ANNE KASTARINEN

Narratives of Grandparental
Consumption

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UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

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Without listing all the good sides of grandparenthood,

I could say that it surely takes time, it may get very expensive,

and sometimes you get tired, but it is definitely worth it all.

I would miss a lot if I weren't a grandpa.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

PROLOGUE

We all have our special sites for inspiration. Regarding this dissertation, I have had two of them. One is the picturesque Mönchsberg mountain in my old hometown Salzburg, where I spent a few beautiful days of autumn 2016, writing the analysis of Chapter 4. The other one is located by the astonishing Serlachius museum Gösta in Mänttä. In the spectacular museum garden, there is a beautiful wooden bridge that leads to a tiny island with enormous inspiration. Visitors can walk round the island within a few minutes; stroll along a simple path with only birches, lake and silence around them, slowly losing touch with the surrounding world. By the path, there are signs with island-topic citations, starting with a quotation from the Agatha Christie classic '*And Then There Were None*'. It stops me every time.

So does the last sign, standing alone just before I leave the land of illusion. The citation is nearly 400 years old and I know the words by heart, but I always read them as if I had never seen them before. This particular sign is actually the reason why I have kept returning to the tiny island: to see, to read, and to feel the words. Encountering the exactly same quotation in Russell Belk's article, the one probably most impactful for the standpoint of this thesis, was a breath-taking experience. Without too much philosophical thinking, if any, this coincidence confirmed me that I was on the right path. It was inspiring to see a flash of intuition and everyday miracles in the middle of an ambitious academic project with disciplined logics and argumentation. From that moment on, after having a nearly spiritual connection with my research phenomenon, I understood what this research was all about.
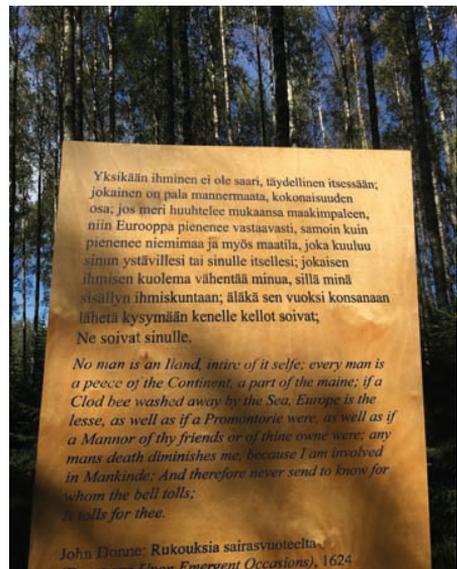
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The last leg of a long journey is within reach, so it is time to look around and thank all the people who have made it possible. First of all, I want to thank my thesis supervisors Professor Hannu Kuusela and Docent Elina Närvänen for their support and encouragement throughout the process. Not only has Professor Kuusela offered me numerous opportunities to grow as a researcher, mental resources to seize them, and his impressive academic knowledge to learn from, but he also wisely introduced me to Docent Närvänen, knowing that she would become my inspiring guide into consumer culture. Elina Närvänen, to whom I like to refer as 'the most intelligent person under 40 I know', is a forerunner in both methodologies and contexts of consumer research and her support has been invaluable. With Professor Kuusela and Docent Närvänen as my supervisors, I had no chance but to succeed. Thank you both.

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Importantly, I want to thank my informants: you are the heart and the soul of this research. Thank you for inviting me into your grandparenthood.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my family: to my loved parents, who have supported me in all life turns. I know you are proud of me, although you have never made a fuss about my studies, at least not after high school. For you, there are other achievements more important in life than degrees and titles. Dad, I can hardly wait for our next hard working day in the forest. I wonder if this thesis qualifies me to finally use the chainsaw. Mum, soon you will have a PhD tour guide for our holidays. My sister Hanna has always been a role model for me, walking a few steps ahead. Thank you for showing the way. My sister Sanna, thank you for your innocent noninterest in my thesis – you cannot imagine how healthy it has been to talk about anything else. I also thank you Maire, my mother-in-law and biggest fan: thank you for being proud of me from day one.

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In Tampere, June 12, 2017
Anne Kastarinen

ABSTRACT

A considerable body of research has examined the interplay between consumption and identity. While these studies provide several important insights into younger age groups, they devote scant attention to consumers in later adulthood. Regarding contemporary perspectives on identity and its construction throughout the life span, it is just as important to understand the meanings of consumption in later adulthood, especially during its various turning points.

Grandparents are at the centre of this study, both as consumers and as identity builders. Grandparenthood is considered to be one of the most important and pleasant roles in life, and its positive effects on both grandparents and grandchildren have been confirmed in several studies. From the perspective of identity construction, grandparenthood is unique and contradictory. Lacking official rights or duties in society, grandparents are free to enact their grandparental identities, albeit inside the framework of cultural age perceptions and prejudices and the fundamental basis for identity construction: a quest for both uniqueness and community.

This study offers a new perspective into the relationship between consumption and narrative identity construction. The research strategy is qualitative and interpretive, and the empirical data was generated in conversational narrative interviews. The conceptual framework is built on consumer identity construction within the domain of consumer culture theory. In the light of its research questions, the study identifies the meanings of grandparental consumption and analyses how consumers employ these meanings to construct their grandparental identity narratives. Four main categories of consumption meanings are identified: grandparental authenticity, grandparental legitimacy, grandparental heritage, and grandparental care. Grandparental authenticity and legitimacy are focused on the self and construct grandparental identity directly by differentiating and showing communality. Grandparental heritage and care are focused on the other, mainly the grandchild, and relate to grandparental identity through a particular generativity script. Importing the concept of generativity from psychology, the study refers to a communal or agentic aim to promote the well-being of future generations. The analysis of narratives summarizes that consumption helps to construct

grandparental identity narratives both directly and indirectly, through a generativity script.

The contribution of this thesis can be divided into the sub-areas of theory, context and method. First, from a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the field of consumer identity research by expanding the life cycle it covers into later adulthood. Second, bridging generativity with the cultural landscape of consumer identity work generates a new perspective and provides a new vocabulary to better understand the consumer. Through a generativity script of consumer narratives, the concept of the *extended self* (Belk 1988) receives a new temporal dimension, allowing the consumer to symbolically *outlive the self*. Third, the thesis conceptualizes *generative consumption* as a qualitative, integrative revision of previous multidisciplinary studies in generativity and in consumer generativity.

Contextually, the study widens the scope of family identity studies by adding the lacking perspective of grandparents and stretching the focus on the family life cycle beyond empty nests. Methodologically, the study contributes to the literature by applying a narrative analysis in a way that synthesizes the collected consumer narratives into a new master narrative of grandparental consumption. The study also has managerial implications. Challenged to support consumers in their identity work, marketing practitioners will benefit from understanding the significant and expanding group of grandparent consumers, as well as the role of generative consumption. In terms of its social implications, the study weakens the echo of redundant stereotypes concerning grandparent consumers, serves as a source of peer support and may indirectly generate more options in the marketplace for consumers to enact generativity.

Keywords: narrative identity, grandparenthood, meanings of consumption, generative consumption

TIIVISTELMÄ

Kuluttamisen ja identiteetin suhde on kiehtonut tutkijoita vuosikymmenten ajan. Valtaosa tutkimuksista on kohdistunut nuorempiin ikäryhmiin, joiden kohdalla kuluttamisen yhteys yksilön identiteetin rakentamisen on ollut selkeästi havaittavissa. Vallitsevan identiteettikäsityksen mukaan identiteetin rakentaminen jatkuu kuitenkin läpi elämän, joten on tärkeää ymmärtää kuluttamisen merkityksiä kaikissa ikävaiheissa ja elämän taitekohdissa.

Tämän väitöskirjan keskiössä ovat isovanhemmat, niin kuluttajina kuin identiteetin rakentajina. Isovanhemmuutta pidetään yhtenä elämän tärkeimmistä ja toivotuimmista rooleista, ja sen myönteisistä vaikutuksista sekä isovanhempien että lasten elämään on julkaistu monia tutkimuksia. Identiteetin rakentamisen näkökulmasta isovanhemmuus on mielenkiintoinen ja ristiriitainen ilmiö. Ilman virallisia oikeuksia ja velvollisuuksia isovanhemmilla on vapaus ja vastuu toteuttaa isovanhemmuuden identiteettiään yksilöllisesti, haluamallaan tavalla, mutta vapauden taustalla vaikuttavat kulttuurista juontuvat perinteiset ikäkäsitykset ja ennakkoluulot sekä identiteetin rakentamisen peruslähtökohta: halu kuulua yhteen mutta samalla erottautua muista.

Tutkimus kehittää uuden näkökulman kuluttajan narratiivisen identiteetin rakentamiseen. Tutkimusstrategiana on laadullinen ja tulkitseva narratiivinen tutkimus, jossa tutkimusaineisto on luotu narratiivisilla haastatteluilla. Tutkimuksen käsitteellinen viitekehys pohjautuu kulttuuriseen kulutustutkimukseen, erityisesti kuluttajan identiteetin tutkimukseen. Tutkimuskysymysten valossa selvitetään, mitä merkityksiä isovanhemmuuteen liittyvään kuluttamiseen kohdistuu ja miten kuluttajat rakentavat narratiivista isovanhemman identiteettiään näiden merkitysten avulla. Tutkimus tunnistaa neljä kuluttamisen merkitysten päätyyppiä: autenttisuus, legitiimisyys, perintö ja huolenpito. Autenttisuus ja legitiimisyys kohdistuvat kuluttajaan itseensä ja rakentavat suoraan isovanhemmuuden identiteettiä vahvistamalla toisaalta yksilöllisyyttä, toisaalta yhteenkuuluvuutta. Isovanhemmuuden perintö ja huolenpito kohdistuvat toiseen, useimmiten lapsenlapseen, ja ovat yhteydessä identiteetin rakentamiseen välillisesti, generatiivisuuden toteuttamisen kautta. Tutkimus nostaakin esiin psykologian tutkimuksesta kumpuavan generatiivisuuden käsitteen, jolla viitataan tulevien

sukupolvien hyvinvoinnin edistämiseen joko yhteisöllisistä tai itsekkäistä lähtökohdista. Narratiivien analyysin yhteenvedossa todetaan, että kuluttaminen rakentaa isovanhemmuuden identiteettiä sekä suoraan että välillisesti luomalla mahdollisuuksia generatiivisen tarinan toteuttamiseen.

Tutkimuksen kontribuutio kohdistuu teoriaan, kontekstiin ja tutkimusmenetelmään. Teoreettisena kontribuutionaan tutkimus ensinnäkin laventaa kuluttajan identiteettitutkimuksen kattamaa elämänkaarta myöhäiseen aikuisikään analysoimalla kuluttamisen merkityksiä isovanhempien identiteetin rakentumisen kannalta. Toiseksi, tuomalla generatiivisuuden käsitteen kuluttajan identiteettitutkimukseen tutkimus lisää Belkin (1988) esittelemään laajennettuun identiteettiin *(extended self)* temporaalisen, symbolisesti oman ajan ulkopuolelle jatkuvan ulottuvuuden *(outliving the self)*. Kolmantena teoreettisena kontribuutionaan tutkimus määrittelee, mitä on generatiivinen kuluttaminen.

Kontekstiin liittyvänä kontribuutiona tutkimustieto isovanhemmista vahvistaa perheiden kuluttajaidentiteetin tutkimusta, jossa on aiemmin keskitytty muihin perheenjäseniin tai perheeseen yksikkönä. Perhe on myös tavallisesti rinnastettu kotitalouteen, jolloin perheiden elinkaarta peilaava kulutustutkimus on temporaalisesti päättynyt tyhjän pesän vaiheeseen.

Menetelmällisenä kontribuutionaan tutkimus soveltaa narratiivista analyysia ja luo tutkimusaineistona olleiden kuluttajanarratiivien synteesinä uuden, tutkimusilmiön kokoavan tarinan. Niukka kuluttajan generatiivisuuteen kohdistuva tutkimuskenttä syvenee tutkimuksen myötä laadulliselle tasolle.

Tutkimuksella on merkitystä myös käytännön liike-elämälle. Hyödyntämällä tutkimustietoa kasvavasta ja tärkeästä isovanhempien kuluttajaryhmästä sekä generatiivisesta kuluttamisesta yritykset saavat uusia mahdollisuuksia oivaltaa, miten ne voivat omalla toiminnallaan tukea tai rajoittaa kuluttajan identiteetin rakentamista.

Sosiaalisena kontribuutionaan tutkimus hälventää isovanhemmuuteen kohdistuvia ennakkoluuloja, tuo isovanhemmuudesta tietoa isovanhempien itsensä saataville ja mahdollisesti lisää kuluttajan mahdollisuuksia generatiiviseen kuluttamiseen tekemällä ilmiötä näkyvämmäksi.

Avainsanat: narratiivinen identiteetti, isovanhemmuus, kuluttamisen merkitykset, generatiivinen kuluttaminen

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Research phenomenon

In the past, identity was an unproblematic concept; an individual was a fisherman, a mother, or a priest, and that was it. An individual's identity was fixed, solid and stable. There are cultures outside advanced industrialized societies where identity can, even today, be mainly a function of predefined social roles. Yet, in contemporary western culture, identity is no longer considered to be fixed or stable, but a dynamic, open and fluid construct that needs to be assembled and reassembled, produced and re-produced (Shankar et al. 2001, 76; Gauthier 2002, 297). Neither is identity conceptualized as a 'thing', but as a project, a process and a practice (Levy 1981; Belk 1988; Giddens 1991; Holt 2002).

Being a project includes a statement that something can, or must, be done. Hence, identities can be worked on, modified, or even managed. This nurtures both pessimistic and optimistic views of human life. Confronted with endless choices, individuals arguably face existential crisis, identity confusion, fragmentation of self and even an empty self (Cushman 1990), or its opposite, a personal saturation (Gergen 1991). At the other extreme, more optimistic consumer researchers see fragmented and alienating society as a liberatory force. Conversely, while the traditional institutions – which used to provide the basis of identity – disintegrate, consumption enables individuals to creatively construct and communicate a multitude of identities (Firat & Venkatesh 1995). Although identities can be fluid, individuals may use consumption to introduce some sense of stability into an unstable world (Miles 1999). Subsequently, consumer culture is considered to be a locus for producing competing identity positions, with consumption as the means to incorporate, reproduce and realize their symbolic potential into ongoing identity projects (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Belk 1988; Firat & Venkatesh 1995). This turns the idea of the marketplace into a pre-eminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people can construct narratives of identity (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 871).

Most consumer identity research concentrates on consumers in early and mid-adulthood, with only a few notable exceptions (e.g. Barnhart & Penaloza 2013;

Price et al. 2000; Schau et al. 2009). However, identity-related consumption is not only typical for some life stages. If it is possible to accept the widespread view of multiple and changing identities, it is important to investigate the relationship between identity and consumption throughout the lifespan. Considering the lifetime value of consumers, as people start to live longer, their longest period of consumption occurs at the later adulthood stage. Yet, consumers' diversity regarding needs, lifestyles and consumption habits has set challenges to marketers, who have tried to develop effective strategies to understand mature consumers. Concentrating effort into a naturally occurring and salient sub-group has been one suggestion for a fruitful research strategy to learn more about consumers in their later adulthood (Moschis 1994; Reed 2002).

One salient and growing consumer group in later adulthood is grandparents, who also represent an increasingly important and multifaceted phenomenon for consumer identity research. For marketers, grandparents represent a growing and highly attractive market (Tootelian and Varshney 2010). Considering consumption, grandparents not only invest in their grandchildren, but also represent a pillar of identity that possibly influences children's development, values and behaviour as consumers in childhood and later life (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002). As one of the few new roles that become available to people during middle and later life, grandparenthood is considered to be one of the most important roles in life (Thiele & Whelan, 2006). Therefore, it presumably generates identity-related activity, such as consumption. As a loosely defined 'role-less' role, grandparenting involves an identity that needs to be self-defined and constructed. Grandparenthood is a status per se, but it does not come with a specific role description. Unlike other parental roles, the grandparental role lacks explicit functions, rights and responsibilities. Grandparents must clarify what is expected of them and then adapt to these demands (Thiele & Whelan 2006, 95–98). This leads to an assumption that consumption has a significant role in the construction of grandparental identity. Conversely, grandparenthood is stigmatized with myriad prejudices and archetypal identities, which prevail, even though grandparenthood itself has changed and become fragmented (Gauthier 2002; Thiele & Whelan 2006). Considered as the beginning of old age, or at least of a new stage in life, it is fascinating to learn how grandparenthood is immersed in the lives of contemporary grandparents and how consumption can support the identity work of grandparents in their search for distinction and communality and in the rejection of redundant stereotypes.

So, how and where can we learn about identities? Citing Giddens (1991, 54), *'identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going'.* An identity never exists in a vacuum, rather, it needs to be narrated against others. It is constituted in social interaction by telling and listening to stories (Hall 2002, 223). In stories, individuals construct meaning for their lives and identities, and at the same time, assign identities to others. With its roots connected to the past, identity is being produced, re-produced, or presented in a certain situation, place and time (Gergen & Gergen 1983). Consumer researchers have adopted a narrative perspective to develop a richer understanding of the various aspects of consumption. Narratives have been used as an interpretive tool to aid understanding of how consumers structure their consumption experiences and give meanings to products and brands (e.g. Ahuvia 2005; Autio 2004; Fournier 1998; Stern 1995). Using narrative methods, it is possible to gain new insight into a salient consumer identity that is presumably a rich source of stories, but also of ambivalence and myths.

This study is situated in the context of discovery (MacInnis 2011; Yadav 2010), with its objective to identify new ideas, constructs and perspectives that have yet to be apprehended (MacInnis 2011, 143). It aims to contribute to the literature through revision, by taking a novel perspective on a phenomenon that has already been identified. Cultivating a beginner's mind through immersion in the research phenomenon, the study makes the authentic voice of consumers heard to provide space for a new understanding and new ways of seeing.

1.2   Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to analyse the interplay between consumption and identity construction in grandparental narratives. This purpose can be divided into three interrelated objectives:

- To identify the meanings of grandparental consumption.

- To analyse how these meanings constitute grandparental identity narratives.

- To create a synthesizing master narrative of grandparental consumption.

Accordingly, the analysis approaches the research purpose on three levels, as illustrated in Figure 1.
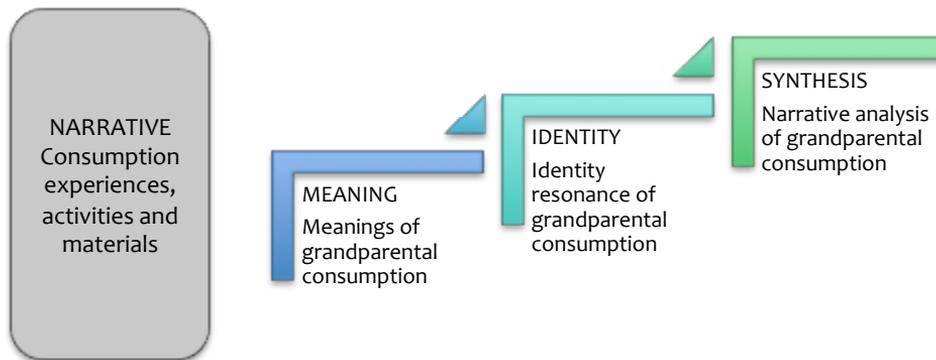
Figure 1.   Three levels of the analysis

After analysing the consumption experience and identifying the consumption activities and materials of contemporary grandparenting as they appear in the narratives, I will first focus onto the level of meanings to determine the 'why' of grandparental consumption. Second, I will analyse the identity resonance of the consumer narratives from the perspective of these meanings. Accordingly, I will analyse how consumers construct their grandparental identity narrative, with the support of symbolic consumption, balancing in their quest for distinction and community. Third, in the final phase of narrative analysis, I will create a synthesis of the original narratives and construct a new master narrative of grandparental consumption.

1.3   Positioning the study

Positioned in consumer research, this study aims both to fill a research gap in, and contribute to, the field of consumer identity studies. During its expansion and growth, consumer research has been a field for significant disagreements about what it really is. Conflicting assumptions about consumer behaviour as an independent discipline, or as a sub-discipline of marketing, have led to different standards over the criteria upon which research should be judged, and to whom research should be relevant (MacInnis & Folkes 2010, 899), as well as to conflicting views regarding the objectives and methodology of consumer research.

One of the predominant views, and the one adopted in this study, supports the position of consumer behaviour as a multidisciplinary sub-field of marketing research (see Figure 2), without being affixed to an individual company's goal, but in terms of understanding marketing as an elevated and institutional discipline (MacInnis & Folkes 2010). Although multidisciplinary, the field of consumer behaviour is unified by its core concern with acquisition, usage and disposal of marketplace entities by consumers. In the field of consumer-behaviour research, consumer culture theory (CCT) contains a plurality of theoretical perspectives focused on the cultural aspects of consumption, that is, on the ways culture and the social reality are constituted in the marketplace (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Moisander & Valtonen 2006). The basic assumption is that we live in a culturally constituted world, and this constitution largely takes place in and through the market (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 7). In other words, consumer culture has considerable influence on our experiences, identities and human ways of life. Hence, cultural consumer research can provide both consumers and marketers a better understanding of the cultural complexity of the marketplace and of their roles in the market (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 13).

Consumer culture theory addresses the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 868). Instead of viewing culture as a homogeneous system of collectively shared meanings, ways of life and unifying values, it explores the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the overlapping cultural groupings that exist within a broader socio-historical frame. Compared to other consumer research, consumer culture theorists do not study consumption contexts, but they study in consumption contexts (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 869). By 'consumer culture', CCT refers to an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts and objects that groups use to make collective sense of their environments and to orientate their experiences and lives. Consumer activities are not being interpreted by causalities, but through models of behaviour and their interpretations, with a special interest in cultural meanings, socio-historical influences and social dynamics that shape consumer experiences and identities in the multifaceted context of everyday life. (Shove et al. 2007, 4-5). From the viewpoint of CCT, marketplace resources both mediate the understanding of self and others, and help individuals to orientate to the surrounding world. Consumer culture is an integral part of everyday life and is driven by the need for people to continuously self-create themselves with marketplace resources (Närvänen 2013, 42–43).

Consumer culture theory can be divided into four specializations: marketplace ideologies, marketplace cultures, socio-historical influences and consumer identity projects (Arnould & Thompson 2005). This study makes its contribution to the field of consumer identity projects by combining theories from social and human sciences with the mindset of CCT, which sees consumers as identity seekers and makers. According to my pre-understanding, consumer identity studies can be further divided into three categories based on their main focus: 1) marketplace symbolism, 2) identity expression and 3) identity construction. The main interest of this study is in identity construction, although there remains a link to the perspectives of identity expression and marketplace symbolism.
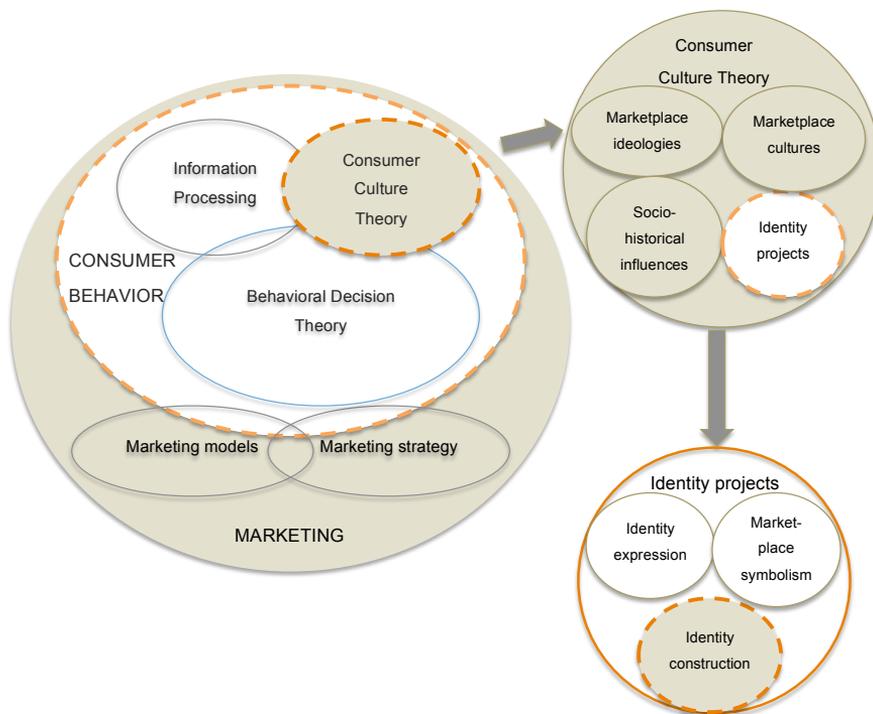
Figure 2.   Positioning of the study in the field of marketing research (partly adapted from MacInnis & Folkes 2010)

As a modification and completion of the consumer behaviour model as a multidisciplinary sub-field of marketing (MacInnis & Folkes 2010, 910), Figure 2 will illustrate the position of this study in the diverse fields of marketing research and CCT.

1.4   Main concepts and definitions

In this study, **consumption** is understood broadly as a process of consummation, relying upon Holbrook's (1987) definition of consumption as the acquisition, usage, and disposition of products. Products include all goods, services, ideas and events, or any other entities that can be acquired, used, or disposed of in ways that potentially provide value, that is, a type of experience that occurs when a goal is achieved, a need is fulfilled, or a want is satisfied (Holbrook 1987, 128). Arnould et al. (2002, 9) usefully elaborate on Holbrook's definition by summarizing that consumption entails the acquisition, usage and disposition of products, services and experiences, committed by individuals or groups.

Consumers, in the cultural framework of this study, are seen as active players, who are re-working and shaping the meaning that they consume (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 11). They are neither passive victims of the marketplace, nor independent producers of meaning, but participants in the interaction in the marketplace and in the production of culture. Meaning is not only something inherent in the objects of consumption, but consumers also produce it and make those objects meaningful. Through the production of symbols and meanings that are incorporated into the system of representation in which people act and make sense of their everyday life (Firat & Venkatesh 1995, 258), consumers participate in the creative work of consumption, and finally, in the construction of culture (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 12). Considering the focus of this study, consumers can also be defined as producers of identity projects that they undertake using the symbolic resources offered by the marketplace (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 871).

Narratives are stories, tales, accounts or descriptions, a discourse genre that represents real or imagined experiences in story form (Polkinghorne 1988). The word narrative stems from the Latin term *narrare*, to tell (Stevenson 2010b). Having its origins in the adjective *gnarus*, the word refers to both knowledge and competence, meaning that the narrator has both an experience-based and meaning-based view of the phenomena they are describing. In academic literature, narratives and stories are widely used without making a distinction between their meanings, but they can also comprise different content, particularly in different research streams. In social sciences, one of the most-used definitions is:

> Narrative is a form of 'meaning making'. It is a complex form, which expresses itself by drawing together descriptions of states of affairs contained in individual sentences into a particular type of discourse (Polkinghorne 1988, 36).

Hänninen (2002, 19–20) defines a narrative as the symbolic presentation of a story. Typically, a narrative is verbal, but narrating can also take place in the form of a film, play, or a single picture. One narrative can entail various stories, which means that it can be interpreted in various ways. People can also constantly tell (narrate) old stories in ways that create new interpretations. In narration, people can make social effects, share and reflect on their experiences, and obtain social confirmation. After narration, the narrative becomes a resource in the cultural stock of stories, which the audience can use as a resource in their own narration and interpretation of life.

According to Weick (1995), all human sense-making is retrospective and based on storytelling to the self and others. Following Bruner (1990), sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between individuals' own sense of self and their sense of others in the social world around them. Everyone makes sense of their lives by thinking about themselves and the events around them in story form. This begins early in life: children commonly use narratives to explore their position in the world and their relations to others. Gergen and Gergen (1983) suggest that it would be inconceivable to think of life without stories, whether listening to, watching, reading, or telling them. Narratives constitute human realities and a mode of being as a socio-culturally shared resource that provides substance, artfulness and texture to life (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 295–296).

Narratives serve various purposes, among them establishing and maintaining identities. In other words, stories help people to make sense of their lives. Polkinghorne (1988) defines narrative knowledge and understanding as individuals' way of organizing their life events into an understandable form, with the help of storytelling. Narratives can be defined as the external expressions of individual, internal representations of phenomena, events, thoughts and feelings, or as the most important means by which experiences are made meaningful. This makes narratives an important instrument for personal integration (Akerlof & Snower 2015) because people make sense of their lives in terms of a single, unfolding story. To understand any occurrences in life, people attempt to impose narrative structure on them. Stories make it possible to understand the reasons for events occurring and for people behaving as they do (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 237). As a narrative is particularly sensitive to the temporal dimension of human existence, it pays special attention to the sequence in which actions and events occur (Polkinghorne 1988, 36). Ricoeur (1992) considers storytelling to be a creative activity, comprising both configuration and composition, which combines the events of life into one plot and story. The story is both unified and contradictory,

unpredictable and proceeding, and the end offers an understandable, nearly inevitable consequence of everything experienced. The narrative mode of thought does not require people to make up elaborate novels about their lives. Rather, narrative processing refers to individuals thinking about incoming information as if they were trying to create a story (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 238). Because it involves reasons and goals, narrative is the best mode of thought to capture the experiential aspect of human intention, action and consequences (Riessman 1993).

