

# **The Full Story: Mining Rich Autoethnographic Data for Insight into the International Consumer's Behaviour with Luxury Fashion Goods**

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*Increasingly, business research needs to recognise the socially-constructive, ontological nature of the domain. We remark that the positivistic characteristics of much research fail to allow social insight into those phenomena. Broadly, there is confusion of purpose, with research 'quality' becoming - and only being researched by - positivistic method. We combine ethnography, biography and self-analysis through co-constructed story-telling and community-autoethnography which illustrates importance of place of origin in the purchase of Jordanian clothing. Findings relate to the importance of brand personality to self-concept and place of origin significance.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As marketers (first) and academics (second), but most of all, participants in a society that is heavily focused on consumption, we are fascinated by the way in which we use products to enhance the story that is 'us'. As marketers, we have been enthralled by the way that consumers either embrace or reject brands, and how they use them to project their self-concept, to enhance, to promote, and even to disguise. Being able to step back and take an objective look at the way that others consume is one thing; looking at one's own consumer behaviour and completing a self-analysis is something else and can sometimes be discomfiting. We, like other consumers, are persuaded to engage with certain brands and products in the sometimes vain hope that they will enhance our lives, give us a rich experience, make us popular or admired. We have favourite brands and favourite products and our perception of these sometimes correlates with others' opinions, and is sometimes contradicted. We feel instinctively that the difference between these perspectives depends largely on the field of experience in question, and are curious about what drives attitudes towards brands.

As part of our role as academics, we supervise doctoral candidates. One of our students is of Jordanian origin, and her PhD is focused upon the impact of place of origin upon the consumer's perception of the brand. During one of our informal supervisory chats, Nadine revealed to us a story about

how she purchased a certain dress. We will say no more about this for now, as Nadine will recount her own story later on in this paper. As we continued to chat, we realised that Lizzie also had a story to tell about the purchase of a dress. These stories were different, but also had some similarities and so we decided to collaborate in a story-telling exercise.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the writing of these auto-ethnographic stories is co-constructed narrative. Autoethnography is defined as, 'setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation....' (Holman Jones, 2005).

The fact that narrative has a socially-situated nature, can indicate that the tale is interactively shaped by an audience. With regard to personal stories, autoethnography links people to culture, and gives a social context to the self (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Autoethnography is thus a method which links theoretical constructs to personal narrative (Wall, 2008; Holt 2001; Sparkes, 1996) and provides an approach which is as rigorous and acceptable as any other method (Duncan, 2004; Wall, 2008). In this way, epistolary autoethnography will tell a more honest story than a verbal account that is repeated over time, as personal narratives will become perfected and polished, and subjected to dialectical variations (Dobrovsky, 1977) from relating with different emphases for diverse audiences, which gives more dramatic impression and retort from the listener.

When seeking a research method, autoethnographic research can be used as an alternative to other qualitative and quantitative methods, in that it acknowledges that a spoken narrative is produced jointly by narrator and listener, whether this results from a natural conversation, deliberately sourced data (such as interview) or fieldwork (Briggs, 2002; Chase 2005), thus developing greater focal insight.

In writing about the narratives that they have studied, researchers, too, become narrators, as they seek ways to present their findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Researchers have a specific and distinct voice when they engage in autoethnography – 'a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts' (Spry, 2001, p.710). This approach thus develops one's own voice as a researcher and means that the narration is both facilitated and restricted by the researchers' social setting and the traditional values dictated by disciplines, cultures and history (Chase, 2005). Whilst this may not be generalizable, the method does offer an exact reliability, as we recognise that interpretation of self-constructed data avoids a loss of meaning through interpretation by a third party.

As with all data-gathering methods, there are negatives associated with a narrative method. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) issue the caveat that as researchers, we should be careful to distinguish between 'the events as lived and the events as told'. Researchers should also pay attention to the difference between causation and correlation within narrative data. Due to the rich quality of insight gained from narrative data, it is considered to be an unsuitable approach where large numbers of respondents are concerned, mostly due to resource issues.

This method reveals the meaning of personal experiences, whilst illustrating how the individuals involved manage the ambiguity, similarities and incongruity of being linked to others (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). Within the context of co-constructive narrative, there exists joint-authorship of past events, the recounting of which focuses on an experience related by each individual. Each story is then subject to a reaction from the other author(s), thus giving shared meaning (Ellis et al, 2011; Vande Berg and Trujillo, 2008; Toyosaki and Pensoneau, 2005; Bochner and Ellis, 1995).

