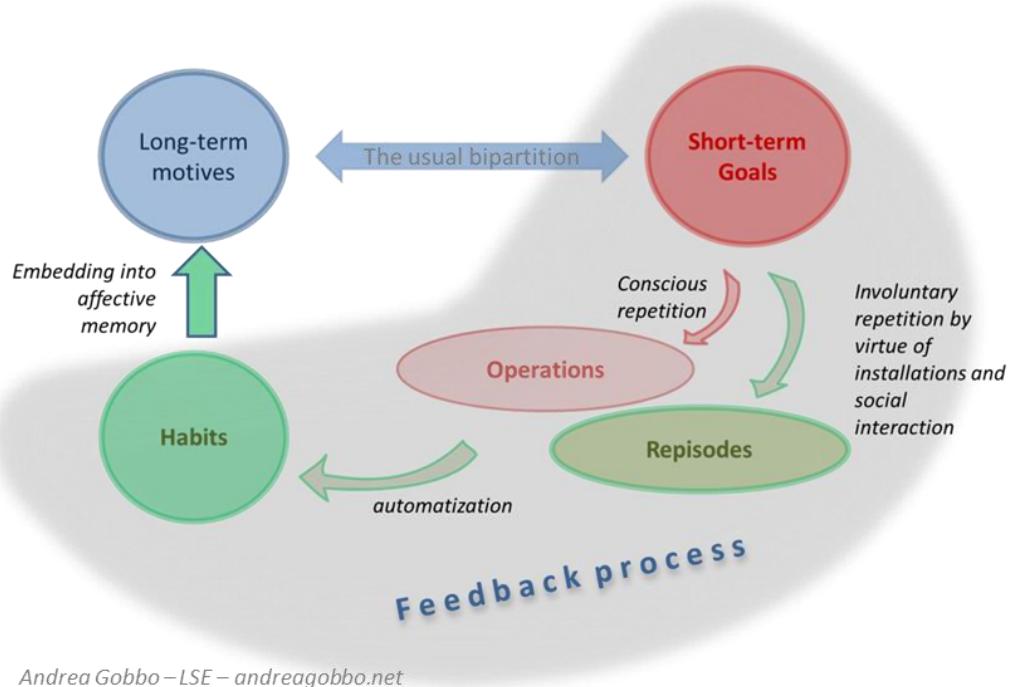


Figure 29 A general model of activity embedding the episodic chain

This study has given evidence that activity is built upon significant chunks of repetitive actions. Such actions in classic activity theory have been considered as operations with a conscious origin and consciously enacted by the actor. Indeed recent literature also includes goal-directed actions that are enacted unconsciously (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000b; Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001). Regarding the problem of conscious and unconscious behaviour, the literature has already pointed out that actions happening consciously can shift to automaticity by virtue of involuntary repetition alone. The contribution of the present study has been, among other things, to outline that involuntary repetition can be triggered by the material setting of the context. Multiple motives pushing the actor during a specific activity can in fact influence the final outcome of that activity in ways that are not consciously carried out by the individual. An example of this phenomenon is found in participants 006 and 007 who eventually were shopping because they were living nearby with the goal to obtaining a study certificate. Both became accustomed to the shopping area by often passing in front of the shops in central London. In this sense the main goal triggered a series of accessory goals and through the initiated activities, initial episodes became episodes and finally, if not a full-fledged habit, at least a familiar pattern of activity during the year in London.

The shadowed area of the feedback process in the figure wants to attract attention to the fact that this slow process of familiarization becomes embedded in habit through repetition. It still seemed important to distinguish the two levels of repetitive behaviour following the two inspirations of activity theory: conscious (following RAT) and automatic or pre-conscious (as in situated models and contemporary researchers in goal-theory) and rational. The feedback process takes the form of a loop that slowly is learned and needs only the environmental affordance for its re-activation.

Through the insertion of affective states (immediate ones like anxiety reduction, purchase satisfaction or long term ones like happiness) we have gained a dimension of evaluation and decision that contrasts with that of rationality. The fundamental conceptual opposition that is traditionally seen in rationality and affectivity has been expanded to the contribution of (residual) conation. The dimension of activity is present in the subject's experience with evaluation and choice, and ultimately in the decision making process, by virtue of the memory of past episodes (what I call *residual conation*).

One main point emerging from this study is the level of agency in consumers. The models of consumer behaviour discussed in 2.1.2 can be seen mainly as passive in their input factors and active in their central part, the one that refers to internal cognitive elaboration of information.

It is indeed difficult to describe consumers in the proposed model; it is not clear how a segmentation based on activity can work. Style of activity could be a candidate for a final description of consumer buying behaviour, because accounting for habits implies a very broad and implicit characterization. These could eventually replace the classic relationship between consumer and product. The fact that observable consumer behaviour arguably remains constant over time indicates that the composition of habits could be more important than the stability of choice of products categories. Ultimately the hypothesis is that products are substitutable not because of perceived similarities among them but based on their specific pattern of activity elicitation for each individual, which would also explain why individual preferences vary to such a high degree whilst motivations remain rather stable. We could think that in order to attain very local goals, for example, testing the fabric of a shoe, very similar motor patterns are enacted by all participants. Alternatively we could imagine the activity that the consumer represents is made possible by the product (value in use).

This explanation is related to the plausibility of the notion of bundle-of-goods used in microeconomics: what microeconomics sees is not actually a bundle of goods but a bundle of

habits. To paraphrase Lewin (1947), it would not be important what shoe or baking mix satisfies the participant's wants but that wants are satisfied by a product that fits the specific activity at the right moment of homeostasis. Of course, not a product which is viable, but the one that the consumer's current social installation defines as the most suitable.

## 7.5 SEBE and consumer behaviour

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In this final section I comment on the efficacy of the subcam method in consumer research compared to other more common techniques. I also outline some possible venues for future research.

The specific mission of ethnography is a deeper understanding of human action in its cultural milieu. Accounting for communication, social relations and life in general goes through a planned method of empirical data collection and interpretation.

Consumer ethnographies together with social data are the two newest inspirations in consumer related disciplines, currently developing at a fast pace. An indirect cause is clearly technological improvements and reduced costs for audio-visual devices, storing and sharing of data. The dynamic is that of shifting from purposeful collection of limited amount of focused data to a virtually unlimited, continuous, unsupervised data collection, with consequences on privacy, copyrights, surveillance legitimacy (Ganascia, 2010; Laholm, 2008a). Data on consumers, be they visual-behavioural or computer behaviour related, are being gathered with great and frightening efficiency. From a theoretical point of view one outcome is undisputable: the growing data base allows insights that were not even imaginable even ten years ago (Cristianini, 2010; McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2012).

The subcam method is among these developments a particularly specific one that in my opinion has not yet been exploited properly in the sphere of politics and business. The reason is that data generated by this tool are more difficult to understand and use than survey data or images from a third person perspective. Also there is a gap in the method of data aggregation as has been discussed. One manifest limitation of the present study was the small sample that hindered breaking down the data in meaningful subclasses. For social scientific, ethological or consumer behaviour analysis, samples of at least hundreds of individuals would be necessary. However, as the method has been conceived until now, it would be impossible to apply it to samples larger than 40-50 participants because of qualitative analysis that would require an exceptional number of manhours. The amount of first person recordings available in the public

domain is however surely going to increase exponentially, so that raw data will be available. As researchers, we will be compelled to find better ways of recognizing patterns of activities in such huge databases; new search engines are needed to efficiently identify activities in the flow of images and attribute social meaning to them. As mentioned, computer science departments are actively working on new algorithms that can search images instead of text (Johansen et al., 2012).

From a methodological point of view I propose a small model built on the previous one based on activity. The model highlights three areas of data collection and interpretation that can be envisaged as the current stage of development of subject evidence based ethnographic methods.

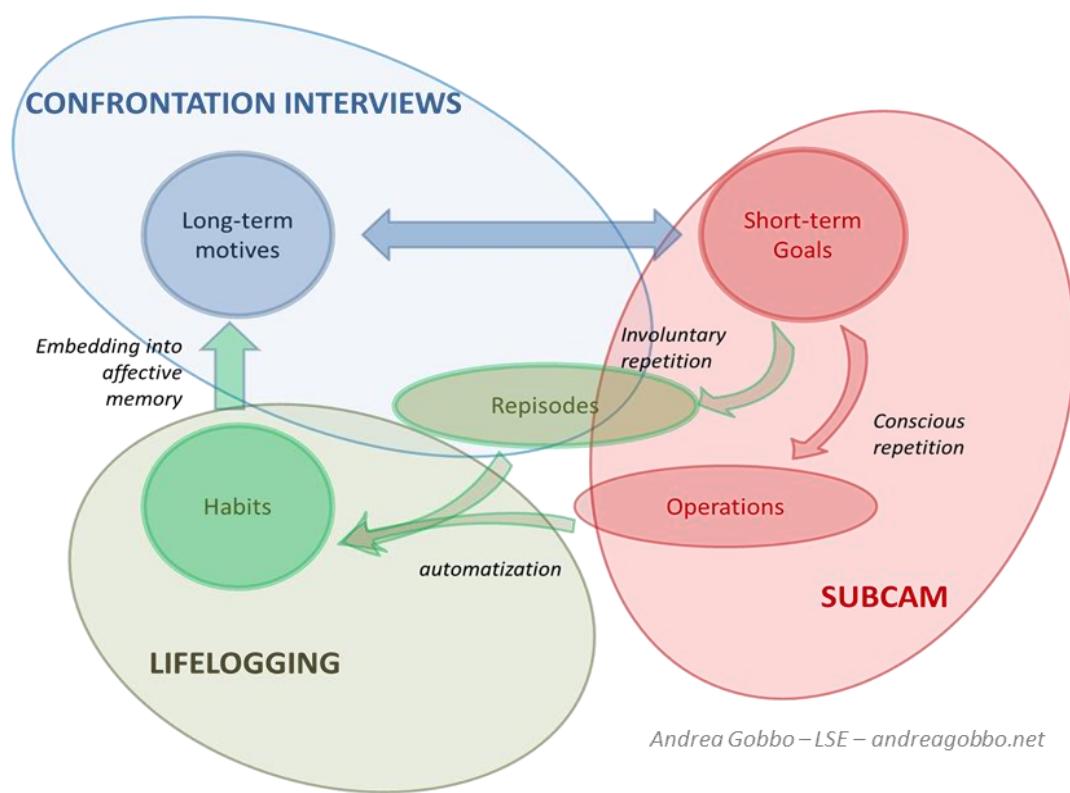


Figure 30 Contribution of the 3 methods of first person ethnography

The three fields at this point are self-explanatory. The red area addresses the collection of first-person visual data and their unsupervised measurement and interpretation as has been done in the content analysis on chapter 5. According to activity theory, this part of the method would theoretically faithfully return just episodes and the build-up of operations (behaviour based on simple frequency). The blue area of replay interviews uses the insights from the subcam data collection to construct a joint-interpretation of the data of the participant and

researcher. According to von Cranach's activity theory and Neisser's view, this step would produce the interpretation of episodes and repisodes in an individual's activity, giving insights into her activity structuring over the long-term. It also provides insights into higher level motivations. The green area is in the light of this research a work-in-progress because it requires a completely new method of accounting for long-term implicit habits that cannot be explained by the individual because of intrinsic human limitations in memory accounting.

On this last point and as a suggestion, I deem that the detection of patterns in extremely wide video sequences (life-stages), would resemble the work of linguists more than the work of psychologists. It would point to the recognition of patterns of expressions (life-events/life-styles?) as one would do with a corpus of texts; the more individuals who add their own data to the corpus, the more precise the identification of common life-events and life-spans would be. It can be further presumed that regularities in social interaction according to such life stages would emerge. It can be foreseen that down this road behaviourism and constructionist psychological inspirations as varied as social representations or social cognition could meet. I can also see how habitual patterns of social activities could be linked to variables of economic and social policy analysis. Such a digital first-person database could theoretically allow identifying the typical behaviours of specific groups thus bringing the new method back to the known territory of sociological disciplines in which demographics, for example, are a key feature.

In the other direction of research, reclassification of activity in ethological or physiological terms could also benefit from the insights and give in return suggestions about how actions and activities can be classified for other social psychological purposes. An example is here the classification of acts based on their speed of execution. The distinction between ballistic and non-ballistic movements entailing automaticity of execution could allow explaining several factors like expertise, level of habituation or more ambitiously mapping scripts onto social practices.

One key feature of this research has been the detailed study of the natural setting of decision making as source of factors for choice. As has been shown, real choice situations depend on habitual tasks that are initiated by individual motivation but are directed by material installations. Material installations however depend on a host of factors of which environmental planning is just one. The method proposed here then goes well beyond its application to consumer behaviour and could be applied to collaborative work in the planning of social spaces. Physical constraints to activity are ubiquitous and there is a need to make them much more explicit than it is currently done. Buying behaviour as an example of a mundane activity has

hopefully made the point that the construction of preferences and the cycles of decision making that we perceive as natural depend to a high degree on the social installation of our life world. Every inflection point in individual motivations has to be related to the material and cultural context in which it happens in order to better depict how it is constructed according to social habits.

Institutional economics made this point long ago; that institutions transcend individuals on the one hand limits individual freedom, but on the other allows them to reach much more complex goals of well-being. The aim of social sciences research is in my opinion to make this trade-off more acceptable; as professionals in the reading of real-world phenomena we have to devise methods that make people perceive the positive utility of long-term policies while letting the producers thrive and make their reasonable profits as well. If we want to preserve a social equilibrium on the aggregate, then we should no longer consider consumers as naïve, but as experts in the activities they know how to perform best while fostering an environment that promotes a sustainable social life.

Word count: 107.386

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## Appendices

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1. Appendix to section 4.2: Open-ended interviews (28 pp.)
2. Appendix to section 5.1: Disclaimer for the Subcam experience (1 page)
3. Appendix to section 5.2: Extract from raw analysis of video material (4 pp.)
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5. Appendix to section 6.2: Pilot interview with first subcam participant (26 pp.)

## Appendix 4.2 – F to F interviews

### Detailed analysis of interviews with experts and consumers

#### First part: Global theme - Subjects' Activities

This section contains the distribution of the codes for activities. For activities I coded what consumers and experts referred to as their typical activities. This coding also includes the representations of actors from the groups involved.

The other dimension accounted for in this summary level of coding is the description of typical actions and activities. The former refer to real episodes, the second refers to typical or abstract activities that participants did in the past and activities they said they might do in the future. The division then tries to mirror descriptions of real instances and contrast them to representations of activities.

The following table summarizes the number of codes.

Table 1 Codes for Activities in open-ended interviews

	1 <sup>st</sup> L	2 <sup>nd</sup> L	3 <sup>rd</sup> L
PROCESSES - ACTIVITIES	Representation of Activities		99
	Addiction		3
	Behavioral Dissonance		3
	competition		1
	Evaluation process		20
	expectation		5
	irrational or affective behavior		30
	rational decision process		14
	Typified social Behavior		23
	Actors typification		144
Situuated descriptions	Motivations & Interests	10	
	Company	19	
	Customer	19	
	Expertise/Education	45	
	Product of Interest	13	
	Profession	35	
Episodes	one-off intentional event	10	
	Event condition	5	
	perception - feeling	3	
	situated evaluation	4	
	social episode	6	
Reepisode	Simple repetition	6	17
	Habitude	6	
	Repisodic Future Thinking	3	
	Memories	2	

#### Representation of activities

*Addiction.* Buying as an addictive behaviour comes up in few respondents; it is however interesting that people refer to this dimension without prompting. A consumer, the Estonian restaurateur says: “*psychologically people need to feel this emptiness inside them and through the buying things for some short period of time, they’re doing it. But later they need to go and buy again,*

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*it's like an addiction. ...you need to go, and you need to buy again. You get this fix, like wow, I feel better now, but actually you're seeking for the emotions, not for the things.*" From the point of view of activity I would like to point out that addictive behaviour in consumption requires a proactive bent; it takes time to go out and look for products. This statement connects to Apter's division of activity in paratelic and telic in that addiction seems to be a kind of short-circuit between the two kinds of activity. Before addiction takes hold the goal must be consciously set (go out and buy something) but tends towards automaticity where recurrent emotional states are probably triggered by external cues.

An expert, an event manager, refers to addiction in these terms: "*Well, there's so many emotions involved in that. That decision making process I'm sure, you know, if you've just had pay day you're going to feel more like spending money. If you've got money you're going to spend more money.*" The participant points to the contingent situation of having more money to spend and that money leads to addiction. The statement is more valuable for the affective dimension of than for cognition; in this case the participant makes an abstract reference to emotions and does not cite any real occurrence. Also the dimension of cognition is flattened onto that of emotion by equating the decision making process to feeling.

*Evaluation processes.* This code refers to the activities participants usually perform prior to buying. A consumer, a headhunter, says: "*I would spend a lot of time online looking at things, comparing things and using the internet to help me make a choice about what I buy and how much it is.*" Furthermore, "*everyone loves to feel that they've got a bargain or that they've got it for less than the original price. So yeah, there is that value there*". In this case the answer points to situated action that implies cognitive activity, but where the use of accessory tools and settings are also quite important.

A consumer, an investment banker, said the following. Researcher: "*When do consumers become more rational then?*" Participant: "*When they've got more time and less people around them. When they can make an informed decision based on being able to wander round*". This answer points to the dimension of movement as an integral part to deciding. Also the participant outlines that social influence is a source of bias in consumer decisions.

An expert, a marketing teacher, says that the evaluation processes occur differently today: "*I mean if you talk about the average customer, we see more and more decisions being made online, and so people do their research and then go to the shops*". The decision then, cannot necessarily be qualified as rational, since it implies different steps of information gathering/decision making; the difference from earlier decision making is huge because the participant says that decision is made before going to buy and the time that lapses between the two moments can vary greatly, from minutes if the consumer goes online inside the place where she/he makes the purchase to days or months if the purchase is not urgent.

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*Irrational behaviour.* This code is central to the research since it asks about the representations of irrational behaviour in consumers. This question includes thirty answers meaning it was easy to identify such cases.

A consumer, an investment banker, points to the social dimension of irrational choice.

Researcher: "So, do you think that customers are more rational or irrational?" Participant: "*Irrational. I'd say that a lot of people are caught up in the moment and will buy something, bring it home and go why did I do that? Especially if there's people around them going oh, doesn't that look lovely? And the pressure to buy – people like the impulse buy, there's something about it, a feeling you get almost high from it. So I'd say sometimes they are very, very irrational.*" Social influence is perceived as a source of irrationality as is the prevalence of the affective state in impulsive buying.

A consumer talks about irrational behaviour in a buying spree as a compulsion. Researcher: "Do you think customers are more rational or irrational generally?" Participant: "*Irrational.*" Researcher: "For every product, or specifically for fashion?" Participant: "*Particularly women are irrational, absolutely, look here! Everyone's irrational, they don't need these things! [Laughs] They just had two champagnes and they're buying. That's why there are champagne bars everywhere!*" Researcher: "Why do people buy?" Participant: "*To get rid of the stress, to make them feel better*".

Another consumer asked about irrationality, attributes it mainly to transient affections: "*Well I think that depends, 'cause you hear of people where they say they're down, or something's happened and they go out and they'll buy five pairs of shoes or something. I, for myself, I don't do that.*" Researcher: "*But it doesn't depend on a fixed disposition – to be rational or irrational?*" Participant: "*No, it can fluctuate within reason.*"

An expert says that irrationality is linked to the product as well: "*accessory buying is more instant than emotional, because if you are buying a bag you don't need to try it on.*" On the same line another professional participant says: "*fashion is emotional, very emotional purchase*".