1.5   Structure of the thesis

The thesis proceeds from introducing its theoretical standpoint and methodology to offering a structural and thematic analysis of the narratives, before culminating in a narrative analysis and conclusion. The structure of the thesis is illustrated as a continuum in Figure 3.
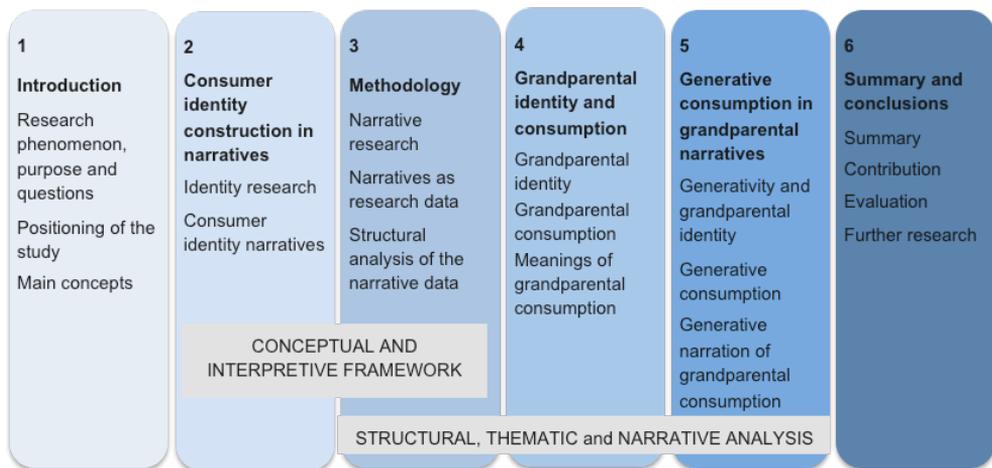
Figure 3. Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, I will draw the conceptual framework for the study in Chapter 2, briefly introducing the main streams in identity research and discussing the chosen approach for this study. I will also present previous studies and their contribution to the field of consumer identity studies in general, and to strategic identity construction in particular. In Chapter 3, I will present the interpretive framework of the study, which is narrative research, and discuss its relevance and

applicability for studying identity. The structural analysis of the narratives is also included in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 contains the thematic analysis of the narratives from the perspective of grandparental consumption, including an introduction to grandparental consumption, an identification of the meanings of grandparental consumption and an analysis of their role in the construction of grandparental identity. Chapter 5 deepens the understanding of the research problem through presenting a definition for generative consumption, based on the narratives and previous research, and through creating a new synthesizing generative narrative of grandparental consumption. Chapter 6 summarizes the entire research, presents an evaluation of the study and its contribution, and makes suggestions for future research.

2   CONSUMER IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN NARRATIVES

Identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.

(Giddens 1991)

2.1   Identity through historical and theoretical lenses

Identity is one of the most studied constructs in the social sciences, and it has inspired researchers from various fields. The most traditional research streams constantly participating in identity discourse and definitions are philosophy, psychology, sociology, social anthropology and social psychology. However, probably because of this border-crossing interest, the concept of identity still has no general theory, even after more than a hundred years of continuous research. There are various perspectives for identity in the literature, and it is impossible to capture a universal academic definition. Identity is a multifaceted, broad and powerful construction, and some academic and popular discourses apply it as an all-inclusive label to cover biological characteristics, psychological traits and socio-demographic positions, or even as a synonym for culture and language.

Identity as a term can be traced back to a Latin root *identitas*, (*idem*, the same) and its two fundamental meanings: sameness and consistency. These refer to the sameness of separate objects and to continuity as a basis for establishing and grasping the definiteness and distinctiveness of something (Stevenson 2010a). Identity, interestingly, involves two basic criteria for comparing objects (or persons): *similarity* and *difference*. The birth of identity as a theoretically defined concept is often connected to the ground-breaking studies of developmental psychologist Erik H. Erikson in the 1950s and 1960s. The basic definition of identity that initially made it appealing to social scientists was this fundamental reference to 'sameness over time' as well as 'difference from others' (Côté 2006). Erikson introduced identity in his lifespan theory of development, understood as a human universal concept. Constructing a healthy identity was seen as the most

important task of adolescence, and failure to adequately complete that stage would lead to confusion about both role and place in life.

The core question in any definition of identity is *'Who are you?'*, or its reflexive counterpart *'Who am I?/Who are we?'* However simple this may sound, the questions involve a considerable degree of complexity. Whether singular or plural, identity can refer to the self-definition of an individual (I am a student, the mother of a child, an entrepreneur, a cyclist, etc.) or pairs of individuals, and small and large groups and categories (we are the Smiths, we are a team, we are Finns, we are students, etc.). Whether posed introspectively, or in social interactions between individuals or groups, the question captures both *'who you think you are'* and *'who you act as'*. This range of diverse – albeit related – contents are differently emphasized in different theoretical perspectives. Each approach typically focuses on one or more levels at which identity can be defined: personal/individual, relational, or collective/cultural (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). The distinction of identity levels contains different forms of identity content, or different kinds of processes by which identities are formed, reformed and maintained (Vignoles et al. 2011, 2).

Simply defined, individual identity refers to the self as a person (Who am I?), referring to aspects of self-definition, such as self-esteem, values and beliefs. Relational identity provides information about an individual's relationship with others (Who do I identify with?). Collective identity tells of an individual's relationship with the world (Who am I as a member of a global community?), thus focusing on groups and social categories, and on the ways people identify with them and give meanings to them. According to the contemporary predominant view, people can have several identities on all three levels, as illustrated in Figure 4, added to the spectrum of possible future identities.
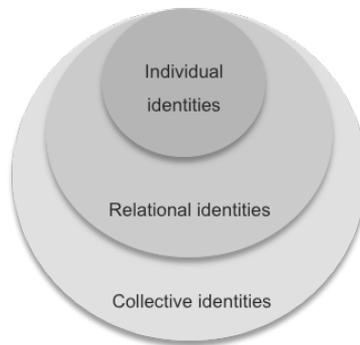
Figure 4. Individual, relational and collective identity

In their attempts to capture human identity, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have taken predictably different approaches, ranging from intrapsychic to macrosocial. In principle, while psychology is concerned with the affective and emotional behaviour of individuals, defined as physiologically conditioned actors responding to sensory stimuli from the environment, sociologists view individuals as members of collective groups in cultural and historical contexts, and identity as an artefact of interaction between the individual and society (Gleason 1983, 918). In social psychology, the main question concerning identity is how the personal self relates to the social environment. The theories that place themselves in the tradition of 'psychological' social psychology *(social identity theory)* focus on explaining an individual's actions within a group in terms of mental events and states, while 'sociological' social psychology theories *(identity theory)* attempt to deal with identity at the level of both individual cognition and collective behaviour (e.g. Hogg et al. 1995; Stets & Burke 2000). For anthropologists, the genesis of identity and the complexity of its meaning are explained through a cultural paradigm: identity is always culturally constituted and defined. Culture represents an essential context of social life and provides the patterns of common ways of living and thinking. Interpretations of identities rely upon this cultural framework of reference (Golubovic 2011, 25).

Philosophers have also reflected on identity, arguably even before psychologists in many ways. The discourse has its roots in Descartes' famous quotes: *'I think, therefore I am'*, and *'I think, I exist'*, which inspired philosophers to inquire what 'I' is. Remarkable contributors in constructing the philosophical identity concept were Hegel, Nietzsche, and most of all, Heidegger, who suggested that the finite identity is only captured after death as people are finally allowed to choose from the socially constructed, seemingly infinite meanings of the world. Later, the hermeneutic philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, started a newer identity discourse stream in philosophy, and he has been the most influential theorist in defining the narrative construction of personal identity. Except for the aforementioned heritage, regarding the study of narrative identity construction, this study will not focus on the philosophical identity tradition, but on the social science perspective.

To understand the multidimensionality of the concept, it is useful to revisit William James' (1890) thoughts about *selfhood*, which were later completed by Mead (1934), who introduced the conceptualization of identity as a dynamic dualism. Considering selfhood as an interrelation of *I* (subject, the knower) and *me* (object, the known) includes making an assumption about the constant dynamics between the individual and community. Initially, the physiologically driven *'I'* refers to the

active (but unthinking) self, who is present in the moment and directed towards the future. Conversely, the socially rooted *'me'*, reflects the expectations of others and implies that individuals have a unique competence to reflect on themselves and to capture themselves as objects. Even today, the constant dialectic of the *'I'* and the *'me'*, blind to physiology and the assessment of social input, are still considered the heart of what it means to be a human being.

From the perspective of consumer identity research, it is particularly notable that the self-concept introduced by James (1890) over a century ago was already highly multifaceted and included the material self. According to James, the me (self-as-known) is composed of all that people can call their own: 'not only his mind and his body, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account' (James 1890, 291). In other words, people and things in the environment belong to the self to the extent that they are felt as 'mine'. Thus, not only 'my mother', but also 'my enemy' belong to the self (Hermans 2001, 244). While the traditional identity sciences have not succeeded in developing a unified theory of identity – not even inside the research streams – consumer research has specifically provided an impressive and accredited input into theory formation. As Folkes (2002, 3) has suggested, by identifying the unique aspects of the consumption context, consumer researchers may contribute to other fields and help them better understand the range and limitations of human behaviour. In fact, one of the very first attempts to integrate the self-concept was made in the consumer behaviour domain through product symbolism (Levy 1959), parallel to James' notion of the material self. Later, Belk (1988) elaborated on the material self in his analysis of possessions as extensions of the self. Belk suggested that the most powerful fact in consumer behaviour is that we are what we have.

As a consequence of diverse, multidimensional, and multi-traditional approaches to identity, there exist some fundamental contrasts in the global discourse, especially concerning interpretations of the nature of identity. According to Alvesson et al. (2008), the key aspects that continue to cause tension in the wider identity literature are *personal versus social identity*, *coherent versus dynamic identity* and *integrated versus fragmented identity* (or, in earlier discussions: unity vs. multiplicity contrast). These contrasts are also seen as being the main distinctions between modern and postmodern identity research.

2.1.1 Personal or social

One main contrast in the identity discussion is that between the roles of the self as personal and social, although the views are not mutually exclusive. Many disagreements in discussions concerning what constitutes identity (ontology), and how to study it (methodology), originate from this difference in focus and, consequently, difference in emphasis (Côté 2006).

In contrast to *selfhood*, the focus in identity discourse is, fundamentally, more on the social dimension of human life, but there are perspectives that focus on the more personal aspects of identity. Psychologists prefer an individual focus and put more emphasis on the mental traits and states of the person in predicting both the subjective and behavioural properties of identity. In this sense, identity presents itself as a 'property of persons' (cf. Côté & Levine, 2002, 49). On the contrary, sociologists place a social focus on identity, thereby concentrating on interaction. This dates to the early symbolic interactionist and pragmatic approaches in sociology, which stated that identity is more a 'property of interaction' than a property of persons. For instance, the theories of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism see human beings as social creatures from the beginning. Identity is socially defined, modified, and maintained, so it does not form as a consequence of individual characteristics, but originates from the social processes of the individual and others. In these processes, language has s significant role. (Burr 2004).

The personal–social contrast has its roots in the early writings of James (1890), who focused on the personal self, but suggested that other people were intricately implicated in self-conception. He was concerned about the social aspects of the individual self, as in his well-known quotation: '*A man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him*' (e.g. Hermans 2001, 247). Later, Cooley's (1902) introduction of the 'looking-glass self' described how individuals' self-concepts are influenced by what significant others think of them (McIntyre 2006). He defined the self-concept as a reflexive mirror that emerges in the interaction between individuals and their relevant social environments. Following this, Mead (1934) made a distinction between 'I' and 'me', referring to the 'ongoing moment of unique individuality' compared with the internalized attitudes of others towards us. Thus, we cannot see ourselves without also seeing ourselves through other people's eyes.

Cooley's 'looking-glass self' was a trigger for the social identity perspective introduced by the symbolic interactionist, Goffman, in 1959. Social identity is the

component of the self-concept that is derived from actual or perceived membership in social groups. It consists of the social categorizations of self and others, in terms of shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to others. Social identity is a more inclusive level of self-perception than personal identity. A distinction is made both between traits (such as honesty, or pessimism) and between social roles. The social roles we ascribe to ourselves are the basis of our social identities, and collectively, these identities form our social self (Kleine et al. 1993, 212). Social roles include the set of standards, descriptions, norms and concepts held for the behaviours of a person, or a position. Social identities originate from social roles, but as Young (1991) puts it: '*While social roles partition a society, social identities partition a person*'.

Social identity research has been led by two major contributors, Henri Tajfel and John Turner, and two respective approaches: *social identity theory* and its expansion *self-categorization theory*. Social identity theory is a social-psychological theory of intergroup relations, group processes and the social self. Although distinct in some respects, self-categorization theory is considered as being part of the same theoretical and metatheoretical enterprise (Hogg et al. 1995, 259). It was developed by Turner to conceptualize aspects of intragroup dynamics related to more minimal groups. Social identity theorists define the self as a universe of potential different identities that may guide behaviour. The self is multiplicative in the sense that it consists of a set of social identities, and behaviour is driven by whichever of these identities are activated in a particular situation. This conceptualization has been an important step in showing that being and behaviour do not always reflect a fixed or individual self, but that self-definition varies with social context. Social identity theory emphasizes the self as being strategic in terms of its flexibility to respond differently to different social audiences (Hogg et al. 1995; Tajfel & Turner 1979).

To simply sum up the personal–social discourse on identity, we can return to the fundamental elements of the term: personal identity defines an individual's *difference* (uniqueness) compared to others, while social identity reflects an individual's *similarity* with other people. To insist on difference over sameness (personal view) as the key to identity is to ignore half of the original meaning of the concept. Meanwhile, some social identity theorists (Jenkins 2014) have abandoned the word 'social' and prefer to talk about 'identity', basing this on an argument that all human identities are *social* identities. Adding the 'social' into a context, which always involves interaction, is seen as redundant, because

identifying others and ourselves is a matter of meaning, and meaning is a matter of interaction, for instance, in the form of communication and negotiation.

My solution to the first fundamental contrast lies in the recognition of Côté (2006), in which identity depends on both personal and social sources; it requires some sort of storage of experiences and habituated thoughts in the memory, in the person, but it needs to be constructed and actualized in social activities – in interaction.

2.1.2   Singular or multiple

The second major contrast between identity studies exists in the debate about whether an individual has one identity, or multiple identities. The debate is often formulated in relation to Erikson's notion of *ego identity*, although the contrast can be traced to James (1890), who argued that the empirical self can be divided into physical, social and spiritual components, which all have multiple discrete parts. In particular, the social self could include as many selves as there are important others in the individual's life. However, James suggested that the person still experiences continuity in the stream of self-consciousness.

According to the original Eriksonian research stream (e.g. Erikson 1963), a person has a singular, unitary identity. His developmental psychology suggested that multiple childhood identifications were reworked in adolescence to produce a coherent identity in adulthood. What is interesting is that Erikson acknowledged the possibility of an individual possessing several self-representations, but these served as building blocks for a future identity, not as separate identities. The Eriksonian portrait of identity as a unified and integrated entity has a long history, but it has been strongly challenged and critiqued in a debate known as the 'modern versus postmodern identity' (Schachter 2005). The critique argues that identity is not psychologically innately inclined towards consistency, but people naturally find themselves acting in multiple contexts across time and place, and a person's identity might be different in each such context. Even within the same context, identities are constantly renegotiated and can change and evolve – just like the context itself. The majority of newer identity traditions, such as the social identity perspective, assume that individuals have multiple group identities that are dynamic and may shift in salience, depending on the context.

Whether these are separate identities, or components of a single identity, is often a question of terminology. What is agreed is that the identity of an individual

is multifaceted in the sense that individuals could describe themselves in several ways (e.g. one person might be a teacher, a musician, a father and a Finn). However, it is also a question of frame of reference: focusing on an individual who occupies several categories argues for an emphasis on the components of identity, but focusing on a particular type of identity, its meanings and wider discourse requires an independent view on an identity, regardless of the individuals who may endorse it (Vignoles et al. 2011, 6). Both perspectives can incorporate opposing ideas. McAdams (1993) suggests that the unifying aspects of self are captured in one life story, so there is room for multiple selves inside the story – just as any long story or novel has several chapters and several scenes within each chapter.

In this study, I presume that an individual has a multifaceted identity and that individuals can define themselves in numerous ways. The focus of this study is on one of these identities, or rather, on one of the components of an identity: grandparenthood. By focusing on the particular consumer identity of grandparents, I aim to understand the meanings of grandparenthood and the wider discourse around it, rather than to investigate the various different components of an individual's coherent identity.

2.1.3 Stable or changing

The third main contrast stigmatizing the universal identity discourse concerns the flexibility of identity, or, as Alvesson et al. (2008) put it, the coherent versus dynamic contrast. The original Eriksonian approach saw (ego) identity as a solid entity that did not change after it was developed in early adulthood. Currently, the main perspectives on identity treat it as an evolving process instead of a coherent entity that will be finite one day. Waterman (1984) suggests that the entire philosophy and history of the self are organized around the metaphors of discovery and creation. The metaphor of discovery has its roots in Aristotle's conceptions, which underscore a view of self as discovery, as a journey inwards, towards a constant, knowable, fundamental self that can be discovered. In contrast, Sartre (1957) introduced an early postmodernist perspective of identity as creation, continually revealed through the choices an individual makes. Rather than possessing an intrinsic core identity, individuals exist through action and have the capacity to have a multitude of possible identities (Cox & Lyddon 1997, 204).

Hall (2002, 223) conceptualizes identity as an unfinished production, which is always in process and constructed more in its presentation than outside it. He

states that contemporary individuals are constantly changing, constructing less coherent and more fragmented identities – even conflicting ones. Identity is thus constructed in social interaction by both telling and listening to stories. With its roots connected to the past, identity is being produced, re-produced, or presented in a certain situation, place and time (Gergen & Gergen 1983). Sociologists, in particular, emphasize that the self is not a solid, given entity, but a process, as it is continuously created and re-created in social situations. Their view of identity as being socially and linguistically constructed leads to another assumption: identity is also constantly changeable. As strongly as identity affects our experiences and emotions, it is reversely affected by them (Berger & Luckman 1966). Born in social interaction, these experiences and emotions affect our identity through the groups we are attached to and engaged with.

The close accompaniment of identity to the verb 'identify' supports the component of activity. According to the current perspectives on identity, identity is not a thing, but a process of identification: something that an individual does, instead of something that an individual has (Jenkins 2014, 5). Identity is established through classifying things (or persons) and through an individual associating with something, or someone, else (Jenkins 2014, 17). Identity is not constructed phase by phase towards a unified and solid identity, but is constantly shaped throughout the lifespan during social interaction. Individuals have pasts, presents and futures, which all effect identity. This locates identity in practice: it is something people do. However, identification as such does not determine what humans do. Knowing the map and our place in it does not provide us with instructions of where to go next. Our classification of self and others is multidimensional and therefore not likely to guide us on its own. Identification and behaviour seem to be connected, but in a more complex way, and not in a straightforward or predictable way (Jenkins 2014).

From the perspective of this study, it is natural to assume that identities change and can be changed. The movement of identity is essential. Thus, identity can be seen as socially constructed, evolving through linguistics and practices (Burr 1995). In the construction of identity, the main influencers are the stories we hear and the process through which we constitute self-related meanings and reconstruct these stories. In that sense, an individual's identities are never final, but can only be treated and understood as a process. In the process of identity construction, people are socialized into society while creating personal identity through the communities they are involved in. The social-constructionist direction makes it possible to achieve things like identity or meanings, which are impossible to study

from an ontological viewpoint. The focus of this study is not on identity itself, but on the ways it is constructed in narratives.

2.1.4   Identity as a narrative

> Self, then, is a narrative construction, and as such, operates under the same constraints as narrative construction in general. This should make us alert to the fact that the writing of an 'overall' self is never one and for all, that it is the product of a perspective, even of a period of life.
>
> Bruner & Kalmar (1998)

As part of the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences, qualitative researchers from various schools of thought have conceptualized identities as being narratively constructed (e.g. Bruner 1986; Polkinghorne 1988). According to Grotevant (1993, 123), the conception of identity as a narrative does not juxtapose Erikson's psychosocial view, but takes it beyond its traditional confines. In realizing their narrative understanding of the world, individuals also think of themselves in terms of stories. Moments in time are not unrelated, but there exist goal-directed, coherent sequences that link an individual's past, present and future into a present identity (Gergen & Gergen 1983). Identity is constructed in narratives, reflected in an individual's life narrative, capturing various roles including past, present and anticipated future selves, thus positioning the individual through a time dimension. Rather than possessing a stable inner 'core' identity, we actively construct and reconstruct a collection of identities in particular situations (e.g. Bruner 1991; Gergen & Gergen 1983; Polkinghorne 1988). According to Ricoeur (1992), we require a narrative identity for ourselves to humanize time and make it socially shared. Thus, we come to know ourselves by the narratives we construct to situate ourselves in time and place. Understanding identity as an active 'narrator agent organizer', as both the I and the me of the story, allows for the integration and coherence of self over a lifetime of temporally grounded events and external changes.

Narrative identity research focuses on understanding how individuals employ narratives to develop and sustain a sense of personal unity and purpose from diverse experiences across the lifespan (McAdams 1993; Singer 2004). According to a more constructivist approach, identities are considered to be an internalized

and evolving life story (McAdams 1993), which develops over time through self-reflection, as individuals seek to draw meaningful connections across their past, present and anticipated future. Positioned in social constructionism, this study takes a less individualistic perspective: living in a story-shaped world, our lives are storied and our identities are narratively constructed. As self-understanding beings, our identities are structured through the textual resources of narratives (Atkins 2004, 341–350). Furthermore, personal stories are not seen as a tool for individuals to tell something about their lives, but to fashion their identities (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992, 1). Somers (1994) makes a distinction between three forms of identity narratives. *Ontological narratives* are the stories of a particular body: those we use to define who we are, as a precondition for knowing what to do (Somers 1994, 618). In other words, ontological narratives make identity something that a person becomes, embedding identities in time and spatial relationships. Ontological narratives are not natural, but are drawn from a limited repertoire of the available social and interpersonal narrative resources. They are derived from the second narrative dimension, *public narratives*, which are webs of relationality attached to cultural and institutional formations. Public narratives also serve as a link to the third narrative dimension: *metanarratives*. These are the master narratives or epic dramas of our times in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history (Somers 1994, 619). According to the identity view adopted in this study, constructing 'who I am' is an ongoing activity, a context-specific practical project of everyday life (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). In narratives, individuals negotiate how they want to be known. According to Goffman (1959), we do not talk to give information, but to give shows and present dramas to an audience, which does not suggest that our identities are inauthentic, but situated and accomplished with an audience in mind. Hence, the response of the audience is implicated in the art of narrative (Bauman 1986).

Currently, there seems to be a broad consensus between identity scholars from different traditions, which believes in the importance of narratives in, and for the construction of, identity. It is now agreed that identities are shaped by the larger socio-cultural matrix of our being-in-the-world (Smith & Sparkes 2008, 6), that they are multiple and multidimensional, and that they are connected to social, historical, political and cultural contexts (Polkinghorne 1988). Narrative identity is based on the idea that we exist through stories. Constructing identity is simultaneously a cultural and social process, where an individual actively produces an identity through narrating and reinterpreting cultural narratives (Gubrium & Holstein 2009). Yet, a closer inspection reveals that the ideas behind narrative

identities remain more fragmented. That is, the concept of narrative identity can mean different things to different scholars (Smith & Sparkes 2008, 6).

Consequently, there are diverse ideas about the exact *gestalt*, language and analytics of narrative identities. For instance, the dominance of individuality versus sociality varies even inside the narrative school of identity. Smith & Sparkes (2008) organized these contrasts along a continuum, with perspectives adopting a 'thick individual/thin social relational' view to identity at one end, and those with a 'thin individual/thick social relational' view at the other. Considering the objectives of this study, it is not essential to focus on the gestalt of narrative identity in that level of detail, but it is possible to combine the most relevant insight from several scholars sharing the narrative view on identity. However, in relation to the individual–social character of a narrative identity, both extremes are abandoned. From this midfield perspective, narrative identities are not merely individual expressions, but situated and social: there is no objective world independent of our knowledge, so accessing a 'real world', 'real selves' and 'real experiences' is impossible. Neither are identities purely social and relational, embedded within society and thus lacking all individual sources of storied selves. According to intersubjective and storied-resource perspectives (Smith & Sparkes 2008), narratives are not a route into our intrinsic, authentic selves, but the culture itself speaks through the stories we tell as carriers of culture (Gergen 2001), or as being culturally immersed (Riessman 1993). As Bakhtin (1973; 1986) puts it, people exist through their relations with others, and to become a self, a person must speak using words that have been used by others. Our narrative identities are formed in a complex interaction between events, imagination, significant others, routines and habits (Ezzy 1998, 251; Smith & Sparkes 2008). Bruner (1991; 2002), suggested that it is culture, not biology, which determines how we interpret and understand others and ourselves. Thus, the nature and shape of the self are as much matters of cultural as individual concern. Narrative is the currency of culture, and the common fund of cultural narratives enables people to think and know how to act in society and in relationships (Bruner 2002, 65–69).

Riessman (1993) views people as largely culturally immersed and culture itself as speaking through a person's story and body (Riessman 1993). Narratives are socio-cultural phenomena, personal though, but thoroughly shaped by socio-cultural conventions (Smith & Sparkes 2008, 17). Individuals are both positioned by others as having a certain sense of identity, and as actively positioning themselves. Instead of having a unified, coherent and integrated self-narrative, coherence and integration are considered as something people achieve through storytelling. The

research interest lies in the socially situated production of identities, in exploring the methods and resources of self-narration. It also lies in the broader cultural narrative resources, such as metanarratives, which people draw upon, use and resist in their construction of personal identities and life stories (Somers 1994). Singer (2004, 445−446) suggests that the stories people create about themselves are drawn from the existing repertoire of cultural narratives based in myth, fable, literature, popular entertainment and ethnic family history that define the meaning-making parameters of their lives. Their narrative identity situates them meaningfully in their culture, providing unity between past, present and anticipated future.

May (1991) describes the process of narrative identity construction as the creation of a personal myth. Using metaphor or myth, an individual constructs a personal story that holds universal elements. These elements connect us to the world where we live. Hence, narrative is a social practice in which people draw from a cultural repertoire of available stories and assemble them into personal stories. Stories become a locus for identity construction: in storytelling, people construct certain identities in specific social contexts, drawing upon larger narrative resources and also upon previously told stories. Narrative lives are played out within the larger framework of an overarching 'cultural tale' (Cox & Lyddon 1997, 212). People have the capability to develop personal, unique stories of a particular life, but they cannot be extricated from the social (Smith & Sparkes 2008, 20). They are free to edit the stories, define the style and type of the stories, and – to some extent – choose their audience within the limits of relationally framed contexts and culturally available narrative resources. According to McAdams (2006, 97), people tell and live out stories that they imagine as their own, but if they were thinking more expansively, they would see that the meanings of their life stories are cultural meanings: told and understood within culture, critiqued and amended according to cultural standards, and lived in a socio-cultural environment.

2.1.5   Identity perspective in this study

Identity research always involves understanding the signal system behind identities, which emphasizes that all knowledge and reality are constructed in linguistic interaction, consisting of co-negotiated, socially shared meanings. As identity is socially constructed in the meaning-making processes in relation to other people and culture, there cannot be any fixed, internally − or externally − given meanings, but only those constructed in a constant dialogue between ideas and the world

(Bruner 1987, 158). In other words, we are not constructs of language, but language constructs us. Words do not mean anything without their intertextual meaning, which is the relationships between worlds. Thus, identities are neither created internally in the informant's mind, nor externally by society, but dialogically in everyday conversations and life.
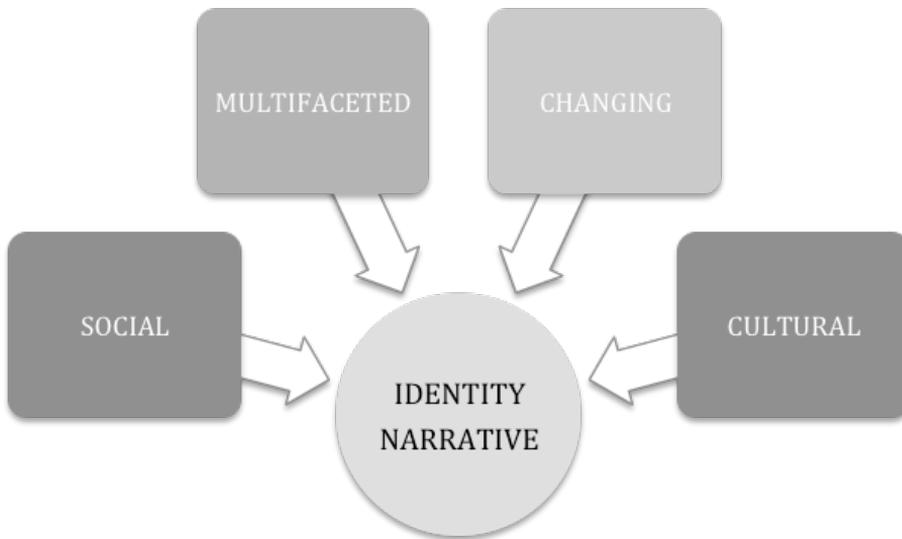
Figure 5. Identity perspective in this study

Figure 5 summarizes the identity discussion with the identity view adopted in this study. Anchored in social constructionism, this study is able to follow the assumption that identities are no personal properties that people have and search for, but they are socially and culturally constructed, flexible and changing. I rely upon the ideas of narrative identity, which considers identity as being both the product of – and realized in – narrative accounts of individual's past, present and future. With a particular focus on consumers' grandparental identity, I assume that identities are social, multifaceted and changing narratives of the self, shaped by socio-cultural conventions and integrated only through storytelling.