Additionally, this paper will incorporate aspects of community autoethnography, whereby a researcher in collaboration takes an objective view of how certain socio-cultural issues are manifest within the story-telling aspect of the autoethnographic work (Toyosaki, Pensoneau-Conway, Wendt and Leathers, 2009).

## AN OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

We acknowledge that there is a long established canon of literature within the fields of culture, consumption and brand; we have chosen not to report these fully here as space and concept complexity would rule it unpublishable. Instead our focus is upon the methodology used, and illustration of the richness of the data generated by our autoethnographic approach.

Autoethnography links the person to the culture, and embodies the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). It is seen as a method to overtly link theoretical constructs to personal narrative (Wall, 2008; Holt 2001; Sparkes, 1996) and in so doing, to make the approach just as rigorous and acceptable as any other type of investigation (Duncan, 2004; Wall, 2008). With this in mind, this paper will now examine relevant concepts from within the extant body of literature, including consumption symbolism and country of origin.

Consumption is embedded in meaningful practices in our everyday lives (Wattanasuwan, 2005). In fact, goods consumed act as a communication tool or method for transmitting symbols that reflect certain behaviour to reference groups (Grub and Grathwohl, 1967).

The impact of symbolic consumption extends to the consistent implications made about consumers owning particular brands (Elliot, 1994). However, in order for others to interpret these symbols successfully, these symbols have to be socially recognizable (Witt, 2010). For example, when owning particular brands or products, we imagine ourselves belonging to a particular tribe that shares common consumption choices, due to the signals we send out and interpret from others (Wattanasuwan, 2005). Similarly, certain goods have the ability to make individuals feel confident due to the symbolic meaning imbued within them (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983). Notably, research has discovered that clothing has an effective function in fulfilling a particular role by enhancing a person's self-confidence (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004). With this in mind, it is clear that consumers do not purchase clothing in order to satisfy functional benefits; instead, specific brands and products aid individuals in transmitting desired images (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004). Individual taste in clothing can reveal different aspects of a person's personality, from their social roles, status and occupation to their musical tastes (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004). Fashion clothing and apparel, are particularly concerned with individuals portraying their image to the public, resulting in the use of clothing as a communication tool regarding status (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004).

When the motive primarily focuses on revealing status or a particular signal of social class, consumption of luxury brands can be a method for signalling this level of status to others (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010). Individuals are willing to accumulate extra cost in order to adopt these luxury brands (Nelissen and Meijers, 2011). Understanding the perceptions of luxury brands varies from one country to another, from one culture to another, and from one individual to another. However, it is accepted that international and westernised brands are frequently associated with the phenomenon of luxury (Batra, 2000; Van Kempen, 2004). Therefore, the country of origin of a brand is a significant cue when it comes to symbolic consumption, where meanings are projected to and interpreted by others.

Country of origin, being one of the most vibrant areas in international marketing, has been influencing consumer's perceptions of particular brands and products (Magnusson and Westjohn, 2011). The influence and effect on consumers' perceptions relate to the quality and the risk associated with brands made in particular countries (Lee and Lee 2011). However, an individual's past experiences, cultural awareness through travel or even prior knowledge embedded in his or her memory could influence the consumption decision (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). For example, tangible and intangible possessions can be a way of restoring or avoiding memories and feelings from the past (Belk, 1988). Perceptions of a brand may be a result of a perception of a country; therefore, the brand image is directly influenced by the country's image (Herz and Diamantopoulous 2013).

## THE STORIES

### Nadine's Story

As I was getting off work at 5:30 pm from the lovely Estee Lauder building in New York City, I remembered I was invited to my cousin's fancy birthday party at the Villa Barone Hilltop Manor, upstate New York. I knew this event would include family members, friends and other important individuals. Simply put, it would be a not-so-traditional Jordanian party, yet still consisting of both Jordanians and Americans. Since I tend to look for the smallest reason to go shopping, I decided that I needed an extra dress for my closet and, of course, for the party.