One expert fashion designer has an original view of rationality and affective states that seems to contradict (or complement) the usual view: "*If they decide, if they behave rationally, it also comes from emotion as well. You have to have the emotion in order to be rational.*" That both irrationality and rationality are driven by emotion is an original view that has to be kept in the background as a fascinating possibility.

One consumer relates irrationality to the season. Researcher, following up on the previous answer: "*In high season they become more irrational because they would need it [a dress]?*" Participant: "*Yeah I think so, I think definitely in the height of summer, when it's really hot and you have somewhere to go, you go out and buy a dress and you won't really think much about it*". The influence of temperature and light is certainly very important in the purchase of fashion items as

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they related both to their protective use and to social occasions in the open; the representation of irrationality is then connected to both season and social dimension.

A consumer attributes irrationality to the increase of choice in markets. Participant: *"I think more people are irrational nowadays, because there's so much choice, and there's so many price variants... ...everyone's just buying whether they need things or not really."* Researcher: *"So variety is increasing irrationality in the market?"* Furthermore, the participant says what she thinks is driving demand: *"Exactly, I think so and it's increasing and that's really true – you only have to look at the way men buy clothes now and that's probably related to the amount of variety there is for them now. There never used to be, and so more men are getting more interested in fashion because, people investing money in it and thinking that there's a demand for it and they're perpetually creating demand for it by increasing the variety."* Although here it is expressed naïvely, it is well known that demand can be stimulated by supply as well as the other way round. This participant finds that variety in the market increases demand inadvertently; producers would increase variety as a response to demand, fuelling in return more demand because of variety.

Coming to typical social behaviour, the participants were asked how they imagined people behaving in economic transactions; this question also produced different kinds of answers about representations of typical social behaviours.

A consumer, an accountant, puts consumers in two classes, either irreducibly routine bound or endowed with a curious and creative personality that allows them to always change their consumption aims and activity: *"You've got people that will always do something different, or go for something different. And you'll always have people that will go along within the boundaries and just stay within there."* From the point of view of activity this passage is interesting for its naïve expression that recalls Rubinstein's conviction that while people are immersed in same environment they will connect different environmental affordances with the same kind of activity; then personality would mediate reinforcement in buying behaviour.

An expert has a very interesting take on consumer stratification by performance: *"there's no such thing as an average – you have to dissect the market to cluster people into groups who perform in similar ways when, their consumer behaviour becomes similar and it could be around either celebrity endorsement, peer review, income, you know – whether they need to be at the forefront of fashion or whether they're happy to lag behind."* Here the professional participant tells us that it is no longer enough to look at consumer stratification variables such as demographic data or education, in her opinion, performance would be a better clustering variable. This comment is very much in line with a consumer behaviour theory based on activity in that it is by starting from observed activity that it then becomes possible to measure other aspects of consumers.

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An expert participant, a photographer, refers to having spotted social behaviour based on imitation (fashion); the passage refers to the objects that were on display at the fair: *“Have you seen the clothes like that? Have you seen ladies wearing clothes with collars.. I say 18 months ago this was being shown at the London Fashion Week, 18 months ago it was London Fashion Week so I think it started here.”*

### Actors' typifications

Coming to the code actor's typification, some remarks can be made about how people perceive expertise and professionalism. The code collects remarks on intergroup representations; this may refer to consumers typifying professional, and the other way round, and professionals representations other professionals, etc.

An expert participant describes what his professionalism is about. Researcher: *“May I ask you in terms of activity, how is it different from your direct competitors? What is the advantage you offer?”* Participant: *“Well I've tried to be creative, deliver value but be trustworthy, I don't mess around, I like the brief and I meet the brief and I try and exceed the brief and get the best price I can”*

One professional participant cites trust as an important factor in professionalism: *“It's about trust: If I have worked with a client before they will trust me and it's much easier. If it's the first time you've worked with a client you have to build that trust up and show them what you can do, you're not going to rip them off and that you will deliver and that can often be what holds work up, what holds the process up... you know, It's just part of the process, you've just got to build that trust up.”* It is noteworthy that this remark contains a distillate of interactional expertise. It is not much about typifying professional behaviour abstractly, but about grounding it in trust-building personal experiences.

Another expert participant brings in the interactional factor: *“the network of relationships that I develop is unique and specific. My ideal client is someone very much like me, so they are bright, they are entrepreneurial, they are probably Anglo-American in culture, doesn't mean that they are from a nationality point of view or culture or an ethnic point of view but in terms of a cultural point of view, yes”*. He does not speak about what makes a professional in general but in his specific case he sees the building of a social network as a necessary condition for building professionalism.

### Situated descriptions of activities

This code summarizes descriptions and representations of typical actions that participants actually performed in the past or represent as being typically performed in similar situations by themselves and others.

The first subdivision of the code is episodes. An example of an episode refers to why a consumer came to the fair. Researcher: *“What is the product you are interested in today here?”* Participant: *“No specific product, probably just seeing what's on offer and looking at the catwalk*

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*show. I mean, it was a present to come here anyway.*" Researcher: "Did you come here last year?" Participant: "No". The answer frames the occurrence inside an interaction that led to his presence at the consumer fair.

Another example of an episode comes from an expert participant, a photographer: "*I had someone who promised to pay £900, I was asking for money in advance, they said I'll pay half at the beginning, but when the job was finished they said no they weren't going to pay any more, and they had looked for every possible reason not to pay, that was a problem. And so you have to be a bit legalistic about it. And they were using my copyright material.*" This episode is a good example of a learning occurrence, because, although short, it contains a complete sequence of actions. Generally episodes seem to be elicited to explain how the subject made an inference: learning is achieved through exemplary life experiences worth narrating.

The episodic register code was inserted in the second cycle of interview analysis, the reason being that it was discovered during the analysis of the pilot replay interviews (see 6.2.1). In the open-ended interviews I was able to identify a few instances of this, but it was quite early apparent that episodes do not occur either distinctively or abundantly in this type of interview. As will be seen in replay interviews, episodes are described quite distinctively because of the ease to connect them to environmental cues. An example of a repisode is told by an expert about brands; the participant explains how a choice among many items on display can be facilitated by the recall of a specific brand. The fixing of a brand name in the memory goes through a repetition of activities that behaviourist would define as habituation, but in the participant's words is a more active process: "*I think that brand is very important. If it's just three items or three to five, you probably don't think about buying, but if it's more than five it's becoming complicated to choose. That's why you think about and I've heard about that before, if you have seen that in publicity, marketing or whatever, if you have seen that someone is wearing that, I think that brand is very important now*".

Another example of the episodic register has a hypothetical character; the repeated action that the respondent thinks a consumer would carry out: "*they [consumers] think oh yeah, tonight I'm gonna go and buy new shoes, I'm gonna be a better person, I'm gonna be more pretty, I'm gonna be more happy and the next day you wake up and you realize no, it didn't make me happy these new shoes. I'm still the same miserable person. So they buy and buy again. Yeah, exactly. That's what it is about.*" Although in essence this passage points to the dimension of addiction, the repetition of episodes contains an activity structure with goals. The final point I would like to stress regarding the code of episodes and repisodes is their connotation of active involvement of consumers contrasts to the passive view we get from behaviouristic approaches.

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The category *attributes* codes descriptions or other references to consumer products. The second part of the interviews thus aims to connect actors and the typical activities described in the first part with the object of the action. In particular, questions 5,6, 7, 9 and 10 sought this sort of answers.

As mentioned above, it is difficult to direct the answers during interviews according to researcher's wishes. This was also true in this case: some participants answered these questions citing a list of factors linked to the objects; others answered in the narrative register and gave accounts of episodes of buying situations. I report such narratives and episodes with ad-hoc codings. I also inserted a second level code called repisode.

This is a summary of codings for the third level, object oriented attributes.

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Table 2 List of codes for the macro category: attributes – all levels

	1 <sup>st</sup> Level	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	
ATTRIBUTES – FACTORS	Economic Factors			Total Number of occurrences <b>63</b>
	Bargain			6
	Budget			3
	Choice			3
	Price & Positioning			30
	Ratio			14
	Sale			6
	Substitution			1
	Developmental Factors			<b>3</b>
	Education			2
Abstract factors	Age			1
	Detail			<b>62</b>
	Design - Style			18
	Image/Shape			8
	Taste			6
Social Factors	Uniqueness (of a specific item)			26
	Advertising			<b>110</b>
	Brand			5
	Culture			27
	Exclusivity (social)			7
	Origin			8
	Media			4
	Social trend			15
	Seasonality			19
	Tradition			14
Micro-interactional Factors	Understatement			8
	Marketing			<b>33</b>
	Environment - Shop			4
	Social interaction			6
	Service			15
Feeling/Emotion Factors	Contingent need			4
	Self image			10
	Sex			2
	Overall mood			10
	Comfort/Fit			14
Material Factors				<b>93</b>
	Color			8
	Material			11
	Function			9
	Technology			1
	Accessories			3
	Quality/durability			34
	Craftsmanship			24

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### Economic factors

Many descriptions of evaluation and choice in open-ended interviews have naturally contained narratives and registers that refer to a distinct use of economic terms and expressions. Some of the words and locutions used suggest a direct coding that makes of the economic theme the most in-vivo.

*Bargain (6 coded segments).* The first consumer mentions bargaining in an episode that happened on that very day. Although the episodic format is to some extent question driven, the respondent takes a decidedly indexical path. Researcher: *“So is there any added value to buy here today? Participant: Yeah, because they’re selling them below the original value that they should have been, and then you’re getting a discount on that price”*. Another consumer refers to bargains as added-value: *“Researcher: Is there any added value to buy here today? Participant: Here? Yes I think there is. I think that one, you might get things cheaper.”* An interesting example of how a definition of a typified action is given comes from a third consumer. Asked about other products, he describes bargaining as a prescriptive action modality: *“Researcher: What about, for example food? Participant: I think if you go into the supermarket, you will just pick up things that are on offer.”* From these three examples one can note that consumers tend to give factual explanations relating either to the contingent situation or to a hypothetical situation that has much in common with the activity they are performing on that very day. On the other hand, professionals do not seem to be particularly interested in the idea of bargains and the only mention I collected is an abstract explanation of this phenomenon by a marketing academic, linking it to the definition of value: *“Participant: value to someone who’s what we call late adopter, could mean it’s something that they’ve aspired that’s now cheap because it’s been around for so long, that they can now have it.”*

*Budget (3 coded segments):* refers to the limited amount of money that the consumer intends to dedicate to the purchase. A consumer says: *“You know, I will go ok that coat’s £200. Not today, because I don’t have £200 available right at this minute, but on a normal day, in a normal month when I didn’t have any other commitments I would probably buy it. So it depends what my current situation is and what else I’ve got to pay that month say, out of my salary.”* Another consumer says that the purchase *“probably depends what I’ve got in my purse on the day”* meaning practically the same. A professional is aware of this behaviour: *“People just think: can they spend this amount of money right now”*.

*Choice (3 coded segments):* It is understood here as the availability of merchandise and not the mechanism of choosing. It is a consumer code in that it is only referred to by consumers. One example summarizes the idea: *“because there’s so much choice, and there’s so many price variants. I*

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*mean, if you, you can pay a lot of money for something, or you can pay not a lot of money at all for something. And so the variety, the availability is much higher and much wider, so everyone's just buying whether they need things or not really."*

*Price & Positioning (30 coded segments):* References to price are obviously much more frequent than other codings in both groups. This is interesting because it points to the frequency of repetition of a certain theme in the public space that is shaped primarily by the media. Reference to price is then a direct consequence of the public discourse on value that more often than not revolves around price. Asked on the importance of price, consumers give some reasons linked to the what they are willing to spend on something: "*The price. If it's worth my spending a lot of money, is it in my budget?*" Price is cited by a consumer as the second factor of choice, a limiting condition: "*so I suppose if I like something I'll buy it but it is within price region.*" When consumers are asked to indicate definite prices for items of interest, they give a wide range of answers, probably dependant on income: "*Participant: Shoes, well I buy various brands for various purposes. Anything up to £1000 is acceptable for me. Researcher: Up to £1000? Participant: Yeah, up to £1000. Researcher: And the average price? Participant: Around 4 – 600. And I also buy smaller designer ones. Like they're not always designer ones. Well mainly European designer ones.*" Another participant gives an astonishingly similar answer to the two same questions: "*Researcher: And what is the average price you are willing to spend for a pair of shoes? Participant: 3 – 400. If it's summer shoes. If it's winter boots, you know something then it's like 600, let's say like that. Researcher: What is the average price that you think people are spending? Participant: I think it's less, like 100 quid.*" The interesting thing is that sometimes they give a price for themselves that is higher than what they think is a reasonable price. Other participants give the a similar answer but turned around, which is understandable because you need different values to make an average; what is not obvious, however, is the distance of one's own estimate from the real average. A consumer answers: "*Researcher: And what is the average price you are willing to spend for a pair of shoes? If it's winter boots, you know something then it's like 600, let's say like that. Researcher: What is the average price that you think people are spending? Participant: I think it's less, like 100 quid.*" This fact in itself is material for further investigation and could be the starting point for a more precise investigation of the market.

Professionals consider price a crucial factor as well, although they seem to have a more technical approach to it. First of all price must respect the relationship to brand and quality, it must in other words keep the promise: "*It's really the name and if the name is something that you would recognise or you associate with quality, people are more likely to pay a higher end for it.*" Another justifies

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higher prices with quality and durability in the same way: “*if it had a high price tag would have to be of quality and of a classic style that would last a long time.*” Interestingly this relationship is more often referred to by professionals than by consumers. Another professional points out that usually the sellers know how to fix the price in relation to the quality and service offered: “*so I think the retailers are good at fixing, so if you go into Primark you'd expect something decent at a very cheap price. Go into Marks and Spencers you expect something decent at a reasonable price. You go into Jenny Packham and you expect to pay a lot of money because it's a designer label.*” Why the respondent is so confident that marketers are good at it probably depends on their proximity to them, he knows the mechanics from the inside. Finally one professional gives a more sophisticated account of how prices are actually formed and points out that they are also relative on the geographical location: “*Commonly here in London it's like they multiply the price, like 2, 2.5 or sometimes 3. So, if we sell like with the buyers, 'Oh, that's £30,' and retail it's going to be like £90, £95 or £100. So, that's where it happens.*” The more sophisticated factors affecting price do not come up with consumers.

*Ratio (14 coded segments):* Often the value of a product is expressed as a ratio between two factors. The most important pair of factors is price/quality: “*Participant: Quality versus the cost, so weighing up whether something is cost effective.*” Another consumer gives a similar response however referring to quantity instead of price: “*Researcher: So when I say the word value, what comes to your mind? Participant: Quality over quantity.*” Another participant synthesizes the idea of ratio between quality and price into the formula value-for-money implying that it is a ratio: “*Participant: It would be that basically it gets down to value for money – to me, when I buy something, because I would love to be in the position that I could buy something because I liked it, but I also have to like it and I do look at the price and see if I can justify it to myself, that it's good for me to buy.*” A more complex declination of the price/quality ratio is given by an accountant with a group of consumers: “*And cost per wear when they're very good quality*”. Cost per wear is a rationalization of the price dimension in that it goes beyond the simple relationship price/quality, implying that something cheap can also be costly if it is not worn frequently enough. This last ratio makes a lot of sense from an economic point of view but it does not appear in any other participant.

*Sale (6 coded segments):* Only consumers refer to sales as an important factor in purchases; one of them sees it as a trigger to irrational purchase behaviour: “*If it's a sale we tend to be more irrational if it's a sale price versus something that they really need.*” Another participant gives an explanation of what happens at a sale in the form of hypothetical activity: “*And also, as my friend said, if something's on discount, you might try it as you wouldn't try it before! You'd say, "Oh yeah,*

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*I'll try that.*" However, another participant is disenchanted by sales and goes beyond the irrationality explanation by saying that as far as she is concerned, she does not buy during sales: "*Like if it's a sale, you hardly can get anything like valuable in the sale – or you have to be really, really lucky. The good things never go on sale.*" Furthermore, she strengthens this position by saying: "*So these are the things, which haven't been sold in the shops in the last sale. And I can honestly tell you, they didn't buy them there, and I'm not gonna buy them here, so.*" Here the participant declares her own scepticism concerning retailers who are perceived as cheats of unaware consumers.

*Substitution (1 coded segment):* One consumer cites substitution of the item as a factor for purchase. "*Researcher: So and how did you decide exactly how to buy that raincoat? What was the trigger to buy exactly that one: colour, fabric?* *Participant: My old one was a bit worn.*" This factor can be considered a trigger and actually pertains to broader motivation that cannot be excluded from other participants. It is possible that substitution does not come up in other participants because it remains latent as the first trigger for action.

### Abstract factors

Under the label abstract I placed all of the descriptions that refer to subjective properties of the good, like for example aesthetic factors. Style is one of them, it is impossible to define style because it refers to the participant's expertise and taste. Something becomes valuable only because there is this very intangible factor of "knowing-how" to put things together in a tasteful way.

Consumers refer to style in the following terms: "*What is more important to you: fabric, touch, colour? Fabric and colour. Fabric, colour and style. And the cut of it. The way it sits on my body.*" So besides a description of material factors (reported below) one often hears of associations with style, which is hardly measurable. Associated with style is design; this is how another participant refers to design: "*Researcher: What is the main interesting characteristic in a raincoat? Participant: Design I suppose again. Something that's a little bit different.*" Later in the same interview she again mentions design: "*And also again the design: they'd have to have a bit of bling for me again.*" A banker makes these characteristics countable: "*'Cos you can see there are definite themes in terms of the colours and styles, but I think that will be it.*" Shape and image are another abstract factor, meaning the effect it has on the image of the wearer; naturally this is completely arbitrary because image is also immeasurable and could in the best case be measured only through external judgement. We are in the realm of socially constructed taste. A professional is also convinced that "look" is something objective, so much so that: "*looks are marketed and people want to respond to those looks*".

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Another variation on the above factors is taste. Some participants are convinced that people need to match the things they wear and this ability is called taste. One participant told me: *“Coats shouldn’t be thrown on just because it’s a coat that you wear every day, you should match up – it should go, it’s a huge part of what you wear”*. A professional participant refers to a brand he likes (taking the perspective of a consumer) as a style that matches with his taste; this is an example of how these two abstract factors are difficult to disentangle. He describes taste as assembling products in a personal way; value comes from putting together different products, mixing styles, revamping vintage clothing. *“So, it’s kind of playing with that concept of things that are very smart and things that are very casual and in the end it’s making a hybrid... of something that can be very interesting and as I say, for me they have a value in that I put their clothing on and it feels very special, I know nobody else has got this item of clothing and that has a certain charm and power to it, if you like.”*

Uniqueness is the last factor I identified as abstract. It is not objective to say that something is unique, but again the “uniqueness” of an item is imagined by the participant as being recognized by other participants (of course participants who share the same taste). So this is an abstract factor that fulfils a need for social identification as probably all other abstract factors. This is how consumers refer to it. The first participant: *“Researcher: How do you think the products you find here are different to what you can normally find in high street shops? Participant: It’s probably something individual isn’t it, items you can’t get on the high street.”* Another one: *“Yes, yeah. I think they’re different and... well, it’s like art isn’t it. Either you have a common element or there’s something that’s just a little bit extra or a little bit different. And I think in here you might see things that are a little bit different, which is nice. So that’s what’s made me come here as well.”* Finally, one cites uniqueness as a factor of distinction: *“They’re not conventional, they’re different, they are – it’s not like everyone else’s. It’s unique, they’re unique usually and you feel set apart, more or less.”*

The interesting point regarding these abstract factors is that although they are impossible to define, participants do not have the least doubt about their existence and objectivity. The second point is that these abstract factors are recognized by the persons who are able to distinguish them, they shape group identity. Insiders coalesce around some abstract factors like style, design, image, uniqueness, which they recognize: they are ultimately devices for an in-group versus out-group distinction, although since we are not dealing with clearly recognizable symbols, it is not completely clear how objectively this recognition can be pinpointed.