2.2   Consuming identities

The multifaceted relationship between identity and consumption has inspired the field of consumer research for close to a century. Ever since the fundamental

debuts of Kyrk (1923), Levy (1959), Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Belk (1988), a view has emerged within consumer research, which suggests that people are empowered to make up their identity through consumption (Shankar et al. 2001, 75). In the early 1920s, home-economics scholars, such as Hazel Kyrk, were among the first to focus on consumers and on the formation of their needs, wants and desires (Ladik et al. 2015, 190). Kyrk's (1923) interest was in the process of consumption: in the ways people consume in their everyday lives, and in the 'why' of consumption. She concluded that consumption becomes a process of displaying pecuniary status and command over resources: a competitive process, with *'each family seeing which can spend, or seem to spend, more money'* (1923, 53). In symbolic consumption, an important pioneer was Sidney Levy (1959), who paid attention to the personal and social meanings of consumer goods in addition to their functions. He insisted that all objects have a symbolic character, and that the product will be used and enjoyed if this symbol joins with, meshes with, adds to, or reinforces the consumer's self-perception.

> In the broadest sense, each person aims to enhance his sense of self.
>
> (Levy 1959, 119)

Synthesizing the ideas of Kyrk and Levy with literature from multiple other disciplines, including historical precursors, such as William James and Thorstein Veblen, Belk illuminated his central premise about the constitution of self through products and relationships in the ground-breaking article 'Possessions and the extended self' (1988), which changed the landscape and lexicon of consumer research (Schau 1998). Even today, after almost 30 years, it remains one of the most influential papers ever published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* (Ladik et al. 2015).

2.2.1   Extended self

'That we are what we have...is perhaps the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behavior'. Belk's statement (1988, 139) was published in association with probably the most powerful concept of consumer identity: *the extended self*. Drawing on the early notions of James (1890) about our multifaceted and material self, which was presented in Section 2.1, Belk posited that we are the sum of our possessions and, whether intentionally or unintentionally, consciously or unconsciously, we regard

our possessions as parts of ourselves. More fundamentally, Belk examined the relationship between possessions and self not only to gain more understanding of consumer behaviour, but also to learn how consumer behaviour contributed to our broader existence as human beings (Belk 1988, 139). With the support of a large body of literature and numerous studies, Belk suggested that consumers use key possessions to extend, expand and strengthen their sense of self. In constituting our sense of self, we draw from the numerous resources available in the marketplace.

Richins (1994, 523) shares this view by suggesting that possessions are part of our social communication system, and we sometimes use them to communicate aspects of the self. Personal possessions not only express our individual sense of identity, but also our sense of belonging to a group and group identity. Dittmar (1992, 11) points out that the notion of expressing our identity through material possessions, and making inferences about the identity of others on the basis of their possessions, leads to a conclusion that there must be socially shared beliefs about material objects as symbolic manifestations of identity. According to Wattanasuwan (2005, 182), possessions embody a repertoire of symbolic meanings through which we bridge the self to others in society. In addition to culturally shared symbolism, this requires that we master the skills needed to present the self appropriately in various social contexts.

Despite applying a flexible view to identity as a subjective assessment, which changes between people and over time, Belk saw consumers as possessing a core self that was expanded to include items that then became part of the extended self. He summarized that our body, internal processes, ideas and experiences are likely to be part of the core self, while persons, places and things to which we feel attached are parts of our extended self (1988, 141). However, to avoid difficulties in separating mind and body, he treated all categories as potential parts of the extended self. Belk's original script (1988) was bombarded with critiques, starting with Cohen (1989), whose main remarks concerned the use of such a powerful concept without setting its borderlines and criteria along a conceptual continuum: when exactly does the self become 'extended'? Cohen also called for guidance to determine whether a possession is, or is not, part of the extended self. As evidence of its power, the concept of the extended self is still being challenged currently, although it has been more specifically defined since its first publication. For Belk himself, the paper was only the starting point for a stream of studies related to the extended self (1988; 1990; 2013). Over the span of almost 30 years, together with other scholars, the conceptualization has been clarified, advanced, further

developed and even updated to include digitally mediated ways to construct and express the self (Belk 2013).

In contrast to Belk's (1988) suggestion that an individual has one extended self, Kleine et al. (1993, 212–213) imply that people have many extended selves, one corresponding to each of the identities included in their global self, referring to the guiding premise of social identity theory: our overall sense of self derives from the particular identities that we enact and ascribe to ourselves. According to the social view, identity is not a unitary and stable construct, but any individual has multiple identities that are dynamic and have to be produced and re-produced. Kleine et al. (1993, 2000) suggest that each identity exists at an actual level (what we really do) and at an ideal level (how we would like to be). Kleine et al. (1993) introduced three schemas (semantic representations of self-defining meanings) for each social identity: a role schema (shared representations, norms, cultural stereotypes about enacting a particular role), an identity schema (individuals' personalized and realistic understanding of themselves with respect to a particular role), and an identity-ideal schema (how the person would like to become as one who enacts that role). These schemas are presented in Figure 6. In enacting a particular identity, our primary guide is its corresponding social role. It is commonly accepted that any actual behaviour too distant from these role norms would cause anxiety in the individual. However, an important difference is seen between shared social role norms (e.g. a typical husband) and what is ideal for an individual (e.g. my sense of an ideal husband). In addition, there are various reasons – value contradictions, disabilities and desire to be different from the crowd – for an individual to avoid enacting an identity as supposed.

Role schema	Identity schema	Identity-ideal schema
• Shared representations • Norms • Stereotypes	• Personalized understanding of self with respect to the role	• How I would like to become as one who enacts the role
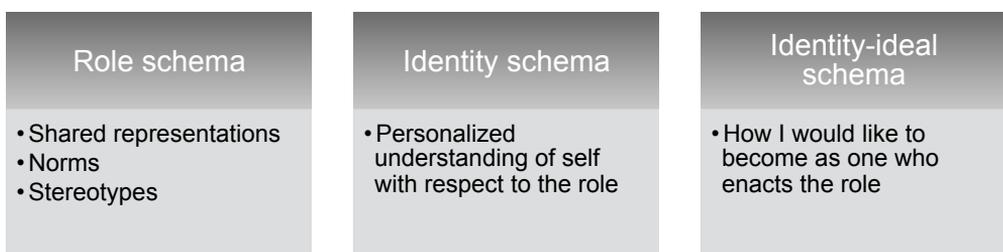
Figure 6. Three schemas for a social identity (Kleine et al. 1993)

Based on the ideas of Solomon (1983) and Belk (1988), Holt (1995, 6) argued that the integrating role of consumption works in two directions: consumption is used

to extend an individual's identity and, at the same time, consumers reorientate their self-concepts to better fit an institutionally defined identity. As identity involves both difference and similarity, consumers need to balance maintaining their sense of a true self while simultaneously retaining a feeling of belonging to the surrounding society.

Ahuvia (2005) supports the idea of Belk's extended self (1988), but challenges the notion of a core self. Essentially, as we are moving towards postmodern conceptions of identity construction, any idea of an authentic self that only needs to be 'discovered' sounds questionable. When understanding identity as a process, or as a constantly evolving narrative, the metaphor of core self becomes confusing. Ahuvia agrees with Belk regarding the varying degrees of selfness among different products, activities and ideas, but rejects the original idea of a core-self metaphor as confusing and misleading due to its indication that the core self is prior to, and ontologically distinct from, the extended self (2005, 182).

Reed (2002, et al. 2012) argued that there is a clear connection between an individual's sense of self and their possessions, although the connection is not direct, but occurs indirectly, through the several social identities people possess. There is a greater correspondence between conduct and its relevant identity than with the global self. Identity-related possessions are highly personal and idiosyncratic, and in clear contrast with the stereotypical set of possessions generally linked to the corresponding role. (For instance, an individual may have different possessions related to sailing than those associated with the typical sailor.)

Belk's pioneering article (1988) has inspired numerous studies concerning possessions, but also their disposition and loss (e.g. Price et al. 2000; Young 1991). The origins of the debate precede Belk, in Fromm's (1976, 76) metaphor of enslaving possessions. For Fromm, acquiring a sense of 'being' through 'having' contains a threat of individuals losing themselves, since what is possessed can also be lost. Fromm criticized industrialized societies for neglecting 'being' in favour of 'having', thus inhibiting self-actualization. He suggested that we should realize the self by sharing, giving and sacrificing, instead of merely having.

2.2.2   Consumer identity work

Following Belk's fundamental debut, consumption has become widely recognized as a central tool in the construction of the self, or its multiple identities. Arnould and Thompson (2005) suggest that our identity is a symbolic project, something

we must actively construct out of the available symbolic materials. Individuals express who they are, who they are not, or who they want to be through consumption choices and behaviour. This turns the idea of the marketplace into a pre-eminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people can construct narratives of identity (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 871). Consumer culture has become a locus for producing competing identity positions, with consumption as the means to incorporate, reproduce and realize their symbolic potential into ongoing identity projects (Arnould & Thompson 2005, Belk 1988). Consumption both enables and constrains the construction of identities. The idea dates to Mead (1934), who suggested that activities, such as consumption, are behaviours constituted into action, which have meaning in the creation, confirmation, maintenance, or transformation of situated identities. We are free to create any variety of possible selves, but our socio-cultural and historical context directs this 'freedom' with its symbolic resources: values, models, images and symbols (Markus & Nurius 1986). McCracken (1986) argued that consumption is part of individuals' constitution of cultural identities. Dittmar (1992) completed his thoughts by suggesting that self, identity and consumption are socially constructed and thus linked, and that both identity and consumption are located at the individual–society interface, representing a crucial link between the individual and society. A special interest for consumer-culture theorists exists in the relationship between consumer identity projects and the structural influence of the marketplace producing certain kinds of consumer positions for consumers to choose. The positioning draws heavily from social conventions in producing a distorted mirror (Pollay 1986), which selectively features appealing characteristics to motivate consumption.

This shift of the identity perspective into consumption has generated numerous studies relating to the use of products or brands in expressing the desired identity (Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2000, 2003; Kleine et al. 1993) during life-stage or life-status transitions (Hogg et al. 2004; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard 2006; Schau et al. 2009; Schouten 1991), regarding the contribution of new possessions in the development of new identities (Belk 1998; Thomsen & Sorensen 2006), and in association with other consumer-culture categories, such as gender (Holt & Thompson 2004), ethnicity and nationality (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard 2005, Penaloza 2007). According to these studies, people produce identities in consumption discourse and practice, through navigating and internalizing the categorical distinctions and relations that support and render intelligible the diverse, multifaceted, socio-market fields that we recognize as specific cultures of

masculinity, nationality, global mediascape, or brandscape (Barnhart & Penaloza 2012). Marketers are well aware of consumption related to the actual transitions between life-cycle stages. For instance, Thomsen and Sorensen (2006) investigated motherhood identity and noticed that acquisitions support identity construction in transitions because of their signal value and potential to provide the consumer with a certain experience of self. Objects can thus be a source of experiential value for the construction of identity by giving consumers a certain feeling about themselves as people (Thomsen & Sorensen 2006, 909).

An exemplary selection of recent consumer identity studies with different identity angles is presented in Table 1 to illustrate the variety of perspectives and contexts in consumer identity research.

Table 1. Selected studies on consumer identity work in the 2000's

	Identity perspective and assumptions	Research areas	Findings/identity work in practice
Schau & Gilly (2003)	• Individual identity vs. affiliative identity. • Consumers use signs and symbols to express both.	• Self-presentation as the intentional and tangible component of identity	Consumer strategies for producing a digital self
Holt & Thompson (2004)	• Several identities	• Masculine identity construction in mass culture discourse and everyday consumption	Men draw creatively upon the heroic masculinity discourse in their masculine consumption practices.
Thomsen & Sorensen (2006)	• Several identities • Consumption supports identity construction because of its signal or experiential value.	• Life status transitions • New mothers • Pram consumption	Liminal consumers rely on consumption symbolism to approach a desired motherhood identity. Post-liminal consumers dispose of products to fully escape the feeling of liminality.
Schau et al. (2009)	• Identity is shaped by consumption practices	• Identity work in retirement	Consumer identity renaissance can occur during any major life transition. Consumption enactments fill gaps between the old diminished identity and a new emerging identity. Classification of consumption inspirations
Shankar, Elliott, Fitchett (2009)	• Identity as a process, a project, and a practice • Dynamic identities that have to be assembled, reassembled, produced, and reproduced • The relationship between identity and consumption is a process where identities are selected, validated, and reinforced.	• How identities develop across time, reflected and represented in past consumption practices.	Narratives of socialization are important constraints on identity projects realized through consumption Tangible objects serve as documents of lives and facilitate the construction of life histories
Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler (2010)	• Moralistic identity	• Consumer moralism • Brand-mediated moral conflicts	Consumption as moral protagonism. Consumers use and interpret myths to transform their ideological beliefs into identity narratives, and to link their consumption practices and personal identities to a collectively shared moral project.
Arsel & Thompson (2011)	• Consumers are active identity constructors who seek to manage identity threats and gain authenticity	• Marketplace myths	Marketplace myths can be experienced as a trivialization of own aesthetic interests, rather than as a source of identity value. Consumers use demythologizing consumption practices to protect their identity investments.
Moisio, Arnould & Gentry (2013)	• Several identities & identity ideals	• Productive consumption • Domestic masculinity • Social class	Consumption contributes to masculinity construction across the domains of home, work, and leisure.

With regard to sharpening the main focus of the current research, it is useful to divide consumer identity studies into three main – although interconnected – categories: studies of *marketplace symbolism, identity expression and identity construction* (Figure 7). Research on marketplace symbolism concentrates on myths in the marketplace and brands as their mediators (e.g. Arsel & Thompson 2011; Moisio et al. 2013). The identity-expression research stream believes that self-presentation is a crucial component of identity and focuses on identity-based consumption, that is, on the ways how particular identity shapes consumption (e.g. Shankar et al. 2009), while the studies of identity construction look at the interplay of identities and consumption from another perspective, attempting to understand how consumption can aid or restrict consumers in their identity construction (Ahuvia 2005; Thomsen & Sorensen 2006). According to this conceptualization, consumption is a creative and productive process, where individuals actively use products to negotiate, reformulate and reject prescribed meanings through symbolic creativity (Fiske 1989).

Rooted in the ground-breaking work of Giddens (1991), a view has emerged and gained support that consumers' sense of identity is structured in terms of a narrative (Ahuvia 2005; Autio 2004; Baumgartner 2002; Escalas & Bettman 2000; Fournier 1998; Stern 1995; Thompson 1997; Thompson & Haytko 1997; Woodside et al. 2008). Thompson (1995) refers to the self as a symbolic project, which the individual constructs out of the available symbolic materials, weaving them into a coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) suggest that consumption can be used as a symbolic resource to construct a narrative identity. In this body of literature, consumer identity is considered to reside in a personal narrative, in the story that consumers construct and play out in their minds about who they are, who they once were and who they are striving to become.
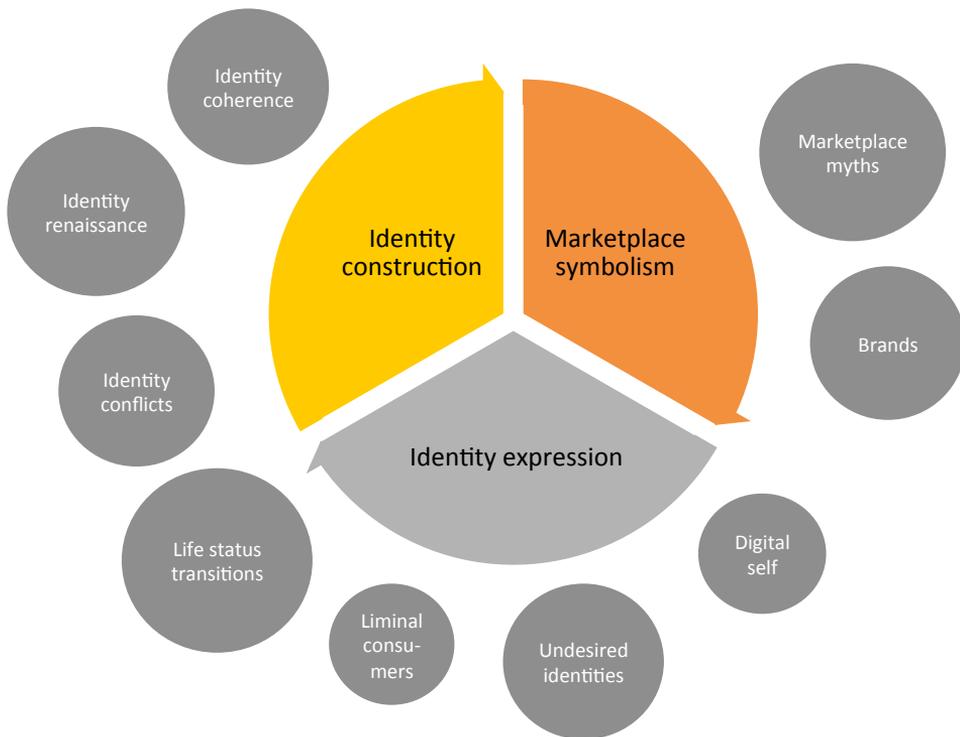
Figure 7. Versatile approaches to identity work in consumer studies

The main interest of the current study is in identity construction, although an essential link to the perspectives of identity expression and marketplace symbolism remains. Reflecting on the previous studies, I join the strategic stream of consumer identity discussion and aim to capture the meanings of consumption that grandparents apply to construct a harmonic identity narrative that communicates both difference from, and similarity with, others. In Table 2, I present seven rather recent key articles that have inspired me the most – in addition to Belk's phenomenal paper (1988) – and among which I position my study. The selection is, of necessity, not an exhaustive list of all the strategic studies on consumer identity, and I have rejected some that were highly contextual, or provided either a minimal, or non-existent, theoretical contribution to this particular field.

Table 2. Strategic studies on consumer identity construction in the 2000's

	Identity perspective and assumptions	Research areas	Methodology	Results/identity work in practice
Arnould & Price (2000)	• Interplay of individual and collective sense of identity	• Consumers' responses to postmodernity • Quest for self-authentication and community	Article analysis	Authenticating acts and authoritative performances are primary drivers for consumer behavior
Hogg, Curasi & Maclaran (2004)	• Individuals have several salient role identities	• Redefinition of the self in a major role transition • Identity resources	Mixed method: interviews & netnography	At the stage of an 'empty nest', mothers enact their role identity and create family life through consumption as a replacement for previous production-led 'mothering'
Ahuvia (2005)	• Consumers actively choose between possible (social) identities • Identity is structured in terms of a narrative.	• Consumers' loved objects and their role in constructing a coherent identity narrative	Case study: interviews	Consumers apply demarcating, compromising and synthesizing solutions in identity conflicts
Smith Maguire & Stanway (2008)	• Reflexive, ongoing project shaped by appearance and performance	• Young people's material practices and discursive strategies of self-production	Thematic analysis of interviews	Young people constantly negotiate individuality and belonging and with pursuits of authenticity and acceptance. Consumer culture poses risks that young consumers tackle using particular discursive strategies.
Banister, Hogg & Dixon (2012)	• Social identity	• Undesired identities • Everyday acts of resistance • Communicative properties of goods	2-phased interviews with young mothers	Consumption plays an important role in the contestation of undesired identities. Teenage mothers turn to the market in order to prepare for motherhood, to demonstrate that they are good mothers, and to differentiate themselves from stereotyped out-groups, and to resist negative associations with being a young mother.
Reed et al. (2012)	• Multi-faceted self identity, multiple selves, limitless array of possible identities	• Identity definition, • Identity principles • Future research	Theoretical paper	In identity conflicts, people seek ways to combine or amalgamate identities to reduce the conflict, or to reconstruct the idea of the identity. Identity conflict may also lead to a lower level of identification.
McAlexander et al. (2014)	• Changing and actively constructed	• Identity reconstruction after marketization of religion and its lost of legitimacy	Dialogic community, depth interviews	Marketization of the church may lead to a dramatic identity crisis. People construct new understandings through a reflective transgression of former consumption codes, demythologizing old practices, and building social and cultural capital in new fields.

Arnould and Price's (2000) article analysis is an important conceptual paper about the individual–collective dualism in consumer behaviour. It was one of the first studies to focus on consumers' double quest for both self-authentication and community. As a theoretical paper, its value is in providing useful concepts and thinking models for this and other studies. Hogg et al. (2004) focused on role transitions as inputs for identity renegotiation. While they studied the new forms of family life at the stage of an empty nest, this study continues from there and sees what happens afterwards, at the stage of grandparenthood. Ahuvia (2005) studied the role of consumers' loved objects in constructing an identity narrative and the various solutions consumers apply in identity conflicts. Despite the various points of contact with this study, Ahuvia's case study has a more narrow perspective, limited to loved objects and conflicts. Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008) studied the discursive strategies of self-production among young people in consumer culture. Also their analysis pointed out the duality of individuality and

belonging, however, the present study will go beyond material practices. Banister et al. (2012) interviewed young mothers in order to learn about the everyday acts of resistance which people use in the contestation of undesired identities. They made important notions about the communicative properties of products and about the role of the marketplace in preparing for and demonstrating motherhood. Focusing on the resistance of negative associations, however, the article has a less positive standpoint than the present study. The study of Reed et al. (2012) is a clearly theoretical paper about the multi-faceted identity and the limitless array of possible identities. Their findings about identification and the strategies to tackle identity conflicts were highly valuable for this, more empirical, study. McAlexander et al. (2014) studied identity reconstruction in occasion of a dramatic identity crisis. While the present study does not go that deeply into identity crises, it was helpful to learn about the ways how people construct new understandings, for instance, through demythologizing old practices and building social and cultural capital in new fields.

Next, I will introduce two important themes targeted in the recent studies. Finally, I will illustrate the exact position of the present study within the multifaceted field of consumer identity construction.

2.2.3 Search for a coherent identity narrative

According to the underlying premise of any identity construction, it involves being simultaneously different and the same: uniqueness and belongingness. An important question is whether each consumer, in various roles, seeks uncompromising coherence of self, or flexibly possesses various, and even contradictory identities. According to McAdams (1993), people have an inherent drive for narrative order and a coherent, unified and positive life story. The stories we tell and hear reflect an inner sense of narrative identity, and their primary function is to integrate a life and provide it with meaning, purpose and unity (McAdams 2006, 122−129). In their quest for an identity that satisfies the dual demands of uniqueness and connectedness, and gives meaning and purpose to their lives, people weave integrative life stories that show who they are, how they have become who they are, and where they might possibly end up in future.

Consumer researchers have paid increasing attention to the difficulties consumers face in their attempts to develop and maintain a coherent sense of self (Ahuvia 2005, 172). Consumer-culture theorists have recognized that consumers'

identity projects may involve ambivalence, bricolage, and coping behaviour to restore identity, or reconcile contradictions (Arnould & Thompson 2005). For individuals, amid endless choices about who to be, how to live and how to represent the self to themselves and to others, consumption has become the centre of attention (Giddens 1991). Studies, such as those carried out by Thompson and Hirschman (1995) on the socialized body, have explored how people generally strive to resolve identity conflicts and employ consumption to make up a coherent identity in a fragmented society. In their studies on young consumers, Thompson and Haytko (1997) and Murray (2002) found that young adults experience tension in their sense of identity as they attempt to be both unique and at the same time full members of a group. Fashion consumption turned out to be actively used to help resolve the tension experienced. Thus, consumer identity is not necessarily a consistent narrative monologue, but offers numerous, even contradictory, interpretive standpoints that consumers actively combine and adapt to create and define the self (Thompson & Haytko 1997). Through consumption, consumers are constantly engaging in an interpretive dialogue, which influences actions and identities (Murray 2002). The self is constructed through continuously monitoring and adjusting the narrative presented through consumer behaviour and consumption practices (Schembri et al. 2010, 625).

A more radical perspective into consumers' quest for coherent identity narratives is offered by Cushman's (1990) theory of the empty self, referring to identity as a black hole into which the consumer feeds objects, despite never being able to fill it. According to this view, consumers' constant desire for a unified identity narrative never meets the required social and cultural support in the prevalent absence of community, tradition and shared meaning. Consequently, people are provoked to engage in endless lifestyle consumption in their quest for identity fulfilment. To free ourselves from the vicious circle of an illusive sense of being is to realize that 'being' is only an illusion (Wattanasuwan 2005, 183).

Ahuvia (2005) takes a more optimistic view of the empty-self phenomenon and argues that although consumers want to create a coherent identity – albeit with some allowed complexity – and they face difficulties in the stream of a variety of subcultures, competing norms and symbolic systems, there are forms of consumption that help consumers create a meaningful life. Consumers are allowed and able to personalize the meanings of things by bringing them into a web of meaning both internally, through integration with the life narrative, and externally, through storytelling and sharing with a community (Ahuvia 2005, 182). In his study of consumers and their loved objects, Ahuvia (2005) developed a notion about the

conflicts his interviewees experienced between possible identities. He identified three strategies that consumers applied to reconcile these identity conflicts: *demarcating, compromising* and *synthesizing*. A demarcating solution to a conflict means choosing one of the competing identities and rejecting the others. In the compromising strategy, the consumer tries to create an identity part-way between the identities. Most everyday shopping can be seen as a series of compromise solutions as consumers balance appropriate choices for different socially defined roles (professional, parental, gender) with individual preferences. A prerequisite for compromising is that all alternatives possess desirable aspects. The same applies to synthesizing solutions, which may occur when a consumption activity, or an object, successfully combines the conflicting aspects of identity in such a way that both aspects are achieved to a satisfactory extent. The pure type of synthesis – according to Ahuvia – is a complete *have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too solution*.

Table 3. Demarcating, compromising, and synthesizing solutions for identity conflicts (ref. Ahuvia 2005)

Solution	Main principle	Characterization	Typical for consumption
Demarcating	Endorses identity A, rejects identity B	One alternative is strongly preferred over another	Rejected products/activities (identities) say the most about the consumers' desired self
Compromising	Creates an identity partway between identity A and identity B	All alternatives possess desirable aspects Consumer gives up some attractive features of each identity	Everyday shopping
Synthesizing	Constitutes a new possible identity through combining most or all of the advantages of identity A and identity B	A consumption activity successfully combines the conflicting identities	Emotionally appealing (loved) objects and activities

Reed et al. (2012) suggest that any given identity is not possessed in isolation but as one of many that must be integrated into an individual's overall self-conception. In

the interplay of multiple identities, people seek to maintain harmony. Harmony is best achieved when all identities represent corresponding behavioural norms, but when identity norms collide, individuals seek to resolve the ensuing conflict through various self-regulatory processes. The authors introduce a principle of identity conflict, suggesting that individuals are motivated to reduce conflict across their various identities and can do so by managing the relative salience of their conflicting identities. While consumption can lead to identity conflict, it can also provide individuals with ways to resolve it. Furthermore, some postmodernist researchers, such as Firat and Venkatesh (1995), have objected to the view of consumers seeking to produce a unified identity. They suggest that the contemporary consumer is free (and happy) to possess multiple, fragmented senses of self.

2.2.4   Being the same and different

The key input of identity discourse is in the dual concept of being the *same* and *different*, in the ways in which individuals define themselves against the dimensions of sameness and difference in relation to their social environments. Identity is being simultaneously different and the same; it differentiates us from others around us and connects us with other individuals. Identity is a unique life story, but at the same time, the way we are varies in different social situations and according to whose company we are keeping. In their quest for authenticity and community, it is interesting to determine, what strategies consumers enact when trying to be similar and different at the same time.