*What a sophisticated lifestyle! Of course, a party is a very special event for any woman, but such an international event in a cosmopolitan location demands THE most sophisticated and elegant dress that can be purchased. I remember how wonderful shopping in New York can be – so much choice, so many beautiful designers and so many sensory experiences.*

Bearing in mind that I did not want to spend much, since I was trying to save for my California trip, I decided to stop by Macy's on 34th street. I knew that they had some lovely international brands and was looking forward to finding a simple dress. Wandering between the aisles, and getting lost in the lovely, breath-taking, and mesmerizing perfume section (as usual), I found it! I found what would be just perfect - a beautiful, elegant yet simple black dress that I absolutely adored. Black will always be my colour since it symbolizes strength, determination and success to me. Of course, it also makes me look slim and I love it. Regardless of the fact that my mom and best friend drive me crazy asking me to stop buying anything that's black, I still do it.

*I know exactly what Nadine means about the perfume department. I love walking through these at the beginning of a shopping expedition. Our senses are assaulted in a very gentle and acceptable way by ladies with perfect maquillage wafting beautiful scents our way and tantalising us with intricately packaged bottles where the glossy, luxurious packaging costs more than the perfume itself.*

*And black dresses – what is it with us women and black dresses? I have a wardrobe full of these, and still, when I 'need' a new dress, I automatically gravitate towards black. Yes, it slims us, but I think it also acts as a perfect background. Nadine has very dark hair, and I am blonde, and yet black suits people with all skin tones and hair colour. It's a safe bet. It's elegant. It can be dressed up, or dressed down. It can be accessorised with colours or jewellery – it's versatile. I get it Nadine!*

I eagerly tried on the dress in my size and it was simply on point. I started thinking of accessories that would go with it, that I had suitable heels at home, and so many ideas crossed my mind. I rushed to the cashier and as she was scanning it, she said, "What a lovely dress!" She continued to process the transaction, and then I realized that it was also on sale. I bought the dress for two hundred dollars, and on that cold, wintry day, I rushed to catch the train and head back home fast so I could try the dress on again with the proper heels, and accessories.

*Nadine's satisfaction with her purchase was compounded by the sales assistant's reaction. How lovely it is to get that affirmation from a third party. Already having accessories and shoes to match the dress makes an expensive purchase more justifiable – I think I would feel infinitely less guilt about buying a dress to complement my existing accessories than I would if I had to go out and buy shoes and other accoutrements as well.*

I felt so confident wearing it at the party; I danced freely, walked around easily, felt energetic and fit. I knew everyone would recognize that it was from Macy's, or at least know that it was a well-trusted brand. Above all, I knew that I had got this dress at a bargain price.

*Nadine felt great – that much is evident. Knowing that your dress was a bargain is a great feeling, but I wonder, if anybody commented on Nadine's dress, if she told them that it was a bargain. It fascinates me how I and my shopping sisterhood cannot accept a compliment about our clothes without telling everybody and their uncle how little it cost us and what an absolute steal it was!*

Fast-forwarding to after the party, I packed my dress and sent it to the drycleaners. I wanted to keep it in great condition, because I knew I would end up taking this dress back home to Jordan. Everyone there loves my sense of fashion; well, the truth is that they love anything that is American.

*I understand Nadine's wish to take the dress back home and solicit approval of her cosmopolitan style. I can remember when I was 18, I bought a skirt on the Champs Elysees in Paris. I used to be absolutely delighted when people asked me where I had bought it, because it gave me a chance to tell them how sophisticated I was!*

As soon as the dress was back, I had a curious urge to find out the dress's brand and where it came from. Suddenly, the conflict between national identity and global identity reared its head. Despite my tremendous pride in my national identity, and the love I have for my country, the feeling of disappointment overwhelmed me. The brand turned out to be Jordanian and all of a sudden all the positive feelings I experienced towards this dress simply disappeared. I started asking myself so many random questions. I could have bought this dress for so much cheaper back home, I could have bought another dress - a different international brand - for the same price, and certainly, now, I would not bother taking this dress back home (to Jordan), since it might be worn by other people there.

*Oh Nadine – how disappointed you were! Was this really conflict between national and global identity though? Or was it just an indication that you can take the girl out of Jordan but you can't take Jordan out of the girl? We have internal value systems which run deep. We've been raised in societies that have specific cultures and practises, and we very often don't recognise how these impact on the choices that we make.*

I kept on thinking, out of all the brands out there and all the dresses in Macy's and in New York, I ended up purchasing a dress made in Jordan, for that much money. It was a very funny feeling of how a person could be miles away from home, yet in a blink of an eye and through consumption of imported goods, realize that he or she never left home at all.