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*Advertising (5 coded segments):* advertising is one of the main drivers of choice of products. Consumers tend to see it as a passive factor as they say: *"Part: No, I think the public is taken in a lot by media and advertising. Advertising is very powerful. I think it can... well it brings it to your attention and you're sitting wherever: at your desk or in your home and it brings it to your attention. Whereas before, you wouldn't know – you would maybe go in and buy XYZ, but then you might buy something ABC because it's been brought to you or you see it and it looks good. And it sounds good, so you will investigate it."* A professional participant uses more or less the same words to express a very similar view but from the other side of the barricade, with an active connotation: *"what advertising has to do is to persuade people that they should be interested in something before they actually see it, live, or experience it"*. This is also a depersonalized way of seeing advertising; this entity is somehow objectified and seems to come from other spheres of influence.

*Brand (27 coded segments):* The main connotation of brand is reputation: *"the reputation. If it's a certain line, or a certain designer they have a reputation over time and so that's what I would say."* Another participant asked if people buy a branded good believing that this is something rational to do, answers: *"No I think they just buy them. Because they know their brands, they will just buy them. They won't look at different brands – they will say this is an essential; this is what I will buy."* The participant hints at habitual behaviour; knowing a brand becomes a shortcut for the consumer to acquire the right thing. There is also another side of brand awareness, which I would call brand overflow: *"Oh, I don't have any single favourite brand: lots of things, lots of things. If it's like bags, I love Balenciaga, I love Mulberry, Burberry, lots of – Yves Saint Laurent yeah, that's nice. I mean many. Can't say one, really because I think if you're really into the fashion you don't have one favourite brand."* Here the interesting insight is the awareness that fashion people have of the whole sector; having a favourite brand is considered something for people outside the consumer fashion group, so to know all the brands but not to prefer one is a sign of distinction for this participant.

An expert, a Russian journalist, says that brand is an important motive for buying when the choice is large: *"Yes I think it's brand; because if you are coming to a shelf you see twenty pieces you don't think it's utility because if you buy shorts, twenty shorts and they look the same, that is not the thing that makes you buy."* In this case he also adds that utility is not a criterion and this says that the representation of utility has probably changed for contemporary consumers because of increased choice.

*Culture (7 coded segments):* This aspect has only been mentioned by professionals. It is not clear what is meant by culture because being a general term the interpretation varies with the

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participant's background. A designer introduces the term in this way: *"Researcher: When I say the word 'value' what comes to your mind? What are your associations with this word? Participant: Well, that's an interesting question, because as a designer I should probably think about value as a financial term, right? But I think here more about cultural value. I would probably put-, if I would be asked to put value on a product I would think about the cultural aspect probably, that would be number one. Researcher: So, cultural, social as well? Participant: Cultural, social, mostly cultural. How this particular product fits into the cultural context of now."* Some other participants connect culture with British tradition: *"Do you like traditional garments? Part: Yep, all of my coats are normally what you'd call a quite traditional British type of thing so I've got a Barbour, I've got a duffel coat, I've got two trenches; so very kind of British type of heritage brand kind of look. I think that's quite true, yep got loads of those."* This term demonstrates the problem of the ambiguity of abstract factors; when dealing with a term like culture one does not really get a clear picture from the participant because everyone has a personal perspective and understands things differently (culture as well as education) or from the perspective of the in-group (national culture) or in other ways, like a company's culture or the current cultural climate.

*Exclusivity (social) (8 coded segments):* Also in this dimension there is a distinct difference between professionals and ordinary consumers. Professionals recognize exclusivity from their perspective as producers, *"I don't like mass market, because the value is decreasing in this place"*; a stylist says he identifies exclusivity with value, although it is not clear what the value would be. Producers understand the motives behind exclusivity, but they are also critical of the reasons consumers have for acquiring exclusive products: *"other people will buy something of Louis Vuitton, because they would like to be the kind of society that wear that."* Consumers often express their interest in exclusive items, although this is not motivated extensively: *"They're not conventional, they're different, they are – it's not like everyone else's. It's unique, they're unique usually and you feel set apart, more or less."* A participant interviewed just after buying something at the fashion WE is more eager to play an active role in the discovery of exclusive new items and describes exclusivity as something personal more than a phenomenon induced consumerism: *"I think there's also a lot of designers that you know like Dolce & Gabbana and Chloe, Marc Jacobs that have got things on special, that are at quite a good price for the day. But it's really nice to get to sample and see things from new designers that you know you might not get to see on the high street."* The distinction among the two groups seems to be straightforward: producers try to find out the motives to promote something as exclusive whereas consumers recognize and accept the message.

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*Origin (4 coded segments):* From the frequency of codes it seems that this dimension is more interesting for consumers than for producers (3 to 1) and the reasons are diverging. Consumers are more interested in the origin for value, quality and ethical reasons: “*Yeah, so the label is important because a lot of the time you'll know about whether they, especially now, whether it's a fair trade kind of object, so whether its designers are using proper labour to actually create the item, as opposed to cheap labour.*” Producers are more interested in the cost factor and they look for place of origin almost exclusively for this reason.

*Media (15 coded segments):* Professionals tend to see media as a means of persuasion: “*what advertising has to do is to persuade people that they should be interested in something before they actually see it, live, or experience it, and that's where photography can, if you are right, can help them.*” In the eyes of the professional advertising seems not only to influence but even to determine the final choice of the product: “*there's loads of amazing ideas out there and it's very cut throat as I said, and it ends up in how people respond to it, because of the presentation of the media or the response of the media: I think that's a very, very strong relation.*” Consumers are quite explicit about the modality of dissemination of information concerning fashion items: the movement is from the source to them: “*I have just emails that come through from magazines and from the internet sites, so I'll sort of log on to them really, when they come through. So they basically come to me, rather than me go to them.*” Another consumer says: “*Yeah I blog regularly, I have a Twitter account, so I tweet a lot, so I have a lot of people that I follow which are basically either designers or magazines, or people who write about fashion, or I have magazine subscriptions which I receive directly at home.*” Also in this case the dynamic seems straightforward: producers think about the methods of conveying the information through a complex organization (advertising, media, distribution channels) and consumers receive information rather passively. The active part they take occurs in selecting from the extensive information.

*Social trend (19 coded segments):* Consumers have two different conceptions of trends; the first most obvious trend is seen as a fashion, so they understand trend as a synonym of fashion. It can be expressed in the following terms: “*I think the fashion began last autumn: a bit of military feel.*” Or else: “*how that kind of comes out at you and colour can be quite – at the moment with the entire colour blocking trend*”. A more thoughtful way to refer to trends is when a consumer explains what a trend means to her or how she understands emerging social trends: “*After the credit crunch, I think people are becoming more rational or they've become more cautious.*”

A participant explains for example a trend that has to do with gender difference: “*more men are getting more interested in fashion because, people investing money in it and thinking that there's a*

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*demand for it and they're perpetually creating demand for it by increasing the variety".*

Professionals understand trends more from a functional point of view and tend to understand trends as a professional product. One professional speaking of consumers: "*whether they need to be at the forefront of fashion or whether they're happy to lag behind.*" Also professionals seem to believe that they are the promoters of the trends themselves and that they are able to exchange their specific knowledge among themselves: "*this is an arena for the buyers to see what is in for next season, what's to put, what's the trend, what to put in the stores, what to put in the editorials, what to shoot*".

*Seasonality (14 coded segments):* This is a particularly interesting code; why in fact should participants recognize seasonality in fashion and agree that it is a shared social category? The first obvious reason is that seasons require a different type of garment due to the temperature outside so that an ecological component is prevalent. A consumer: "*...personally I'm not going to go and buy a dress because it's still quite cold outside and I can't see it warming up anytime soon.*" However seasonality becomes a recognizable category in itself, independent of the weather: "*Participant: ...and I wouldn't get something that was very seasonal, I wouldn't get something like bright orange cropped trousers for example*", meaning that a seasonal garment is something that changes, tied to the whim of the moment. So seasonality is seen by the consumer to be linked to changing behaviours: "*Because you see in the rain and the snow, people don't go out. In the summer, they're in a good mood, everything looks nice and you're in a happier disposition.*" Also: "*but I think maybe in the summer; people might be a little looser with their money.*" It can be debated if it is season that engenders the changed behaviour or if humans change their taste and preferences and then try to fit them to the season. This insight from interviews is linked in my opinion to evolutionary motives, because seasons are deeply embedded in all human activities; body rhythms and cycles are selected by phylogeny. Seasonality has also a negative meaning: "*Researcher: Why do you prefer these two brands exactly? Participant: Because they're not too outlandish, and you can wear them across multiple seasons.*" So, in this case seasonality stands for irrational behaviour, essentially changing tastes and has to be consciously resisted.

*Tradition (8 coded segments):* First of all consumers seem to have clear ideas of what tradition means. An investment banker refers to a raincoat that he plans to buy: "*Probably a bit like that, no a bit darker than that. [Whistles]. It's a type of traditional English.*" Another consumer gives importance to tradition: "*Researcher: Tell me why you like these two designers? Participant: Because they're very quintessentially British but they're still very cutting edge, they're still very interesting, they're different*". Professionals also focus on the traditional and historical and

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recognize that those factors are discriminatory for consumer's choice. However, it remains rather undetermined what it means for a product to contain tradition and history: "*Well you know it depends on the product, I mean it could be a level of technology, it could be a level of craftsmanship, it could be a history as well maybe.*" Another says that her customers distinguish themselves for having an interest in these dimensions: "*Somebody with an interest in that kind of classic items that have a longevity but also have a unique twist about them.*" Also, tradition is a crucial factor at the level of company organization to provide final value in the product: "*I think you find it [value] more today in a very small probably a family run company or something with a very family traditional history, where they still have their eye exactly on every item that's being made*".

*Understatement (3 coded segments):* Some consumers like to follow fashion, but with less emphasis on appearance and more on quality: "*and because I don't wear things too outstanding or extraordinary so I think well Hermes or LoroPiana kind of thing, yeah I like those a lot.*" Another consumer: "*Researcher: Why do you prefer these two brands exactly? Participant: Because they're not too outlandish*". A receptionist says she a preference for low key retail with an ethical value: "*I just buy in charity shops, so it depends. Yeah, Oxfam – well, yeah a lot of different ones, so it depends. Maybe Oxfam, Cancer Research, Banardo's – all around. So, different ones.*" Interestingly no professional refers to understatement: perhaps this is not recognized as an important factor to create value in a product.

### Micro-interactional factors

I start the analysis of experiential factors with the micro-interactional ones: the marketing environment – the shop, the social interaction, the service. The assumption about these factors is that they have a lesser representational valence and are described as something happening to the participant, so in term of episodes or description of facts.

*Marketing (4 coded segments):* A professional sees in marketing a technique to enhance the look of a product. "*Well the photography is superb, it's the sort of level I can do but I didn't get commissioned for it unfortunately because someone did who they thought was the right person. And if you see it you will see it really makes Marks & Spencer's look high quality model good stuff.*" The value of marketing is in fact that of making something more valuable than it really is.

A consumer confirms this definition of marketing as a series of stratagems to enhance the appeal of products: "*And also, I guess in a way I'm really – even though it doesn't really mean much to the product but I really like packaging – how things come to you. Like if they come in little bags or nice boxes and things like that.*"

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*Environment - Shop (3 coded segments):* a professional photographer tells me that the shop is actually what determines the representation of value of a product: “*I think the retail situation you are buying determines the price you are aiming.*” Moreover: “*I think it's linked to the retail and where it is because Haute Couture you'd expect to pay £3,000 or £4,000 for a dress but you can buy haute Couture in Harrods. You wouldn't buy something for £3,000 or £4,000 in Marks & Spencers*”.

*Social interaction (15 coded segments):* The interest in this answer is that answers relating to social interaction cluster in specific participants. In other words, it seems that certain persons, for reasons that are not obvious and might depend on personal history, are more prone to give social interaction as a reason to evaluate and buy goods. For example, a consumer says: “*Participant: Mainly appearance is the main characteristic and probably... if girlfriends like it, things like that.*” And further: “*And then ask my girlfriend if she likes it as well*”. A second consumer gives a similar account of a constant interaction she has with her daughter: “*Researcher: Do you follow fashion regularly? Participant: I follow probably with my daughter more, we come to these shows for her, yep. Researcher: Do you ask for advice from anyone else? Participant: Just from my daughter probably. Researcher: She always comes with you? Participant: We do shop a little bit together, yeah we do.*” In this case it seems that the unique interest of the participant is to focus on the needs of a family member; this generates a common activity that supports the interaction.

The practitioners I interviewed referred to interaction among consumers citing their personal theories on social influence. Generally practitioners have a quite structured view of how social interactions work; a lecturer in a fashion school for example says: “*we find that fashion consumers are very influenced by the peer groups of which they are in.*” And further: “*or they're maybe wanting to.... fit in and therefore they want to buy into something that is seen as “in fashion” as an acceptable way of fitting in.*” These factors of making a purchase are not obvious in consumers: peer-group influence has to be reconstructed from a larger account than they are willing to give. Another professional refers to social identity theory without being explicit about the concept of image: “*it's also very important the kind of image what we can be when we are wearing something,*” he probably means that consumers are aware of the image they convey to others. Another register of social interaction has to do with sales-management; as a professional says, attention must be paid to the relationship the salesperson is able to establish with the customer, in that this can make the difference in a homogenous market where everything can be found: “*I think customer service is really important and becoming more and more important in this environment when everything's quite readily available.*”

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*Service (4 coded segments):* Service is curiously only referred to by some professional participants; one can presuppose that this might be due to it being a constituent of value construction in the chain of the production/distribution process. In contrast, since consumers do not refer to service, I advance the hypothesis that the abstract description of a decision process or a general account of how value is constructed by consumers does not entail service as a main factor. From an ethnographic point of view however, service might be referred to as a main factor in choice because the sales person's functionality to the whole buying activity; the situatedness of the buying activity compared to classical reconstructions of a typical activity by means of interviews may probably produce a different perspective on the same choice factor. One professional describes how service to the customer is understood in her company: "*it's not just following a trend or just kind of offering them what's available. It's very much tailored to them.*" The description of the level of service to the client is particularly interesting because it uses terminology from the professional field. Another professional suggests that service is actually induced by the process: a company is bound to offer a certain precision in service because you have tight delivery deadlines: "*Factually, there's seasons, you have to catch up, spring, summer, fall, winter. You just have to live a lot like-, or be in that certain date and deadlines.*" Service is then definitely a producers' dimension in that going to market implies a lot of attention to the needs of the customer and to the timing of the market as a whole (relation to competitors).

### Physical factors

I have identified object factors as the ones referring to perception.

*Colour (8 coded segments):* This is a consumer factor: all of the segments refer to them. One consumer says he perceives colours as giving him information about trends, so that they do not just mirror personal taste, but they are consciously perceived as cues to a social dynamics (fashions/trends): "*Participant: Cos' you can see there are definite themes in terms of the colours and styles, but I think that will be it. Researcher: So you see the trends here because there's a good choice of designers or, the people or...? Participant: I think a lot of designers, I'm seeing a lot of neon colours, just a lot of really bright colours around in the different sections we've been to.*" From another participant it is also clear that colour is linked to overall trends: "*Are you buying raincoats? Participant: Yes, a couple of, well I recently bought a Burberry one – the latest season. It's quite nice, it's green colour, I think the fashion began last autumn: a bit of military feel.*"

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Another participant describes colour among the material factors and reports it as a factor for choice linked to trends again: *“Res: When you think about products you may buy, what are the main physical characteristics of the products? Participant: I guess again the quality of the fabric, how that kind of comes out at you and colour can be quite – at the moment with all the colour blocking trend and coming up to spring and summer, that’s quite appealing.”*

*Material (11 coded segments):* This also seems to be a factor referred to by many consumers. One question of the topic guide was focused on material or physical characteristics and many participants did not show any problem in answering it, many times preferring to speak about fabric. Participants often declare clear preferences for materials: *“Res: Now when you think of a product you may buy, or you bought recently, what are the main physical characteristics that you are looking for? Participant: The type of material: mostly leather, I prefer leather goods.”* A second refers to material as the main factor in choice: *“Res: What do you look for in a fashion items? Participant: Quality material, that’s probably the main one”*. Sometimes the reference to material is motivated by the function as in: *“Researcher: In, for example a raincoat – what are the main characteristics you look for? Participant: For a raincoat I would look for windproof, waterproof, quite light for the rain”*. Another participant is looking at the material for longevity reasons: *“what’s the quality, if it’s leather, you know; how the handles are made because sometimes when you’re buying bags the handles they wear off so they get darker”*. A professional cites material and fabric in connection with uniqueness and style; fabric is what allows the company to be distinguished and helps to build an identity: *“we have a bespoke range... so it’s completely unique, it’s one offs and we make things that can’t be replicated elsewhere and they can’t be replicated both in design and in fabric, because we rework vintage garments, so we take something that’s already unique and original and probably very little existing and then we adapt it again more.”* In this quote a new element also appears which is re-use as a source of added-value.

*Function (9 coded segments):* This element belongs to the class of situated factors: function is a result of the activity the consumer does with that object, so that if the object fits the activity it is highly functional. How a consumer comes up with the description of the function is also based on the representation of the usual activity she/he does, in other words function is directly connected to routine behaviour and habits. Again this factor is mentioned most often by consumers. References to this factor switch from the quite general as in this statement: *“Researcher: Do you buy something even if you don’t try it? Participant: Not clothes, no. Never. You always have to try. Researcher: Bags? Part: Bags, yes of course. You can buy it, but still you’re gonna look how practical it’s gonna be, what’s the fabric, what’s the quality...”* or: *“For example for a raincoat, what would be the main*

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*thing that you look at, what is the main reason to buy a raincoat? And if you can tell me what brand for example? Participant: Practicality really, I mean maybe something like a Barbour or something like that.*” Clearly the prompt influences the answer in this case and it has to be observed that function is described in general terms because the question is not particularly detailed. However, some respondents have a clear idea of the functionality above many other factors, at least at the level of representation of the use of an item: “*Res: What would you think of, if you’re buying sunglasses, what would be the main aspects that you would be interested in? Part: I suppose the - erm, what’s-it-called ..factor. [UV rating] In sunglasses. UV factor – you have to look out for the sign. And also again the design: they’d have to have a bit of bling for me again.*” Again when asked about raincoats, a consumer says something about her representation of what this item should deliver: “*Res: In, for example a raincoat – what are the main characteristics you look for? Part: For a raincoat I would look for windproof, waterproof..*” this is a tautology, but still this points to a representation that might have been constructed through repeated use.

A further element of functionality is the attribution of specific functions to brands; this might be induced by advertising but may also come from previous experience, and most of all repeated experience. If someone cites a brand it might well be that she selected the brand through repeated wear and use of that item: “*Researcher: So, thank you very much. Sunglasses: what is your favourite brand of sunglasses, what do you like in a pair of sunglasses? Participant: Probably more functional: a pair of Oakley as well, that I wear for skiing more.*”

*Technology (1 coded segment):* This factor has been cited by just one professional. This is a case in which there clearly appears to be a difference between explicit and explicit factors of choice. Clearly technology is a crucial factor for production even if it is not recognized or cited, so it becomes an embedded factor.