   According to Douglas and Isherwood (1996), consumption is a modern arena for negotiating the tension between individuality and generality, and products can be used as both fences and bridges to display distinction and membership. Arnould and Price (2000) introduced authenticating acts and authoritative performances as consumer mechanisms that construct the narrative of self-identity and an individual's relation to the community. The authors suggest that personal narratives enable people to accommodate multiple selves and mitigate or render comprehensible events and performances that deviate from presupposed collective norms. *Authoritative performances* represent a primitive quest for unity between self and society. They are a vital bridge between the individual and society, constituting collective displays aimed at inventing or refashioning cultural traditions. All shared rituals, rules and traditions are collectively orientated cultural displays that seek to

establish group identity through creating a community experience. Effective authoritative performances offer integration between participants, as well as a collective sense of identity. According to Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008), particularly revealing are those moments when authoritative performances fail and participation turns to empty role-playing and a lack of confidence and connectedness.

Authenticating acts (Arnould & Price, 2000) are those self-referential behaviours that reveal or produce the individual's 'true self'. They emerge from the symbolically creative integration of life experiences within a narrative of self-development and include activities that induce flow, peak experience or peak performance − something that can be experienced as authenticating. They may also result from an accumulation of experiences with mundane consumption and more ordinary products, such as possessions, which over time, become intertwined with personal histories. Both authoritative performances and authenticating acts facilitate a sense of cohesion, integration, tradition and self in today's de-territorialized global society and hyperreality. This view is optimistic, and considers consumers actively and creatively carving out their identities and recomposing their social universe amid postmodern challenges.

The quests for distinction and similarity are shaped by assurances, opportunities and rewards, but also by risks, challenges and penalties. Anxiety results from the weakening of traditional sources of authority and identity (e.g. family, class, religion), which leaves the individual alone with an array of choices (Smith Maguire & Stanway 2008, 66). The marketplace is a setting for a paradox of locating uniqueness in and through objects available to the masses. In their study, Smith Maguire and Stanway (2008, 76) noted that young people constantly negotiated the tension between individuality and belonging, as well as the difficulty of pursuing authenticity and acceptance while simultaneously contending with the risks of conformity and exclusion. To cope with risk, they applied diverse discursive strategies to reduce the risk, or transfer it to others.

2.3   Conclusions from the literature review

When reviewing the main contributions of consumer identity research, it is possible to identify some major gaps that call for further research. In this chapter, I will focus on these specific research areas and explain how this study will contribute to them.

2.3.1 Theoretical gap: consumer identity construction in adulthood

First, despite the wide variety of angles in consumer identity studies, they have traditionally focused on younger age cohorts, with only a few notable exceptions (Barnhart & Penaloza 2013; Price et al. 2000; Schau et al. 2009). Young people have been considered a fruitful arena for research in the nexus of consumption, identity and individualization. However, identity-related consumption is not just typical for some life stages, and it is not only young adults who must negotiate the contradictory demands of self-production in a consumer society. Accepting the widespread view of our changing identities, we cannot overlook the relationship between identity and consumption throughout the life span. Independent of age, consumers' identity work may be emphasized at certain life stages or events, including major later-life transitions, such as widowhood, retirement, grandparenthood and physical changes. In their study of retirement, Schau et al. (2009) challenged the prevalent view of older consumers reviewing and integrating their already-developed identities. Controversially, they witnessed an increase in the breadth and depth of identity-related consumption and evidence of extensive identity work at the retirement life stage. Targeting the same theoretical gap, this study aims to obtain insight to complete this work, without limiting it to the pivotal life transition of retirement.

Barnhart and Penaloza (2013) illuminated ways in which old-age identity is negotiated in specific elderly consumption ensembles, where younger family members or friends assist older people in everyday consumption activities when they can no longer manage independently. Despite principally addressing the same research gap (identity work in later adulthood), the perspectives adopted by Barnhart and Penaloza into elderly consumers and identity construction are narrow and merely age-centric, and thus outwith this study's focus.

Controversially, despite being limited to possessions, the study by Price et al. (2000) about older consumers' disposition towards precious objects has provided an important input to the present study's interpretations.

Reed et al. (2012, 318) suggest that identification processes are affected by the passing of time in two ways. First, a particular identity may be directly or indirectly linked to a certain life stage, such as the grandparent identity. Second, ageing can affect the possibility or appropriateness of enacting an identity, or of engaging in activities linked to the identity. In our ageing society, people not only live longer than before, but they can also expect to continue enjoying a healthier, 'higher-quality' life until an age when few people in earlier generations would have still

been alive. It is likely that people approaching old age will perceive an inconsistency between the identities they are used to enacting, and can very well continue to enact, and those that society expects from people their age. The theoretical perspectives of ambivalence, bricolage and coping behaviour in consumers' identity projects are presumably particularly relevant to consumers in later adulthood as they try to restore, renew and rewrite their identities against the mainly negative ideologies of ageing. According to the principle of identity conflict, any inconsistency may lead elderly people to seek ways to combine or amalgamate identities to reduce the perceived conflict (Reed et al. 2012, 318). They may actively try to reconstruct the fundamental idea of ageing through strengthening its positive connotations and thus manipulate the image of what it means to age. A more negative scenario is that identity conflict in later life may simply result in a lower level of identification with identities linked to later life stages. Reed et al. (2012, 318) refer to evidence suggesting that some baby boomers recoil at being called 'grandma'. They also speculate about the late adoption of identities associated with late-life stages and suggest that the perception of an expansive (instead of finite) time horizon until later in life encourages people to endorse identities typical of elderly people at a later stage in their lives.

Consequently, in addition to learning more about identity-related consumption in later life, extending consumer identity research to all stages of the lifespan can provide new interpretations about the meanings of consumption and the overall interplay of our identities and consumption.

2.3.2 Contextual gap: beyond the empty nest

Second, when narrowing the focus of identity construction onto the research area of family consumption, the main interest has been on mothers (e.g. Banister et al. 2012; Jennings & O'Malley 2003; Moisio et al. 2004; Thomsen & Sorensen 2006) and also more gradually on fathers (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson 2013; Moisio et al. 2013), and regarding children, particularly on adolescents (Autio 2004; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard 2006; Miles et al. 1998). Furthermore, Epp and Price (2008) have provided conceptual input into the field of family-identity interplay in consumption practices.

Despite awareness of the increasingly important role of elderly consumers, grandparents have had no place in these studies until recently, which is partly due to the equation of family and household. The main interest in family consumption

studies has focused on households, thus excluding the role of grandparents. Grandparents are an integral part of family life, but they occupy an evolving family position. Only within the past 70–80 years has grandparenthood become a role that most people will live long enough to enjoy. In western society, grandparents have only recently attracted wider interest as the large cohort of baby boomers has entered the nucleus of grandparenthood, making it inevitable to seek substitutes for existing stereotypes. Baby boomers have transformed every life stage they have touched, and they are also likely to rewrite the story of grandparenthood. In addition, increasing interest in childhood has created a new interest in grandparents, who, in their own way, have the means to influence children's behaviour and choices (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002).

In their study on empty-nest households, Hogg et al. (2004) detected that, as the children of the family grow up and move away from home, consumption becomes a form of bridge to connect parents with their children's new lives. In empty nests, consumption-based activities become the main carrier of meaning for creating family life, and the meaning of different possessions increases in importance to retain a sense of family. The authors illustrate how, during role transition, the informants move away from an emphasis on expressing their love and enacting their parenting role through production (cooking, cleaning, other supporting activities) to a focus on consumption (purchasing for their children).

Grandparenting has been illustrated as a second chance for parenting (e.g. Kivett 1991) and as such, has developmental importance for middle-aged and older individuals (e.g. Kivnick 1982; Robertson 1977). Therefore, it is interesting to find out how consumers construct and communicate their grandparenthood. Does consumption still work as the main carrier of meaning, or will the emphasis move back to production-based family life? What is the bridge that connects grandparents and their grandchildren?

2.3.3   Methodological gap: narrative analysis of consumer identity

Parallel to the narrative change in social and management sciences, there has been a growing interest in the use of stories in marketing research. A narrative perspective has been increasingly seen in service-marketing literature (Stern et al. 1998) and gradually also in consumer studies, mainly in those concerning brands (e.g. Thompson 1997; Fournier 1998; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Woodside et al. 2008). Consumer researchers have adopted a narrative perspective to develop a

richer understanding of different aspects of consumption. Narratives have been used as an interpretive tool to aid understanding of how consumers structure their consumption experiences. According to various studies, consumers like telling stories, they relate to each other in terms of stories where products and brands often play various roles, they name products and brands when reporting their lived experiences (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994; Kozinets 2002), or they assign roles, actions and relationships to brands in their stories (Fournier 1998). Telling stories also enables the consumer to relive the experience of enacting archetypal myths via brands (Holt 2003).

Despite the increasing popularity of gathering stories in consumer research, narratives have mainly served as a methodological tool for data generation. Simply put, consumer narratives and identity narratives have been widely collected, but, so far, consumers' narrative identity has received little attention and effort. In other words, relying on the definition set out by Polkinghorne (1995), the analysis of consumer narratives has been successful, but the narrative analysis of consumers is still inadequate. Consumer researchers have focused on the content of narratives by comparing and contrasting central themes to understand how consumers use consumption for identity construction (Ahuvia 2005) and representation (Autio 2004), and on the structure of narratives to understand how the structure of consumer stories reveals values and beliefs (Stern 1995). Even so, a narrative analysis would enable researchers to discover richer ways of understanding consumers, while simultaneously allowing informants a means to express and structure their experience (Shankar et al. 2001, 436). The objective of a narrative analysis is to create a synthesis of consumer narratives to aid our understanding of consumption through more usable meanings and metaphors. In this study, parallel to structural and thematic analyses of grandparental-consumer narratives, the narrative analysis of grandparental consumption also plays a significant role. Thus, this study produces both an analysis and a synthesis of grandparents' narrative consumer identities.

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Research philosophy

To understand the study background and positioning, it is essential to introduce its main paradigmatic choices. First, ontology refers to the nature of reality as defined in the study. Second, epistemology defines the relationship between the researcher and reality (Carson et al., 2001). My study adopts the paradigm of interpretivism. Having its philosophical background in hermeneutics and phenomenology, interpretivism is concerned with subjective and shared meanings. Although interpretivism is not a single school of thought, but includes different perspectives with different views of reality, these perspectives share a common target: an aim to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of its participants and to explore the meanings through which the participants construct their reality (Hopkinson & Hogg 2006, 158). Interpretivism relies upon the ontology of social constructionism, believing that there is no single external and stable reality, but that reality is both multiple and relative (Hudson & Ozanne 1988), and socially constructed by interconnected patterns of communication (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Burr 2004). This anti-essentialist perspective of social constructionism starts out with an assumption that the only way to access reality is through social constructions, such as language and shared meanings (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 19).

From an epistemological perspective, the knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed, rather than objectively determined (Carson et al. 2001, 5). In the framework of social constructionism, language is a form of social interaction. Language creates definitions and defines activity, which have effects. Language is more performative than only a simple way of expressing the self or describing reality (Burr 1995; Gergen 2001). Interpretivism denotes a belief that the researcher and informants are interdependent and mutually interactive, thus acknowledging the perspectives of different actors, contextual understanding and

interpretation. The goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour instead of generalizing or predicting causes and effects. Emphasis is placed on understanding motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences, which are both time- and context-bound (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). Interpretivist research questions the suitability of transferring the philosophy, theory and methods of the natural sciences to understanding human action (Shankar et al. 2001, 437).

Aiming to understand, rather than make predictions, interpretivism favours non-quantitative research methods and also accepts the value of feelings. Multiple methods may be employed, but interviews and observations are increasingly popular. In addition, secondary data are widely used. Seeing the researcher as a co-creator of knowledge, interpretivism places importance on the role of pre-understanding (Carson et al. 2001).

Table 4. Main frames of interpretivism (Carson et al. 2001, 6 modified)

Ontology	No single external reality
	No direct access to real world
Epistemology	Understanding through perceived knowledge
	Research focus on the specific and concrete
	Aim at understanding specific contexts
Methodology	Focus on understanding and interpretation
	Researchers as participants and co-creators of what is studied
	Importance of pre-understanding
	Acceptance of feelings and personal experience
	Primarily non-quantitative research methods

3.2 Narrative research

3.2.1 Characteristics of narrative research

Narrative research is the study of stories (Polkinghorne 2007, 471). It is neither an independent school of thought, nor a paradigm, but a looser frame of reference referring to ontological and epistemological presumptions, forms of data and the method of analysis. As a dimension of constructionist scholarship, narrative research is a varied, ongoing and contested enterprise, rather than a singular or monolithic one (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 297). It aims to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of its participants and to explore the meanings through which the participants construct their reality (Hopkinson & Hogg 2006, 158). From an interpretivist perspective, narrative research focuses on stories as producers and intermediates of reality. Or, as Scott & Scott (2000) formulate, narrative research is about collecting stories as data and telling them as theory (Hopkinson & Hogg 2006, 156). From an epistemological perspective, narratives have emerged both as a way of telling about our lives and as a method or means of knowing (Bruner 1990; Sparkes & Smith 2008, 295). The narrative change in academic sciences is connected with changes in understanding knowledge (Heikkinen 2000, 49). Researchers have noticed that the process of knowing is largely based on narratives, that is, on listening to and telling stories, and that we interpret the world as a constantly evolving story (Heikkinen 2000, 49).

Narrative research challenges the positivistic view of reality that is constructed through observable facts and rejects the understanding of behaviour as shaped by an objective reality available for scientific observation. While positivism is associated with nomothetic knowledge, from which generalizations can be made, interpretivist paradigms refer to idiographic knowledge, seeking understanding of situated behaviour, which is always linked to its social and cultural contexts (Belk 1995). It aims to understand the world by experiencing meanings and sharing reality; thus, it abandons the concept of objective truth (Polkinghorne 1988). Narrative truth differs remarkably from historical truth; it is based on storied evidence that is gathered, not to determine whether events de facto happened, or are accurately described, but to form an understanding of the meanings experienced by people. Thus, a narrative research report can be seen as a product instead of a record (Heikkinen 2000, 49). Conversely, Bruner (1990) introduced an idea that all research is an act of storymaking and storytelling as researchers first

discover other researchers' work on previous stories, subsequently question it and then create their own stories.

The antecedents of contemporary narrative research are located in two academic movements: in the humanist approaches within western sociology and psychology, and in Russian structuralist (later French poststructuralist, postmodern, psychoanalytic and deconstructionist) approaches to narrative within the humanities (Bruner 1990; Squire et al. 2013, 3; Polkinghorne 1988). Despite the original theoretical differences, there are many convergences between the humanist and poststructuralist traditions within current narrative research. Most current researchers are affected by both conceptual histories, but the different theoretical origins are largely responsible for the current wide variability in the conceptualization of a narrative, in how to study it, and whether its significance lies in the material, method, or route to understanding psychological or social phenomena – or in all of them. For instance, there remains a difference in emphasis between constructivist narrative research and constructionist narrative research. Narrative constructivism is more psychological and studies narratives as inner organizers of events, whereas narrative constructionism is more interested in narratives as constructed in social interaction. Simply put, constructivists privilege narrative as a means of accessing the interiority of individuals' personal experiences. Although they do not deny the importance of social interaction, they see narratives as making explicit the meaning that already exists in personal experience (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 297).

Relying on social constructionism, a fundamental presumption of this study is that narratives are constructed in social interaction, in a cultural context. Therefore, the main focus rests on narratives as a vehicle through which our world, lives and identities are articulated within social relationships (Gergen 1999) and in the narrative truth they offer. In contrast to narrative constructivism, there is a shift from an individuated image of the person to a perspective that stresses narrative as a socio-cultural phenomenon, which suggests that narratives never simply mirror some independent reality or inner world, but help to construct the reality itself (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 299). Meaning is not considered a property within the individual that can be transmitted to others via narrative, but narratives generate meaning within the realm of human interaction (Gergen 1999). This does not imply that meanings or identities would remain locked in an inaccessible personal experience, but that we should regard them as constituted through storytelling and shared cultural resources, such as narratives (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 299).

However, although there are tensions and contrasts between narrative constructivism and narrative constructionism, the differences are not absolute. Points of contacts exist, and co-existence is possible, for instance in the approaches to theorizing, empirical material and practical engagement with the world. Concerning identity, the key concept in this study, both constructivism and constructionism share the understanding that identities are constituted via narrative. They both recognize that stories are shaped by culture and, despite this, that people are not slaves to culture, but have at least some agency and freedom to construct the story they tell, albeit only by drawing upon a set of available narrative resources (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 301). Consequently, despite dividing the social-constructionist view and interest into narratives, I see no point in restricting my understanding to the theorizations of purely constructionist narrative researchers (e.g. Gergen, Phoenix, Riessman, Somers, Sparkes), but I simultaneously appreciate and elaborate on the readings of narrative constructivists (e.g. Bruner, Hänninen, McAdams, Polkinghorne).

Accordingly, it is more important to determine the difference between narrative research and other types of qualitative research. First, unlike many qualitative frameworks, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points (Herman 2009). There are no self-evident categories on which to focus as there are with content-based thematic approaches, or with analyses of specific language elements. Neither are there any overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation, or what epistemological or ontological significance to attach to narratives. Stories can take various forms and can be linked with different ontological and epistemological assumptions. Hence, narrative research can be considered as being an umbrella, which covers a multitude of possibilities for carrying out research.

Second, the goal in a narrative study is not producing objective or generalizable knowledge, but creating local, related and (inter)subjective understanding (Heikkinen 2000, 51; Riessman 1993). A narrative perspective suggests that realities are multiple and constructed: the social world does not exist independently of the people interacting in it. Objects, actions or behaviours in social worlds only become real once they have been interpreted by the individual and have acquired meaning through language (Shankar et al. 2001, 438). As Gergen (1991, 242) points out, our interpretations are never truly idiosyncratic, but are shared with others as we are all socialized into the world through a shared language. We are born into the world as an important character in the life story of our parents, who write our individual narratives for us, and more broadly, the social and cultural narratives we

are socialized into also influence our individual narrative (Shankar et al. 2001, 439). Although narratives can be felt and expressed as if they were highly personal, they are culturally situated and rely on culturally shared conventions about language, and the telling and hearing of stories (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 300). To summarize, reality from a narrative perspective is individually constructed through language, but modified by the social and cultural world within which the individual is embedded.

Furthermore, narrative research contains the idea of 'double interpretation'. Riessman (1993, 4–5) makes an informative distinction between narrative research and ethnography in terms of interpretation: while ethnography focuses on events, narrative research focuses on the stories people tell about events. Another comparison is made to any other textual analyses applied in social sciences, such as semiotics, hermeneutics, discourse and conversation analysis – all of which share the same idea of social constructivism as narrative research. While the other streams have interpretation as their consummate goal, narrative research is interested in how people themselves interpret the phenomena in focus; it is then the role of the researcher to interpret these interpretations.

Having clear advantages in providing rich information and revealing meanings not easily discerned on the surface, narrative research also has disadvantages. Most critics argue that narrative research can pretend to offer an authentic voice and idealize individual agency (Riessman 1993, 6), or produce confirmation for its own purposes through over-selective data collection, ignoring imperfect narratives and too much simplifying. No research method is without limitations, so narrative researchers also need to acknowledge the methodology's limits and stay within those borders with their interpretations. Most importantly, narratives do not mirror the past; instead, they refract it. The researcher needs to pay constant attention to the distinction between events as lived and events as told, and to avoid the illusion of causality. The truths of narrative accounts are not contained in their faithful presentations of past events, but in the shifting connections they forge between past, present and future. Narratives are useful in research precisely because narrators interpret the past, rather than reproduce it exactly as it was (Riessman 1993, 6). In addition, narrative research is not appropriate for all studies, particularly those with a large number of participants, due to the required time commitment.

To summarize, narrative research gives the human voice space to be heard in its authentic form and creates knowledge as a multi-voiced, multilayered entity. The fundamental objective is to create intersubjective understanding where narrators

give meanings to different things and phenomena with their own voices, and researchers interpret these meanings. Ricoeur (1991; 1992) suggests that there is never only one story: there is no such a story that could define the whole world around us, or one that would empty the whole reality. Stories offer new viewpoints to interpretation.

3.2.2 Narratives as research data

Narrative data are, at simplest, any storytelling. As research data, narratives can include oral or written interviews, diaries, life stories, or any published or unpublished documents. Importantly, as Heikkinen (2000) notes, narrative data cannot be compressed into numbers, but always require interpretation. The main focus is on how individuals give meanings to phenomena through their stories, and the main aim is at intersubjective understanding, where the narrators attach meanings to things with their own voices. Emphasizing individuals' authentic stories, narrative research differs from many other qualitative methods, which build more on the researcher's conceptualization. Narrative research encourages the production of new knowledge in close dialogue between the researcher and the informant (Heikkinen 2000, 52). In a fundamental sense, all narratives are co-constructed (Salmon & Riessman 2013, 199). The audience, whether physically present or not, has great influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what is self-evident, and what needs argumentation and explanation. Concerning personal interviews, what was previously seen as the expression of a single subjectivity, is in fact, always a co-construction (Salmon & Riessman 2013, 199).

In terms of their ontological level, narratives can be divided into metanarratives, collective narratives and personal narratives. Metanarratives, or grand narratives, are shared cultural beliefs that order, explain and produce abstract social knowledge. They are the master narratives in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history: broader cultural-narrative resources, which people draw on, use and resist in their construction of personal identities and life story (Somers 1994, 619). Metanarratives tend to be mostly optimistic, providing a framework in which individual experiences and thoughts can be organized (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 212). In contrast, individuals' mundane, personal stories deal with the authenticity and variety of human experience, local contexts and emotionality. Riessman (1993) suggests that a personal narrative is a

recollection of events and emotions as experienced by an individual in the course of their own life. A personal narrative may cover the whole life of the individual, or focus on certain episodes or issues. Personal narratives permit the depiction of lived events, and making sense of said events and their interrelations, and of their effect on the identity and development of the person. Only by having a notion of how we have become, and where we are going, can we create a sense of who we are (Giddens 1991, 54). In other words, what people say about themselves structures identities and clarifies the meaning of their lives. Life narrative strongly conditions its disposition towards future events, to the extent that this conviction about identity and the meaning of life is a resource for facing life's challenges.

Finally, in between metanarratives and personal narratives, there are collective organizational narratives, which focus on the collective stories co-produced by diverse communities (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 213). Referring to different levels of narratives, there is an ongoing debate within the narrative-research field about the importance of 'small stories' versus 'big stories'. Bamberg (2006) and other supporters of small narratives state that more attention should be paid to the micro-linguistics and social structure of the everyday, and to the small narratives that occur naturally in spoken language, text messages, and even in actions. In contrast, Freeman (e.g. 2006) and other biographical life-story researchers emphasize the richness and reflectiveness of big stories, derived from individual narratives. Although the division may not be significant to most narrative researchers, it reflects a criticism addressed to all narrative research deriving large social interpretations of 'some people talking about their experiences'. The danger of over-interpretation appears throughout narrative research, but it is avoidable.

Concerning narrative structure, there is no universal definition for it, although a majority of the different theories agree on two fundamental elements: chronology and causality. Narrative thinking organizes events in terms of a temporal dimension. Time configures narrations as episodes, which have a beginning, middle and end, while time in reality is an undifferentiated continuous flow (Bruner 1990). By structuring elements (scenes, action, talk, acts) into an organized framework, narratives also establish and communicate relationships between the elements of the story, thus enabling causal inferencing and the presence and critical role of goals (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 238−240). In more detail, Bruner (1991) mentions four essential dimensions of narrative structure: agents (in action to achieve goals), causally sequential order (linearized events and states), canonicality (normative rules), and narrator's perspective, that is, a narrative is never voiceless, but has the narrator's subjective perspective. Conversely, in philosophy, Burke (e.g.

1969) introduces five major elements of narrative: the action, the scene, the actor, the instrument of agency and the purpose. These elements can be posed as questions: What was done? When and/or where was it done? Who did it? How did the actor do it? Why did the actor do it? Furthermore, in linguistics, Labov (1972) contends that narratives have six formal and functional properties: an abstract, the orientation, the action, the evaluation, the resolution and the coda. His work has provided narrative research with useful methodological guidelines, but it has been challenged by new conceptual frameworks of the experience-centred and socio-culturally orientated approaches to narrative research. When studying narratives as stories of experience, rather than events, researchers need to adopt a more socio-cultural research framework. Squire (2013, 47) traces three important deficits of event-centred narrative research that a more experience-focused and socio-cultural-narrative researcher can address:

1. Event-centred narrative research does not study talk that is not about events, but is still significant for narrators' stories of who they are.

2. Event-centred narrative research does not take the uncertain, changeable nature of written, spoken and visual symbol systems into account. The stories are distanced from the occurrences they describe, have many meanings and are never the same when told twice.

3. Event-centred narrative research fails to analyse the interaction between storyteller and listener, that is, the co-construction of stories.

In this study, the narratives technically follow the structure and principles of experience-centred narratives. They include event narratives, but they may also be more flexible about time and defined by theme (grandparenthood and consumption) instead of structure, possibly relating to a life-changing moment. An experience-centred narrative may address a life transition (e.g. having children), or a general experience (e.g. living through a war). It may go beyond the past tense and involve present and future stories, or even imaginary events. Following Squire (2013), experience-centred narratives are sequential and meaningful, they re-present, reconstitute and express experience, and display transformation or change.

A narrative makes it possible to understand the world in a different way than can any paradigmatic knowledge. Framing the research in terms of narrative allows

us to see different and contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other and to understand more about individual and social change. Narratives are not only ways to tell experiences to others, but a means of consolidation and integration, strengthening certain parts of our identity and ignoring others (Polkinghorne 1988; Ricoeur 1992). With story form, people are able to make sense of themselves and to have a unified identity that connects their past, present and possible futures. Narratives describe the path of identity development defining *who I am, who I have been, who I am becoming* and *who I am no longer* (Kleine et al. 1995, 328). In other words, people's sense of self is guided by the story they create about who they are, what has happened, what they have done, and what they want to accomplish in future (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 237). However, narratives do not speak for themselves, neither do they have an unanalysed merit. Narratives always require interpretation when they are used as research data (Riessman 2008).

By generating data in the form of narratives, I rely on the social-constructionist view of stories as forms of social action through which human life and our sense of self are constructed, performed and enacted (Sparkes & Smith 2008, 299). My aim is not to uncover the objective truth, but the narrative truth, which is based on storied evidence and can create an understanding of the meanings experienced by people. Therefore, this study abandons the positivistic view of reality constructed through observable facts. I analyse narratives from the perspective that they are the constructions of live experiences that grandparents wanted to tell me. The informants are not repositories, but constructors of knowledge, and this construction takes place in cooperation with me, the researcher.

3.3   Conducting the research

3.3.1   Pre-understanding of grandparent consumers

In any interpretivist research, the researcher is positioned as a co-creator of knowledge, which places importance on the role of pre-understanding (Carson et al. 2001). A researcher rarely enters the research field with an innocent mind, free of any previous knowledge, presumptions, experiences or attitudes related to the research phenomenon. While worth consideration in any research, the significance of pre-understanding is increasingly important in narrative research. For the

researcher, it is important to demonstrate theoretical sensitivity during the entire research process and to proceed from pre-understanding to understanding (Gummesson 2000). For the audience, it is essential to understand the path that leads to the interpretations.

Pre-understanding refers to a researcher's insight into a specific phenomenon before actualizing the research process. Gummesson (2000, 60–67) suggests that pre-understanding is a combination of first-hand and second-hand understanding, which include the researcher's personal experience, the literature, and others' experience. It goes beyond knowledge by involving attitudes, commitments and personal experience as essential elements in the process of collecting and analysing information. While our pre-understanding definitely 'corrupts the innocent mind', directs our attention and may launch personal defence mechanisms, it is also seen as a pre-requirement for conducting research. A lack of pre-understanding would cause the researcher to spend considerable time gathering basic information. Gummesson calls for researchers to using their pre-understanding without becoming its slave and letting it block innovative thinking.

My first-hand source of pre-understanding is limited to the personal experience of being a grandchild, a phase in life that ended 20 years ago. As a child, I had two grandmothers and a grandfather living in the countryside, and my relationship with them all was rather formal. My next perspective into grandparenthood started to evolve through observing my own parents as grandparents, and later, in the observation of my daughter and her friends' relationships with their grandparents. Considering my interest in the research theme, a pivotal experience relates to school holidays when all my daughter's friends went to stay with their grandparents. Clearly remembering my own rather distant relationship with my grandparents, I had no choice but to wonder what grandparents and grandchildren did together these days, especially when the majority of those grandparents live in towns and cities, rather than in the countryside. Despite knowing grandparents who frequently travelled abroad with their grandchildren, I assumed there was also a more mundane side to spending time together, yet one that differed from my childhood experiences.