*Do we ever leave home? Do we ever divorce ourselves completely from that which makes us 'us'? The fact is that Nadine would look simply gorgeous in whatever she bought and wore, as her sense of style shines through.*

### **Lizzie's Story**

Getting married for the second time is a little daunting. Boswell says it's a triumph of hope over experience, and I tend to agree. Apart from all the worries about history repeating itself (even though I really felt that this was different), I had the problem of what to wear. As a middle aged woman, preparing to walk down a narrow gap between chairs in a room in a hotel (rather grand, but still just a room in a hotel), I didn't want to under- or over-dress, didn't want to pretend to be virginally pure (after all, I had two teenage offspring) and certainly didn't want to look like an ageing Shirley Temple in a frothy

meringue of lace and silk. On the other hand, I didn't want to look like Camilla Parker-Bowles; my inner teenager balked nauseously at the thought of a coat dress and matching road-kill fascinator.

*Lizzie has done this before and this is her second marriage; she is letting her hopes win over her fears and disappointments. She obviously does not want people to think she is pretending that it is her first marriage, but is also concerned about dressing appropriately. Women worry about what others think in every event they participate in, so imagine if it was their own wedding. I was a maid of honour twice and I know how brides worry about what others think and what others will do!*

A shopping trip to Solihull in the West Midlands soon made me realise that traditional wedding dresses were far too fussy, would show my dimply upper arms, and would make me look ridiculous. The shops were also populated with assistants who would tell me I looked beautiful even if I looked like a circus sideshow, providing the price tag on the dress would allow them a sizeable commission. I settled for a bridesmaid's dress in deep champagne. Plain, elegant, and with the option of a short jacket to hide the offending upper arms. Of course, being just 5'2" in height, the dress was too long for me, and in order to avoid me tripping (literally) towards my future husband, it needed to be shortened.

*Solihull, West Midlands! I heard some years ago that it was voted the best place to live. How impressive! Women these days experience a love-hate relationship when it comes to shopping. We are so excited to shop, but there is always that feeling of self-consciousness overlapping our excitement. Dresses lately are not designed for average women; instead, it feels like they are made for Victoria Secret models. Lizzie does not trust the sales assistants and probably, like everyone else, believes that they are biased towards making the sale. It is all about sales people and commission. I was one of them in a previous life, and trust me it's not nice!*

Two weeks later, armed with my rather expensive wedding shoes (after all, a wedding is an ideal time for guilt-free self-indulgence) I tried on my elegant dress, only to find that they had over-shortened it, and I looked as if I'd had an alarming middle-aged growth-spurt. The assistant assured me that they could fix it, and I left with a sinking feeling, wondering exactly how they would manage to grow an extra two inches onto the bottom of my dress.

*I can identify with this; we all love shoes and the more we have the better! Lizzie it is your wedding and it is your only chance to spend without experiencing any sort of cognitive dissonance. Weddings are all about us women indulging ourselves without guilt. Disappointment in our purchases, after high hopes and expectations can frustrate us. We even start looking for any light in the tunnel for solutions, but even so, it never feels the same.*

I returned home with a sure and certain knowledge that my dress was going to be a disaster, and over a consoling cup of tea, started to flick through a rather up-market magazine. There, in the bottom left-hand corner of the inside page, was an advertisement for an exclusive boutique, bearing the image of a beautiful dress that would be perfect... just perfect. I made a note of the brand of the dress and then started searching for retail outlets. There was one en route to Solihull, and on the day that I was to return to try my shortened/lengthened dress, I decided to call in. Just in case, you understand.

*Lizzie, while drinking a cup of tea, is flicking the up-market magazine looking for inspiration in case the dress is ruined. Although acting calmly, she is looking for a glimpse of light between all of the options, and she finds it. She finds a dress advertised by an exclusive boutique, exactly what she wants. I think I too would rush to the boutique*

*and check the dress out, but it is clear that she feels some sort of hope that her original dress will be properly altered.*

It was a grim, grey and rainy day, with dark clouds and heavy showers. I had to park a few hundred yards away from the boutique, and by the time I'd sprinted through the puddle-strewn streets, my carefully straightened hair had started to curl uncontrollably, and my make-up was threatening to slide down my face. I burst through the door of the boutique in a flurry of wind and rain, making the chimes ring violently, taking the cold air in with me and causing the two assistants to look around in alarmed manner.