*Accessories (3 coded segments).* This factor includes accessories as well as details; although one could think that this factor was very significant it appears only 3 times. The only consumer who speaks about details in a rather general way whereas the professional refers to it as a component of value: “*What we are offering is special details so for example it’s not just what you see on the outside, so what does special surprises on the inside, be it the special buttons or a special label or charm, so it’s added value to just, what simply meets the eyes.*”

*Quality/durability (34 coded segments).* This is the most important factor of this class and is mentioned by virtually all participants. The distribution variance however is high in that there are some participants that mention it as many as five times in the same interview. However, I combined

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quality and durability in the same factor although one could argue that they are not really 100% compatible; the rationale is I collected the two factors independently but afterwards I noticed a superposition of the concept of quality and durability and decided to combine them. I will start with the consumers and the first statement I to cite is a really down-to-earth factor of choice:

*"Researcher: When I say the word value, what comes to your mind referred to fashion items?"*

*Participant: Quality, quality of the item – how it's well made and how long it will last, like not one season but how long will it stay, like classic items. That's what I would say is valuable."* One can already note that longevity is not only linked to the physical durability but to also to the style, in other words the good must have a style that remains wearable for years to come: this in turn is linked to the social factors described above, like trends and fashion. A banker reiterates the same concept, introducing seasonality as a negative factor, and contrasts it to the social factor described above (seasonality) that above had a rather positive connotation: *"So not something that you would use for one season then not again. If I was going to get something expensive I'd like to use it for a few years, at least.* Participant: *Yeah, you've got to [unclear] would it wash well, will it last you? If you're only going to be able to wear it a couple of times I wouldn't be interested."* In this case quality is connected with durability across seasons. Another consumer says more or less the same thing:

*"And something like what you're gonna wear for years like, fashion for us is about having these things in your wardrobe for years and years and years."* Finally another consumer, an accountant, connects even more clearly quality, durability and value: *"when I want so it has to have a long life for me. I have to look at it and see if the money I'm paying – if it's less value, then that's fine, but if it's a lot of then I would look at how long it would last me, how long I would use it. Things like that."*

For the producers, ideas about the quality and longevity are comparably clear; some producers introduce quality and longevity in the same representational terms: *"I suppose quality, longevity, something classic. So, something for value for me if it had a high price tag would have to be of quality and of a classic style that would last a long time. So, the value would be in the time space as well as the actual item."* Other producers give more structured answers that entail perspective taking, so a second-level of intentionality; I can propose some reasons why this must be the case; producers have to ask themselves actively why consumers might prefer some items compared with others. It would be possible for them to answer this by figuring out how they would behave in such conditions, in other words by imagining being consumers themselves. This kind of answer implicitly reaffirms the importance of dividing the sample into two groups: the attitude of producers towards being a consumer is distinct: the former must make an effort to understand the latter, whereas the latter does not necessarily know anything about the production/distribution process. A personal shopper has a particularly poignant definition of value of a product: *"Value in the terms of products*

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*that we're buying, I would say it's probably long lasting actually. So, it's worth the money and it's going to last and it's well cut and the actual way it's stitched together I would say. Yes, and cost per wear. So, yes, I would say I suppose it's different for different people, but I would say it's something that would last them for a while. So, if you're paying a lot of money for it you would expect it to last as well.*" Here the perspective is very clear in that the shopper speaks about "them" referring to the customers he is shopping for, acting in this way as a mediator between the consumer and the industry. A final participant from the production chain tells that quality is keeping the material at a minimum standard for longevity: "*I think that.. we always try to at least have good materials, story you know, not to go too cheap for the materials, it's a certain level.. the three brands I worked for it tried to keep it above a minimum standard and not go below that standard: that's in practice value.*" So both consumers and the industry recognize that longevity/quality is the factor where probably the two sides meet more often and have to find a sustainable compromise.

*Craftsmanship (24 coded segments):* This is a recurrent theme; it includes cut, expertise, and technique. It is seen as one of the main sources of value in a product. To a specific question like the fifth a consumer answers: "*Res: How do you calculate if something is worth buying? Participant: Probably look at the workmanship of the item and see if it's worth buying*". An expert introduces the value of craftsmanship in this way: *Researcher: "When you think of that product or one of the products you sell, what are the main physical characteristics that you like to value?" Participant: "Well the quality of the fabric, the way in which it's constructed. So, something with attention to detail and a high level of quality ingredients essentially. So, put together in a very thoughtful way with a lot of attention to the design detail."*" Asked about the origin of this particular factor of evaluation: *Participant: "I think it's possible to find it, but I think you find it more today in a very small probably a family run company or something with a very family traditional history, where they still have their eye exactly on every item that's being made, because my experience is, even with a very high quality name, the outsourcing reduces the quality."*"

Here it is interesting to note the link between value factors and complexity of the organization, where bigger companies correspond to the lower value of the item because the organization implies a loss of craftsmanship.

The following statement from another expert contains three of the material factors in the second level class: craftsmanship, material and detail are mentioned in the following way: "*In terms of luxury fabrics and the attention to detail. They would add value. So, it could be something, the way it's stitched together or extra pocket details or something that makes it slightly different and that I think would add value to it. So, it makes it different from a shirt you might buy in a general high*

## Appendix 4.2 – F to F interviews

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*street store. It gives it value, if you have those added touches that you might not notice when you first see it”*

### Feeling/Emotion Factors

In interviews, one class that stands out for its frequency but also for the difficulty to classify it: that of emotional factors (or feeling). These factors are also not readily distinguishable from attitudes, in that participants happen to declare general attitudes towards classes of objects in terms of feelings.

*Contingent need (4 coded segments):* A consumer participant gives a nice description of why someone purchases new fashion items using a metaphor with eating: “*Cos you always come out with more than you need, don’t you? Don’t shop when you’re hungry!*” Shopping is like eating.

The reflection on habitual buying behaviours and routines by a procurement participant, a fashion designer, is extremely interesting. This participant introduces the emotion factor in consumers as a deviation from a routine behaviour that is usually entailed by seasonality: “*It’s not the season for now and they don’t need it right now, but this is more emotional, yes. They’re drawn to it, that’s what I like.*” Emotion comes in when a participant is less dependent on seasonality, or what is more or less the same thing when seasonality is trumped by a contingent emotion. It follows that the natural course of action is seen as following a natural cycle of seasons, whereas contingent emotions may make us deviate from that course of action. Professionals are also inclined to rate in detail the size of the group involved in choosing products, for example a buyer: “*Researcher: Do you think it is possible to measure the amount of emotion or rationality involved in the choice. How would you say fashion customers are rational or emotional about buying a product? Participant: 90% emotion*” ... “*even though it’s for a work function, ...ahm... you need that in your wardrobe for work, you don’t actually need it, you just want it. So yes I think it’s very very high.*” The participant makes a point here about the prevalence of emotional/irrational behaviour among consumers; the view that the great majority of consumers is driven by emotion is shared by almost all the professionals interviewed.

*Overall mood (10 coded segments):* This is the most general class in the category and relates to the general attitude one has towards the object of interest and how this varies over the time period of reference (during the day, over a week or seasonally). One participant states this in general terms: “*Lots of things are beautiful in one designer house, then you have another designer house next season you love this. Next season you love this so it’s – it’s all about your feelings as well.*” Clearly the mood of the customer varies a lot and the broadest timeframe is the season. One must remember that fashion houses bring products to the market on a seasonal basis. It is not obvious

## Appendix 4.2 – F to F interviews

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however if the seasonality of merchandising is dependent on people tastes or if it is the other way round, i.e. people tastes depend on the fact that fashion is organized on a seasonal pattern.

1 WSS217958 - LFW – expert - russian – male – 33-36yo – interview done with subcam

2 INT: Have you been doing this since a long time?

..Profession ♀

3 RES: We are from National Collection magazine, this is a fashion magazine... this is a nationwide glossy fashion magazine, originally published in Russia for seven years already. It has started with few starting from one copy per issue, kind of magazine and I'm in public relations, public relations editor.

..Profession ♀

4 INT: Thank you, and what type of products are you advertising or covering on that?

..Expertise ♂

..Expertise ♂

..Expertise ♂

5 RES: Our magazine covers premium products and we are working with the main fashion houses, that's why we came to London Fashion Week, because we would also like to know what kind of brands are presenting here, because we usually work with in Paris and in New York and London as well is one of the fashion capitals, also, in fashion and in this kind of industry. Because we work with some of these brands like Burberry, Paul Smith, Springle of Scotland, that's our clients as well. We would also like to know what's new and what's going on there.

6 INT: How big is your company? How many people are involved?

7 RES: You know actually our publishing house is not so huge, but it's about forty people working, but also we are working with free-lance kind of reporters, photographers, these kind of freelance work is huge now.

8 INT: Can you tell me how you started your career in the fashion business? What kind of studies did you do before?

..Expertise ♂

..own Behavior ♂

9 RES: Actually, I'm a specialist in international relations, I finished my education in Politics, but I think it happened-, I don't know how. It was a kind of sudden thing or something like that, I don't mind. I needed to work for public relations magazine, not this one it was another magazine and I started work in fashion. I was always very exposed to that, because my parents they do business in textiles and that's why my research does clothing.

10 INT: So, there is a history, a familiar tradition about that...

11 RES: Yes, something like that.

12 INT: Do you think that this had a big influence in choosing to work in the fashion business afterwards, or maybe in magazines?

13 RES: What exactly?

14 INT: I mean, did this familiar history, tradition, had an influence on that?

..outward

..own Behavior

..social Behavior

..indiv event

15 RES: Of course it does, because certainly my mum she always brought me to tailor, so when I was growing up and I could see all these things going on around me and I also wanted to be part of this... But then when I was a student, I decided to change a little bit, but therefore, probably it was a kind of destiny, of fate, it was all the time close to me, and now it's happening the same with the magazine.

16 INT: When I say the word 'value' what comes to your mind? What are your free associations with this word? Value referred to fashion items...

17 RES: Oh you know... I think that.. value concerning any things that may take.. that may happen in fashion, of course it's like it should be unique, if it's valuable it should be unique especially in different collections or any other item, yeah, what kind of fabrics do they use? Are they the same value? Because sometimes we can see- like it, as for me, as I'm working for a luxury magazine; I don't like mass market, because the value is decreasing in this place. Because, if it it's unique, it can be seen in limited edition, or it can be seen by just one item, then the value is high. That's the way like concerning any art, what we cannot do the same, like.. what we can't copy: if you can copy the value is decreasing. That's why the value for me is like originality, things like that. That's why probably London Fashion Week is a kind of interesting experience, because the fashion they do here is a little bit different from what we can see in Milano or Paris. Because there are many young designers here, probably that's also the influence of the Saint Martin's, because probably of their education, yeah..

18

19 INT: So, when you think of a product or something you may buy for you, what are the main physical characteristics that reflect the value for you?

20 RES: If I buy something in fashion for me, I think the most telling for me is cut. If I can see something inordinary, I think I like that. In cut and in that way, in fabrics as well, I think that in fashion it's also very important the kind of image what we can be when we are wearing something, especially concerning luxury things. That's why we buy I think Prada or Gucci or something like that, because we want to be part of any society where people wear it. That's why I think it's kind of the marketing as well, but we would like to be part of this all. It's also a value.

21 INT: How is your kind of activity different from your competitors? Do you have competitors in you branch?

22 RES: Of course we do. The main competitors for our magazine are Vogue and Elle, but they also do a fashion publications in Russia, but comparing it with our own publication, we've got another strategy of development, because Vogue and Elle they are licensed magazines, they are making just one magazine, and that is distributed throughout Russia. But concerning our magazine, we are making an emphasis on regions because Russia is huge and the biggest country in the world and Moscow is not the only city!

23 INT: We normally don't think about that... That's right

24 RES: Yeah, and because we are making.. We have thirteen editorial offices throughout Russia, we have also publications: because, actually it's not just one magazine, it's thirteen magazines! because we have one part the same for all magazines, and some part is local, we try to encompass local news, local features, the very thing that makes this magazine more interesting for people living in the very city where we publish and distribute it. That's why it's so a distinctive picture.

25 INT: How do you think people calculate what something is worth? How does the decision process take place at the very moment of buying?

..Brand

26 RES: I think it's the brand,

27 INT: Brand?

..Evaluation process

28 RES: Yes I think it's brand; because if you are coming to a shelf you see twenty pieces you don't think it's utility because if you buy shorts, twenty shorts and they look the same, that is not the thing that makes you buy. If you wear the shorts you want to be something in that way. That's why some people will buy unknown designers, because they want to show that they protest, they don't wear luxury, for example, and other people will buy something of Louis Vuitton, because they would like to be kind of the society that wear that. I think that brand is very important. If it's just three items or three to five, you probably don't think about buying, but if it's more than five it's becoming complicated to choose. That's why you think about and I've heard about that before, if you have seen that in publicity, marketing or whatever, if you have seen that someone is wearing that, I think that brand is very important now.

..outward Behavior

..outward Behavior

..Evaluation

..indiv event

29 INT: So, mainly brand? What would be your ideal client? We are speaking now of a magazine. Your, sorry, client and customer, what is your ideal?

..Company

..Customer

..Customer

30 RES: You know, we have two types of client. First we are making a publication for our readers, so they are our main client. That's why we have to know who particularly reading our magazine. These people are of a wage and salary more than average, those people who travel a lot, those people who can afford luxury things, those who drive a car, I think in majority, so people of high income and another type of client are our advertisers, because it's a glossy magazine... i think it's known that most of the money that comes to the magazines, comes from advertising, that's why our main clients are fashion houses, those who want the brand to be known, it's D-watch, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, these kind of clients.

31 INT: Is there anything that you would like to add or suggestions for this interview on value? How we should cover different other dimensions, or other type of questions? To add from your experience?

32 RES: It's an interesting experience for me. I've never seen such kind of things (*referring to the subcam glasses*).

33 INT: That's quite new

34 RES: I think everybody is kind of surprised looking at us, It's a great experience, thank you.

35 AUDIO ENDS

1 DW\_B0134\_restaurant\_owner - 13.08 minutes

2 **Res: If you can just tell me what kind of activity you do, what job, since how many years?**

3 Part: I'm working in the restaurant business. I just started actually, but I'm working in the catering industry for six years.

4 **Res: Where, in the UK?**

5 Part: In the UK yeah.

6 **Res: Are you British?**

7 Part: I'm not British; I'm from Estonia.

8 **Res: What is the product you are interested in today?**

9 Part: Everything, because it's the first time we came to the London fashion weekend, so everything: clothes and bags and shoes, jewellery. Everything.

10 **Res: Okay. Do you follow fashion regularly?**

11 Part: Yes.

12 **Res: Where? On magazines, blogs?**

13 Part: On magazines and the fashion channels. Like fashion TV.

14 **Res: When I say the word value, about fashion items, what comes to mind? What is valuable.**

15 Part: Designers. Most quality. Okay. Like, classic I would say for me classic things more [unclear] more well known designer brands houses, with the quality.

16 **Res: And when you think of a product you might buy, what would be the physical characteristics that you are looking for? What is the main factor for buying it?**

17 Part: To be comfortable, good quality and look good. Suit me.

18 **Res: It must look good on you.**

19 Part: Yes, exactly.

20 **Res: So you try it.**

21 Part: Of course.

22 **Res: Do you buy something even if you don't try it?**

..Profession ♂  
..Expertise/Education ♂

..Media

..Design - Style ♂  
..Taste ♂  
..Brand ♂

..Comfort/Fit ♂ ♀  
..Image/Shape  
..Quality/durability

..Comfort/Fit ♂

..Comfort/Fit

23 Part: Not clothes, no. Never. You always have to try.

..Function  
..Material  
..Evaluation process  
..Material24 **Res: Bags?**

25 Part: Bags, yes of course. You can buy it, but still you're gonna look how practical it's gonna be, what's the fabric, what's the quality, if it's leather, you know; how the handles are made because sometimes when you're buying bags the handles they wear off so they get darker, so you need to be very careful of the materials you're buying and of the colour.

26 **Res: Is there any added value to buy here today?**

27 Part: No. [Laughs]

28 **Res: Do you find they are different from what you find in high street shops?**..situational evaluation  
..Sale

29 Part: What I can say, my personal opinion, I think my friend would agree with me as well; the items on sale here today, they are the items from the previous sale in the shops. So these are the things, which haven't been sold in the shops in the last sale. And I can honestly tell you, they didn't buy them there, and I'm not gonna buy them here, so.

30 Part2: [Friend] Yes, it's true.

..Ratio  
..Quality/durability  
..Sale  
..Bargaining31 **Res: How do you calculate what something is worth?**

32 Part: Market value, but certain things like, you know, something with the good quality, these things they never go down of the price. Like if it's a sale, you hardly can get anything like valuable in the sale – or you have to be really, really lucky. The good things never go on sale. So whatever you have on sale, it's more about price, not about the thing itself, not about the product itself, so they try to attract you with the price, but actually you don't need these things sometimes, you just think "oh wow, that's cheap and I'm gonna buy it", but it's not what you want. You would not buy it at the full price, and then why should you buy it with the discount? So let's say, I would buy something on sale, what I really really like will be full price, and then if I'm lucky, then I can buy it cheaper. But if something they offer me cheap, I don't need it, I'm not gonna buy it. If something wouldn't attract me with the full price, I'm not gonna get it. So something like this. Yeah? [Laughs]

33 **Res: Do you think customers are more rational or irrational generally?**

34 Part: Irrational.

..irrational or affective behavior

35 **Res: For every product, or specifically for fashion?**

36 Part: Particularly women are irrational, absolutely, look here! Everyone's irrational, they don't need these things! [Laughs] They just

..irrational or affective behavior	had two champagnes and they're buying. That's why there are champagne bars everywhere! Except us, we're not buying. We made our opinion, we just enjoy each others' company and champagne, not shopping. [Laughs] There is nothing worth to buy, really, nothing.
..Typified social Behavior	
..irrational or affective behavior	
..overall mood	
..Marketing	
..Addiction	
37	<b>Res: Why do people buy?</b>
38	Part: To get rid of the stress, to make them feel better, you know why people buy things? They have things missing mentally and they think if we buy, we're going to feel better, we're going to be better people, but it's not like that. That's what the business do with the people. They're trying to make people buy things because they know, psychologically people need to feel this emptiness inside them and through the buying things for some short period of time, they're doing it. But later they need to go and buy again, it's like an addiction.
39	<b>Res: How do they feel better by buying something? I can't really understand that.</b>
40	Part: Ah, ok we're going to explain you, just give us a second. How do they feel better? It's actually very easy to explain, like, it gives you value, like, you spend money buying something; you own something and you think like you own some kind of emotion, some kind of character through the buying things. But actually it's not true. Then you need to go, and you need to buy again. You get this fix, like wow, I feel better now, but actually you're seeking for the emotions, not for the things. So people mix shopping with the real things like emotions and good feelings, good things in their lives, like real valuable things. They mix them with this quick fix, they think oh yeah, tonight I'm gonna go and buy new shoes, I'm gonna be a better person, I'm gonna be more pretty, I'm gonna be more happy and the next day you wake up and you realize no, it didn't make me happy these new shoes. I'm still the same miserable person. So they buy and buy again. Yeah, exactly. That's what it is about.
41	<b>Res: Very mysterious. What is your favourite brand?</b>
42	Part: Oh, I don't have any single favourite brand: lots of things, lots of things. If it's like bags, I love Balenciaga, I love Mulberry, Burberry, lots of – Yves Saint Laurent yeah, that's nice. I mean many. Can't say one, really because I think if you're really into the fashion you don't have one favourite brand. You really have many different ones. Lots of things are beautiful in one designer house, then you have another designer house next season you love this. Next season you love this so it's – it's all about your feelings as well.
43	<b>Res: Shoes, did you buy any shoes?</b>
44	Part: Not today, what I bought recently – let me think, I buy quite a lot. Recently I bought - in Harvey Nichols there was a sale, the Christmas sale – so I bought a pair of Louboutins.
45	<b>Res: Quite expensive, 700?</b>

46 Part: No, it was a really good offer, it was for cardholders it was additional extra sale, so I paid around I think 280 pounds or 300 pounds, something like that. Really good value, really good value.