In addition to common-sense observing and reasoning, I turned my focus to the academic literature on grandparenthood. It became apparent that most theoretical considerations originated from the 1950–80s and therefore provided little information about current grandparenting. Yet, there were other recent studies from various fields that paid attention to the same deficit and called for more research into grandparents. Considering the societal and familial changes in

recent decades, it became obvious that there was a need to update any aspect of grandparents' lives. However, in marketing research, previous studies of grandparenting had been mainly problem-orientated, focused on the need to protect grandparents as consumers from misleading advertising or high-pressure sales tactics. There seemed to be a gap there, too. Next, the expected relevance of the research field opened myriad possible questions and routes, which was not an ideal opportunity for a new researcher, instead, posing the risk of not being able to see the wood for the trees. Listing the titles of my initial research proposals reveals some of the problematic factors:

- *The grandtour – travel practices of grandparents and grandchildren*

- *The grandmarket – consumption practices of grandparenthood*

- *Two-way consumer socialization in intergenerational consumption practices*

By traversing the academic literature on family consumption and grandparenthood, I gained a good basic understanding about family identities, the third age, intergenerational relationships and consumer socialization. Theoretically, they all provided interesting angles for research, but finally, I was given a superior advice: *'Stop reading and see what is interesting out there.'*

3.3.2   Pilot study

To clarify my thoughts and specify my research questions, I entered the field in late 2014 to undertake a pilot study. At that time, I was most interested in two-way consumer socialization, both primary and reverse, that is, how grandparents and their grandchildren influence each other in the field of consumption. The goal of my explorative study was to add to my pre-understanding of the research theme and to test two different forms of narratives as research data. I approached four grandparents to collect their narratives of grandparenthood. I briefed the topic to the respondents as '*discussing what is important for them as grandparents'*. Two of the narratives were short written stories, emailed to me by two grandparents, one male and one female. The informants wrote about their first thoughts on becoming a grandparent, shared some examples of leisure activities with their grandchildren and reflected on their thoughts about the essence of grandparenthood. I

deliberately approached people who I knew had the ability to produce rich and descriptive text, and I was not disappointed.

In addition to the written narratives, I conducted two personal interviews to collect oral narratives about grandparenthood. I also wanted to test the value of the elicitation materials, so I issued the informants with a pre-interview task to collect 5–10 photos or pictures that illustrated for them the most important things about grandparenthood (Figure 8). The photos could originate from grandparents' own albums or smartphones, but photos from newspapers, magazines, or websites were also acceptable. Originally, I hoped that the photos would help fuel discussion with previously unknown people, but in the event, I almost forgot the photos, as both discussions were smooth and colourful from the first moment. Still, the photos provided some interesting viewpoints and helped to summarize the key meanings that grandparenthood involved for both respondents.

Figure 8.   Examples of informants' photos (pilot study 2014)

The most significant finding of my pilot study was that grandparenthood reflected a highly important identity issue for the informants. My original aim had been to locate 'a contemporary, ordinary grandparent', but I returned from the field with

stories from four extraordinary grandparents, if only according to their own self-evaluation. The way that all my informants considered themselves to be 'totally different' grandparents was too strong to ignore, and it initiated my interest in grandparental identity. I realized that entering the identity discussion would not be an easy route, but would involve an enormous struggle amid the colossal, multidimensional and contradictory identity literature. Another dilemma concerned my planned research theme: consumer socialization. The preliminary fieldwork had not been successful in providing answers or guidelines in terms of grandparents and grandchildren influencing each other's consumer behaviour, and the reason was clear. Studying a phenomenon such as consumer socialization would have required a different method, for instance, ethnography. On their own, narratives would not spontaneously generate research data on such a specific topic, or at least I would have to approach both grandparents and grandchildren to understand the phenomenon. Not wanting to feed the research amoeba I already had in my head, I decided to stay with grandparents only and to abandon the notions of grandchildren and socialization.

A more positive finding, though, was that even the scarce data from my pilot study was enough to convince me about the richness and importance of my research theme. The few narratives I had collected immediately shed light on the interesting and multidimensional connection between grandparents' consumption activities, meanings and identities. Fortunately, I had also made findings that were surprising, interesting and even contradictory to my pre-understanding and the literature I had already familiarized myself with. Without any greater theoretical deliberation, I tested the pilot data from the social-identity perspective of Kleine et al. (1993); see Figure 9. First, I listed the forms of grandparental consumption presented in the narratives, whether it occurred for, with, or because of the grandchildren. Subsequently, I returned to the consumption data for argumentation and identification of consumption meanings. Finally, I divided meanings according to their relationship with each social-identity schema as presented by Kleine et al. (1993). As a result, I found several social-identity feeding functions of grandparental consumption that helped a grandparent to form a unique, self-defined and justified role identity. The conclusion worked at a satisfactory level and presented one plausible side of the phenomenon, albeit a somewhat simplified one. However, it gave me the confidence to delve more deeply, with the expectation of detecting even more interesting findings.
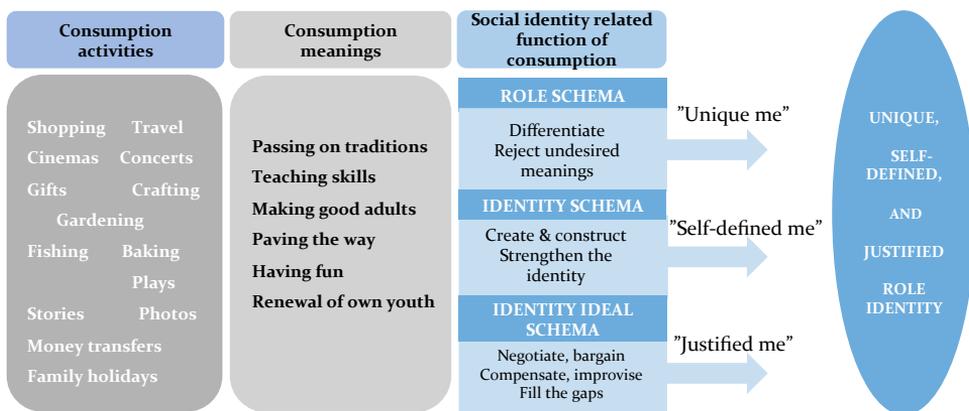
Figure 9. An analysis of the pilot study data adapted to the social identity schemas of Kleine et al. (1993)

Another decision to be made concerned the data-generation method. After evaluating the different forms of collected pilot data, and after considering their benefits and weaknesses, I chose oral narratives as my main source of data, and personal interviews as a method to generate them. Although the quality of the two written narratives had been extremely good, I could not guarantee finding similarly talented authors for the main research. Furthermore, I wanted to catch what was said and also how it was said, and to include the variety of nonverbal communications in my research. By choosing written narratives, I would have saved the effort of data transcription, but I would also have relinquished the total power of conversation to the informants. Combining both methods seemed unnecessary and unfounded, and I trusted that I could grasp the meanings sought by using oral narratives.

3.3.3 Narrative interviews

The popularity of personal interviews in research is based on the view of them as an outstanding tool for gathering both facts and feelings from interviewees. Yet, an important question, which distinguishes the positivists and constructionists, is whether interviews should be treated as reports on reality, or as displays of perspectives and moral forms (Silverman 2010, 144). According to a widespread positivist assumption, with the right technique, it is possible for the interviewer to 'step inside' and explore the world as do informants (McCracken 1988, 9). On the contrary, for constructionists, interview data have no epistemic status as empirical

evidence of the real world. Instead, the personal interview is considered as a special form of social interaction, guided and constrained both by the cultural discourses relevant for the topic and context, and by particular cultural conventions about how the interview is to be performed by both participants (Moisander et al. 2009, 334).

Accepting the perspective of Moisander and Valtonen (2006), the principle aim of the interviews was not to gather information (as facts), but to generate cultural talk, which, through analysis, could provide cultural knowledge about consumption and the marketplace. Thus, the interviews can be characterized as a valid way of capturing shared cultural understandings and enactments of the social world (Atkinson et al. 2003). Instead of conducting structured interviews as a method of gathering information, I used personal interaction as a vehicle for producing cultural talk around grandparenting. From this point of view, the participants are not passive respondents to given questions, but informants who use their available cultural resources and discursive practices to construct meaningful accounts of social reality (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 71). When telling their life stories, or reflecting upon specific themes, people do not necessarily tell stories that are completely their own, instead, borrowing from appropriate and available narrative and discursive resources (Moisander et al. 2009, 334). Therefore, the interview or discussion can be viewed as a performance in which people enact cultural meanings (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 71). Followingly, even *informant* is an imperfect term to describe the conversation *participants*, but chosen to emphasize the role of grandparents and to differentiate them from the other participant, the researcher.

In this research, the main data were collected in 13 narrative interviews with 14 informants: 9 female and 5 male. I carried out the majority of interviews with the grandparent informants between February and April in 2016. The selection of the informants was purposive, as I wanted to get a variety of different perspectives into grandparenthood, but also ensure that the informants could elaborate on grandparental consumption through their own experiences. Of course, I realize that there are grandparents who never see their grandchildren — whether by intention or not — and those who consume neither for, nor with, their grandchildren. Certainly, these grandparental narratives would provide different aspects of grandparenthood, but my particular interest in grandparental consumption required a more specific focus. Therefore, I chose and accepted participants who: a) had a grandchild, or grandchildren, whether biological or not; and b) spent time with them to some extent. Consumption for, with, or because of

the grandchildren was not an *a priori* requirement for qualification as an informant, mainly because my idea of consumption is broad and would probably have differed from that of some informant candidates.

Most informants were introduced to me via professional and personal networks, and some I chose from among the grandparents I already knew. Two informants actively approached me after being informed by third parties about my ongoing study. Recruiting informants was probably the most rewarding phase of my research. After introducing my theme, one hundred per cent of informant candidates responded positively.

> I'd love to discuss this with you. The theme is so dear and important.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*
>
> I'd really love to be interviewed − this is a very dear topic for me. [answered in ten minutes]
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*
>
> I am so excited about this interview. I have been thinking that grandparenthood is a really big thing.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

With respect to demographic variations, all informants were Finnish, their ages ranged from 45 to 80 years, grandchildren numbers from 1 to 11, and grandchildren ages from 2 months to 33 years. One grandparent did not have any biological grandchildren, and 7 out of 14 informants had only biological grandchildren. As an interesting anecdote concerning biological/non-biological grandchildren, while some informants included non-biological grandchildren in their number of grandchildren, others did not. When reporting the number of informants' grandchildren I have used the number they presented, whether including or excluding non-biological grandchildren. Half of the informants lived in a city, and the others in a smaller town, or rural village. Five informants were still professionally active, and the remainder were retired. When referring to informants throughout the text, I use randomly chosen pseudonyms, and the grandparent name (in Finnish) used by the informant.

Table 5. Informants and interviews

Informant pseudonym	Date of the conversation	Site of the conversation	Duration of the recorded conversation
Anitta	February 2016	Home	1:20
Eija	November 2014	Home	1:35
Ilpo	June 2016	Garden	1:47
Katri	March 2016	Home	1:30
Marjatta	February 2016	Home	1:24
Marjo	April 2016	Cafeteria	1:25
Mikko	March 2016	Home	1:48
Pirkko	March 2016	Home	1:48
Riitta	November 2014	Home	1:15
Seppo	February 2016	Home	1:10
Tapio	April 2016	Cafeteria	1:24
Tuija	April 2016	Cafeteria	1:38
Tuomo	March 2016	Home	1:34
Ulla	March 2016	Office	1:18

The interviews I carried out were conversational *narrative interviews*. In contrast to other personal interviews, narrative interviewing aims to produce stories, both little spontaneous stories that people tell and bigger ones, activated by the researcher as a co-constructor. Being conversational, the narrative interview enables interviewers to share their own stories and viewpoints about the topic in question. Conversational narrative interviews are typically highly individualized and context-based, and they are particularly useful to gain an understanding of topics relevant to the participants, such as grandparenthood. A narrative interview assumes that narrative expression reflects both conscious concerns and rather unconscious cultural, societal and individual processes. The focus shifts from particular context-dependent individual experiences and emotions to culturally and socially shared grand narratives (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 216).

A narrative interview is open in two ways: first, there are no a priori hypotheses or propositions to be tested, and second, the informant is encouraged to talk openly (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 216). The narrator is free to tell their story from their own perspective, in their own words, with pauses and without any predefined agenda. The objective is to create a conversation that leads to an understanding of the subjective meanings of the informant's lived experiences (Hopkinson & Hogg 2006, 160). My idea was to create a cosy atmosphere to enable fluid, open dialogue about a highly personal theme. According to my subjective view, supported with positive feedback from some informants, this goal was achieved. The first interview I carried out was an unfortunate exception, because, due to my lack of trust in the recording system, I wanted to make notes on my laptop 'just in case'. Evidently, a conversation partner with an open laptop in front of her is not considered to be approachable, and the informant expected me to take an active role and lead the interview with sequential questions. When I realized this, I stopped making notes and shut the computer, and the informant started to tell stories, refer to real-life episodes and elaborate on them instead of just giving short answers to questions. In the following interviews, I had no computer at all, but used a jotter for making notes and remarks (Figure 10).
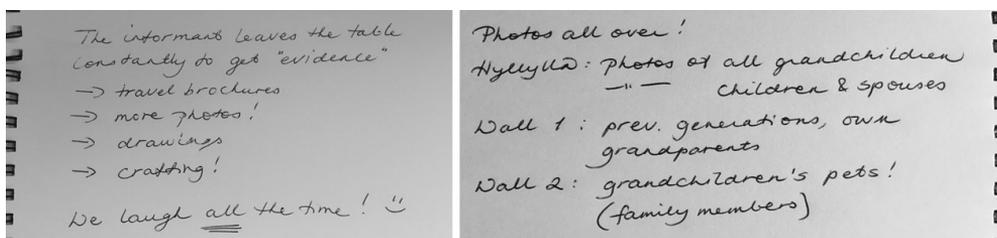
Figure 10. Examples of field notes, March 2016

Despite the rather easy-going atmosphere, I acknowledge that an interview – especially a recorded one – is never equal to a naturally occurring conversation. Not even when most conversations took place in the informant's home. As with all meetings, the beginning of the conversation is the part for getting to know each other and building trust. Before turning the recorder on, I provided all informants with a short, official, written description of the background to my study; this included information on the use and handling of data and the secrecy policy, which

was signed by me and contained my contact details. Most informants did not show any particular interest in the document, some read it, and others asked further questions concerning the study timetable and my understanding about consumption in particular.

I started the conversation with two narrative-eliciting questions:

When was the last time you saw your grandchild/-ren? What did you do?

For most informants, these were easy warm-up questions, because they had a recent experience in mind, and they could easily refer to it in a detailed way. This was typically an everyday situation, such as babysitting, eating out together, a family get-together, or a family shopping outing. Some informants referred to a peak experience, such as a holiday abroad, or to a more distant episode, such as a fishing trip some years ago. Whether that really was the 'last time' or not was unimportant to me, because it mattered only that the recalled episode was, for some reason, important to my informant and, as such, activated our conversation. In most cases, I also asked one or two follow-up questions relating to the recollected episode to ensure that the conversation continued seamlessly. With some informants, follow-up questions were unnecessary. For newer grandparents, it was natural to elaborate on the birth of their first grandchild and their feelings about their new role. Informants with more, and older, grandchildren recalled becoming grandparents at some point of the conversation, but the beginning of the conversation usually dealt with more recent incidents.

Following the structuralist view of narratives as a co-construction, I engaged in active listening and story sharing. Although the conversations progressed smoothly and covered topics important to the informant, there were some specific themes I wanted to touch upon with each informant. These included the informants' experiences and memories concerning their own grandparents, the guidelines or lessons they wanted their grandchildren to learn, the way they wanted their grandchildren to see them, and as an important nuance, what term their grandhild/ren used to refer to them and its origin. These were the kind of back-up questions I asked, unless they had been spontaneously answered in the general conversational stream.

The total amount of recorded data comprised 17 hours and 57 minutes. Immediately after each interview, I made notes about the conversational atmosphere, my first feelings, topic highlights, or any other distinctive features,

details and emotions encountered. I transcribed each recorded interview myself, as I wanted to relive the moment of the interview. During transcription, I also made notes about nonverbal communications and ways of saying things, such as tone of voice, laughter, yelling and whispering, as well as any interruptions. I also transcribed my own comments and tone of voice. I transcribed the recorded data verbatim, usually on the day following the interview. The short delay made it easy to memorize the conversational situation and to make notes about other observations. The total amount of transcribed text exceeded 200 pages.

3.3.4 Researcher–informant relationship

Considering the interview as a vehicle for producing narratives affects both the informants' and the researcher's roles. Unlike interviewees, informants in a narrative conversational interview are not passive respondents to pre-determined questions. They are active and pro-active narrators, allowed to share their story from their own perspective, in their own words.

Research interviews can be seen as portrayals of power relations, or as a cultural dance (Gergen 1994), where one participant invites the other to dance, and the invitation is accepted or refused. If it is rejected, the participant who made the invitation has to try out new ways to proceed. In this way, participants test each other and create their own miniature culture, with rules about how to speak and how to act together in their shared situation. A narrative interview involves co-authoring the narrative, because the relationship between the researcher and the informant creates one of the contexts in which meaning is constructed (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 215−216). At best, an interview presents itself as a win-win situation that benefits both the interviewer and the informant.

As a co-constructor of the narrative, the researcher may have to practise some unlearning before entering the narrative field. For me, the best way to guarantee the quality of the research data was through active listening, open-mindedness and patience, letting the informants speak freely and in an uninterrupted way. Despite being forewarned about the various and changing roles of the researcher, I must admit to being unprepared to face as many as I finally did. The role of *researcher* was most apparent in the preceding and early phases of the interview as I introduced myself and the aim of the study to the informants, gave them the research document and asked my initial question. But after that, the researcher-me faded away and only returned to the scene at the end of the interview, as informants

finished their stories and asked me whether I 'had got anything out of it'. Every informant asked this question.

A second role was that of an *expert* in grandparenthood and children's consumption. Having studied the theme, and being presumed to have already undertaken interviews, legitimated me as an expert. In the stream of the conversation, I was asked questions and my opinions were solicited about contemporary grandparents and consumption, and participants even sought advice on how to achieve balance between others' expectations and their own desires.

> I just heard that children get like 20–40 presents for Christmas. Or something like that. You must know it better but anyway.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

My third role, which was probably the most pleasant one, was to be an equal *conversation partner*. Despite having a dialogue with all informants, this role was not self-evident and not given to me immediately in all conversations. There were informants with whom it was easier and more natural to talk and share my own stories about the topic.

> *Informant:* And I know that his grandpa always gives him a sausage in hand, which is never allowed at home. But you know, children learn it, they immediately learn it if you have different rules in different places.
>
> *Researcher:* Yes, my daughter is so nice and well-behaved, and she always asks for permission. And if I let her take like a cookie, she says 'Oh, thank you, Mum!' But when she goes to her grandma's, she rushes in and sticks her both hands into the cookie box, and I'm like 'What? Where did all your manners disappear?'

A fourth role I encountered was that of an *audience*. It is well known that narrative and its meanings are constructed in the narration, that is, when telling the story. Therefore, the narrative always needs an audience. However, there were interviews, and parts of interviews, where my role as the audience was significantly dominant. In some cases, the informant was obviously reflecting upon different perspectives that needed to be said aloud to obtain clarification. Sometimes, it felt as though the story itself had been created before the interview and was now being retold to me. Other times, the informant touched on a topic outside the main focus and wanted to 'teach' me about that. During my interview tour, I learnt a great deal about sports, gardening, philosophy, disease, travel, nature and music – to mention only a few themes. Looking back, most of these "lessons" were given me by male informants.

There are three important elements that must be found in every piece of music: rhythm, melody, and harmony.

Tapio, pappa of 4

There are really only those two things, which we all practice in unique ways. How do you love your neighbour and how do you make sure that things go right.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

The fifth role I identified was a pleasant one: that of *mentee*. This role tended to appear outside the grandparental focus and included informants giving me advice on particular interests, or life in general.

Well, that is so familiar to me. But you are young; you should probably try to grow over it.

Ulla, mummi of 2

Finally, I encountered the role of a *daughter*, most probably due to my age and the fact that I had a child myself. In those sessions where this information was not known beforehand, it was asked about in every conversation. I was given parental advice, and I was also compared to the informants' children. Some informants openly wondered at my having only one child.

Having only one child would make me a little worried. What if? What if something would happen?

Ilpo, pappa of 9
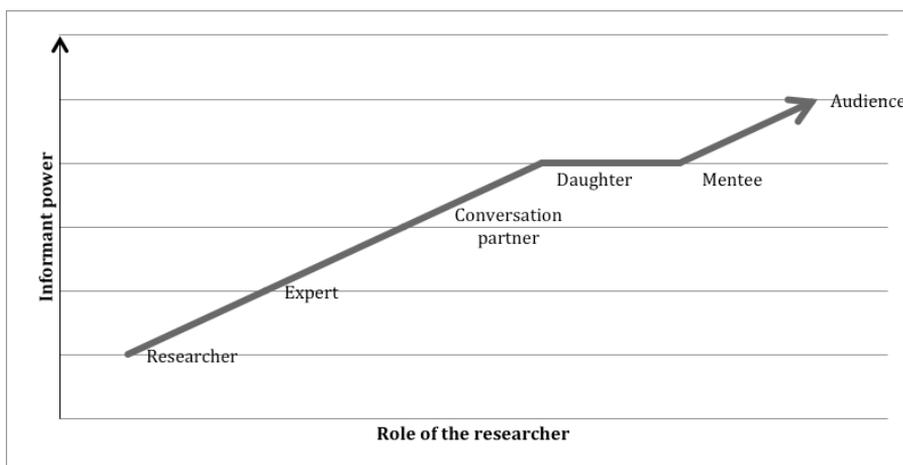
Figure 11. Roles of the researcher and informant power

The power balance between researcher and informant varied in different roles, so that the researcher power was at its greatest during the actual researcher role and at its lowest during the audience role. This variation is illustrated in Figure 11. However, it must be noted that my role as a researcher was flexible during each interview, likewise, the power balance between the participants. Relinquishing some power to the informant also made the conversation more fruitful and balanced, and it encouraged informants to actively share their stories.

3.3.5   Interpretation and analysis

According to Paul Ricoeur (1991), the hermeneutical problem begins where linguistics stops. Currently, narrative analysts have moved from linguistic analysis to more interpretive frames. A widespread approach is thematic analysis, moving back and forth between the narratives and their generalizations, as in a classic hermeneutic circle. A distinctive feature of a conversational interview, as with any qualitative research, is that the process of data analysis and interpretation has already begun during the data generation. The goal of these intertwined processes is to form a holistic and coherent interpretation of the empirical data. Spiggle (1994, 492) defines data analysis as processing empirical data to enable interpretation and theory building, while at the stage of the interpretation phase, the data are explored and given meaning through the chosen interpretive framework. Usually these two phases are intertwined. Schwandt (2000) identifies two major positions that inform interpretation in narrative research. Empathetic understanding (German: Verstehen) includes an assumption of possibility for researchers to break out of their own experiences and circumstances, and reproduce the meaning or intention of the informant. Conversely, philosophical hermeneutics assumes that interpreters always encounter texts from within their own prejudices. Hence, the interpretation is a conversational dialogue through which meanings are being formed as a product of interaction. In my analysis, I rely upon the more interactive nature of the interpretation, as in philosophical hermeneutics. During the research process, the power moves back and forth between the author and the informants, so that while the voice of the individual plays a crucial role in the idiographic analysis, the researcher's voice becomes louder in organizing the data. Finally, the presentation and the research analysis are characterized by the researcher's language, and not by that of the informants. The

original narratives have turned into a data pool and have been absorbed into the analysis framework.

As the analysis of data had already started in the phase of data generation, it was challenging to make it transparent and accurate. Because I was aiming towards a rich description for my research theme, I needed to move between the narratives and their context in a flexible manner, instead of complying with a strict procedure. The process of analysis can be characterized as iterative and cumulative because the final analysis entails findings from the early stages. There are, however, clear procedures and functions for the different analysis phases. During the interviews, my aim was to capture informants' perspectives about the described experiences. By using conversational interviews as my research method, I gained the opportunity to ask informants for clarification, specification and further details when I was unsure how to interpret what they were saying. Making notes about the dominant emotions, findings and topics of the conversation was also a form of analysis as I summarized the atmosphere and content of each conversation. Transcribing and reading the conversations again was the next phase of the analysis. I did not use any computerized coding programs because I wanted to retain the subtle use of Finnish language in the final analysis. After selecting descriptive quotes to illustrate my inferences I translated them into English and let a native English editor proofread them respecting the original tone of voice of the informant.

When analysing narrative data, Polkinghorne (1995, 6−8) makes a distinction between *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis*, based on their different ways of knowing. The analysis of narratives applies paradigmatic cognition (Bruner 1986) and aims at classifying narratives with the help of typologies, metaphors, or categories. The researcher collects narratives and then uses different techniques to analyse their plots, structures, or story types (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 217). Narrative analysis, however, adopts narrative cognition and aims to configure a new, thematic and coherent story based on the original narratives, thus aiming more at a synthesis than an analysis (Polkinghorne 1995). This fundamental difference between an analysis of narratives and a narrative analysis is illustrated in Figure 12.
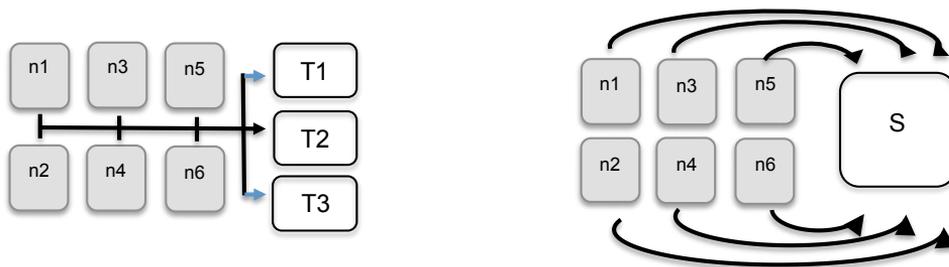
Figure 12. Analysis of narrative (typologies) vs. narrative analysis (a story)

This study combines both primary forms of narrative research. Analysis of narratives is applied when analysing the structure, storyline and the meanings inherent in each narrative, while in my narrative analysis, I aim to construct a new narrative of grandparental consumption, thus producing a new story and synthesis as an outcome. The analysis of narratives begins in this chapter in the form of structural analysis and continues in Chapter 4, in the analysis of the meanings of grandparenthood as they appeared in the narratives. The narrative analysis takes place in the succeeding Chapter, 5, as a descriptive illustration of a grandparent consumer.

In the *analysis of narratives*, the interview texts are interpreted as consumption stories and self-referential projections. The narratives that the informants share about their experiences create temporal trajectories, in which a past event is relived in relation to present concerns and is projected towards an envisioned future, thus organizing the multiple contexts of experiences into a coherent narrative of identity (Thompson 1997, 442). The analysis includes various decisions, for instance, about the form, order and style of the presentation, as well as about what is included and excluded.

Following Riessman's (1993) suggestion of never beginning a narrative analysis with a content analysis, I first explored the transcriptions from a structural perspective. The structural analysis of narratives focuses on 'how the story is told' (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 219). The first method of structural narrative analysis was developed by William Labov, who lists the basic components of a narrative structure as follows: the abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda (1982). However, not all narratives contain all elements, and they can also occur in varying sequences (Riessman 1993, 3).

Another approach for analysing experience-centred narratives is provided by James Gee (ref. Riessman 1993), who parses the narrative into idea units, stanzas, strophes, and parts, based on how the narrative is spoken. Furthermore, it is possible to explore the narrative genres, such as tragedy, comedy, romance and satire, or to categorize them according to their characters or conclusions. The main objective of a structural analysis is to categorize narratives according to their elements to force the researcher to extend the analysis outside the content. As with all experience-based narratives, the narratives in this study included event narratives, but they were also more flexible about time, and as such, they did not follow a strict structure. There was therefore no point in forcing the entire narrative into certain sections, such as beginning, middle and end, or in compressing the data into the components set out by Labov. Instead, I applied different narrative elements for structural analysis and identified their setting and the scene, characters and genres. The structural analysis of the narratives is presented in Chapter 3.5.

When analysing experience, the challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into a summation. Riessman (1993, 63) describes this as follows: *'An investigator sits with pages of tape-recorded stories, snips away at the flow of talk to make it fit between the covers of a book, and tries to create sense and dramatic tension.'* More concretely, the content analysis focuses on 'what is told' in the narrative. In a thematic analysis of narratives (Riessman 1993; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008), I explore the common themes and patterns in the narratives: first with a focus on grandparenthood as an experience, and second, from the perspective of consumption. The thematic analysis of experience-centred narratives commonly expands the context and the materials of the study, even to include my own reflective comments on the interviews. As a starting point for thematic analysis, I created an Excel table immediately after the first interview, and I listed the key themes of the narrative. When adding data from subsequent narratives, I added the new information under the titles of the first interview, but also added new titles when necessary. After adding information from the final interview, I had a massive table with tens of rows of themes, from which I chose those that had been discussed with more than one informant. These themes were then subjected to further analysis.