*I love my new temporary adopted home! Everything in the UK is beautiful, except its gloomy weather and limited parking! It is such an annoying feeling when you have your hair straightened and in a blink of an eye, it appears as if you just stepped out of the shower. These awkward moments get even worse when you realize that you are there to try on dresses while you are soaking wet! I don't think I'd have had the courage to go in to the shop - especially since it was a high-class boutique.*

I explained what I was looking for, and after relieving me of my umbrella and sodden coat, they guided me solicitously to the back of the shop, where this particular range of dresses was stored. It was love at first sight, and the object of my love was absolutely nothing like anything I was consciously seeking. A pure silk, two-toned green and gold dress, with a gold lace bodice and a delicate silk wrap to cover my shoulders and arms, was whispering my name from the hanging-rail. I tried it on, it was a perfect fit, and I heard my voice saying, "I'll take it!". The price tag was scary, but this dress was meant to be mine, and I handed over my little piece of plastic in a painless exchange for a luxuriously beribboned carrier bag, bearing the embossed name of the boutique and containing the spoils of my trip.

*I can only relate to Lizzie's feeling when she fell in love with that dress. The feeling comes from nowhere and it looks like nothing you had in mind, but you still absolutely adore it! The green and gold in the dress will enhance Lizzie's eye and hair colour. Here Lizzie's behaviour and attitude are clearly overcoming her fear of the price she is paying for the second dress. We all fear price tags but tend to justify our purchases to ourselves with various reasons, but Lizzie does not need to do so because it is part of her big day.*

The brand was Jordanian. I had never previously heard of it, but the name spoke to me of quality, exoticism, style and exclusivity. It was likely that my wedding guests would not have seen a dress like this before, and would certainly not have heard of the brand, but that gave it a certain cachet in my eyes.

*The way Lizzie is explaining her feelings, knowing that brand is Jordanian, amazes me. Lizzie is relating the quality to the name of the brand, and also, perhaps, she is relating quality to price, and the country of origin. Maybe it is the idea of the guests never being exposed to such a brand that is the reason behind her love affair with the dress. Honestly, I would have felt insecure knowing that the dress is possibly familiar to others.*

As it happened, my original dress had been beautifully altered and was found to fit perfectly, so I wore it for the ceremony, and then changed into my Jordanian dress for the small dinner party that would act as a wedding reception. I was gratified by the ooohs and aahhhhs from my special guests, and took great pleasure in telling them that my dress was made by a Jordanian designer.

*Reading this, I feel that Lizzie fell in love with the Jordanian dress much more than the original one. In fact, I am wondering why she did not wear the original dress, while*

*return the Jordanian one back to the boutique. I think I would be very happy telling the guests that my dress is from Jordan, but the only problem is ...my guests would never perceive it as quality.*

How much more exotic was it to be wearing a Jordanian designer dress than the plain and simple British bridesmaid gown? Much, much more. The exotic qualities of the dress were transferred to me, and I sparkled in a confident and elegant way, all because of my dress.

*Lizzie, it's all about where we are and who are our guests...that British bridesmaid gown would be absolutely gorgeous in the eyes of Jordanian guests, just as exotic as that Jordanian dress was to all of your guest. We are influenced by perceptions of others and by what is known to be different. We drift away from anything domestic, yet are drawn by anything foreign.*

## **BRIEF PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

As this is a methodological paper, the findings are discussed only to elucidate how this method of data collection can give insight to marketers, and is therefore effected in a somewhat cursory manner.

Both contributors write of the confidence with which they are imbued due to the brand of dress they wear; Nadine expresses that the purchase of a dress in New York made her feel confident, because she knew it was from Macy's, and a well-trusted brand. Lizzie writes of the way that she felt confident because her designer dress was an exotic Jordanian brand. This adds weight to findings that the symbolic nature of goods can enhance confidence (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983; Piacentini and Mailer 2004).

The dresses were both used to project a particular image, as Nadine comments that she knew that everyone would recognise this dress as being from Macy's, and Lizzie discusses the fact that the exotic qualities of her dress were transferred to her, making her sparkle and feel elegant (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004).