47 **Res: And what is the average price you are willing to spend for a pair of shoes?**

48 Part: 3 – 400. If it's summer shoes. If it's winter boots, you know something then it's like 600, let's say like that.

49 **Res: And what is a reasonable price for a pair of shoes, which is a different thing. I mean, what is reasonable for you?**

50 Part: 2 – 300. Most expensive, But these have to be really really good shoes. Really comfortable.

51 **Res: What is the average price that you think people are spending?**

52 Part: I think it's less, like 100 quid.

53 **Res: Did you buy any raincoats recently?**

54 Part: I didn't buy any raincoat recently.

55 **Res: Did you consider?**

56 Part: My friend is considering buying a trench.

57 **Res: Ah, you are considering buying a trench?**

58 Part2: A Burberry.

59 **Res: Why a Burberry?**

60 Part2: [Friend] Just a very nice made trench.

61 Part: It fits her perfectly, good quality. And something like what you're gonna wear for years like, fashion for us is about having these things in your wardrobe for years and years and years. So you're buying something really good quality and you kind of, you are connected with this thing, so it's not like quick fashion: you're buying something and then you're forgetting about this so you want to get rid of it. But something what you're gonna really love over the years – the thing, the product is gonna change and you're gonna have some different feelings, different memories you know, connected with this regular trench – you know she's gonna buy a trench. And in ten years' time she's still gonna have it and it's going to be in perfect condition, but then she'll think oh my god, I bought it ten years ago and I was this and this at that time. I still love it and it's gonna be a bit worn, maybe a little bit, but still it's going to be something very valuable.

Emotionally and money wise as well. Because it's an investment, when you're buying expensive things and you're buying them wisely, you're investing. You're buying one trench – expensive – ten years you've still got it. So if you divide it by ten years, what, you spent

Definition of Value

nothing. So that's how it is.

62 **Res: So it's a sort of calculation you do, how many times you wear it and how much?**

..rational decision process

63 Part: It doesn't come like this; you don't have a calculator, but you obviously think of it, you know when you're buying you think okay, I'm gonna spend that much now and then next year I don't need to buy and it's gonna last for five, ten years and then, I'm gonna enjoy it, like that.

64 **Res: One last question: sunglasses, did you buy sunglasses or are you planning to?**

65 Part: I'm planning to buy a pair of aviator sunglasses, I didn't decide which brand yet. I know I want to have them in gold.

66 **Res: Aviator is like a RayBan?**

..Self image

67 Part: Yeah. Like a RayBan, but I'm not sure if I'm gonna buy RayBan because they're a bit too big for my face. So I was thinking maybe Dolce & Gabbana or something different. So I'm definitely going to choose a pair of aviators this summer.

68 **Res: You know there are different sizes of RayBan? There are also the small ones.**

..Uniqueness (of a specific

69 Part: Yes, yes I know – I've got actually, in my collection, the original aviator without a frame. You can't buy them in shops. I ordered them from Italy, from the factory. So they're discontinued and you can't buy these, so they're really collectible. I've got them in black, and they have no frame.

70 **Res: So the old lenses.**

71 Part: Bausch & Lomb.

72 **Res: Old names... So thank you very much.**

73 [end]

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**Institute of Social Psychology**

**Subcam Research Participant Form**

Date of recording: 27/06/11

Name of Participant: 1  Anonymized

Contact Address, telephone, email:

Anonymized

Location, nature of activity :

US CAG

CENTRAL LONDON, SHOE SHOPPING

**Informed consent and image rights:**

I hereby agree to participate in the SubCam research protocol, which includes :

- A - Wearing the SubCam during my own activity
- B - Participating in a debriefing session to comment the activity.
- C - Appearing in a film where someone else is wearing a SubCam

YES NO  
 YES NO  
 YES NO  
 YES NO

I agree in principle to my face/voice being identifiable

I am aware these records will be used for scientific research.  
Some of my comments may be dubbed to the original clip.

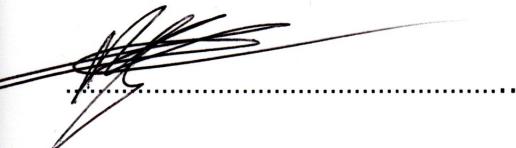
I have been informed that:

- no image where I can be identified will be used without my previous consent: I will be shown the final tape with a right to ask for edits or anonymity.
- I remain free to withdraw of the process at any time during the data capture and analysis.
- I will not receive payment for being filmed or participating in this research.

I will get a free copy of the final film, and non-exclusive rights to use it for private audiences or non-commercial venues as long as the source and the research programme are fully quoted.  
I cannot sell, distribute or modify the film. The film remains property of the LSE/SHEOS Research Programme, which will have all rights for diffusion.

By signing here I agree to the above.

Signature of Participant, date:



Professor Saadi Lahlou  
Director, Institute of Social Psychology  
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## APPENDIX 5.2: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SUBJECTIVE CAM RECORDINGS

This appendix contains some scans of the raw content analysis of recordings:

PART_015_Crystal		PART_015		PART_015	
00:07:56	Fitting 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe (right)	00:13:32	Entering 1 <sup>st</sup> shop (Aldo)	00:13:32	Entering 1 <sup>st</sup> shop (Aldo)
00:08:54	MIRROR				
09:01	Sitting				
00:10:58	Fitting 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe (left)				
11:29	Short look into the MIRROR				
00:11:49	Looking into MIRROR Whole figure				
00:12:38	" "	16:51	Touching 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe	00:15:14	" "
13:40	" "			15:36	" "
00:15:35	Buying shoes to the counter	16:01	" "	16:01	" "
	DECISION	17:32	" "	17:40	EXITING 1 <sup>st</sup> shop (Natural shoe store)
00:16:18	PAYLINE	00:18:02	Entering 2 <sup>nd</sup> shop	00:18:02	Entering 2 <sup>nd</sup> shop (Natural shoe store)
00:20:22	Entering 5 <sup>th</sup> shop (1 <sup>st</sup> shoe again)	00:19:50	Touching 6 <sup>th</sup> shoe	00:20:07	" "
20:42	Talking 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe	00:20:59	" "	00:20:35	" "
21:02	" 15 <sup>th</sup> time (shoe N° 4-5)	00:21:22	EXITING	00:21:22	" "
21:08	Aking for Assistance.				
00:21:59	Sitting down (waiting for n°2)				
	00:23:24				
FNLB_0832-2501201314651		00:00:49	ENTERING 3 <sup>rd</sup> shop	00:01:15	" "
00:01:31	Ancient back with size	01:24	Talking 8 <sup>th</sup> shoe	01:24	" "
00:04:12	FITTING 2 <sup>nd</sup> shoe	00:03:08	" "	00:03:41	EXITING
01:40	MIRROR	00:05:23	ENTERING 4 <sup>th</sup> shop	05:40	" "
02:20	" again	05:40	Talking 10 <sup>th</sup> shoe	06:04	" "
04:03:43	FITTING 3 <sup>rd</sup> shoe	06:25	" "	06:48	12 <sup>th</sup> time (11 <sup>th</sup> shoe)
04:13:33	MIRROR	06:25	" "	06:48	13 <sup>th</sup> time (11 <sup>th</sup> shoe)
00:04:52	FITTING back 2 <sup>nd</sup> shoe: 5 <sup>th</sup> FITTING	06:07:04	Aking for Assistance (size)	07:33	Sitting down
00:05:10	MIRROR				
06:03	FITTING back 2 <sup>nd</sup> shoe: 5 <sup>th</sup> FITTING				
06:12	MIRROR				

Wellalie - Part 002 - FNKH001 - 1806201140826 ①

**First shop entered** (weg)

14:15:32 **1<sup>st</sup> shoe** touched

14:16:33 exiting shoe

14:17:27 entering shoe

14:18:23 Entering 2<sup>nd</sup> shoe

14:19:49 Touching 2<sup>nd</sup> shoe

14:20:56 exiting shoe

14:22:03 Entering 3<sup>rd</sup> shoe

14:22:28 exiting shoe

14:24:27 Entering 4<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:26:31 Touching 4<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:26:58 exiting 4<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:25:25 Entering 5<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:28:10 exiting 5<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:29:43 Entering 6<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:30:43 " 6<sup>th</sup> shoe (name on before after tour)

14:31:04 exiting 6<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:32:56 Entering 7<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:33:27 Touching 7<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:33:55 " 7<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:34:47 Entering 8<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:35:17 Touching 8<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:35:53 " 8<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:08 " 9<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:10 " 9<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:33 " 10<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:39 " 10<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:48 " 11<sup>th</sup> shoe

14:36:51 " 11<sup>th</sup> shoe

00:07:22 **FITTING** giving 3rd shoe **6<sup>th</sup>** fitting

07:52 **MIRROR** giving back shoe to Assistant **DECISION**

00:10:48 giving back shoe to Assistant **DECISION**

00:10:48 Touching nodes - talking pedat

00:11:02 at the TILL

00:11:35 **PAYING**

00:11:35 **EXITING** shop

00:11:35 **LEAVING** shop

00:11:35 **ENTERING** shop

PART-009	Charlotte	FNK40011-20130102192306	Starting Time [18:23:06]	①	
				18:23:56	Entering 1 <sup>st</sup> shop
				18:32:27	Touching 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe
				18:33:12	" again same shoe
				18:33:20	Interaction with Assistant
				18:34:36	Tending 2 <sup>nd</sup> model
				18:35:03	" 3 <sup>rd</sup> shoe
				18:35:15	" 4 <sup>th</sup> shoe
				18:35:20	" 5 <sup>th</sup> "
				18:35:31	FITTING 1 <sup>st</sup> shoe
				18:35:32:10	Interaction with Assistant
				18:38:31	FITTING 2 <sup>nd</sup> shoe
				18:39:03	MIRROR (small)
				18:39:58	MIRROR (large)
				18:40:05	Interaction
				18:40:39	Tending 6 <sup>th</sup> shoe
				18:40:40	" 7 <sup>th</sup> shoe
				18:40:53	FITTING 3 <sup>rd</sup> shoe
				18:41:55	MIRROR change to larger Mirror
				18:42:00	Tending 8 <sup>th</sup> shoe
				18:43:27	Tending 9 <sup>th</sup> shoe
				18:43:41	Mirror
				18:44:34	giving shoe back to Assistant
				14:37:15	DECISION?

PART - 009

18:54:43 Touching 30<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 54:57 " 31<sup>st</sup> " "  
 55:37 " 32<sup>nd</sup> "  
 55:49 " 33<sup>rd</sup> "  
 55:59 " 34<sup>th</sup> "  
 56:01 " 35<sup>th</sup> "  
 56:12 " 36<sup>th</sup> again 32<sup>nd</sup> shoe  
 56:16 " 37<sup>th</sup> again 33<sup>rd</sup> shoe  
 56:16 " 38<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 18:56:40 going to the TILL  
 18:57:30 paying (inserting card)  
 18:58:17 Existing the shop.

(3)

18:45:00 Touching 9<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 45:04 " "  
 45:53 " "  
 18:46:57 " "  
 18:47:10 " "  
 47:23 " "  
 48:01 " "  
 48:08 " "  
 48:38 " "  
 18:48:49 Fitting 4<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 18:48:57 MIRROR

FNKH0011-20130102184921  
 18:49:39 Touching 18<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 18:49:52 " "  
 18:52:21 " "  
 18:52:41 " "  
 18:52:52 " "  
 18:53:06 " "  
 18:53:12 " "  
 18:53:22 " "  
 18:53:37 " "  
 18:53:49 " "  
 53:54 " "  
 54:04 " "

18:49:39 Touching 18<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 18:49:52 " "  
 18:52:21 " "  
 18:52:41 " "  
 18:52:52 " "  
 18:53:06 " "  
 18:53:12 " "  
 18:53:22 " "  
 18:53:37 " "  
 18:53:49 " "  
 53:54 " "  
 54:04 " "

18:49:39 Fitting 5<sup>th</sup> shoe  
 18:49:52 " "

## APPENDIX 5.7: JOINT INTERPRETATION SESSIONS

### **Interpretation session at ISP on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June – 2013**

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5 groups of 3 people each involved. Footage has been collected both from offset camera and Subcam cam Panasonic worn by the researcher. Listed beneath are the comments each group has made after watching each clip. A 10 minutes discussion followed to collect further interpretation possibilities for the subcam footage, on a separate file (003\_wav).

#### **Clip 1**

##### **Gaensche**

She is walking but not really shopping. We were not sure what she is thinking. Maybe she has a specific target maybe not.

##### **Emily LeRoux-Rutledge**

What is she doing (disagreement within group):

Interpretation 1: window shopping in covent garden.

Interpretation 2: looking for specifically for shoes.

What is she thinking:

Who knows? Probably thinking about something unrelated to shoes and shopping, but glancing incidentally at windows.

##### **Saadi Lahlou**

looks for a shoe shop by looking at windows, in Covent Garden, and inside shops though open doors. in two instances hesitates to enter the shop, stays on the doorstep, decides not to enter, then continues to other shop. Always focuses on same side of street (on the right).

##### **Jane Roberts**

Window shopping with no clear idea of what she's looking for specifically.

##### **teresawhitney1**

The participant appears to be "window shopping," walking past stores and looking at the window displays, but hasn't made up her mind as to which store she will enter. She appears to have almost walked into a store, but pauses, which makes me think that she has second thoughts about entering.

## Clip 2

### **Gaensche**

Shopping for shoes, explicitly boots seem to be her target.

### **Jane Roberts**

A bit more focused in her browsing. We get the sense that she's interested in boots and she seems to be looking to actually buy something. Her entering a shop possibly indicates this.

### **Emily LeRoux-Rutledge**

What is she doing:

Shopping for boots

What is she thinking:

"Anything here that interests me? I quite like the look of those boots. Is it worth going into that store to look at them? Maybe not. What about these ones? Yes, I'll go in and look at these."

### **Saadi Lahlou**

Looks at windows of shoe on left side (Neal Street). Seems to focus on female boots. Looks inside, and slows down more in front of the door of the shop than the windows (noise? more difficult to see? or more salient dilemma of entering?)

### **teresawhitney1**

The participant appears to be shopping for women's boots, as s/he quickly passes men's shoes as well as women's shoes that are not boots. She is focusing on the left side of the street (glanced over at the right side) - either she is not interested in the stores on the right or she will walk back on that side of the street.

## Clip 3

- **Gaensche**

She is specifically looking at boots, particularly brown boots and looking at prices. Now we are more convinced that she intends buying boots.

### **Jane Roberts**

She entered the shop and bypassed the room of bags and accessories going straight for the shoes. We notice she's beginning to browse prices- it was the first thing she looked at after seeing a shoe she liked. She seems to be drawn to pale brown/tan shoes, so maybe she has something specifically in mind.

### **Saadi Lahlou**

goes back in the shop she had seen (Aldo in Neal Street?), enters -probably had taken the decision in the first pass by the window- then picks up several to look closer, at various brown boots on display. All brown sturdy leather boots. Looks at the (price?) label on the sole of one. rejects offer of help from the salesgirl. Probably in evaluation stage to create her consideration set.

### **Emily LeRoux-Rutledge**

What is she doing:

Looking at brown boots

What is she thinking:

"Maybe shorter ones with laces? Longer riding ones? Not quite sure yet. How would this look on me? What's the heel like? Will it be comfortable? What's the price?"

### **teresawhitney1**

She turned back (from clip 2) to go back to a store she passed. She walks over to the boots section, but stops and looks at flats for a moment, so she is in browsing mode (she has something in mind, but she's open to other things while she's in the store). She turns her focus to knee-high and above the ankle boots. She's interested in both price, lining, and heel height (flat-ish) - most interested in price & quality. She isn't interested in girly shoes, but more practical.

## Clip 4

### Gaensche

She goes deeper into the process of shopping, checks more carefully prices and material, particularly the inside of the boots.

### Jane Roberts

She asks to try on the first pair of boots she picked up. She had a good impression of the boots visually and wanted to know if that particular pair fit- the pair that had been on display. She seemed unsure of what size she was, so wanted to confirm before sending the sales person off. We also noticed that the boots she came in with were black, so it's becoming clear that she's interested in a different color.

### Saadi Lahlou

accepts offer of help of salesgirl. Asks to try out tall brown leather boots, one of the first she touched in the shop. She tries out the pair on display to check the size (36, 37?).

She already wears very similar boots, although of a dark color (black? Dark brown??)

### Emily LeRoux-Rutledge

What is she doing:

Asking about the size. Trying on boots.

What is she thinking:

"Do they have my size? How does this look? Are they the right boot length?"

### teresawhitney1

She got help, so is ready to move from browsing mode to more serious/committed shopping. Can see that she already has black boots on, so is clearly only interested in brown boots.

## Clip 5

### **Jane Roberts**

She asks if the boots she's interested in come with a warmer lining, indicating an interest in warmer boots. This seems a bit different from what she was drawn to when she first entered the shop, as the first boots had no lining. Maybe she's decided at the last minute to go for something more practical? She does some browsing while she's waiting for the sales person to return and didn't seem all that thrilled with the black winter boots they brought back for her.

### **Saadi Lahlou**

asks salesgirl for other models of boots with furry inside like the ones she tried. While she waits, goes around and explores other models on display by feeling the inside with her right hand. At some point she puts her purse down on a shelf to be able to use both hands.

Other salesman proposes her pair of furry (inside) boots but of a different style : black, lower (UGG?). As she was exploring the shop, she also looked at different kinds of shoes, especially high heeled/soled shoes (no touch)

### **teresawhitney1**

She is clearly interested in warm winter style boots, as she is explicitly asking about thicker/warmer lining. She doesn't seem to be very keen on the first pair w/the lining and asks the associates for other warm options. They show her black & she goes back to brown. She seems like she's not keen to leave until she's totally sure that there's nothing there she wants - she thoroughly checks the store for all options before making a decision on whether to go, she's invested time in the store.

### **Emily LeRoux-Rutledge**

What is she doing:

Checking the lining.

What is she thinking:

Will they be warm? Maybe they're not comfortable. Maybe I'll get some shoes after all... no, boots. Do I want them for warmth, or do I want them to look pretty?

## Clip 6

### Gaensche

she is trying one brown boot and carefully watching herself in the mirror, turning the boot in all different angles thinking about how does it look/fit. She is debating whether to buy it.

### Jane Roberts

She tries on brown boots with lining and spends a lot of time considering them after taking the pair that was on display, presumably because it was her size. She seems a bit lost on size, re-checking the size of another pair on display. Or maybe she's looking at the price? She is unconvinced when salesperson says they look better, instead saying they are too big.