After the thematic analysis, I identified the meanings of grandparental consumption. This stage connects the 'what' of consumption with the 'why' of consumption. The main task of this phase is to develop an understanding of the significance of the salient experiences, circumstances and events described by the

informants. It addresses the narrative movement, that is, the temporal order directed towards a destination or goal state, and on the narrative framing, which selects and highlights certain details from the experience (Polkinghorne 1988; Stern 1995). A key facet of this stage is discerning the construction of personal history that underlies a consumer's consumption goals and his/her interpretation of desirable attributes and outcomes (Thompson 1997, 443), assuming that personalized life meanings are symbolically expressed in consumption stories. At the next stage, I focused on the meanings used to construct narrative identities. The aim was to analyse, which meanings serve to define the informants' sense of self-identity and the type of envisioned identities that they seek to realize through consumption activities (Thompson 1997, 447).

During the *narrative analysis* (Riessman 1993; Heikkinen 2000; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008), I integrated the themes and meanings of the narratives into one meaningful story, thus constructing a new narrative as an outcome. The goal of narrative analysis is producing a solid and coherent story, which has led to the blurring of boundaries between literary and science discourses. In particular, some ethnographers (e.g. Rinehart) have succeeded in creative and experimental writing that could be situated midfield between academic and fictive writing styles. Richardson (1994, 521) names first-person texts, fictive texts, drama and visual presentations as *evocative representations*, emphasizing their ability to evoke associations and mental images. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2–3) call an archetypal narrative analyst a *'Bricoleur'*, referring to the character of Claude Lévi-Strauss – a person who 'works with his hands and uses means compared to those of a craftsman' (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 16–17) – and to the creative ways that researchers divergently combine different methods, materials and writing styles with their own creative thinking. Whereas a conventional research process might be limited by the original use of individual narratives, the bricoleur works outside such limitations, reorganizing the narratives to construct new meanings. In the field of marketing research, the various possibilities of storytelling have remained undervalued. This is surprising, considering the power of stories in marketing practice, which is tightly related to creating interesting and stimulating communication. Moisander and Valtonen (2006, 163–165) point out the importance of the 'poetics' of writing, indicating that conventional forms of academic writing may have become insufficient as vessels both for representing our understandings and for inviting action in the world. They suggest that marketing and consumer researchers would benefit from considering new ways of writing and representing their research results. New forms of writing might also expand researchers' analytical and

interpretive skills by introducing fresh viewpoints (ibid, 165). Also Gummesson (2000; 2001) suggests that researchers in marketing could learn from novelists, moviemakers and investigative journalists, and finally reject the unspoken dimension of an acceptable research report, that is, boring and difficult to read (Gummesson 2000, 185).

3.4 Trustworthiness of the research

The purpose of narrative research is not producing one definite truth about a phenomenon that is 'out there', but to offer one version of it, told by someone from a specific point of view (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 223). According to Paul Ricoeur (1991), stories are reconfigured in their readings or hearings, so that the process of composition is never completed in the text, but in the reader. Narratives are not autonomous, but understanding can only occur when the worlds of readers and texts, speakers and listeners are brought together. Therefore, traditional notions of reliability simply do not apply to narrative studies, and validity must be radically reconceptualized (Riessman 1993, 65). That said, narrative research, and narrative constructionism in particular, do not claim that 'anything goes', but that issues surrounding trustworthiness and utility need to be considered for any narrative study to ensure its quality.

3.4.1 Narrative quality

The definition of a good story varies considerably for literary critics and social scientists. Even inside the social sciences, there is no one universal description or list of attributes, but different researchers emphasize different aspects. However, these viewpoints are definitely not exclusive, but comprehend the understanding of a good, valuable narrative. Furthermore, they all strengthen one fundamental principle: high quality narratives evoke elaboration and emotions in their audience (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 241). According to this rather loose perspective, all the narratives I gathered were high quality. However, the difference in how people talk about their lives and experiences is enormous, which was confirmed in the interviews I conducted. At one end were the *narrators*, who kept leaping to the

concrete and the episodic, without stopping to wonder why things happened, how they felt, or what the lesson was. At the other extreme were the *analysers*, who always included an analysis in their narratives and practised impressive introspection. From the perspective of the research analysis, neither extreme was ideal, but there was a golden medium: an informant who shared episodes and examples, and was able to reflect on them and on the feelings that arose as a result.

Bruner (1986) distinguishes two dimensions in narrative: the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness. The landscape of action refers to the causal sequence of events, such as those visible to any casual observer. These include the initiating event, resulting actions and outcomes. While the landscape of action is requested in all narratives, the landscape of consciousness is not. It comprises something of an addition that makes the narrative more compelling. According to Bruner, the landscape of consciousness makes the audience aware of the psychological state(s) of the story characters, that is, it transmits what they think and feel, and what their attitudes, motivations and goals are. Hence, when a narrative has a well-developed landscape of consciousness, the audience is more eager to construct an interpretation of it. Furthermore, in the summarization of Squire et al. (2013, 8–9), Stein and Albro (1997) define the quality of a narrative in terms of complexity and coherence, both of which nurture goal-orientated action episodes: complexity increases the number of such episodes, and coherence can be evaluated in terms of existing causal connections instead of only temporal sequencing. Later, Riessman questioned the requirement of coherence and defended the incoherence of our fragmented lives, suggesting that it may be the listener's (or researcher's) need for continuity and meaning that elevated the significance of narrative coherence (Salmon & Riessman 2013, 201–202). Furthermore, Gergen and Gergen (1983) emphasize the evaluative slope of the story – alternations and drama, as in steep inclines or declines – and Freeman (2006) adds that those narratives, which contain multiple possibilities, are better in quality and more useful for research than more apparently dogmatic narratives.

Reflecting on these various claims, not all material in the realm of narratives can be defined as 'good quality'. Probably, all researchers conducting interviews, or any qualitative methods, must occasionally deal with the question of 'bad material'. In this study, 'bad material' can be interpreted as narratives with only a 'thin' story. There were narratives that could be labelled as 'bad material' due to their lack of personal interpretation. However, I do not believe in the necessity of dismissing such material due to its imperfection. After all, as Goodson (2001) points out, researchers should be interested in the way people actually narrate their lives, not

in the way they should. As a narrative researcher, my task is not to evaluate whether the story is true, or not. In the same way, it is not the aim of this research to determine whether the story was told in the wrong way. Considering the ultimate objective of narrative research – to transmit the authentic voice of the informant – it may be dangerous to judge or privilege the narratives due to some external criteria, not to mention rejecting some narratives as 'imperfect'. Despite our interpretive authority, we should not set any greater requirements and assumptions for the narratives we study. After all, we cannot list in advance those incidents and emotions that should be included in certain type of stories, or how they ought to be talked about.

3.4.2 Validation of the research

Academic studies have traditionally been evaluated by defining their validity and reliability. As both concepts are built on the correspondence theory of truth, using them in narrative research is problematic. Narrativity is attached to constructive philosophy, according to which, reality is produced through narratives (Heikkinen 2000, 50). Therefore, there is no 'corresponding other' as the correspondence view assumes. In contrast to paradigmatic cognition, which aims to assure the audience of the truth, narrative cognition focuses on ensuring verisimilitude (Bruner 1991). Verisimilitude is not based on arguments or claims, but on the reader/listener experience of the story as a simulation of reality (Bruner 1991, 4; Heikkinen 2000, 51). A holistic experience includes an affective element, which is not the case in a paradigmatic truth that only has a pure cognitive meaning. However, simulating reality does not exclude reality, but conversely includes it, in contrast to any text script based on correspondence theory and referring to the 'reality' outside the text. What is essential is that authors of narrative texts inform readers of their interpretations of reality, and that the aim is to interpret and create reality through the story as a simulation.

In narrative research, facts are always interpreted, and they are products of an interpretive process (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 223; Riessman 1993, 64). In the same way that individuals narrate similar events in radically different ways, narrative research does not expect a single interpretation to emerge, but approves multiple valid interpretations, that is, multiple narrative truths (Freeman 2006). For narrative researchers, it is not meaningful to prove the objectivity of a study by distancing themselves from informants, or by demonstrating that other researchers

would have reached the same conclusions (Hopkinson & Hogg 2006, 162). In her narrative analysis, Fournier (1998, 360–361) portrays an intimate and committed involvement to the informants and the data, coupled with systematic analysis. Moreover, the present study does not seek to assure the readers of objectivity, but of supportable results that are neither objective and complete, nor causally derived. Because of the personal role of the researcher, another researcher would be likely to uncover different themes from the same data.

When evaluating the validity of narrative research, it is useful to separate the *validity of the narratives* and the *validity of the analysis* (Polkinghorne 2007, 478). Considering the quality of the research data, the key question is whether stories are valid, not whether they are true. As stated earlier, the task of a narrative researcher is not to prove, or convince anyone, that the stories heard or read are true. In fact, treating the stories as factual would render the entire research pointless, or at least no longer narrative research. Riessman (2008, 187) defines narratives as articulations told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see events in a similar way. The narrative authors do not have to be concerned about the reliability of their story in the traditional sense because the researcher is interested in the storyteller's truth, anyway (Höykinpuro 2009, 95). The focus is on narrators' construction of experiences that have been meaningful to them. It is also not necessary to argue for the capability of language as a trustworthy intermediator of identities by offering direct access to our lived experiences. Traditionally, the literal translation of talk is seen to equal experience and its representation, but narrative constructionism has challenged this idea, suggesting that language does not merely mirror experience, but operates performatively and constitutively; it is used to construct reality (Gergen 1997; Moisander & Valtonen 2006). As story-builders, people do not record the world, but create it, mixing in cultural and individual expectations (Escalas & Bettman 2000, 242). If narratives are studied as such, instead of as reflections of the 'reality' or 'interiority' of individuals, there seem to be no further epistemological problems. Another important notion about language is that talk is never neutral, but it involves important power relationships, social statuses, positions, duties and rights. It is natural for us to express ourselves in a way that we consider is approved of by others. We also compose ourselves differently for different audiences. Hence, narrative research does not even attempt to offer tools for capturing reality outside the narrative reality of the informants.

In narrative research, the starting point for evaluation is to clarify what and whom the storied text is intended to represent. The text is evaluated on the basis of how well it creates understanding that expresses the actual meanings

experienced by the informant. Validating narratives is not a mechanical process, but an argumentative practice that allows for gradations in the confidence instead of plain acceptance/non-acceptance. Validity is not inherent in a claim, but more like a characteristic given to it (Polkinghorne 2007, 474). According to Polkinghorne (2007), there are, however, validity threats that must be considered, and that can be tackled. First, the language has limitations in capturing the complexity and depth of experienced meaning. Generally, this threat can be tackled by encouraging informants to use figurative expressions. In this study, the active use of elicitation material guided the conversation and added to the feelings and atmosphere that the informants aimed to describe. Personal photos and illustrations helped to draw attention to such layers of meaning that were not actively within informants' awareness. Furthermore, informants may also resist revealing the entire complexities of their felt meanings because of social pressure. This can be overcome through establishing trust in the researcher, for example with the help of several interviews to help the researcher to gain informants' confidence. In this study, there were no back-up interviews, but I tried to create trust in advance through personal contact and by providing rich background information. I also made an effort to keep conversations casual and open. An additional requirement for a valid study is that informants are willing to share their stories and co-operate with the researcher. Due to this being an obviously pleasant topic, all informants in this study were happy, and even proud, to take part in the interviews.

> I think it's just so great to be part of a project like this. I even told my boss that guess where I'm going today, could I leave a bit earlier?
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Considering the validity of the research analysis, it is vital to understand and evaluate it within the context of narrativity. Neither the research, nor its evaluation, should exceed the level of analysis that a narrative study can access (Polkinghorne 2007). Applying a narrative methodology means that the findings are not generalizable to the reality of all grandparents, not even to that of the informants. The data and the analysis do not directly correspond to how the narrators act as grandparents in real life, but to how they interpret these lived experiences. Riessman (1993) suggests four criteria to evaluate narrative research: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence and pragmatism, which refer to a *convincing interpretation, respect for the original narratives, consistence of the interpretation* and

the *usability of the research for other researchers*. In the following section, I will evaluate the research analysis from these four perspectives.

The assertiveness of the interpretation is greatest when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants' accounts and when alternative interpretations are considered (Riessman 1993, 65). A distinct advantage of a conversational interview, as with any oral data gathering, is that interpretation and analysis of research data begin during the conversation itself. During the act of capturing informants' perspectives, it is possible to ask them for clarification and specification, and also for further details. Having an expanded pre-understanding of the research phenomenon, through the pilot study and an extensive literature review, helped me to funnel information, connect it with more general phenomena, and finally to understand the nuances and their part in the bigger picture. Consumption stories never tell the whole story, but only highlight specific characteristics while rendering others marginal or invisible. An awareness of this encouraged me to interrogate the givens of a narrative by asking myself what meanings would render this detail or issue salient in the narrative. During interpretation, the question is likely to be answered in terms of the salient event's symbolic function, such as representing broader life issues (Thompson 1997, 446). However, as the final text is a co-creation of the researcher and informant, I had to be conscious of not producing the text I expected. To guard against this eventuality, I practised open listening and always tried to pay attention to the unexpected.

To increase the validity of the analysis by ensuring the consistency of interpretation, I approached each narrative using identical methods, including verbatim transcription, taking notes and reducing the data into a table of themes. When highlighting the themes, and subsequently the meanings, each narrative played an equally significant role. However, the original quotes that appear in the final report may be less balanced, with some informants having more 'lines' than others. That reflects the wider spectrum of descriptiveness in the original narratives: even when the theme and the meaning were shared, some informants could elaborate on them using more detail, notion and finally, emotion. For the purpose of verisimilitude, I have chosen the richer quote over the thinner one to describe a shared phenomenon. Finally, when evaluating the usability of this study for other researchers, the key concept is transparency: by describing how the interpretations were produced, I aim to make it possible for others to determine the trustworthiness and usability of the work.

3.5 Structural analysis of grandparental narratives

The structural analysis of narratives concentrates on how the story is told, including the structural and linguistic elements of the narrative and the narrative devices used (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2007, 219). In the following structural analysis, I will view the narratives according to the elements of setting, genre and characters. As already explained, experience-centred narratives are temporally flexible, so there is little point in applying the traditional perspectives of chronology or sequentiality. Although the demand for structural analysis is not inherent in any of my research questions, attention to structure can generate new knowledge and complicate the final analysis. Riessman (2008) has suggested that structural analysis can also help in data reduction and facilitate the identification of such substantive issues that might be missed when using only thematic analysis and paying minimal attention to the context.

3.5.1 Setting and scene

Analysing narratives as stories of experience is an example of the 'second wave' of narrative analysis, which has moved from the study of narrative as text to the study of narrative-in-context (Georgakopoulou 2006, 123). This division also refers to the focus on 'big stories' versus 'small stories'. While big stories often take cognitive perspectives and focus on the content of the autobiographical story, small stories focus on how narrative is performed and how it accomplishes particular tasks, including constructing or performing identity (Phoenix 2013, 72). In other words, analysis of the small story enables attention to be paid to the doing of narrative, foregrounding the context within which particular narratives are produced. Despite of some disagreement about what constitutes context, it is generally agreed that it is important to include it in narrative analysis. Understanding how narrators draw upon wider culture requires researchers to go beyond what they say and also to analyse how they draw upon and use culture in their narratives.

Narratives are linguistic stage productions. In the beginning of any narrative, there is likely to be a sequence that provides some background orientation, 'scene-setting' (Labov 1972). More than just interpreting the scene-setting as neutrally setting the story in its context, the sequence can be analysed to determine how it

performs. Riessman (1993) states: *'Where one chooses to begin and end a narrative can profoundly alter its shape and meaning.'* Scene-setting refers to the ways in which descriptive passages and references function to establish a frame for action and to connect narrative space with real-world locations. The production of space can be explained by reference to the distinction between narrative and authorial audiences, the use of multiple narrative voices, and the strategic use of direct and indirect discourse.

My conversation with Anitta offers a fine example of scene-setting, with the use of multiple voices and direct discourse.

> I just tell her: 'This is how I did things when you were kids...and you can decide yourself what to do'...In some things she attacks: 'Don't do that! You mustn't do that to her! Not that either!' First, you have to play with her and then all of a sudden: 'Leave her alone!' And if there are others here, too, I'm like: 'Would you just make up your damn mind?!'
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Likewise, Eija invites the listener to the original site of the event by using multiple narrative voices.

> In the summer, they went fishing for two or three hours, and when they came back, I asked, what they had talked about. They look at me like: 'What? We weren't talking, we were fishing.' And I am like: 'Oh, I'm sorry, of course.'
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

In this study, the scenes of the narratives varied from informants' own homes and those of their significant others to public places, such as shops, theatres, restaurants, amusement parks and sports places, and also to leisure locations, such as forests, lakeside cottages, cars, airplanes and ferries, all of which showcase the various locations of grandparenthood. What was even more interesting about the settings was the temporal dimension of the narratives, which stretched from the past (even preceding the narrator's birth) to the far future, *post mortem*. The informants' grandparental experience had reflections in their own childhood and parenthood, but also in the stories they had heard about their own grandparents' lives, and in the expectations and goals they had for the future.

Ulla memorizes her mother (using the voice of her daughter) and stretches the temporal dimension of her story from the past to the future, to the time when she no longer exists, but is still remembered by her children and grandchildren.

> I want to save something from further past to be passed on...I just love it how my children and their cousins talk about my parents, it's really astonishing. Especially, my daughter often says that 'If only Grandma Anna was here. Everything would be fine then.' That is what I want, too. That they remember.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

3.5.2 Genre and tone of voice

As autobiographical narratives and memoirs, narratives are highly subjective. Instead of exact, recorded facts, they present how the individual personally remembers and feels about their life and life events. The style and tone of voice vary in different narratives and some traces of other, more fictive genres can often be identified. Elaborating on Northrop Frye's genre taxonomy (comedy, romance, tragedy and irony) as presented in the article by Stern (1995), I categorized the narratives into comedy, drama, irony and self-irony, completed with realistic and philosophical narratives. It was interesting to notice that most narratives about grandparenthood involved considerable humour, laughter and fun. However, only one of them could actually be called a comedy, as that entire interview was filled with laughter. A more typical genre was irony, where the dominant tone of voice was humorous, but an underpinning purpose of criticism could be identified. Like all good ironies, these stories of grandparenthood first made me laugh, and then made me think. Two of the narratives could be titled as philosophical narratives, in which a significant part of the story was devoted to a discussion of the sort of questions normally addressed in discursive philosophy. These included the purpose of life, ethics, religion and morals, and the role of the individual in society. Some features of drama were present in most narratives, but only few narratives could earn the title of full-blooded drama. In these, conflicts and emotions were expressed through dialogue and action, and the tone of voice was more serious than humorous, and the focus was more on the in-depth growth of the narrator dealing with realistic issues. As a commonly considered opposite of comedy, drama narratives included some humorous aspects, but the dominant atmosphere remained serious.

Table 6. Genres of the narratives

Genre	Example
Comedy	Then we went to the crapper and fell asleep and a pig woke us up!
Self-irony	This is the thing: I'm the only fat person in our whole family and she just loves my softness. I tell them that hey, none of you has this what I have!
Irony	Before, they used to come here with their friends and say: 'Mum, we're staying here, go away!' Now they all come with their babies, leave them here and go away themselves.
Drama	The fear was enormous. Can you imagine the feelings you have every single day, wondering what will happen, hopefully the baby will be born, be hard, make your own decisions, don't let the doctor tell you what to do.
Realistic	It was a nice wall, it always took a while to watch their photos. But then we renovated the room and put new tapestry and I said that now we can take them off.
Philosophical	Like 'to honour your father and mother', what does it really mean? I only recently understood it. That is, how does a child honour a drunk father or mother? By learning. They should respect the experience that the father has. And not make the same mistakes. This is the idea. Not to grovel and crawl.

Ultimately, the conversations with the informants were filled with emotions, ranging from love and affection to irritation or despair. They resembled miniature plays that evoked a spectrum of emotions and inspired new thoughts in both participants. It is no wonder that we laughed during every interview, but after checking my transcripts and field notes I realized that crying was quite frequent, too. Out of 13 conversations, 7 included tears of affection – and these were not only shed by the grandparent.

> *Informant* (crying): I was afraid that if we touch certain topics...I'm sorry.

> *Researcher:* No, I'm sorry. This was not the intention. But what a relief that it's not only the researcher who's crying here.

3.5.3   Characters

In addition to themselves (analysis in Chapter 4) and their grandchildren, the informants included various co-starring characters in their narratives. It was, however, made clear that the main starring roles belonged to the **grandchildren**. They were the stars of the stories: remarkable, talented, sweet and genuine young people, who had brought lots of richness into their grandparents' lives. Superlatives were not spared when grandparents talked about their grandchildren.

> Oula is such great travel companion. Everything went so well, he is like a man's thought; there were no problems at all. He is so nice, from inside out.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*
>
> Inka is exceptional. I have never taken her travelling, I'm waiting for her to take me. Inka could be my travel guide.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*
>
> He is so remarkable, just extremely brilliant. He already gets really big understandings...he can handle things so well, so that I don't have to worry about him; if he won't manage, who would? He is linguistically very talented, talks a lot...he is happy and positive and you can have a chat with him, and he has such a great sense of humor, has always had. That is pretty funny.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

In the first two examples, the grandchild is in primary school, and in the last example, the grandchild is only three years old. It might be reasonable to assume that the tone of voice would change as the children grow older, so that teenage grandchildren are no longer subjected to such effusive praise. These research data provide no confirmation of the presumption, but there is a clear lack of criticism concerning grandchildren. This non-existent criticism of grandchildren might have been less noticeable had criticism not been present elsewhere in the narrative; the criticism that was present was mostly targeted on the informants' own children, or on other grandparents.

    The informants' own children, the grandchildren's parents, played the role of the sometimes-interfering middle generation. The presentation of the informants' adult children involved many emotions, reflecting the bond between the narrator and their adult child. Some grandparents openly, yet gently, criticized or made fun of their adult children, while some admired their offspring and were distinctly proud of their accomplishments. Criticizing and being proud were not exclusive and were parallelly apparent in the same narratives.

Piritta does not cook that much. She just knows nothing about flavouring: such horrible mush!

Anitta, mummukka of 1

And I had wondered what on earth is wrong with her, she was again cranking like a little brat.

Eija, mamma of 1

I brought Roosa up as a vegetarian. In adolescence, she had this crisis that she wanted to buy Saarioinen chicken balls and wear branded clothes. Normally adolescents don't wear branded clothes and become vegetarians.

Marjo, mummu of 1

Sometimes they are so ecological, but then again: 'We just bought a jeep!' Yeah right.

Tuija, mummu of 2

Then you go back, after you have taken care of Sisu all day, so why is everything in the exact same place as when you left? Dirty laundry all over, dishes and stuff. Even though you've tried to arrange everything so that she has time to do that.

Tuomo, pappa of 2

The children's spouses were treated more gently, which could also be interpreted as the inevitable outcome of a more distant relationship. The informants' bonds with their adult children were generally tight and close, so the relationships were filled with openness and more emotion, both positive and negative. The common 'grandparental ambivalence' of being involved in child care and yet not interfering is especially distinct in relation to children-in-law, and it is important to consider the feelings and opinions of the focal grandchild's other parent.

Mirkku [the daughter-in-law] is such...quite direct...and she dislikes dogs. So, I wondered in advance if she'll approve of it...that after being mummu and vaari to the dog, we'll also be the same to her child.

Tuija, mummu of 2

I used to stay there like one week in a row, so I asked my daughter if her husband has commented on that, that I always appear from the guestroom every single morning.

Ulla, mummi of 2

Other children were used as either a confirmation of, or comparison to informants' own grandchildren's achievements. They were either the grandchildren's best friends, who shared similar values and accomplishments, or children who always achieved a little less, or obtained worse results.

> He was a good friend of Oula, and Oula had told him to come and greet the grandma. I went there and saw a boy coming there and running fast by saying 'Moi!' Then Oula came and introduced that 'It was Juuso and he was in a hurry but he was supposed to say good afternoon to you'.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*
>
> I was so proud that even though Sisu is impulsive and active, he was sitting there peacefully and listened to it all. He was listening, although all the others kept running around, but Sisu, he was dedicated to listening. I am always so proud of him because he is so good.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*
>
> Tiia was always ahead of others. Eila had become a grandma at the same time and I always had some news about Tiia, while her grandchild wasn't even talking yet. Tiia was a wonder child really.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

The way in which the informants talked about their **own parents and grandparents** was mostly empathetic and understanding. It was obvious that life was now different, so it was natural that previous generations had represented a different model of grandparenting in many ways. The informants shared colourful and detailed memories about their own grandparents, even though most of them had experienced rather distant relationships, concretized only in regular visits during holidays. Some had lived in the same household with their grandparents, but even then, the relationship had been formal or work-orientated. Diseases and injuries characterized the memoirs of many informants when talking about their own grandparents.

> Grandpa was naturally of no use, he was paralysed and I could hardly understand his speech. Some advice I might have got from him. I remember when he told me to bark the wood, so if it's impossible to cut up, you just peel off a couple of layers to make it dry well. So it was at this level, our interaction.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

I remember my mum's parents well, there were taata and mamma, and taata was a real storyteller. He died when I was 16. My brother and me, we spent a lot of time there, and always after eating we had to go to bed to lie down for a while, it was not allowed to go and ramp immediately. And he always told us good stories, a little scary though, of the wartime.

Eija, mamma of 1

Well I come from Kainuu, so my grandmas lived far away. They sent me tights and I cut holes in them. So I had no close relationships with them...We visited them once a year and grandma visited us once in five years, and then she died.

Marjo, mummu of 1

I remember my other grandma being paralysed and lying in bed. But then there was mamma living in the house next door. She was so kind, fat and nice. If there was something she disliked, it was 'lempo'. That was her worst word. We always went up to the attic to see her exciting things, and then we asked her if we could have this and that, and she always said yes...So, she was very kind. But we thought she was terribly old. She was already 60!

Katri, mummu of 11

Yet, some informants had experienced a stronger bond with their grandparents, to the extent that they wanted to pass this on to new generations.

At work, we had this event where we had to think of the most important person in our lives, and it was our mamma. She was genuinely present in everything she did, and somehow I saw what she told about all that evacuee travelling, and I understood what a struggle it must have been for her with all the children, leaving their home several times...You can of course never become another person, but that presence and genuineness, it was so beautiful.

Marjatta, mummi of 3

To a greater extent than their grandparents, the informants' own parents served as role models – or negative role models – of grandparenthood. Many informants reflected on their own grandparental role and compared it with that of their own parents when they had become grandparents to the informants' first child.

I respected my parents and the way they wanted to help us in babysitting...Now that I listen, as they are no longer here, how my children and their cousins talk about my parents, it is just stunning... She [informant's mother] was such an arms-always-open-mum. Her big heart even annoyed us sometimes, just naturally. She organized everything and made it everywhere; she always found a way to make the children take naps and suchlike. My parents had their own way to manage the whole crowd.

Ulla, mummi of 2

My Mum used to get hurt whenever she didn't get enough attention, so I don't want to get upset of anything like that. If they don't come over for Christmas, so what? Besides, everyday counts more than the holidays, for me it was always so.

Marjo, mummu of 1

When they [informant's own daughter and father] go to the forest, she knows to be quiet, you don't scream and shout. Years ago, my father laughed afterwards that he had really tried to...you know, Laura is so small, a real miniature girl, so he made an experiment that for how long will she stay there, right behind him. Laura knew that Grandpa would never step onto something unsafe so she always placed her boot onto Grandpa's footprint. And my Dad laughed that he really tried to make longer and longer strides, expecting her to say: 'Let's have a break.' But no, she said nothing, and he looked behind and saw that there she still is.

Eija, mamma of 1

Further to informant's own parents and grandparents, other important family members played a part in the informants' grandparenthood. **Extended family** could include informants' adult children, their own siblings, families-in-law and even ex-spouses and more distant relatives. Family, and keeping it together, were highly important to the informants.

We have such a tight family, and although my son is single, he is an important part of it, too. Like when Eino found his old little cars, they were so important to him, he still had them in his hands when he got to bed.

Ulla, mummu of 2

Now that we have Jaakko's birthday, we'll all go to Tenerife, including Mirkku's parents and her mother's sister and her husband, because she is a bit like Jani's second mother-in-law.

Tuija, mummu of 2

A more minor, but common, role in the narratives was played by significant **confirmants** – those outsiders who, through their comments, confirmed the important events and statements of the narrator. These 'witnesses' could be any professional, or otherwise trusted person, who justified that what was obvious to the narrator should be obvious to the audience, too. Witnesses were particularly important for confirming the objectivity of grandparents in appraising their grandchildren, or reporting something positive about themselves.

Even the counsellor was a little offended when Veera said that she'll go to the horse academy if she only is accepted. He said that with your grades you definitely get in but you could get into much better schools, too.

Pirjo, mummu of 10

They were just skating, and there happened to be the junior coach of Tampereen Ilves. He had watched Jimi skate and wondered aloud where he had learnt all that. He said he couldn't remember seeing such a young boy with such skating skills.