Communicating status through clothing (Piacentini and Mailer 2004; O'Cass and McEwen 2004) is also evident within these data, as Nadine's wish to be recognised by her family and friends back home as a cosmopolitan style-guru shines through. Nadine's disappointment to find that her dress was a Jordanian brand would indicate that she believed that this would not impress to the same degree. However, Lizzie's delight at finding a Jordanian dress which would somehow set her apart and make her feel special corroborates the fact that consumer perceptions relate to the individual's cultural awareness and experience (Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998; Magnusson and Westjohn 2011; Lee and Lee, 2011).

## **COMMENTARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Henceforth, individuals vary in their consumption decisions due to a large number of complex, individualised and socialised reasons. In fact, consumer needs are the main driver for certain consumption patterns or brand choice (Guo et.al, 2011). Some are functional, yet the majority of consumers strive to earn a symbolic and sentimental utility from their consumption (Graeff, 1996). Perceptions vary when putting time, effort and money into consuming particular brands, since the expectations of individuals depends on the symbolic benefits obtained from that brand as it is being socially consumed.

This work has sought to explore, through autoethnographic method, ways in which firms could gain insight into consumer behaviour and, at a more generic level, ways in which autoethnographic methods can assist in building sustainable business models. In many ways we see this as a natural extension to the concepts of metamodernism, in that we aim to build upon the notion of 'communitas' as espoused by Arnould and Price in 1993, when they proposed ethnosociological approaches in the study of the emotional and communal phenomena of consumption. Their aim was to explore the impact that the social context had upon consumption, whereas our aim has been to explore the societal from the perspective of the individual psyche and through narrative.



We have chosen a metamodernist lens for this activity, as we decentralise consumption from linear patterns of behaviour... 'and movement between intention and trace, mark maker and interpreter, reading and authorship, consumption and production, object, subject, time, place and space' (Fiske, 2000). The metamodern view is one of oscillation between the naïve narrative of the modernist and the ironic narrative of the post-modernist; thus we seek a descriptive rather than a prescriptive discourse: how an individual 'structures a feeling' around the purchase and subsequent use of a garment (in our case a dress), for example, oscillates between futility and usefulness, simultaneously developing a new vocabulary for consumer insight (through user experience) (Cova et al. 2013).

Therefore we observe from a metamodernist marketing perspective, that brands from one's own country are not perceived in the same, exotic light as items from other places of origin – there is an oscillation of meaning that is taking place – between the country of origin and the country of consumption. Additionally, there is rich data within this piece of research which may provide insight into the female clothes-shopping experience, as clearly, narrative extracted from the individual is at once naïve and useful to marketers and accepts that few 'universal truths' actually exist in consumer behaviour.

Thus, this approach to research offers insight for practising marketers in that we believe there are several areas of consequence. Firstly, from a practice marketing perspective – this type of research can be undertaken by practising marketers relatively simply and can be actioned with relative speed. Although somewhat simple and fast as an approach, it provides considerable insight into consumer behaviour, as long as one is able to interpret narrative in a meaningful way. Indeed, we would argue that most practising marketers probably have a practised insight into autoethnographic research anyway, but may not realise it.

In relation to our study, we show that this type of research offers an understanding of how consumers behave in relation to the purchase of brands with a specific country of origin. Although the data may not be used to extrapolate, the 'thick data' is extremely useful when considering the narration of the consumer experience without it being subjected to outside influence.

In this paper, we have exposed autoethnographic research in relation to the purchase of fashion items, however, we believe that it could be used without prejudice within almost every area of consumer behaviour. We believe this is important to practitioners, as this approach to understanding consumer mirrors, in its metamodernist form, consumer behaviour that sits outside purchase decisions; by that, we mean that consumers are both influenced by, and contributors to social media, which is based upon hyper-partisan story-telling. The autoethnographic perspective presented in a narrative format is both contemporary and perceptive.

Therefore, we conclude that user-generated content is currently created through many media, one of which is blogging, very often consumed for entertainment purposes with the potential for significant consumer influence. Autoethnographic research mirrors this narrative approach and avoids the specialist language often associated with more formal methods of data collection and the interpretation/analysis thereof.

This approach could, through its academic novelty, provide a way of bridging the gap between academia and practice within the marketing discipline. The most interesting occurrence is that in the world of marketing and business management research, this type of approach is rarely used as philosophically, it borrows much from the arts; however, it can elicit rich data and important consumer insights in line with the recent developments in UX (user experience) ethnographic research.

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