### teresawhitney1

She tries on the pair w/lining. Is clearly concerned with how they look - she uses several leg positions to get a sense of how they look/wear (behind, front, twists her leg, sits down & looks at the foot). She decides that they are too big.

She's interested in dark brown boots (says no to tan), and wants a pair w/decoration (buckles, etc., not plain). Perhaps she likes a pair she has & is looking for something similar in dark brown.

### Emily LeRoux-Rutledge

What is she doing:

Trying on another boot

What is she thinking:

Do they look good? Are they warm enough? Is the heel the right height? Are they comfortable? How do they look compared to the one I'm wearing?

## Clip 7

### Jane Roberts

She tries on another pair that aren't quite as tall and seem a bit different from the ones she was looking at first. Her decision to buy them seemed a bit impulsive as she seemed to decide she wanted this pair only after the sales woman came back and asked her about them. She held them in her hands considering them for a bit and seemed to decide at that point she would take them.

### Gaensche

She tries the same boot but a different size? Looks in the mirror and then again at the boots, there is a moment of reflection and then she seems to make a decision.

### teresawhitney1

She goes back to the first pair she looked at, though lighter in color than others she had checked out. She wanted to check all her options before settling on the first pair that she liked, just to be sure. She rechecked the price before making a final decision - comfort was the main factor in her purchase. She asks the assistant for a pair that was not on display - wants to make sure there is no damage.

### Emily LeRoux-Rutledge

What is she doing?

Trying on another pair and deciding to buy them

What is she thinking?

They're shorter and warmer. Yes I like them. They look good too. I like the sole. It has a good grip. But on the other hand, those boots over there are also quite nice. But they wouldn't be so practical.

## Clip 8

### Saadi Lahlou

waits for the sales assistant to come back with some info (is there another pair that was not on display?). In the while, she looks at other very different shoes (high heeled/soles, glittering) like she is now allowed to look at uncomfortable shoes opposite to what she bought). Also looks at her smartphone. Sales assist comes back : it is the last pair. She goes to cashier.

### Gaensche

she is waiting for the assistant. while she is waiting she is looking a other style shoes, maybe she is browsing and thinking about a future buy.

### teresawhitney1

She wanted a pair that was not a display, but those were the last pair. She decides that she still wants them. While waiting for the assistant, she did a lot of heavy/intense browsing - picking up boots, looking a other styles, sale shoes, and non-practical dress shoes. Maybe she's killing time or making a mental note of shoe options for another shopping trip.

### Emily LeRoux-Rutledge

What is she doing:

Checking her phone, taking another look around, waiting for salesgirl to return, buying the boots.

What is she thinking:

They look nice too. Maybe next time. Have I made the right choice? Am I sure I like these ones better than other similar pairs? I'd also like to buy some pretty shoes, but I can't afford it.

**-- End of Transcript --**

**ESCP 01**

[Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli](#)

In our opinion this video probably shows the "alternatives evaluation" stage:  
the first shop attracts the customer but still she/he decides not to enter.

Still, the second one is worse than the first one because it's not even worth one second to have a look inside.

Lodo & Julia

[Nitish Singh](#)

We can look at number of seconds spent in front of each shop.

[alex619912](#)

Window shopping & getting an overview of the shops available.

**ESCP 02**

[Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli](#)

She sees and skeeps 2 more shops before entering one shop she probably knew before.

She stops for a while in front of 5th shop's window, probably evaluating the kind of shoes she is going to buy, or the find an inspiration.

L&J

[Fabian Fuchs](#)

The person scans different windows for shows. She mostly screens them quickly but seems to stop at a certain point and have a closer look at shows that might catch her interests. It appears as if she has an idea of what kind of shoes she is looking like since she does the screening quickly.

[Marcella Astini](#)

Selection of the type of product (boots).

[alex61991](#)

Focusing on the type of shoes. Rather than the shops. Entering the shop considering the supply of shoes.

### **ESCP 03**

[Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli](#)

She goes back to a shop she'd already seen, and she finds the right shelf as soon as she walks in: she knows where to go.

She is evaluating the alternatives within the chosen shop: she watches, she touches, she checks for the price, and put the shoe back.

All of the 3 samples are light brown so she probably knows the colour of the shoes she wants to buy.

The process is interrupted by the shop assistant's arrival.

[Nitish Singh](#)

Once she found a prospective shoe on the second shelf from bottom, she mainly focuses on the this particular level of shelf.

[Marcella Astini](#)

Go in the selected shop already with an aim, probably where she saw the most interesting products. She interacts with the possible products. Still screening which type of boot she wants.

[alex61991](#)

Interested in boots. Particularly in these leather-brown boots.

### **ESCP 04**

[alex61991](#)

Looks at the price. Asks informations at the saleslady. Try them to feel the comfort.

(The saleslady is hot)

Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli

Assistant speeds things up: without really doing anything she "pushes" the customer to try the shoes.

She didn't need any help from the assistant since she finds the right size on her own,

Fabian Fuchs

She hasn't asked for size by herself but waited to be approached by the sales rep. Then she appeared to be clear in what she wants to try.

Marcella Astini

First contact with the sales person followed by first product selection and trial.

**ESCP 05**

Nitish Singh

We can measure the time she spends on a particular eye level.

Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli

She keeps on evaluating alternatives: it is clear she prefers "riding boots" and does not want any heeled shoe.

Asking for the size of a pair and being helped.

Chu T

She may have checked out the heel of boots.

alex61991

Looks for alternatives while she waits to try the boots. She seems interested in fur inside the shoes.

The music is loud and annoying. (But the saleslady remains hot).

Marcella Astini

Browses for a substitute with a specific feature. Asks for help. Browses for other substitutes in a more broad category.

### Fabian Fuchs

She seems to have identified a certain functionality she is looking for: boots that are padded.

She also has a look at chic evening shoes but then seems to circle back to her initial buying intention: boots.

### **ESCP 06**

#### Fabian Fuchs

The person chose to try a particular boot. She immediately looks into the mirror. This could indicate that the look of the boot is quite important to her. She also has a check again on the price tag of the same boot. Instead of trying the fit by walking around, she spends long time standing in front of the mirror

#### Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli

Trying one pair of light brown boots: we can see she already has a dark coloured boot, so she is more interested in other colours.

She checks herself in the mirror, until the assistant arrives,

#### alex61991

She tries the shoe. Have a glance at the glass and wonder how the shoe fits her. Keep looking the price.

#### Marcella Astini

third fitting. Goes back to the original features she was looking for. Analyses the product while looking in the mirror. Reaches the conclusion that they don't fit.

### **ESCP 07**

#### Marcella Astini

She goes back to the first boots she liked, brown with fur inside. Tries them on again. Decides to take them, they are nice and comfortable.

### Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli

Decision making moment arrives: she also check the time so maybe she was in a hurry?

### alex61991

She is observing another customer. Tries the boots again. Finally make up her mind and decide to purchase the boots !

### Fabian Fuchs

She has a final look at the show and then takes her decision to buy it.

## **ESCP 08**

### Marcella Astini

She is still a bit hesitant. Looks at the chosen boots but in a darker shade of brown. While waiting for the sales person she browses a bit more, very broadly, looking at all types of shoes.

### alex61991

Wait the saleslady to bring back the shoes. Watch her phone and have a look on the other shoes on the shelves. Finally pay her shoes at the cashier.

### Lodovico Agnoli Beccadelli

Decision is already taken, she just check the phone, looks around and pays

### Fabian Fuchs

She walks to the shelves again and looks at and touches other boots. She focuses on brown colored ones.

Afterwards, she walks to the high heels shelf. In this case she views them with much more distance. Maybe she gets an overview of the offer. She also does not touch the high heels as opposed to the boots. When the sales rep comes back, the situation becomes clearer: She was waiting for the boots and had a look at the high heels in the meantime

## Appendix 6.1 – Pilot replay interview

### Pilot replay interview - Participant 001

The replay interview of participant 001 has served as a piloting resulting in a longer account of the interview because it has been fully transcribed and also some frames have been extracted to make the process clearer. The edited version is available for the reader on the ethnoshoes.com website, under “research videos” (*passw. swimming*). PART stays for participant, RES for researcher.

#### 1 to 35: preliminary factors in declarative modus (screening halted)

6	PART: Yes, I had actually looked-shopped around for what I wanted; had seen it had seen the price and then I took my time, took a look: should I buy, shouldn't I buy and then... I had been there a couple of times looking at labels, then I wanted to go, like.. Debenhams has different designers... and..
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The first turntakings are about situating the action in the physical environment; the first seconds of recording are used as a prompt but the recording is halted for 15 minutes. From the very beginning the participant refers to the repetition of similar actions in the past: going shopping is not an isolated activity but is enclosed in a succession of approximations to the final goal (buying a pair of shoes) whose motivational starting point is virtually impossible to reconstruct

8	PART: So I even went to the producer itself: they have their own shop, and see what other options they have
9	RES: right
10	PART: I also checked online to see what different types of shoes they had, but then I focused on that particular one that that seems what will do the work I wanted it to do, right? And then given the price and all that had to think of when to buy and all that ...
11	RES: So that's a process that has been ongoing for several weeks?
12	PART: yes, several weeks

The participant has used different strategies for the collection of relevant information. Checking for prices and comments on the internet was also mentioned in the open-ended interview; before the actual purchase all strategies seem to be considered simultaneously without a specific ranking of importance, it is not possible to state which one was decisive in the choice.

13	RES: and the shoes that you would like to buy, how would you describe them?
14	PART: Essentially a pair of trainers;
15	RES: yes
16	PART: which I think I am going to need for the next winter period; which is usually better to buy them now than to wait for the season when the price goes up

## Appendix 6.1 – Pilot replay interview

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In this turn, although being only prompted to state the object of interest, the participant gives a temporal window of preference, referring the present activity to a future need with a time horizon of 4-5 months: the main reason brought forward for the long anticipation of the buying activity is the price factor.

20

PART: actually the one that I bought was the last one they had; i had delayed for so long they probably had sold all the others, so when i asked they bring another for me they said that was the only one that was left.

The other main reason to anticipate a future need is declared here more implicitly because of the availability of the item now compared to a future state of affairs in which it might no longer be available (prospective scarcity of goods).

21

RES: So how would you describe the list of criteria that you are using to

22

PART: What I wanted is something very comfortable, and then I also wanted something a bit trendy, and then the colour as well: I have a white one and I wanted something black, so that whatever pair of trousers I am wearing, i can shuffle between the two. Don't want to look too out of the picture Yes, basically I wanted something quite trendy; and reasonably priced..

This prompt generates a first list of factors:

- 1) Comfort
- 2) Trendiness (Style)
- 3) Colour
- 4) Price

Comfort as the first factor is interestingly enough the same one that appeared in Lazarsfeld's seminal research on shoe buying in Zurich in 1933. Lists of factors are quite easily generated by the participants and what is important about them is that they remain more or less the same in all the interviews; they always are between four and six, whereas the change is in their ranking.

24

PART: usually I don't like to buy trainers more than 60 GBP, because you hardly use them for more than a year, and then they are gone ... At times as you buy some small ones, or some other designs for 25-30 GBP, I knew that one was going to cost me some amount of money; the initial price was 60 GBP, and then I kept on looking at the price any time I was around there waiting for it to come down, .. Was waiting for a period when they have some kind of sale, when they take 20% off the price. At Debenhams I have their store card so anytime they are doing some kind of sale I may get some further discount on top of the original discount

## Appendix 6.1 – Pilot replay interview

When asked about the price the participant cites durability as the main factor in evaluating what the prospective buy is worth; accordingly the price range is set from a minimum of £25 to a maximum of £60. At this point the process of deciding between current and future buying starts. This process appears to be consistent with the literature of the discounted utility model in that all possible factors get reduced to a price; in fact the participant is using only this as a measure of preference, in which durability has been already factored in and is no longer discussed, it is entailed by the price-range



Figure 1 Screenshots-1 from buying experience: Participant\_001

### 39 to 50: Factors in recognition modus (watching the recording)

At this point the recording starts and the participant is asked again to give a list of factors.

## Appendix 6.1 – Pilot replay interview

39	RES: Did you have an order of the criteria that you would say that if it doesn't satisfy these criteria you would eliminate it?
40	B; The first is comfort. It has to be my size.
41	RES: Is that before comfort?
42	PART: I think the comfort is part of the size; at times it is 12 but it is small; and at times it is 12 but it is too big; and at times it is your right size, but inside it is not comfortable. Maybe they use hard leather, or for trainers you want some foam, soft material in so when you wear you still have some room ...
43	RES: so comfort is more than size ... Then the price, then...
44	PART: it must be affordable: for more than 60 GBP I did not want to buy it, I had the feeling that they would take off something after a while as they usually do, I just have to keep watching
45	RES: the price and then?
46	PART: And then when I have the Money! That's another one the three have to come together, affordability is there I am sure I can afford it at this point in time considering all other things I have to put money on
47	RES: Trendiness do you say it should come before or after or..?
48	PART: Trendy? This is probably towards the end..
49	RES: towards the end, yeah..
50	PART: At times you want the functionality, so trendy is kind of enjoyable thing whether I make you look good or not and with shoes these days the choice is so big you see all kinds of designs out there in those days it used to be hard sole, Italian soles, but now all kinds to widen your choice ...

The participant comes up with a different list:

- 1) Comfort
- 2) Price
- 3) Affordability (distinct from price in the sense of having disposable cash)
- 4) Trendiness / Design
- 5) Functionality

Consistent with the first list the participant gives comfort as the first factor. Comfort is associated with size and later also fit is mentioned as a synonym. Price becomes the second factor and is immediately associated with affordability, even if distinguished from it. Also colour disappears and functionality appears. Now this is the first documentation of the variability of the order of factors, so the question becomes why the participant changes the order. The question is about internal factors (calculation, memory, mood), or ecological influence (did the participant receive salient information from installations?) or other causes that remain implicit at the moment.

## Appendix 6.1 – Pilot replay interview

### 64 – 68: elaboration of the list of factors

64	PART: I just see, I look for something that is within my what I would call trendy, for me, this is a different definition, I don't want something too loud, not too colourful, I don't want green, I don't want too flashy.. If I find some design that is a bit, I wouldn't say dull, you can see the colour I picked against the white background,
65	RES2: So you like the white sole
66	PART: I like the white sole.. It's a bit, gives you that attractive edge to it but it is not too loud: it's white
67	RES: What do you look at when you look at the shoe, what are the important factors for you...
68	PART: First thing is the design, whether I like the design or not, I actually have a pair of shoes that look like these ( referring to what he has in the hand), with the white bottom, and .. I wanted to look at the price, to see how much they are selling for now, .. and this is a slightly different design from the one I have in that the sole is still thicker , and it looked a bit more comfortable from the other one I have.. because the other one I have, in very cold weather I don't get to wear it, because my feet get very cold: I like the design because this was a little bit like an inch thick, ... I felt that would lift your feet off the ground a little bit, but then you usually get more for the price how much they are selling

At this point the participant states that he looks at all of the factors at the same time. Noticing a product due to its “attractiveness” produces a sudden move to the left. In this case the glance to the left is on the order of a tenth of second (every frame is taken at 1/25 of a second): this gives one the idea of the speed of elaboration of factors when just glancing at an object: the participant, as every other customer, can decide if a product is interesting or not in a matter of tenths of a second. Now, the problem with the scale of factors as listed at the level of the replay interview is that the order is put discursively; in other words, the order of preferences (higher and lower factors in a hierarchy of needs) is not always present for the autonoetic consciousness, but it is stated by the participant each time in a different sequence. The order of factors is not absolute, each time it is reconstructed differently. From the point of view of the replay this becomes particularly salient because the participant by looking at the film discusses this order, meaning that he is trying to reconstruct the order from the visual cues in the video. Here again recognition versus recalling is key to understanding why these differences emerge.

The fact that the order is made discursively points to the retroaction of the syntax of our speech to the order of our preferences or even to our representations. How is the order produced and muted each time? Now this is rather disturbing because the assumption would be that the factors are always present in the mind of the participant or at least this is what a rational utility model would imply. If the participant says that the order changes we have to acknowledge this and should not force the interpretation allowing ourselves to order them. Without prompting, the participant

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here gives an interim ranking of factors: 1) attributed beauty, style; 2) product, examination of quality; 3) size. This again is a reclassification of the factors.

Moreover the participant introduced the concept of *band\_of\_taste*, meaning by this that the attractiveness of a product is a matter of degree: there is no inherent absolute attractiveness in the product, but it can vary between two boundaries of acceptability.

### *72: attractiveness of the product vs. price*

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72

PART: It is actually a very difficult thing to do... **the important thing first is to really like the shoe**, no matter what the price iRes: if you don't like it than the price makes no sense to me at all; if I like it then I want to say ok: I like the shoe how much is it? 50 pounds, ok, I think it is too highly priced for the design I am looking at, maybe I may get a better design, more comfortable somewhere else for the same price... There are probably a thousand and one designs up there.. that meet your set of criteria and.. you .. after you focus in on a particular design this is good, that is good and I want to compare the price.. and see the functionality as well. I think it's more of a mental thing whether you are judging right or not you don't really know at the end of the day, I just like this, the price is good, and..

In this field the participant states the conditions and possibility for purchase; it is a trade-off between price and design (emotional factor). He gives this account partly in form of routine, pointing out that this is a procedure he has followed in the past and will likely follow in the future: this is how he finds the balance between value and price. In a second interpretation of the transcript he also adds that he has to go "*back with memory to what he did before*" in order to find similar cases, probably meaning that he sees it as happening regularly.

### *82: episode leading to repisode*

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82

PART: I bought a pair of shoes for my pastor in Lagos and after I bought the shoes I started looking at the customers' comments at the back. I bought them online, and I asked a friend to bring them home (to Lagos) , and then I went back to read the customers reports online and I was amazed at what I saw, that the sole gives off very quickly, and I bought it at Marks and Spencers, that at times you get the sole peeling off, at times you get the sole removing from the top leather kinds of comments you have to take to the shoemaker after that; and that's from Marks and Spencer! So, we now know that within some band, within a price range, all sorts of things, even going into a shop, it doesn't mean that you are getting 100% what you want; but some of the comments I read already were that for that price "what do you expect".. You are buying a pair of shoes for 20 poundRes: those shoes are not supposed to last for 6 years

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This complex narration contains as a starting point an episode: the precise occasion is recalled, the persons named. From the point of view of the description of an abstract procedure an episode would not be strictly necessary, in that the same thing could also be narrated in abstract terms. However, this episode is the basis of an inference that is clear afterwards: “*we now know that within some band...*”. One could also infer that the citing of a real occasion also has a second and more important function: it is an aid to memory, i.e. the episode triggers the explanation of the process of going online to look for comments on blogs better; this is also narrated in the form of an episode. In other words my hypothesis is that the episode is functional to the recalling of more abstract episodes and that it would not be possible to explain abstract procedures without linking them to a recognizable episode. Moreover, the first-person perspective of the recording appears to make recognition easier, perhaps possible at all. In a second comment on this transcript the participant says that he uses this specific narration as a way of describing how his experience taught him how to act in a similar way and uses the expression *case study*: this would in essence be the learning of an evaluation routine.