Mikko, vaari of 10

Like at work, none of the young ones believes that I am over 50, they feel that I'm just one of them.

Eija, mamma of 1

Finally, the narratives dealt with known or imagined **other grandparents**, who represented a comparison to the informants' own grandparenthood, whether by indicating similarities, deficits or differences, or by representing models of grandparenting of which informants disapproved. Comparisons were made by informants, particularly to the other grandparents of the grandchild in question. Although the informants mainly had good relationships with their grandchildren's other grandparents, differences between grandparenting styles were clearly present in some narratives.

Mimmi is afraid of them [the other grandparents], she gets shy, and when she's on the floor they just stand there and look at her and say 'Oh no, now she's crying'…They don't get along at all, they have never played with her, and have they like only once changed her diapers, or said 'Should we do something?'

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Jari's father then…he has problems with his back, so he won't necessarily…he plays with Sisu, yes, but is not ready to take full responsibility. He does different things, yes, but they are so different. Like sometimes, I'm not that organized, and when we're at the playschool, Sisu may stay there to sort the little cars, because this other grandpa is like that, they want to sort everything.

Tuomo, pappa of 2

One gal from work said that no, don't even try to bring any brats to her, like grandchildren I mean, not if she has other plans. That you made your brats, take care of them, too. And I'm like really? Oh my God, bring them here, to me! Everyone!

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Despite not relating directly to any of my research questions, the structural analysis above served various purposes and affected the following thematic analysis of the narratives. First, viewing the characters in the narratives revealed the complexity of relationships, which, in turn, directed attention towards different aspects of consumption and grandparental identity, including the power relations of consumption, experienced and widely mentioned differences to other grandparents, and the role of the intergenerational chain in passing values on from the informants' own parents. Second, by paying attention to the scene and setting of the narratives, I was alert to the extended temporal dimension of the grandparental experience, which stretched from days before their own birth to the far future, *post mortem*. The grandparental experience presented its roots in the informants' childhood and parenthood, but also in the stories their own grandparents had told, in the special moments of the present and in the ambivalent expectations and ideas they had for the future. Third, the categorization of the narratives in terms of their genre helped me to understand and analyse their quality. While there was no such category as 'bad narratives', it was more difficult to interpret and analyse the most realistic narratives with a thin story, with minimal personal interpretation, assumed causalities and consequences. When identifying a realistic narrative, it was important to be careful with my own interpretations and to return to the informant in the event of any uncertainty.

4 GRANDPARENTAL IDENTITY AND CONSUMPTION

4.1 Being a grandparent

> So I'm not at all like a traditional grandmother, and I haven't thought of starting to act like one.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

There are many ways of being a grandparent, ranging from fully engaging in the role to withdrawing from it. The freedom of choice is great, since there are no prescriptive norms set on grandparenting. Grandparenthood is a status *per se*, but it does not come with a specific *a priori* role description. Ultimately, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is voluntary and evolves within a specific context. This freedom, however, contains a risk: ambivalence about the role and opportunities for failure.

Several factors illuminate contemporary grandparenthood. Because of greater life expectancy, grandparenthood is now more common than ever, and more grandparents have a chance to see their grandchildren born, grow up and have children of their own. Most informants in this study remember their own grandparents as diseased, old people. For the informants' grandchildren, the situation will be entirely different. The lengthened lifespan of grandparenthood leads to long-term relationships and comprises several distinct periods (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002; Gauthier 2002; Hoff 2007). Most children born today will have at least one, and likely more than one, living and healthy grandparent, who can potentially be involved in their lives (Swartz 2009, 194). The status of grandparent is reached in varying phases of the life span, but the average age is 47 (Tootelian & Varshney 2010). More often, the new grandparent is still

professionally active and is often engaged socially, politically, or through voluntary activities. Still, it is the younger grandparents in particular, who devote large amounts of time to being with their grandchildren (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002; Danielsbacka et al. 2013).

Currently in our society, raising children is clearly the parents' responsibility, and grandparents are assumed not to get involved in their grandchildren's education. Consequently, the role of the grandparent is now more liberal and playful (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002) than it was during the childhood and youth of most informants. Following the declining birth rate in Europe, it is also easier for today's grandparents to be more present and to invest in relationships with their grandchildren when there are only a few of them (Gauthier 2002, 297; Swartz 2009, 193). Silverstein and Marenco (2001, 495–496) suggest that the grandparenting role has become more diffuse as a result of the longevity revolution and growing diversity in the role itself, due to changing family structures and the alternative lifestyle choices available to grandparents.

> Back then, grandparents or parents never played with the children. The children's role was to go out and spend their time. It was totally different, they never played with us and I didn't expect them to.
>
> *Tapio, pappa of 4*

However, more liberty does not mean that grandparenthood today is conflict-free (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002). Various familial and societal phenomena have affected the nature and everyday experience of grandparenthood. Many grandparents live far away from their grandchildren, which poses challenges to forging special relationships. Moreover, the changes in family structures also affect grandparenthood, as the concept of the nuclear family is no longer a norm. When parents divorce and remarry, the continuity of the family and the grandparent–grandchild relationship can be endangered (Attias-Donfut & Segalen 2002). Children in blended families can also gain new 'blended grandparents' or 'social grandparents', which extends the borders of grandparenthood beyond biological ties. To compound the issue, not only do the grandchildren's parents divorce and remarry, but also their grandparents. Whether these and other intrafamilial and trans-generational behaviours pose challenges, or not, they certainly affect the experience of grandparenthood and coalesce to make contemporary grandparents into a diverse group.

Therefore, it is obvious that grandparenting is not a uniform experience today if it ever was. Although there is no 'typical' grandparenthood, there remain some traits of normativeness in the way grandparents expect they should be and behave. Consequently, some sociologists have challenged the view that the grandparent role lacks all social definition. For example, Robertson (1977) suggested that grandparents typically assume their role with numerous preconceived attitudes and expectations, presuming for example, that good grandparents love and help their grandchildren and do not interfere in their upbringing. The present study confirms this position: parallel to the strong individuality, there seem to exist unspoken cultural rules of grandparenting that frame what grandparenting should and should not be. For the informants of this study, grandparenthood appears to be a desired status, which leads to unique and cherished relationships. When mapping what grandparenting is not, the informants brought up the common sources of grandparental ambivalence: too much interference, abuse and disrespect (see Mason et al. 2007). In addition, some behaviour was rejected by the informants as inconvenient, such as having to be involved in activities one disliked, as well as negative changes the informants experienced in themselves, such as feeling old in the 'wrong' way. Informants also disapproved of an image of a grandparent generation, who considers youth and the lifestyle of young people to be disgraceful. In the following chapter, I will describe contemporary grandparenthood as it appeared in the narratives.

4.1.1   My way grandparenthood

I tell my daughter not to interfere: this is our thing.

Eija, mamma of 1

What does grandparenting include? First, it involves a precious and companionable, *unique relationship*, which exists not only between a grandparent and a grandchild, but also beyond these roles – a relationship between two individuals with their own histories and personalities. In the narratives of this study, grandparents are willing to make considerable effort for a strong relationship. For

grandparents, it is important to get to know their grandchildren as they are, and in return, to be known by their grandchildren as they really are.

> I want Aida to get to know me as a person, not as a grandma, who just takes care of her. And I want to learn to know her as a person, instead of as my grandchild. So that I don't have to do only those things that grandparents are supposed to do.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

Grandparenthood has become less predictable due to changes in the timing of fertility (Silverstein & Marenco 2001, 495). While acknowledging that grandparents have little control over the timing of grandparenthood, or how many grandchildren they will have, grandparenthood still contains an aspect of active preparation. It is a *desirable* goal that some are waiting for long before it actualizes. This may include active *planning* and preparation, such as saving their own children's clothes, necessities and toys, but also expectations about how life will be and what can be done with a grandchild.

> It was great news, long-awaited. I had always said that it is a bloody misery if I cannot have grandchildren before I turn 50. So that could you please do something?...It was all I ever dreamed of: to be a mom and a grandma.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

For new grandparents, the most natural way to start building the lifelong relationship is through babysitting. Some grandparents see their grandchildren nearly every day, and some have specifically organized their personal life to better support their adult children's young families.

> My husband and me, we will take turns each Monday. I can have unpaid time off from work to make it possible to spend every second Monday in Helsinki. It will be 15 Mondays and we would half them. Because we want to form a real relationship with that child, and it won't happen by visiting them once a month and staying there for a few hours. We want to share his everyday, just be alone with him.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

To understand the various forms of grandparenting, it is important to situate grandparenting within the context of the family life cycle. Partners in intergenerational relationships play different roles, depending on the type and timing of their development (Silverstein & Marenco 2001, 494–495). Thus, the life stages of grandparents and their grandchildren determine how the grandparenting role is enacted. Relationships with grandchildren may *change* remarkably as

grandchildren grow up, as the interaction is often appropriate to the developmental stage of the child. While providing child care or recreational outings is a common way to interact with younger grandchildren, financial help often meets the needs of older grandchildren. The narratives of new grandparents often dealt with mundane issues and a simple effort–reward balance: the grandparent's main duty and best quality was to get the baby to sleep, eat and smile. This indicates that good grandparenting involves at least some of the norms and everyday familial practices of good parenting (see Valtonen & Närvänen 2016, 377).

> I pick him up from the daycare, feed him in the car, and then he gets asleep in the car. Then I put him on my shoulder, carry him to bed and take a nap myself next to him. It works so well.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*
>
> For some reason, she is not shy at all with me. You know, the smile on her face, it goes up to the ears when she sees me, and then she lifts her hands, and I pick her up in my arms and then we just crawl on the floor all day.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

All informants with grandchildren older than preteens told about a change in the relationship. They described how their role as grandparent had changed since the early days, either through growing into the role, actively reconstructing it, or as the children grew older and changed in terms of their needs and points of interest. What was important was that there remained an easy way of being together and doing things together.

> At first, I felt somehow unreal when the first grandchild was born. How to react, how to be, how to behave? As the group of grandchildren got older, many things became routinized...Grandpa's job description gets bigger and bigger, and almost explodes sometimes.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*
>
> The plays have turned into discussions on school, sports, music, clothes, friends, games and everything that happens in the young people's lives. We even talk about crushes and dating.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

As the grandchildren grow older, it may become more natural for some grandparents to spend time with them. Ilpo mentions the joy of being able to rely on his strengths by engaging in 'mental arm wrestling' with the older

grandchildren. Riitta describes how her role in the grandchildren's lives has become easier. At best, grandparents and grandchildren make a *perfect match*, who value each other, learn from each other, and have the time and willingness to spend time together.

> They are such a couple...when Laura and grandpa go somewhere together, they may just spend hours without saying a word...Then again, Lotta and my mother, they are extremely imaginative and love furnishing. They are like: 'Oh, have you seen this new magazine?' Sometimes, I just wonder where I fall? But now I've finally got my long-awaited counterpart.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*
>
> And they [the grandsons] keep teaching me: computers and mushrooms, sometimes patience, too. And fishing, no matter how tiny their fish are, they always want to make a meal. They showed me how to clean them. And I told them that I had never eaten anything that delicious.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Another distinctive feature in the narratives was the high level of self-confidence, determination and *agency* that the informants attach to their social role. To them, it seems clear what they would and would not do as grandparents. They strictly avoid sacrifices, such as behaviour and activities that they do not like or approve of, or moving too far from personal comfort zones. The informants are also very realistic about their competence as it relates to their perceived grandparent ideal, and they are keen to see whether other grandparents do things differently, or better.

> Because I'm not a mother myself, I lack the maternal instinct for care. I cannot care for children the way mothers do, all that feeding and bathing and whatever is included. Changing diapers is pure horror. So bringing very young children overnight is not very wise, unless in an extreme emergency... I am also not very good at typical children's play, I easily get bored and frustrated. Hide and seek is terribly boring to me.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*
>
> I will do anything for her but sports. I am very good at supporting all sports but I am so sports-restricted that no way. I get so irritated if I sweat. Sled hills are fine, but I won't ski, I won't skate, I won't do slalom, nothing like this. Well I could go to the swimming hall but that's it. I just won't do sports.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

However, informants' wish to stay inside their comfort zones does not mean that contemporary grandparents are not willing to compromise. The grandchild will – and is allowed to – change the world.

> Suddenly my bed is reserved and I just have to move into the other room...and when I return, what on earth is there? Something moist...oh, it's a carrot! An end of a carrot in my bed! And yesterday I found a toy under the sheets. I thought that, well, there used to be entirely different toys in grandma's bed before!
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Becoming a grandparent is traditionally considered a benchmark for the beginning of old age, or at least a new stage in an individual's life course (Kaufman & Elder 2003, 272). Thus, although grandparenthood is often experienced as a pleasant role, grandparents generally refuse to accept the elements of the title that *make them feel old* 'in the wrong way'. Merely being a grandparent will not make the informants feel old, but they are aware of the negative stereotypes and associations shadowing grandparenthood. Being a 'different' sort of grandparent is a popular statement when the informants reflect on their grandparental identity. The youngest grandparents also proudly talk about funny misunderstandings and other people's surprised reactions to their grandparenthood.

> I've noticed how a few heads turn when Aida calls 'mummu' and I am there.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*
>
> I remember how they thought she was our 'evening star', when we walked around with the pram. Mikko said, 'Yes, she is, but our son did the job!'
>
> *Pirkko, mummu of 10*

Even though the informants do not want to identify with the negative connotations and ageing effects of grandparenthood, there can also exist a positive side in the title of a grandparent and the prejudices it involves. Marjo tells about the liberating benefits in her identification as a grandparent.

> Then again, you get merciful towards yourself. It is easier to forgive yourself if you gain some extra pounds or suchlike. Hey, I'm a grandma; I can be just like this!
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

Following the principles of 'my way grandparenthood', all informants chose their grandparental nicknames, often after conscious and careful consideration. Choosing a nickname is by no means an ad hoc decision, but a well-grounded one,

reflecting various perspectives and symbolism. The grandparental name appears to be a high-involvement decision that helps the individual avoid those associations with grandparenthood of which they disapprove. In harmony with Reed's (2012) notion about grandmothers who refused to be called grandmothers, some nicknames were rejected as being undesirable due to their strong association with old age, or other negative features. They were characterized as making grandparents feel old 'in the wrong way'.

> I've always considered 'vaari' as someone with a walking stick while 'pappa' can be younger and more playful... I said that I am not 'vaari' and I don't want to become one...Even today, 'vaari' has a strange echo for me. If someone says that 'vaari' is coming, I turn around to see what kind of a 'vaari' there is.
>
> *Tapio, pappa of 4*
>
> I don't want to be 'mummo'. I don't want to be 'mummo-like'.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Grandparental names have different connotations, which informants use to differentiate themselves from, or to identify with, other grandparents. Katri tells how she had always wanted to become 'an honest countryside *mummu*', in contrast to her sister who wanted to be a 'posh *mummi*'. Riitta named herself '*junma*' because she knew she 'would never make an ordinary grandmother', and Eija chose the nickname '*mamma*' because she considered herself to be a 'totally different grandma' and also wanted to distinguish herself from her own mother, who was '*mummu*'.

However, not all negative associations with grandparenthood can be tackled with a right nickname.

> I've noticed that after becoming 'mummu' I've got more physical problems than before!
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

For the informants, grandparenting includes mutual *respect*. Respect for the parents of the grandchildren and their way of living is an important aspect of grandparenthood. Different families have different rules and principles, and grandparents know that they should respect the rules that their grandchildren's parents have set. Sometimes, compromises are needed when the habits and opinions of different generations collide.

I'm learning to understand that it is not so terrible if the beds are unmade, or if the hall is full of shoes. I try to ignore those things. Before, I always started to clean the house first. It's more important that the kids are well than that the house is clean.

Katri, mummu of 11

When I visit them, my daughter's family, and my son is there too…we eat and sit down onto the sofa, and they all have smartphones in their hands! Then I just may say aloud: 'Could we please have a little chat, because we are like on a visit here?'

Ulla, mummi of 2

Grandchildren are also required to respect their grandparents and the lives they live. Grandparents value their privacy and their own time, rules and routines, and see no point in sacrificing them. Compromises can be reached without losing respect for one another.

You already want to have your privacy; you need your own peace. I don't want to have a constant hassle around us.

Katri, mummu of 11

When studying the rules of grandparenting, Mason et al. (2007) identified two agreed-upon norms about what a grandparent should be and do. These predominant norms were 'not interfering' and 'being there'. Being a combination of parent, parent-in-law and grandparent poses unique challenges for grandparents, who try to compromise on the different role expectations of others and themselves. Being involved does not straightforwardly constitute interfering, but the boundary between the two concepts in practice is not self-evident. According to previous research and this study, this may pose a problem for grandparents. Parenting adult children is said to be a process of 'letting go' and allowing adult children to lead their own lives. For grandparents, this can be translated into allowing adult children to bring up their children in their own way and recognizing the legitimacy of their parental authority (Mason et al. 2007, 691). Interfering is associated with bad parenting, and not facilitating adult children's transition from dependence to independence.

You have to give the reins to the other one, even when you're still there, behind, holding on and guiding.

Anitta, mummukka of 1

In the narratives, grandparenthood presents itself as an arena for balancing between too little participation and too much interfering. Involved grandparents want to express that they are 'there for' their children and grandchildren, but that they sometimes fail and get too close. It seems that grandparents know the rules and make a conscious effort to follow them, but they do not always succeed.

> I feel the urge to interfere in things even when I know I shouldn't.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

> You must be so careful, not to give your own opinion on how things are. You must constantly learn things like that and just be silent and accept it. Then you notice that they are doing just fine, if you only manage to keep your mouth shut. But you don't always. Not so very often at all! But you keep training.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

In the study by Mason et al. (2007), some grandparents felt that they were expected to serve as a reserve parent and as a child-care repository, to be called upon for practical, emotional and financial support when required by the parents. In the narratives, however, there seems to exist a better balance between the wishes of parents and grandparents. Most grandparents talk about arranging their lives around their grandchildren and prioritizing their grandchildren's activities over their own. According to the narratives, more problems seem to arise concerning the grandparents' willingness to do more and be more involved than from their resistance to being there whenever needed.

> Me and my daughter-in-law, we had a little...You know, when they come over, I'd like to be with Elmo all the time, look after him, do everything, I want to be with him a hundred per cent of the precious time he spends with us. Also, to let his parents take a break for a while. And I don't know, I think she has taken it in a bad way, she thinks that I fuss too much.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Nearly all grandparents talk about the importance of having time to themselves, but this does not seem to conflict too much with the norm of 'being there'. The possibility of ambivalence exists, but it has been quite successfully tackled so far. Being regularly needed and having distinct responsibilities can also be considered a privilege by those grandparents who are no longer professionally active. For instance, Tuomo, who has taken early retirement, talks positively about the everyday order that his little grandson brings.

On the other hand, this has given a nice rhythm to my life. Of course, I enjoy it when I have no responsibilities, but then again, this rhythm is pretty good, too. It is good to have those planned days. Otherwise, you just spend the whole morning thinking of what to do today.

Tuomo, pappa of 2
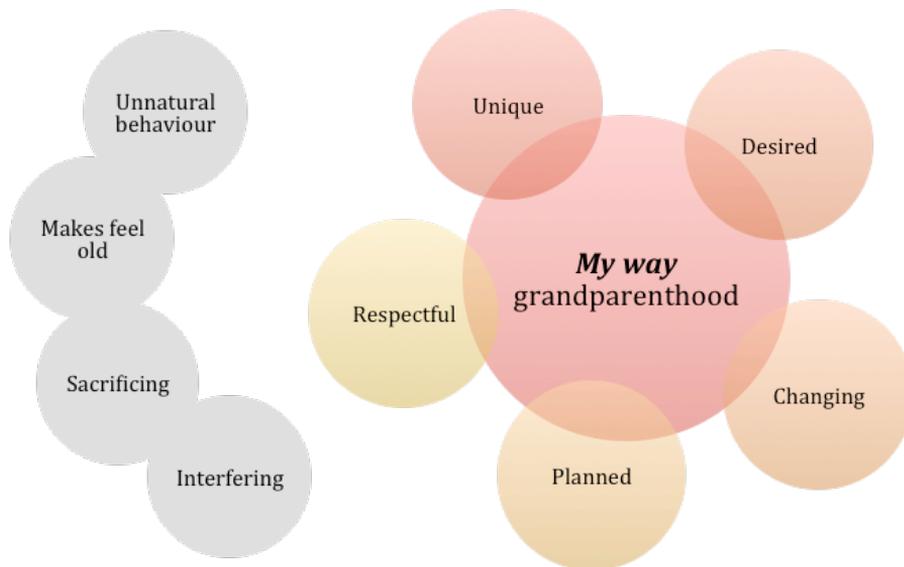
Figure 13. My way grandparenthood: what it is and is not

In conclusion, being a grandparent currently is a unique, but not entirely unregulated, experience. The main features of the contemporary experience of grandparenthood are summarized in Figure 13, as an illustration of 'my way grandparenthood'.

4.1.2   Meaning of grandparenthood

In conversations with the informants, it became apparent that grandparenthood plays a significant role in their lives. Being a grandparent is repeatedly reported as adding richness in life and a status that the informants are grateful for. Even the

youngest informants speak plainly about happiness with grandparenthood, despite its strong ties with later adulthood and old age.

> It's no cliché to say that children are the richness of life. This grandpa has a lot of that, and I'm happy to have even more. That guarantees that you do not have to stand by doing nothing.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*
>
> Making it short, these four young people have brought so much richness and new content in my life. I am extremely grateful and happy that they exist and that I can be a part of their lives.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*
>
> I just love this. I never thought that 'Help! I will be a grandma'...I never think about age really, I just love it that Aida exists.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

According to Erikson (1963), middle-aged and older individuals experience personal growth through relationships with younger people, which prompt a dynamic balance between tendencies towards generativity and self-absorption. Bonds with grandchildren can strongly contribute to personal lives as grandparents make affective, spiritual, or material contributions to their adult children's parenting and to their grandchildren's upbringing. Robertson (1977) differentiated between meanings orientated towards meeting society's needs (good education for the grandchild) and those orientated towards meeting one's own personal needs (feeling less lonely). Kivnick (1982) theorized that grandparents derive multiple sources of meaning instead of one primary role meaning. She identified five dimensions of meaning: 1) centrality as a high salience of the role, 2) becoming a valued elder through admiration by younger people, 3) immortality through the clan, referring to the ability to live on through a grandchild, 4) reinvolvement with the personal past by reliving earlier experiences through grandchildren and 5) indulgence, that is, an ability to spoil the grandchild. However, the limited number of investigations that have examined Kivnick's model have shown inconsistent results (see Szinovacz 1998) and have rejected some meanings, such as indulgence, as being a stereotypical grandparental behaviour instead of a genuine source of meaning. Overall, the only factor that has been agreed upon is that grandparents find the role satisfying (Thiele & Whelan 2006). For instance, according to Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986), involvement with grandchildren provides grandparents with meaningful activity, a sense of pride and potential sources of support.

Ultimately, the relationship between different aspects of grandparenthood, such as behaviours and meanings, remains largely unexplored (Thiele & Whelan 2006).

Capturing the meaning of grandparenthood is beyond the objectives of this study, but the narratives confirm the best parts about grandparenthood. First, being a grandparent guarantees that life and the family go on. Most informants spontaneously told how important it was to them that the chain of generations would continue from now into the future. Referring to immortality, this continuity indicates that our children and grandchildren are our living legacies – strongly desired extensions of self (Lifton 1974). Consequently, grandparenthood is represented as a trigger to rework identities.

> When the first of them was born, it was so great; somehow, you experienced the chain of generations at that moment.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

Another important source of joy was the experience of being needed, which is a concrete confirmation of importance. As grandparents, the informants were made to feel important, as an essential part of the young children's lives. Grandparenthood seems to refer to a fundamental feeling of trust that the informants' lives really count, or that they are 'still needed'. This manifests communality and refers to generative adults' desire to nurture and assist, or to be of any important use to others (Erikson 1963). It also reflects the anticipated finiteness of being needed and encourages grandparents to demonstrate their own importance when it still is possible.

> In all that fuss and noise you feel that life goes on, including your own. After all, I am not totally unneeded, yet.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*
>
> It seems that we're organizing our life, so that the children and grandchildren come first. Now that you still have the energy, you must do all the things you want, instead of leaving it all to the retirement. Because you don't know if there will be that time.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Finally, grandparents appreciate the chance to 'get updated' and learn about the life of younger generations, even when it involves phenomena they are suspicious about. Having a link to the everyday life of children is a gift and a precious possibility to learn about the world.

It's great to spend time with the kids, and to get into their world. I'm interested in the modern day-care system and in the schools, how they function. It's interesting to observe this new generation, now that you still remember how things were when you were young.

Marjatta, mummi of 3

4.2   Grandparental consumption

In Finland, the context of this study, there is a distinct lack of both studies and statistics of grandparental consumption. Fragmented data gathered from diverse statistics concerning 50+ consumers indicates that grandparents spend substantial amounts of money on their grandchildren – just as they do in the US. According to the US Census Bureau (2014), grandparents control 75 per cent of the country's wealth, and they are willing to consume. Even when their capabilities are limited, grandparents appear willing to reallocate funds to their grandchildren. Tootelian and Varshney (2010) studied grandparents' consumption and noticed that nearly 95 per cent of the target group spent, on average, more than a thousand dollars per year on their grandchildren. In the US alone, and only in those product categories included in the study, this makes the total market worth more than 54.5 billion dollars annually. In addition to material support, grandparents also provide their children and grandchildren with practical assistance, such as child care, household help and transport. As important sources of regular and intermittent child care, grandparents provide USD 17–29 billion in unpaid child care for their grandchildren (Silverstein & Marenco 2001). To illustrate the role-specific consumption of grandparent consumers, we can look at the phenomenon from various aspects, according to the actors in the relationship and the consumer inputs.

Grandparental consumption, that is, the consumption related to the role of grandparent, can be roughly divided into three main categories: consumption for the grandchild, consumption with the grandchild and consumption because of the grandchild; the latter category describes consumption activities initiated by the role and relationship, but not directly targeted at the grandchild. Figure 14 summarizes examples from each category of consumption, based on the data from this study.

Consuming for the grandchild

- Necessities
- Gifts
- Hobbies, sports equipment
- Clothes
- Transport
- Food
- Money transfers

Consuming with the grandchild

- Travel
- Culture (theatre, movies, museums, concerts)
- Sport events
- Shopping tours
- Crafting, baking, gardening, fishing, hunting
- Entertainment (fun parks)
- Restaurants, food

Consuming because of the grandchild

- New technology, new trends
- Photobooks, paintings
- Necessities & accessories (highchairs, potties, prams, trampolines)
- Language courses
- Fitness, yoga, mindfulness
- Travel, accommodation
- Events, celebration

Figure 14. Grandparental consumption

The ensuing chapters consider more closely all three categories of grandparental consumption as they appear in the narratives. The approach here is rather descriptive and sparse, preceding the actual analysis of the narratives, which starts in Section 4.3.

4.2.1   Consuming for the grandchild

Grandparenthood may generate consumption *for* the grandchild, including gifts, savings, money transfers and other consumption targeted directly at the youngest generation. The first big purchases of a young family, such as car seats and prams, create an opportunity for grandparents to participate in the baby's life. Later,

hobby equipment replaces baby necessities as the 'big, useful purchases' that grandparents either finance entirely, or contribute towards.

> We've bought a pram for both families. Of course, they chose it themselves, but we gave the money.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*
>
> We've said about Christmas presents that we can be those who buy skis and skates, kickboards and such; we can get them something they really need.
>
> *Seppo, vaari of 3*

According to the narratives, the reputation of grandparents as being generous and indulgent gift-givers is quite misleading when it comes to toys. Grandparents precisely tell how they want to refrain from that category and trust that children get enough – or too many – toys anyway, without their input. Some exceptions can be made, but only 'for a good reason'.

> Toy departments have never inspired me...Well, I remember one Christmas rush and strolling from one toy store to another, being frustrated and desperate, looking for a light sword. I didn't even know what it would look like. But I do know now. Why I won't buy them toys is because everyone else keeps buying them. Then again, when I was a child, I never got excited about toys that were bought from shops. Well, of course the selection was not what it is today, but still. I preferred creating the toys and plays by myself, and I want to encourage these kids for that, too. Skis, sledges and skates are different. They are useful and needed, and I'm happy to buy those things.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*
>
> It is just shocking. I am no buyer of presents because I know that when the birthday comes...well, I bought the binoculars because so we can observe birds together. But when he was opening the presents, he asked if it was Christmas again. It is just crazy...I think that parents and grandparents should really try to control the number of those purchases.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

In addition to anti-materialistic reasoning, grandparents avoid toy departments for reasons of insecurity, due to not knowing what to buy. They tell about constantly changing 'hit toys' for young children, and even more 'chances to fail' with purchases for older children. While acknowledging their own unimaginativeness, they prefer, above all, giving money as a present, either as a note in an envelope, or as a deposit into a personal bank account – often one opened by grandparents

themselves for this particular purpose. Also long-term deposits, bank memberships and life-insurance policies are popular gifts for grandchildren.