### *88: Reconstruction of choice factors in other participants*

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88

PART: you need to look at the two, even when you wear a shoe some people have just two pairs, some people have 10, if you have 2 you really have used them more than the person who has 10; and then if you have a car it is different if you go by bus, if you walk 6 miles a day, is different from if you walk for just 1 mile a day, some would say that they used this for 3 years, just how much usage ... some would say they use it for 6 months, and maybe they used it for 6 months or everyday compared with somebody who you know has a lot of pairs and use them, so it is still a game that you have to try and figure out yourself, you look at it and try, put some association on the company on the brand, there is some level of quality guaranteed that you yourself you have to manage that quality yourself, I bought it for 35 pounds should not expect it to be like a 100 pounds shoe usually Above a certain price maybe what you want is not really a shoe, maybe you want the brand in which you want your friends to see that you are wearing Gucci or something like that.. if you want just a functional thing to wear to work and back

In this passage the participant gives an account of evaluation of the comments on blogs. He says that the weighting of positive and negative comments cannot be taken at face-value, because one does not know the exact reasons. Even assuming that participants are honest and say what they think, it is not clear why they are saying that, and if they have in mind all of the conditions that would make that assertion or evaluation true for the participant. The participant explains this by saying that “*it still is a game that you have to try to figure out by yourself*”, this means that the implicit factors have to be understood from the context. Again, we are speaking here about evaluations that happen outside the time of activity, this is not activity, these are persons explaining the results of their own evaluations. But, because this depends on unknown selection processes

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that occurred at a specific moment, this is why you have to figure out for yourself what the latent conditions might have been.

### *90: Positional goods*

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90

PART: After a certain price you are buying style you are buying a brand name, walk into Russel&bromley and the Gerald leather Goods, is 420 pounds, that has moved from function to style..

This passage is a clear reference to conspicuous consumption and the threshold where the participant starts to look for something other than the function. It cannot be said clearer: style and brand go beyond doing the job, functionality; another comment on this transcription is that there are elements that create “*class*” and by wearing these you belong to a group, it is a “*kind of thing you do in that group*”. The participant adds to the second comment that it is typical to look for style when “*you move up the [social] ladder*”.

The participant then mentions wine tasting as an example of an activity that is more objective compared to evaluating fashion items, as he sees that as more routinized. The objectiveness of wine tasting is contrasted here to the more individual evaluation of apparel; it is considered more objective because he recalls that wine tasting courses exist (no shoe trying courses) and that they contribute to formalize the description of subjective tastes. This might be an example of how choice undergoes social construction.

### *96: Episode on the cultural use of fashion*

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96

PART: When we wear our native traditional African attire, we don't usually wear socks, we don't mix English with traditional .... And then your shoe makes his own statement you are attending somebody's burial or a wedding: that's when you are wearing very expensive shoes, but for the daily going around, go to work, come back, just look for the conventional shoe, .. when it comes to weddings, parties, baptism, things like that, you want to look at your best. Because cameras are there the journalists are there, the newspapers the paparazzi, all of them are there, you never know what they are doing with the camera, so you try to look your best: and for us the top attire is usually not very expensive, especially now that people tend to wear what we call 'Ankara' a product which is quite cheap to wear, but everybody wears one, when someone is throwing a party and the artist.... , ok this is cloth have chosen like .. for my dad's burial we sold about 250 pieces, almost everyone who comes to the burial wears the same thing, but all indifferent designs, what is different is the way you've sown it and the shoes you are wearing,

This section is again about social status. The participant describes something that reminds him of symbolic social interaction narrated in form of an episode where the symbolic component is the

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fashion of the garment that is used as a signal inside the family and as an index towards the out-group. Everyone in the family wears the same fabric in order to give to everyone affordability and be part of the group (a signal). This allows one to be distinctive within the family by the design and fabrication of the final garment. In practice the same fabric is bought for everyone but it is tailored in different ways for social status. In turn this identifies the family members for others that do not belong to the family, someone who can or cannot be aware of the subtleties of the design but who can surely recognize the use of the same fabric.

### *102: conspicuous consumption*

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102

PART: Yeah, I should have added watches as well, because when you look at watch it tells you how much that watch is, if it is the original one, and then you think if he can afford that then he should be a gentleman

After 30 minutes of interview at this point the participant is in more talkative mood as happens in open ended interviews as well. When asked to expand on the question of status, he goes in the direction of conspicuous consumption citing watches as a product that distinguishes male social status.

### *110: Status signaling*

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110

PART: when you come out of the car, the first thing people see is the shoes... (Laughs)..

This is an example of a specific occasion where a consumer would make use of shoes as a symbol of status; the participant describes a real life situation in which the shoe can be half-inadvertently shown and seen by another consumer (broadly a competitor in Veblen's terms); this would work again as a signal.

### *114: Information seeking and experience construction*

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114

PART: here I am trying to look at the price and maybe just to store it in memory, if another time comes and I need another pair I have seen something that I like and this is the price range for now: maybe in one month time or two months time if I think I can afford it, I come back there...

At this point the participant initiates another sub-goal; he seems to use the occasion to collect information: "*here I am trying to look at the price and maybe just to store it in memory, if another time comes..*". This is interesting for the following part of the interview because from here on it becomes explicit that there are at least two concurrent goals during the whole activity, one is to buy the item and the other to look around to get information and accumulate buying experience for another time. The split into telic and paratelic activity is here particularly explicit. The event is

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triggered by aesthetic salience, “*this item was more attractive*”; again this is something that was not visible on first inspection of the recording and had to be made explicit through the interview.

### 118: Material factor

118

PART: just that you feel the material how much padding is in it whether it's something for winter or is it something that you are wearing for summer... that's very important for the comfort. It's not well padded and if I have to walk a few distances every day, then it becomes a problem.

Introduction of a fifth factor that I classified as technical detail or craftsmanship. The participant touches the inside of the shoe and looks for something (see film); asked about this particular act he refers that the shoe must have the characteristic of being padded, a necessary condition for purchase. This factor was not declared at the beginning of the interview, before starting the video, and becomes apparent only on close examination with joint comment. The interpretation is possibly that the factors that cannot be isolated/abstracted and explicitly conveyed in linguistic form remain implicit, although they are still necessary to purchase. Just to confirm what Lazarsfeld said (1933), the implicit motives of choice are to be discovered with other methods than by simple surveying.

### 121-129: Construction of a new factor, white soles (see film)

121	... here am still picking the one with the whites
122	RES: Can we pause? Did you have in mind to look at those ones with the white sole? When you came into the shop?
123	PART: I think I was just attracted to it, probably because I have something similar or because this probably is something that I think I like..
124	RES: But that's the white thing that attracted you into the store?
125	PART: no, no... I just came into the store because they are selling trainers
126	RES: right, and then you saw the one with the white sole.. And then, now your mind is somehow more focused on the ones which have the white lining?
127	PART: Yeah.. I think I looked at them more than the others probably: but also I looked at the area once I was ... near that one...
128	RES: Because yesterday we had the same kind of path-dependency, like people yesterday, they focused on something that they were looking for more of the same, for similar thingRes: do you think it is the case here or not?
129	PART: Yeah, I think that it is probably what's happening: for... it'sunconscious.. I wasn't really.. I did not set out to do it, but Most of what I looked at.. Now that I am looking at it, I felt that I was just looking at shoes generally.. Now I am looking at it and seems like I was looking more towards the ones with the white sole..

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In this sequence the participant is asked why he picked up a certain pair of shoes with white soles. It becomes apparent only at this point that the participant had in fact been looking at white soles for a while, at least 3 other times; he says that he saw some more earlier but that he became *interested* in them only at this point. This opens up an interesting question: why the participant does not look consciously for a certain factor from the beginning? Does he slowly pick up a trend unconsciously? Consistent with recent research, it can be supposed that a cognitive threshold is overcome triggering a conscious response to the accumulation of new information (Smith & Blankenship, 1991). In practice he switches from the implicit to the explicit and is able to say that he is looking for white soles. This dynamic of incubation-explicitation would then be applicable for many other attributes that are mentioned during the interview like the padding mentioned above.

### 131: Information for intersubjective purpose

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131

PART: Here I am still looking around and seeing the .. Again for me going into a shoeshop is not just buy for myself, at times I would like to pick something for my daughter, and then I just look at what they have..

Here the participant makes explicit that the activity he is performing is not just about buying the item; he is looking at female shoes saying that they would be for the daughter. This occurrence is environment driven and it is difficult to say if the motivation was already present or if he thinks about it because female shoes were present.

### 140 – 143: Expansion of selection

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140

RES: So here you are trying to look at the price; and you take off your glasses and put on the sight ones

141

PART: And I really wanted to see the price of that one; I think I took off the camera, to look at the price.. see I picked the white sole again ...

142

RES2: So at a certain point you developed a preference for the white sole..

143

RES: well a lot of them have white soles; it seems to be the trend, but then it means that probably you realized that the trend was to wear white sole  
RES: I did not know that..

The participant starts to compare prices between the shoes with white soles and other shoes that he was considering to buy before. He oscillates among numerous models of shoes; this can be interpreted in different ways: 1) negatively, as indecisiveness, 2) positively, as capacity to take into account a vast choice and compare among many models, 3) as a cognitive increase of momentum towards the final choice. The increase in the items considered is unexpected here and again is probably unobservable through survey or interview because it is not salient to memory, it does not

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fulfill any emotional function and stays latent as a correlate of an implicit task. Whether this increase influences the final choice in terms of deviating from the initial goal cannot be said at this point.

### *148 – 156: Comparison between real and memorized items*

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148	RES2: Why did you put it back so quickly? The last one..
149	PART: I had seen it on the internet and it wasn't what I thought it would look like.. (rewind) I have seen the design before on the internet ...
150	RES2: so you put them away, and then, after this one, you seem to look at them from a distance and wait a moment...
152	PART: I think I was ready to go, was about to go to another section, and I noticed that one... I was really leaving when noticed it and then I turned to have a quick look ..
153	RES2: Now you wait a moment and you see the other one behind, and then you picked that, but just very quickly...
154	PART: I had seen it on the internet before, and it wasn't what I expected, and I didn't like it..
155	RES: It doesn't look like in the picture.. and why didn't you like it?
156	PART: I think it wasn't just fitting to my idea of what a pair of trainers should look .. I went back to this one again...

In this case there is the discovery of two items that the participant remembers having seen on the internet. He compares several items (3-4) keeping in mind the other models he saw online. The whole process seems to be rather implicit being composed partially of interconnecting routines.

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Figure 2 Screenshots-2 from buying experience: Participant\_001

### 157 – 166: Choice selection and information gathering

157	RES: And here (an assistant) you give the information that you can't have it, so you take out the glasses to see the price... You remember the price now?
158	PART: I think it was 60 GBP: also the prices are the same, 60 each
159	RES: Even on sale
160	PART: no, no, no.. there is no sale in this shop
161	RES: because it's written SALE on it..
162	PART: No that was a shop before this; they might have some individual items on sale but the bulk of what they have here are there new designs
163	S; So you thought it was just too expensive, or you just wanted the information?
164	PART: That particular one I might still buy it in later I have a feeling I might still but that one later .
165	RES: So , ( PAUSE) my understanding is here that you have discovered a new design?
166	PART: That I like..

Here the participant narrows down the choice because the shop assistant tells him the price; considering all of the factors in this instance loses its importance: the price is the main factor *for taking items into consideration or not*. It seems also that after learning the price he might retain the information for another moment; this move appears to be a justification for the time devoted to this action: in practice, even if it does not lead to an accomplished act it may be nonetheless useful in the future.

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### 172 – 183: Service

172	PART: I knew that it was not the priority for now; I would probably go online, check online, check the sizes they are going to... I went to this shop, (how is it called...) I found a pair of sandals but they didn't have my size, and I wanted that particular pair of sandals, so I went online and I found they had the size there, I think it was Timberland or so.. I found that they had the size, so I went to another shop in Westfield; they also didn't have the size So I told the guy: look, this thing is advertised online that you have it , - he said no, we don't have it in the shop so he gave me a token, I should go online and put in the token and then they post it free which is about 7GBP, so they gave me the token, but I tried the 11 and half, so I needed just the next size, so I just bought it online (in the end)
173	RES: and you did buy it online then... and they gave you a token to get it free online?
174	PART: Yes, since I had gone into a shop and they did not have it.. this is done in this particular shop
175	RES2: Otherwise you would buy on some other sites, like Ebay, and they would lose a customer? Do you think this is the reason?
176	PART: no, for this particular one I am not so sure, but I looked for it in their shop and they did not have it, so I think they assume that it is their own fault they did not have the shoe..

Here there is the development of a particular process of considering the delivery service; the participant calculates how much it would cost to have the right model and size through the site on the internet instead of buying at that moment. Service is a new factor that was not accounted for before and can be a decisive motive for purchase in the course of the activity.

### 186 – 204: Social interaction

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186	PART: but for this (instance) I don't usually shop alone, I have a friend whom we always go shopping together, and then I have a friend who has been in the UK for a very long time anytime I want to shop I will call her who knows the places, she likes shopping, and then she says this is not good and this is not very good and then you get all that influence, on what you want to buy
187	RES2: And so she is a woman?
188	PART: yes she is a woman, she has the feminine perspective as I always put it, so, every time she is free and she thinks, ok, I will give you 30 minutes... and then... At times, you want to buy things like perfume, you don't want to be the only person to put that thing in your nose, you want somebody... they will always tell you that it is good! But you need somebody else to tell you whether it is offensive, or is too sharp or dull

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193	RES: So, for some goods which need somebody else's appreciation, like when you perfume for example, you don't just buy for yourself you buy that for other people; so you are using this co-shopper as a test of the validity or of the quality of the good, is that it?
194	PART: Is it quality now? Or the flavour, or the.... What's the word now.... acceptability, if I can use that word
195	RES: acceptability...
196	PART: when it comes to shoes, I think that usually I know what I want to buy.. I know what is good and what is not good.. I don't usually buy the latest styles; I just want something comfortable; .. when it comes to perfumes, .. is either I know the brand name, that they produce something very good, or if I need something out of my existing stock of brands, <u>then I need somebody else to tell me</u>
197	RES: If you don't have the knowledge, you will take the knowledge with you in the co-shopper basically, is that? You want to buy something where you are not able to assess the quality
198	PART: I would take a second person with me (in that case), if I can't do it on my own, I think I will take a second person with me.. That shoe, actually, we have seen that shoe together when I was shopping for my daughter, the same trainer that I just wanted to buy... actually I tested it <u>and it was ok</u>

This section of debriefing is triggered by the remark about building experience for future purchases. The participant introduces the activity he performs occasionally going to department stores with a female friend as co-shopper. This can have several functions: 1) to test his own choices on the spot and ask for confirmation; 2) to fill gaps in his knowledge about current taste (of the public or a reference group). The word used for this is *acceptability*. Explicitly the participant is looking for the *acceptability* of the product he purchases and by extension of his persona; this social activity refers to the construction of the relation between the self and significant others. He cites as a second reason of an economic type, that is, “*to make every pound count*” in what you buy, again this equates to making the best trade-off among factors and in this case it is performed together with a partner. I repeat even though the factors of purchase are not all present at the same time in the participant’s consciousness, they are revealed in sequence, or better they appear in chronological order although the order is not created by time but by the ecology of the encounter: this point will be discussed at the end when I will tentatively say what gives unity to the experience in terms of the perceived time dimension.

### [234: Present and future evaluation](#)

234	PART: Just storing the data for another time, for another period! (laughs).. I found this somewhere... ...and those ones really look nice, but for the fact that I already bought one... The one with the high top is a bit too much for me, in terms of design
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This passage is important to understand that the evaluation for the future is not really different; imagining to buy at the present time or to buy in the medium-term does not seem to produce qualitatively different explicit evaluations in the participant (they could be mismatched without his

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clarification). This means that evaluation for the present time, representational – semantic or for the future, performed as semantic future thinking is abstracted from the time dimension of actual activity and events (Atance & O'Neill, 2001). Imaginative and representational knowledge, i.e. past and future representations of shopping instances enter the situated decision making process back and forth without a precise time reference. In other words what is past is easily re-elaborated for prospective use.

### *246 - 249: Comparison of prices as a habit*

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246	RES2: And also comparing different products at the same time
247	PART: Yeah, I do it regularly; I always compare prices
248	RES2: So it is a habitude?
249	PART: Even to buy normal equipments, I always compare.. Even just a textbook or a notebook I make comparison

The participant speaks here of price comparison as a habit one can understand that as a routine. If the price is out of range this becomes the first factor for its elimination. This is an example of how a factor changes rank. In fact it all depends where the participant starts from when considering how to make the purchase and this changes continuously, implying that he can drop the task at any moment. This also implies an interesting fact, i.e. that the memory of the whole action does not really exist: if the participant each time chooses a different initial factor this means that not only the factor but the motivation changes: the buying process is a sequence (not a chain) of different, heterogeneous and to a certain extent random motivational states, whose coherence comes from the prevailing final goal.

### *255: Routine building and habit*

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254	RES: So you know the place pretty well...
255	PART: I know the place well yes, I have been there several times;

In this case the participant enters the shop he initially wanted to go to. The fact that the initial goal is recovered as soon as he enters the shop suggests that there is a strong link between environment and memory for the main goal; this refers in my opinion to the fact that future thinking is dependent on the familiarity with the setting, it seems that similar actions are elicited by the environment in which they took place in the past (Arnold, McDermott, & Szpunar, 2011). This could be confirmed by the fact that the particular place had been the scene of several episodes. *PART: "I know the place well yes; I have been there several times"*. This point of the replay interview is particularly important in that it could mark the passage between a simple episode and the construction of a routine, that is for us a first form of habituation; the mechanism of the formation

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of a routine is also illuminated by the fact that the participant states that routine is relaxing. Routine as a homeostatic process?

### *279: Ecology of the situation and evaluation routine*

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279

PART: At times I look at all of them together, at the same time, yeah.. like what I did when I entered there, was to take a scan, or just to scan all what they have, and then I already knew what I wanted to buy, because I had been there several times before, to look at that particular one, I think I have seen the shoes there about 3 or 4 times, without buying it..

In this case the participant speaks of the process of scanning the environment when he enters a new or a familiar space. This has to be understood as a routine. He is speaking in fact of a general procedure so something that is no longer an episode or referred to as a repisode, but an action that has purposiveness in itself, which set aside quite independently from the environmental affordances. Scanning the environment is admittedly more than taking a glance; it is done in order to absorb information. This can be an example of automatic operation that is partly physiological and partly learned.

### *281: Multiplication of items for choice*

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281

PART: And I had not even gone to the one I wanted to buy.. Maybe, I was still trying to say: that one that you want to buy is still the best, or something, I don't know...But I was just looking at all what they had there: ok, this is a new one, is not as good as the one I want to buy... this is another new one, it's probably not as good as the one I wanted to buy... and then, I go around the shop, what are the other options that are there, if it's not trainers, but I knew I wanted a pair of trainers, these are new leather shoes, let me see what the design is, take a closer look, and then put it back on the shelf... I think invariably I was probably comparing what I was seeing with what I had in mind, or what I wanted to buy, whether this one would convince me to drop this one and that's the possibility, but I wasn't really conscious..

On the question of why he spent time on this activity the participant enumerates three motives to continue comparing the new products with the one he had set out to buy: 1) desire for knowledge, 2) curiosity, 3) to be sure to get value for money. Also it is interesting to observe in this instance that intentions and motivations for future buying are expressed with a syntax that depicts a real action: "... *this one would convince me to drop this one and that's the possibility, but I wasn't really conscious..*". Also in a second comment in the replay interview he states that the increase in items to choose from actually makes the decision more difficult, where this also engenders the need to check the offer many times and comes to form a repetitive process.

### *285: Storing information for social reasons*

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285

PART: Actually what I did before now, I actually repeated it for 3 times before buying the shoe.. I had gone into Debenhams to look at the shoe, and then gone round to look at all the others... I had even gone online, to check all the other options they had, for the same Sketchers, and I didn't see anything that was better for me at this point in time, than this particular one, and then at the point then it took me few weeks to make up my mind that I really needed to pick it up, and then at the point when I was even going to buy it, at the purchase point, I was still looking around to see whether there were some other things.. Because if you buy something here you can return it, that you don't want but, I was still looking if there were some other things that could displace that in my mind or.. maybe, ok, this is available let me store it for a while, and then maybe in the future I can come back to buy it, later, or this is a new design, cause at times you see there you are speaking with your friends and somebody says, oh, there is a new design out, "have you seen it?", and then you want to join the conversation, or I saw it at this store, or if somebody wants to buy a shoe and you recommend it that I saw this one here, look, you go the shop and pick it out..

It is a description of a longer sequence of actions. In this case the participant is willing to give a much more structured account of the whole process; it is possible that at this stage of the debriefing interview, we have already been talking for seventy minutes, he has a clearer idea of what he has done and that the replay interview helps the participant reconstruct the whole action; this would also imply that the motives to be explicit need to be reconstructed, although they were still there implicitly (after all the action has taken place for real). He describes three episodes: ...*I actually repeated it for 3 times before buying the shoe..* Explicit motives behind this behavior are: 1) exploration, 2) narrowing down the items to choose from, 3) confirmation of choice preferences. This does not constitute a routine yet, but it contributes to the construction of a method of evaluation to be used in the future "*in the future I can come back to buy it later...*".

Furthermore in this answer the participant again introduces a social element; the goods are important for social positioning and are a factor of socialization and maintaining good relations with others by being able to suggest where to buy interesting products. This is confirmed in 287 with another example of episodic narration of a similar occurrence (underlined).

### 299-301: Reflection on procedural acts

299

PART: Yes, they have my size and I suspect they would have my size in that one, but this is I think that particular one is size 11, but now I am shopping for the future; I am looking at "what am I buying in the future ?" ... Because the one I wanted to buy I have already got it.. Holding it and now looking at

300

RES2: When do you consider buying this? September, October, when do you imagine?

301

PART: Maybe when I come back, from the holidays, I will just see if they still have it and then buy... ... I've got the shoe, I don't know why I am still looking around and checking out all other things all other things they have in the store.. Now I want to put it on and try it.. The shop assistant is telling me that this is probably the last pair that they have.. and they don't have another one; so she is going into the store to look for the other leg

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At this point the participant engages in argumentation in which he gives order to the factors and the reasons why he is going to buy the product he bought. This way of reasoning has the characteristics of an internal monologue, and its verbalization is more a way of giving order to the succession of steps that lead to the final choice. Furthermore, he shows surprise in seeing that he did actions that he no longer remembers: “.. *I've got the shoe, I don't know why I am still looking around and checking out all other things they have in the store..*”; this surprise is not new and is understandable if we refer back to Schachter's scheme where acts are classified mostly at the procedural implicit level. In essence procedures do not undergo memorization because they do not include motivational attention.

### *305: Argumentation to reduce cognitive unease*

305

PART: I wasn't sure, whether... I know that they always have a series of 12, and probably they had more in the store; if they had another in the store I will take it instead that the one I was there... a lot of people would have put their legs in it, but.. I asked him and he said it is probably the only one they have, so he wants to go in and pick it up.. There is actually been sales-festival going on, so a lot of people are trying on and buying shoes, there a lot of bargains going on with 20% off, and so on.. Usually when they start their sales like that they send out a lot of emails to people who they have their accounts, and on the first day you have a lot of people rushing in and picking up what they had been looking at for some time, 'cause there's one trick friend of mine told me, don't buy when you first see.. you wait for them to do the sale...

This passage is an interesting form of argumentation that helps the participant to justify that the item is worth buying to himself. It can be seen as starting with hypothetical thinking of an argumentative kind and then evolving towards an episodic style. This is the sequence: 1) hypothesis: “*I know that they always have a series of 12, and probably they had more in the store; if they had another in the store I will take it instead that the one I was there...*”; 2) episode: “*but.. I asked him and he said it is probably the only one they have, so he wants to go in and pick it up..*”; 3) support; “*There has actually been sales-festival going on, so a lot of people are trying on and buying shoes, there a lot of bargains going on with 20% off, and so on..*”; 4) second support “Usually when they start their sales like that they send out a lot of emails to people who they have their accounts, and on the first day you have a lot of people rushing in and picking up what they had been looking at for some time”.

So, it is interesting here to see how evaluation at certain moments seems to take an argumentative style and the form of a justification. This movement tries to rationalize locally the motives, especially acts that have just happened shortly before (usually described in one episode). This can be possibly done to reduce cognitive disease. The reasons to prefer an item oscillate back and forth from past experience, reported in an episodic format (near experience), and hypothetical argumentative thinking in a more abstract form (*usually...*). The latter concerns future actions in which the participant asserts some unknown state of facts and supports them in comparison with

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similar conditions that happened in the past (fourth support in form of a repisode, that depicts a personal experience of similar circumstances).

### 310 – 314: Trying on the shoe for the first time - Mirror

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310	PART: yeah, the pair of the brown, I also bought from Debenhams, from the same place, ... Most stores don't stock size 12, I never get it... you hardly get a 12 from all the other stores.. Then it comes with two laces, black and white.. I was thinking already of buying a black lace for it... normally they are very good at ... most trainers now come with two types... ... 5-6 seconds... he is telling this poor guy that the shoe he just picked is not on offer... (10s)... I am going to look in the mirror I think,
311	RES: So here you are sure that they are your size..
312	PART: yeah, and now I just want to have a look in the mirror: I don't know what for, because the shoe I am supposed to walk around with it.. maybe I was looking at the trousers, and where it sits on the shoe...
313	RES: are you satisfied with the look of them?
314	PART: yeah, yeah, it's a very brief one, once I put my leg in I know whether it's ok or not.. and then the fabric, the material is quite soft, and s'got some foam built into it, and the outside is between rubber and leather, it's got a padding

First trying on of the shoe. This is done very late and the question is: why did the participant wait for so long before trying on the shoe if indeed fitting is the first factor that was declared.)? Another short action is surprising in this case: the participant uses the mirror in the shop and the comment in the debriefing interview is that he does not know why he did it since he would not look at it like this in everyday life: “*yeah, and now I just want to have a look in the mirror: I don't know what for, because the shoe I am supposed to walk around with it.. maybe I was looking at the trousers, and where it sits on the shoe...*”. One can argue that this is a reflective moment when the participant tries to imagine how others will see him wearing those shoes and is in essence able to perform perspective taking (reflective self).

### 318-328: Finding an eventual trigger to decide

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318	Part: I think it was actually... I'll put it this way: I first saw it a few... a few weeks before now, and I was taking my time to think about whether I really needed it or not, and then at one point in time, during that period I decided I wanted to buy it, but... like I told there is a particular shoe I wanted to buy I made up my mind which shoe I am going to buy, even at the point of going to buy it, I was still looking at all the shoes...
319	RES: What I am surprised at is that you have not tried them out, you have decided before trying them out
320	PART: Yes, because they are size 12 at Debenhams is my size, there are some shops I would go and wear size 12 and it won't be my size; but I bought a couple of shoes at Debenhams and their size 12 is always my size.
321	RES: But how would you know that they would fit comfortable
322	PART: That is why I know how to try, just to be sure of that...
323	RES: Ok, so let me.. You had all this choice, and you had all this process that was quite long comparing everything; now based on your previous experience of the shop on the design on the price on the fact that there is your size, you take some sort of like, I would say optional decisions, right? And then the decision you will transform only if they fit, comfortable, and if the price is reasonable, and if it's a good price, and if you can afford it at the moment at the good price
324	PART: Don't want to buy at 60 GBP today and then go to the shop tomorrow and then discover that they reduced the price to 45, which is really very annoying...

Here the participant reveals that much of the action until that moment was just confirmatory: he says the decision was made some time before and that what he had been doing up to this point was in order to reassure himself and probably to find added reasons for buying. *"I told there is a particular shoe I wanted to buy I made up my mind which shoe I am going to buy, even at the point of going to buy it, I was still looking at all the shoes..."*. In field 320 the participant makes an inductive statement about the size he was going to buy, asserting that the shop is usually trustworthy on size. This can still be seen as part of his backing up a decision already made.

### *330: Avoidance of cognitive dissonance*

330	PART: That's why I am saying that. It's probably because I know that their size 12 is my size and I have a pair or two of skechers at home that I know that their size 12 is my size; if it were Marks & Spencer, or any other place I would have tried them first.. And then I don't like to try shoes when I don't have the money to pay!
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This is an interesting description of induction from episodes confirming the interpretation above about the trustworthiness of the shop. The narrative is partly situated; it does not refer to time but to place. Indeed an abstraction from the time dimension seems a common characteristic of episodes, induced by the repetition of similar actions; it seems less important to know when they happened if the cycle repeats predictably.

In the final part of the sentence 330 the participant also introduces a factor of reduction of cognitive dissonance, i.e. avoiding trying on shoes if he does not have the money to pay: *"...I would have tried them first.. And then I don't like to try shoes when I don't have the money to pay!"* This depicts an internal movement of self-restraint that could be interpreted as having exactly this

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function. If he tried on the shoe, he would regret not buying them. This can be classified as visceral desire or product lust that could lead to either: 1) impulse buying, or 2) fear that emotions may overtake reason. A rational buying decision in this case would emerge as being a result of self-restraint.

We can clearly see that this is a crucial point in which a decision can take place, to buy or not to buy. In this case the participant decides to defer buying to another moment and this is the negative outcome of the situation. What also becomes clear is that the decision process is constituted by many small steps that have to be gone through integrally in order to come to the end. In the discussion section, I describe a decision tree that tries to summarize these steps.

### 336: Cognitive dissonance is associated with the Zeigarnick effect

336

PART: That's possible, don't get too much into it; once you put your leg in it everything fits, everything is ok, yeah I think that's probably it.. because if you don't put your leg in it to confirm that it fits then you still have it at the back of your mind, maybe it is not appropriate for me, but once you put your leg in it, and it fits you and it sizes you and then it becomes a problem to walk away from it

According to the participant, trying on the item without buying it, would lead to a feeling of forced remembering it over the following weeks: "...you still have it at the back of your mind...". This passage can be seen as an observational confirmation of the Zeigarnick effect that explains that not going through subgoals and goals (interrupted acts) strengthens memory and engenders the recurrence of the subroutine at the intention level (as distinct from wish/desire) (Altmann & Trafton, 2002). Below the participant restates the same concept some three minutes later, clarifying further the dynamic of this effect:

358

PART: In fact the whole period that I was thinking of buying the shoe that I did not buy, I thought of it almost every day! The day that I bought it I forgot that I needed the shoe again because it was just in the wardrobe, but from the first day I saw it up to the day I bought it, almost every day I will remember that there is a shoe waiting for me.. at Debenhams; and every day it was like that, it was like that and there is a shoe waiting for you...

This is a detailed account of how this cognitive effect works and is told in the episodic register; I want to underline how versatile an episode is when it comes to explaining general future motivations. This point is one of the main reasons why this has to be discussed thoroughly at the end of analysis to see if this were the case for every participant.

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### 344: Social capital and information harvesting

344

PART: I actually follow the (a) shoe, a pair of shoes from Russel& Bromley from Westfield (shopping center) to Oxford street, two of their shops in Oxford street, it had been displayed in Westfield, than they moved the sales towards Marble Arch, and then I saw (had seen) it with my friend at Westfield, he wanted to buy a pair too, but they were like, it was leather, and were 120 pounds, so one day I came out of Marble Arch and I saw the same shoe there, they had dropped price by another 15 pounds, so I called him and said "they have dropped the price of that shoe by another 15 pounds" .. And he said, let's wait for them to drop the price further and then we didn't see the shoe again, the shoe was gone... Somebody must have bought it at that time.

The narration of this episode is about the physical itinerary he followed to get a certain pair of shoes at the lowest possible price; it is worth examining this in detail. The point the participant makes is about: 1) risk implied by the deferral of purchase, 2) social capital and its implication for individual choice. First the participant explains how he followed the particular model in order to save money: *"I actually follow the (a) shoe, a pair of shoes from Russel & Bromley from Westfield (shopping center) to Oxford street, two of their shops in Oxford street, it had been displayed in Westfield, than they moved the sales towards Marble Arch..."*. This is the base from which the following action starts; the trigger is the following: *"...and then I saw (had seen) it with my friend at Westfield, he wanted to buy a pair too, but they were like, it was leather, and were 120 pounds"*. It seems that there is no clear distinction of whom is actually interested in the shoe, if the participant himself or his friend; it can be supposed that there is here an intersubjective superposition of goals. This becomes clearer afterwards in that the participant remembers his friend's interest in the item: *"so one day I came out of Marble Arch and I saw the same shoe there, they had dropped price by another 15 pounds, so I called him and said "they have dropped the price of that shoe by another 15 pounds"*. At this point it seems that he is actually examining the options for his friend. Implicitly then the participant recognizes that sales work by depletion of stock with an effect on prices: *"And he said, let's wait for them to drop the price further and then we didn't see the shoe again, the shoe was gone... Somebody must have bought it at that time."*

The last sentence explains both why it is risky to rely on social capital (third party information) and so the risk is waiting too long, but this can be induced also by consultation with others, so the lesson to be learned by the participant is both that he cannot wait too long and that he cannot rely blindly on someone else's advice. It is also interesting to note the narrative register; the connection between experience and the lesson is through the recall of an episode: it is inductive, and the reasoning goes if sometimes the sale led to depletion of the good in the past, then it could also happen in the future.

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### *352 – 354: Bargaining is compared to gambling*

352	PART: When he says is too expensive at times, I think at times at the back of our mind knowing that they are dropping the price, we are taking a gamble, where we are risking a little bit; maybe it will go down a little bit more... and then.. Because between Westfield and Marble Arch, the same chain they dropped the price; it was just about 15 pounds, even your travel card for the day will take care of that...
353	RES: Exactly, yeah, so it's the cost of... getting a lower price may not be worth;
354	Part: It is shopping for petrol, like looking for cheap fuel.... What it will cost you to drive from one gas station to the other one you will lose it in trying to buy...

This statement is about balancing of action and waiting for a better bargain as well. Buying behavior is similar across classes of goods, in this case wasting time looking for a better price for shoes is compared to petrol. The calculation is then clearly made in the time dimension and not just comparing products, although exactly as in the intertemporal discounting model (see Loewenstein, 1997): in contrast, if the acquisition of a product is imagined in a future time, then it can become more interesting instead of losing appeal, and this is because the price may fall. However this dynamic is valid only when the product might no longer be available. So the trade-off is between the current situation in which it is not attractive because it is expensive and a distant future when it is no longer there, with the bargaining point in the middle.

### *362 – 365: Shop strategy to avoid product returns*

362	RES2: there are some shops where they don't push to sell you things, they are kind of retracting from your choice point and they prefer to leave you to decide, because probably they know that a satisfied customer is more likely to come back
363	PART: And you are not likely to return it, the product that you bought; than when you see it once and then you buy it and then you get home and then you don't like it again and you want to return it
364	RES: Did you often return products?
365	PART: I don't like returning products, once I buy it I buy it, it might take me a while to do the purchase; I actually saw a shirt at Westfield, a friend of mine came from Nigeria so he was doing some shopping, and so we saw this new linen shirt at Marks & Spencer, just one pair, just was his size and he picked it, just bought mine and said I like the shirt , I said I liked it but I won't buy it now, and went to Oxford street and spent the whole day looking and I didn't see it..., I don't like buying when I see it immediately, if I do that there is a possibility that I might not like it after a while and that I would return it, but if I really make up my mind before buying it then once I pay for it that's it,

This passage is in the form of description of an action; this is not a repisode and for level of abstractness it would be better placed just before the representational/semantic kind of account but

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after episodic. The right category for this may be procedural; it pertains to customer behavior and is not a factor of choice that can be rationalized abstractly: the participant knows what he does or what he would do in such situations and it is narrated in form of a procedure, not in abstract motivational terms.

### *373: uses an economic term for the first time*

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373

PART: Again it depends on the utility, what you really need it for, and how urgent, when it is urgent you don't think of waiting, but when you think you can delay then you have all kinds of options, when you really need something you just go and pick what is there, and then you know, maybe in the two months that or one months they would give to bring down the price you have already done what you would like to do and you can't wait any longer..

Here the participant uses a pure economic term for the first time, *utility*. Also he uses a register of examples and makes explicit that utility is calculated not in monetary terms or as a trade-off between two or more products, but on the basis of time. Now this is relevant in that the utility of the object (function or whatever) is not discussed here, it is just a matter of getting the object at the best possible time.

### *379-380: Construction of routine*

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379

RES: Let us finish then: after you that just buy it? Here you are still looking at things?

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PART: Yeah, I think I was waiting for him to come with a shoe, he was attending to someone... I was looking for comfort, because when you walk a lot you bend the neck of the shoe ... And that's the second time I am looking at that particular one, when I first came I went there now I am back there again, you know that one looks good...

This passage contains the description of the first repetition of a previous behavior, something very close to a repisode although not structured in form of complex narration. Interestingly it is noted by the participant, unlike other situations in which repetition remains implicit. This may suggest the basic constituent of a routine behavior, where the first time it is performed is somehow more salient than when it is part of a repisode. Then it is noted and then, if repeated in similar situations, might go on to become first a series of repisodes, slowly losing its time determination and then its reference to spatial anchoring as well to become in time an implicit routine.

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### *402 – 406: Confirmation of the intermediate point of bargaining*

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402	PART: Yeah, that was it: at last I got it! I made up my mind to do it, and that's it! I don't have to think about it again... Because if I have to give a comment and I have to remember that you have a shoe somewhere to buy, buy before some else does, or before it finishes, and that was the last pair!
403	RES: Is it more satisfaction that it is the last pair?
404	PART: Yeah... I was worried that if I had waited a little longer somebody could have bought it...(he was paying here)
405	RES: Sorry, can you build on this that you were more satisfied because it was the last pair?
406	PART: I am more satisfied because I found it; but, eventually it was still there, being the last one, well... it might tell me that.. if I had delayed a little longer maybe someone else would have picked it, so maybe the next time I need to be a little bit.... there is always that thing there, that you go there and you won't find it again..

The participant has just accomplished the main goal of buying the item. The main motivation is explicitly remembered: "*I don't have to think about it again*". He finds the end of the process satisfactory, not just as a general feeling (affective), but for motivated (cognitive) reasons as well; it also seems that the accomplishment of the goal frees cognitive resources for the future and that the satisfaction is linked to the ability to perform new tasks.

In this passage it is also recognizable the tradeoffs between temporal intervals: buying it as a result of impulse would not have been the right thing to do, nor would have it been good to wait too long because the item would disappear: it was the right time to take the decision when it was taken.

### *Addition to the second comment on debrief*

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Commenting on these final turntakings the participant adds general motives to the buying experience as it unfolded in the replay interview. One of the motives to go through a lengthy process of decision is relaxation; the participant in fact describes collecting information all along because he would also get more general impressions on the product as relaxing: *verbatim: "store, offer, to get a different orientation, a diversion for when I get tired"*. The fact that the buying process is perceived as relaxing would also suggest, if the interpretation is not too far-fetched, that it is the repetition that engenders relaxation and not the content of the information collected. The participant even refers that this activity overlaps with leisure time that it becomes in this way useful because it adds to the knowledge about trends and society confirming this interpretation.