> As a baptism present, we gave them both a membership of a local bank; it's worth 100 euros. We also bought them insurance for the future, and deposit 50 euros every month.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Parallel to money and deposits, educational gifts and hobby equipment are examples of 'purposive gifts' for birthday and Christmas, or as souvenirs. Some purchases are made after asking the parents what the child needs, others are determined by grandparents' own interests. At best, a gift uniquely reflects its giver and serves to connect the grandparent and grandchild through a shared activity.

> I bought him this assembly kit from Japan, from the Miraikan science park. We are going to build solar cell devices, the kit includes all parts and Japanese sketches. We have started the project already, and we will continue it on our holiday trip. It is really complicated, but I thought that it would be great to make it work, that is, if there are sunny days. You could see how the rotors function.
>
> *Seppo, vaari of 3*

Another type of gift that connects grandparents and grandchildren is a photo book that grandparents create, order online and give to their grandchildren. The narratives indicate how the first grandchild in particular has a good chance of receiving their own unique photo book consisting of sweet memories of childhood, subjectively chosen by the grandparent. As time goes by and more grandchildren enter the world, the popularity of creating unique photo books wanes.

Ethical/ecological products are spontaneously mentioned as generally preferred gifts, but it seems that the principle can also be easily neglected in favour of other attributes, such as making the child happy. Marjo tells how she puts a high value on sustainable consumption and ecological choices over materialism, but ultimately, not at the cost of her granddaughter's happiness.

> I normally buy one big gift, which is more considered...Last Christmas, I was in a huge hurry and Aida had fallen crazy in love with that Frozen thing, so I bought her Frozen-branded clothes. It's not, you shouldn't be so dogmatic in anything. If the girl loves Frozen and that's what makes her happy, I can buy those for her. And I buy a lot of used things, so I can very well buy something new every now and then.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

Considering the more mundane aspects of consumption, it is common for grandparents to buy products that meet their grandchildren's primary needs, such as clothes and food. In particular, those grandparents who are closely involved in the everyday lives of their grandchildren, tend to pamper them in terms of 'good food and warm clothes', or even by taking a stronger responsibility for fulfilling the basic needs of their grandchildren's households.

> I have bought groceries and cooked for them for all these twelve years, so that the meal is ready when they come home from school.
>
> *Pirkko, mummu of 10*
>
> Last time, I bought them clothes and shoes for their stepfather's funeral, so that their mother wouldn't have to do that. And I also bake buns and bread every time I go there and take some food and woollen socks with me.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

In conclusion, the grandparents of this study are willing to consume for their grandchildren in many ways and forms, except when it comes to buying toys. Grandchildren are a good reason for grandparents to consume, even to the extent that grandchildren are in the role of vicarious consumers and it is the grandparent who is indulged.

> I've been wondering if it's stupid to start this tradition that you always bring them something. But it's just so nice. You care for yourself at the same time.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*
>
> I am a gift person, I love to get presents and to give presents. It makes me so happy.
>
> *Tuija, mummi of 2*

4.2.2   Consuming with the grandchild

Grandparenthood encourages informants to consume *with* the grandchild. As grandparents' supporting role in the daily care of children has become more common in recent decades, grandparents and grandchildren are generally spending more time together than before. Although babysitting young grandchildren seems to predominate among all the different ways of being together, there are numerous other activities that grandparents and grandchildren are involved with. A distinct duality seems to prevail concerning time spent together, varying from mundane

everyday moments at home to the highlights of holidays spent together. This was also a subject of disagreement among the informants: some wanted to have memorable experiences and do extraordinary things with their grandchildren, while others emphasized that it is the everyday that counts, rather than luxurious holidays and special peak moments.

Grandparents and grandchildren as a consumption unit is an example of the many ways in which demographic changes reflect consumer behaviour and ultimately the market. The more grandparents and grandchildren spend time together, the more there are attractive opportunities for the leisure industry if the marketers seize the challenge to create environments where the wishes of both generations are met. This requires ambitious and open-minded research to understand the dimensions and meanings of this new kind of consumer behaviour.

> I would never have imagined that I'd like Disneyland. I always thought that: 'Ugh, I will never go there. Such a money-stealing place.' But it was just fantastic! I just loved the way they had made everything perfect, everything exceeded expectations, velvet carpets, golden items, it was totally insane, and I really loved it.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

One famous mode of grandparent–grandchild consumption is holidaying. It is estimated that at least five million US family holidays per year span three generations, with grandparents often paying for the fun. Another dimension of the trend is *grandtravel*, grandparents holidaying with their grandchildren, without the children's parents. This sector of the tourism industry currently accounts for seven per cent of all adult leisure travel in the US (Schänzel & Yeoman 2014, 353). The new composition of family travel groups has been highlighted in some articles (Becken 2013; Gardyn 2001), yet the niche remains underserved and understudied. The extent of grandtravel is expected to grow as the heavy travellers in the baby-boomer cohort retire (Tootelian & Varshney 2010). At the beginning of the 21st century, baby boomers already counted for half of the family travel market (Gardyn 2001).

For grandparents, holidays offer an opportunity to spend time together with grandchildren, without the physical or social restrictions of everyday life. For parents, these holidays with grandparents provide valuable child-care help and a possibility of offering the child experiences that they otherwise might not have, whether for economical or temporal reasons. More than a half of my informants had travelled abroad with their grandchildren, in most cases without their grandchildren's parents. In particular, retired grandparents tend to have time to

take grandchildren on holiday and thus offer appreciated help to parents during holidays, as well as providing extraordinary experiences for the children. In the best cases, these holidays provide a win-win situation that benefits all parties, such as in instances when grandparents would otherwise lack suitable travel companions. This makes travel a good possibility to actualize the myth of the 'perfect match'. For instance, Katri tells how she and her husband used to be heavy travellers until her husband, for health reasons, no longer was able to travel. Since then, Katri has taken all her grandchildren travelling.

> Now that my husband won't travel anymore, but I still want to go, it is a good excuse to take grandchildren along.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Currently, a growing number of grandparents live in cities, which turns urban spaces, such as shopping centres and theatres, into sites for grandparent–grandchild leisure. In the narratives, grandchildren are presented as good companions for visits to movies and museums, and they also provide a good excuse to visit amusement parks.

> I told them that I'm always ready to go to Särkänniemi [an amusement park] if someone wants to go and needs company... As long as they want to go with us, I'm always ready to go. Whenever someone asks me, to the movies or theatre.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

Restaurants and cafés present another urban arena for grandparental consumption, as the generations more or less regularly meet for a joint meal, or a coffee. Having lunch together seems to be an easy way to spend time together, even with older grandchildren, who no longer need care and company. Dining out with younger grandchildren is presented more from the perspective of socializing the child into the consumer culture.

> We also dine out a lot. So that Aida is with us. I believe it is good for the child to learn it, from the beginning.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

Shopping together with the grandchild is a desirable leisure activity for grandmothers, which includes some traditional elements of the *flâneur* – strolling along city streets, seeing and being seen. The concrete outcome of the shopping tour is less significant than the tour itself.

> We stroll in the shops, stop to have some treats, and go on. For the young lady, it's important that grandma buys something for herself, too, not only for her.

> *Riitta, funma of 4*

In the narratives, shopping together was also a repeated theme that the grandmothers of newborn granddaughters dreamed of, regardless of their personal desire for shopping.

> Oh, and then we'll go shopping around, stroll along the city streets, fancy and fine. Not knowing if we'll ever buy anything, but still going...Shopping is not really me at all, but then I want us to walk over there, just like that. I'm no shopper at all. They always laugh that it will be great to see me shopping, but then we will, we will learn that together.

> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Finally, considering more mundane forms of consumption, grandparents and grandchildren still bake, craft and fish together. The myths of a bun-baking grandma and a fishing grandpa live on, but they only form an imperfect part of grandparenthood. More importantly, grandparenthood not only reflects a certain role with typical grandparental activities, but also an important, intimate and intensive relationship that involves both highlights and the everyday.

> Together we chat, play games and sing. Karaoke devices are in heavy use and Muksukaraoke DVD is almost broken after all these years. We find beautiful pictures in books, draw and craft. We organize shoe and jewellery shows, we dress Barbies and Bratzes nicely. I remember being a wedding priest for Barbie and Ken once. I took care of the entire wedding ceremony: speeches, liturgies, hymns...both in Finnish and Swedish, of course.

> *Riitta, funma of 4*

4.2.3   Consuming because of the grandchild

Grandparenthood can also provoke consumption that is neither directly targeted at grandchildren, nor generated as co-consumption between grandparents and their grandchildren. It may be necessary or desirable for grandparents to make purchases, or to prefer certain consumption activities specifically *because of* being a grandparent. For instance, grandparents may find themselves buying products that they would not normally buy, such as toys, school supplies and various other necessities for young people. Given that grandchildren spend a lot of time at their

grandparents' home, it is likely that families buy multiple products that would be difficult to carry between homes. Baby necessities, such as car seats, highchairs and potties, are good examples from a product category whose share has significantly grown in the segment of 50+ consumers, but which is continuously marketed to younger age groups only. In particular, the new grandparents in the present study told how they had refurnished their home to meet the needs of young families. Baby equipment not only included a potty and a highchair in the closet, but complete 'play and care' rooms that were fully equipped for families with young children. Some had extended the decoration from indoors to outdoors, with swings, playhouses and trampolines becoming commonplace in many grandparents' gardens.

> We've bought all the stuff to our home, so that when they come, it's easier for them to stay…I love to make everything ready in the room, to decorate it in baby style.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Another popular range of grandparenthood-generated purchases involves commodities or services required to stay in contact with grandchildren. Increased mobility for studies and jobs detaches people from their hometowns, thus stretching families across locations and leaving grandparents struggling to participate in family practices (Epp et al. 2014, 81). More traditional ways of staying in contact include transport and accommodation when visiting far-away grandchildren, but the narratives also reveal the newer consumption practices of family life, often including the use of information technology. According to Epp et al. (2014), dispersed family life spurs disembodied and dematerialized interaction as long-distance families reconfigure consumption practices through technology. When collecting the narratives, one of my interviews was interrupted by a Skype call from the informant's young grandson. Another grandfather told how his granddaughter had taught him to 'skype' just before moving abroad. Smartphones and mobile applications are also among popular gifts from children and grandchildren to grandparents, provided to keep the elder generation up-to-date and in the centre of family information flows. As a member of a family group in Facebook or WhatsApp, grandparents have much-appreciated virtual access to their grandchildren's everyday experiences. As the study by Epp et al. (2014) indicated, technology-aided interaction not only replaces old practices, but also creates new ways of enacting family life.

We laughed and jumped around on my bed, which is never allowed at home, and took a funny selfie. 'Let's take a selfie and send it to Mum!' I said.

Eija, mamma of 1

Furthermore, in the same way that grandparents may influence their grandchildren's consumer behaviour, children may also influence their grandparents' knowledge, skills and attitudes related to consumption. In some cases, especially regarding information technology, it may be the youngest consumers who possess the best knowledge and best practices to act as effective members of consumer society (Ekström 2007; Watne et al. 2011). New technologies and smartphones were covered in every conversation with the grandparents and discussed from two angles: first, reflecting the overall concern of occupying a too-large part of the young children's lives and second, when admiring the new skills that contemporary 'digi-native' children seem to master naturally. And there were other fields of mastery that the children had brought to their grandparents' attention.

I got interested in Harry Potter because they talked about it all the time.

Katri, mummu of 11

Veera said that the weather is so bad and it's so far, that, let's take a tram. And boy have we laughed at that afterwards! That was our first tram ride. So we collected the money for the tickets and Veera said that we can use the back door, and she takes the front door and pays for us all. And so we took a tram.

Mikko, vaari of 10

In addition, the narratives reveal that in the course of children's various hobby-related dance shows, horse races and hockey games, grandparents are faithful cheerleaders, who rarely complain about ticket prices. And when there is a grandchild living abroad, or in a bilingual family, it can motivate grandparents to attend a language course, or at least to buy a dictionary. Forward-looking grandparents also want to stay fit and take care of themselves: the ultimate inspiration for joining a yoga or mindfulness class may lie in grandparenthood and its anticipated future challenges.

4.2.4 Power game of consumption

> I want to be a grandma who has fun with the children, not in the 'let's break all your parents' rules' way, but well, sometimes loosely interpreting them.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

One of the most interesting phenomena in grandparental consumption narratives involves the power relations in the grandparent−parent dyad. Who decides what is being consumed, and how? Previous research into family decision-making has examined decision roles, influences and influence/decision strategies (Commuri & Gentry 2000). Epp and Price (2008, 60) suggest that families draw on bundles of identities, including those of individuals, dyads and the family as a whole. They also call for more research on families within and beyond household boundaries, with a focus on the actions that produce family. Because traditional family decision-making research has equated family and household, there is a clear lack of research in the decision-making of extended families, including grandparents.

When consumption involves the grandchild, the power of grandparents ranges from zero to a hundred per cent. Most informants agree that their grandchildren's parents have the right to make decisions because they concern their children. While some minor items, such as clothes, souvenirs and small presents, can be bought without asking – likewise, any equipment and necessities that grandparents buy for use in their own home – larger acquisitions for grandchildren should always be negotiated beforehand.

> We buy nothing without asking them first. Well, clothes sometimes, but all the bigger things we talk through. We've heard so many times how grandparents buy something and parents disapprove.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*
>
> We only bought the camera for him because we knew they had been in contact with Santa Claus about it.
>
> *Seppo, vaari of 3*

The rules for consumption are ideally agreed in advance, before the grandchild is born. For new grandparents, it is tempting to prepare for grandparenthood in the shops − after all, there are no other rules or rites concerning how to become a grandparent. If that approach is denied, it can create feelings of frustration and of being an outsider during a life change that is important to informants' sense of self.

Piritta is such a person, who wants to decide everything, all the colours and suchlike. I couldn't even buy the pram, just finance it, she knows what to order...of course I was irritated. But I had the honour of opening my wallet and helping with transport.

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Young people are so strict and they all have their own taste, so I don't dare to buy anymore. Mirkku [the daughter-in-law] is so strict. I don't dare to buy that much anymore, I prefer giving the money.

Tuija, mummu of 2

One informant gave an even more dramatic example of the power relations in consumption. Following occasions that resulted in negative feedback, he has almost entirely rejected consumption for his grandchildren. In that case, it was not the children's parents who made the rules for consumption, but their grandmother, who seemed, from the informant's perspective, to regulate what was right and wrong for the children.

My ex-wife, their grandma, is very strict about everything. Like when you get a soft toy, she is awfully suspicious about the materials and suchlike...Not to mention something to eat, she won't approve them at all. Like, if I ever came with a bag of sweets, she was like 'Not now! They are just about to have lunch.' I've come to the conclusion that it makes no sense to get them anything, because it would only go wrong. She won't accept anything I buy. Nothing.

Tapio, pappa of 4

According to the narratives, some grandparents seem to have managed to retain some power. However, whether this is due to interpersonal relationships, family traditions, situational circumstances, or personal traits is not the focus of this study. Among some grandparents, power relations even generated bluster and determined expressions to express the control they had over the situation.

Lotta laughs and says 'Save us from the two of you!' I say, 'Don't you dare interfere in this!' I've told her 'Do not interfere in everything we do together'. I can just take her to a Popeda gig if I like, we will definitely not ask mum, we will just go!

Eija, mamma of 1

And the little miss won't much ask her parents; she'll just say 'Byee! I'm off to Grandma's!'

Anitta, mummukka of 1

In general, grandparents are not eager to totally cede control, but they actively use compromise and manoeuvre as tools to resolve power questions. An example of an 'eat-the-cake-and-have-it-too' consumption compromise can be identified in Tuija's story. While respecting the parents' wish for the child's first birthday, she tells how she still enacted her own ideal for gift-giving.

> They said they want a new safety seat for the car. I was like, 'What? That's not something for Elmo.' A new safety seat? But it's worth more than 500 euros, and you always have to get the best available...Still, I'll definitely get him something. I'm a bit old-fashioned; I'm going to buy a book or something, anyway. I'm like a present person myself; I love getting presents and I love giving them. It makes me feel so good...And you have to give him something, no matter if he doesn't understand it yet, you must have something for him.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Anitta tells how she has learnt an effective way to navigate decisions with her daughter.

> If I tell her what to do, she attacks immediately, argh! 'Don't you dare!' But when you start with 'What do you think about this?'...You kind of guide them...just like you do with men! You have to make them feel that it was their decision.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Referring to power relations, indulging grandchildren seems to be an accepted privilege of grandparents, providing they do not step on their adult children's toes in terms of educational principles and everyday rules. A classic example is when a grandparent gives a gift to a grandchild, despite knowing that the grandchild's parents would not approve. By overlooking the restriction, the grandparent aims to have a pleasant moment with the child, see the child's joy and to experience transient popularity. The informants had a rather realistic view of indulgence: it is not of value in itself to break family rules, but to keep the relationship unique requires doing things differently from their grandchildren's parents.

> I remember what happened with Sina. She is vegetarian, but her grandma from the father's side gave her liver box. That wasn't nice at all. I believe that if you have bad experiences concerning grandparenting, whether it is your own or not, you want to avoid repeating it.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

To summarize, it is vital that the flexibility of the rules is not tested too often, or in areas of interest that are too important. Minor modifications to the main policies

are allowed – at least according to the grandparents; the parents' side of the story remains unheard for now.

4.2.5   Equality and reciprocity in consumption

> They are all just as good and as close. But somehow, there is something extra with these four, because we have seen each other every single day. Being so deep in their everyday, it has added something on.

Pirjo, mummu of 10

Based on the narratives of grandparents, equality is one of the most sensitive arenas in enacting grandparenthood. It is vital for grandparents to be objective and treat their grandchildren equally, even though it is not always that easy, especially if some grandchildren become closer than others.

According to numerous studies (ref. Gauthier 2002, 302), the bond between grandchildren and their maternal grandparents tends to be closer than the relationship with paternal grandparents. In the narratives, it seemed to be more a matter of general closeness among families and family members than of maternal/paternal branches. Life situations, such as living near one another, the need for everyday help, or shared interests brought grandparents closer to some of their grandchildren.

Grandparents told about an ambition to be exact and literal in their efforts to give the same kind and amount of support to all their grandchildren. If grandparents decide to buy a pram for their first grandchild, it easily becomes a rule that also applies to their other children's firstborns. Whether it involves birthday presents, travelling, or money deposits, grandparents want consumption to appear equal to all children and grandchildren, but time was also considered to have a similar value. After taking care of one adult child's children, grandparents also feel obliged to help their other children.

> We have always given exactly the same to both of them, taking it perhaps a little too seriously. Just so that there would never be anything, and there has never been. But it's like our way to do things. We want everything to go in the exact same way.

Tuija, mummu of 2

Favouring one child or grandchild over others may cause feelings of guilt and an immediate need to balance the situation. The unwritten requirement for equality

can become a real concern for grandparents, who want to avoid any intrafamilial conflicts, both now and in the future.

> It is a huge problem for me to keep all the children on the same line. I don't want to face a situation that they get pissed off because someone got something more. Because I know that it exists a lot, that: 'Why did you get that bowl, I would have wanted it, too.'
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

This concern was confirmed in the study by Price et al. (2000) about older consumers' disposition towards their own cherished possessions, although the willingness to avoid intrafamilial conflicts was only one of many concerns associated with choosing the recipient for their own important possessions.

In terms of consumption, it is also possible for grandparents to create their own rules of conditional equality. For instance, the amount of money deposits may depend on the recipient's age or educational level, as in Katri's example. By using external indicators, such as age and school achievements, as a basis for defining the value of the gift, she also gives her grandchildren a lesson about certain values and hierarchies in life. Having the power, she is free to evaluate a good sum of pocket money for younger children in comparison with older ones, and to value vocational school 'lower' than high school – clearly defined rules make it seem equal to all.

> We were just talking about the Christmas money. We'll give each family 1.000 euros, 20 euros in cash for each schoolchild, a 50-euro-deposit for the one in the vocational school, and a 100-euro-deposit for Tiia, who is in the high school.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Grandparenting also involves at least some degree of reciprocity, although it is often not specifically mentioned. Children and their families are supported without any expectation of compensation, yet expressions of gratitude – and the lack of them – are often noticed.

> We got this letter from her, as a 'thank you'. So, they notice us, and if they organize something, they always invite us first. 'Will you be there, won't you?' they say. I don't know, could this letter have a sort of meaning, a response to what you asked earlier? That somehow, yes, our relationship is as tight as it can be, with them all. It almost makes me cry.
>
> *Mikko, vaari of 10*

> They never react...I don't really expect a thank you, but when you send them money you would like to know if it ever arrived. So, I texted him – did you get the envelope? And I got an answer: 'Yes.' That was it!

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

The signs of reciprocity are mentioned in association with very young children, like Tuomo and his 3-year-old grandson show.

> Even with this experience, we have a great mutual understanding. He has said that he'll move to grandpa's and suchlike, but what was really touching was his comment: 'In return, I'll take care of you when you're old.' Of course I don't want him to have that burden, but still, where on earth did he even come into that!

> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

Considering gift-giving, care and generosity, the notion of reciprocal altruism suggests that we only act generously towards others because it adds to our own well-being (Belk 1988, 158). From this rather pessimistic perspective, children − and grandchildren − are seen as sources of potential financial and emotional support who are more likely to help us if we help them first. Taking the view of an extended self frees us from this pessimism: giving to our loved ones makes us happy through making them – an important part of our extended self – happy. Considering grandparental support, the presumption of reciprocity takes various forms. It can best be explored in the meanings of grandparental consumption, as illustrated in Section 4.3. In summary, grandparental consumption appears to be a clear win-win phenomenon for the informants of this study.

4.2.6   Characteristics of grandparental consumption

Whether the grandparents consume for, with, or because of their grandchildren, there are certain dominant phenomena that reflect their role-related consumer behaviour. The first notion follows the phenomenon that is traditionally 'one step before' grandparenthood: the empty nest. In their study of empty-nest households, Hogg et al. (2004) detected that as the children of the family grow up and move away from home, consumption becomes a 'bridge' to connect parents with their children's new lives. Consumption-based activities become the main carrier of meaning for creating family life, and the meaning of different possessions increases in importance to retain a sense of family. The authors illustrate how, during role transition, the informants move away from an emphasis on expressing their love

and enacting their parenting role through production (cooking, cleaning, other supporting activities) towards a focus on consumption (purchasing for the children).

In light of the narratives, grandparenting seems to return the core of family life towards more productive consumption. Grandparents primarily want to do things together with their grandchildren, and not just buy things for them. The dominance of *producing over consuming* was present in all grandparental narratives, and it varied from 'making toys' to 'real work', such as gardening and forestry. The informants seem to be real proponents of the do-it-yourself philosophy, but it should be borne in mind that the narratives were collected in the context of grandparenthood. Hence, the examples tell us more about the experiences of family leisure than the exact way of life for the informants. Productivity serves the grandparents' purpose of spending time with their grandchildren and teaching them useful skills, such as cooking and crafting, or long-term lessons in independence.

> I've already promised to teach her cooking. We already peel potatoes together. She's here in my arms, and I give advice, and the others look like: 'She doesn't understand it yet!', and I'm like, 'Yes she does!'...Everything like that, we hoover together, I explain every detail for her, what we do now, what next. She is not too little at all, even when she is little.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Furthermore, grandparents tell about a notable insecurity when trying to shop for their grandchildren. Either they feel uncertain about the taste and preferences of their grandchildren, or they are restricted by the power relations, mentioned in the previous chapter. This easily leads to *giving money instead of buying* presents. Money is a common present, even for young children, first as a deposit for the future and then as a ten-euro note, gradually a little more.

> I really don't know what to buy them. I know that it is boring, but I just give them some money.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

In addition, the grandparents in this study prefer *saving* to consuming in many ways. Three streams of economic consumption can be identified in the narratives. First, grandparents save items and money for their children and grandchildren, that is, they refuse to consume themselves.

> With my wife, we have stated so many times that we are just fine like this, we don't have any use for money. Why not give it away? To those who have use. Isn't that natural?

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

> *Researcher:* Here is a little 'thank you' for this conversation.

> *Marjo, mummu of 1:* Oh, a gift card, thank you! I'll probably give this to Roosa and Riku...yes, I'll give this to them.

Second, grandparents save for the future, for their own safety. Despite its self-centred goal, this type of saving is also justified for their adult children's welfare: the grandparents do not want to become a burden on their offspring.

> I don't want a future where they have to take care of us. Let them just put us to a residential care...and hopefully visit us sometimes!

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Third, for some grandparents, an economical way of living means taking care of the environment. Overconsuming is frowned upon; instead, it is important to cherish the environment and preserve it for future generations. In most narratives, this was, however, more an expression of ideology underlying disapproval of society. Personally, an anti-consumption position was more often justified as being for informants' own – or their grandchildren's – well-being and happiness than for the environment. However, grandparents seem to be active in *recycling*. Every informant told how they had saved items from their own or their children's childhood to be passed on to the youngest family members.

> I bought Tiia a wicker cradle that circulates in the family and will last into the next generations, too. Like my husband's baptism dress, which has served my brother's grandchildren, too.

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

And recycling does not end with the informants' own grandchildren. After serving their own children and grandchildren, clothes and necessities often end up in other families – unless they have some special affective value that means possessions must be saved for future generations yet to be born.

> You can easily get rid of everything there [on Facebook] There are these families that take everything you offer. I set a very low price, and if they come to buy something I might give something more. Like when they came to pick the skiing

shoes, they wanted to buy all Inka's old trousers. I let them have them for free. It's good to get some extra free space in here.

Katri, mummu of 11

In contrast, informants' recycling behaviour does not seem to extend to flea-market purchases, at least not those made for a baby. Interestingly, while expecting that others will accept their grandchildren's used clothing, they reject the idea of their grandchildren using other, anonymous children's, used clothes. Later, used hobby equipment, such as pianos and skis, may well be bought.

I'm no flea-market type at all, for me it's like 'Flea-market clothes for a baby?' I never said anything, but I thought 'Do you really have to?'

Tuija, mummu of 2

Producing instead of consuming
- DIY
- Anti-materialistic lessons

Giving money instead of buying
- Power relations
- Shopping insecurity

Saving instead of consuming
- Saving for self
- Saving for the children
- Saving the environment

Recycling
- Clothes, toys, books, sports equipment
- Chain of generations
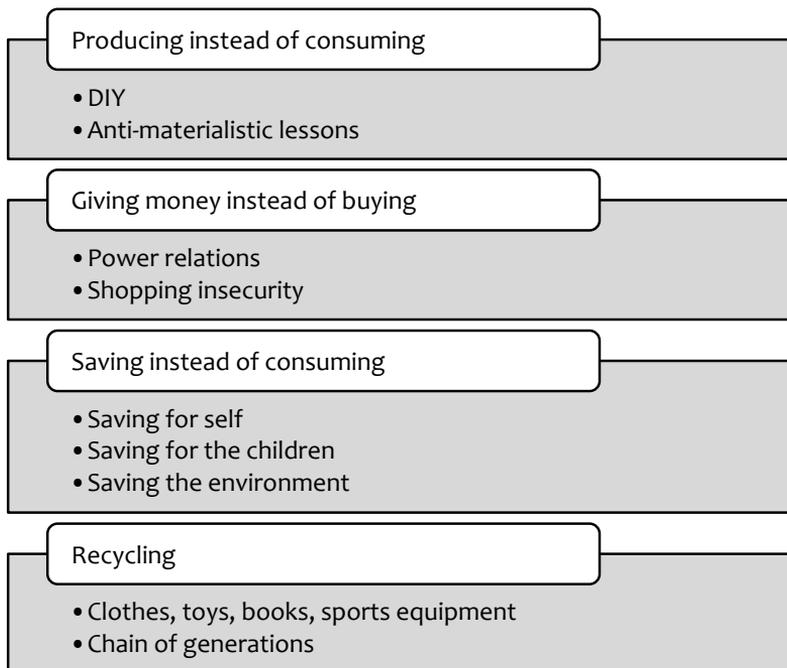
Figure 15. Characteristics of grandparental consumption

Figure 15 summarizes the characteristics of grandparental consumption that appeared in the narratives.

4.3   Meanings of grandparental consumption

Instead of delving into the sparse discussion of the meanings of grandparenthood, this study focuses on the meanings of grandparental consumption. Consumption is seen as a rich source of symbolic meanings, which we use to implement and sustain our project of the self (Elliott 1997; Wallendorf & Arnold 1991). Consumption symbolism is, however, not a constant or intrinsic element, but socially constructed and always in transit, negotiable and subject to endless interpretations (Elliott 1997; Firat & Venkatesh 1995; McCracken 1988). The meanings may be idiosyncratic, or shared with other people: portraying essences of individuality or reflecting desirable connections with others (Kleine et al. 1995). Symbolic consumption helps consumers to categorize themselves in society, to facilitate self-transitions and to achieve a sense of continuity and preparation for death (Belk 1988). In addition, consumption may be used as a symbolic resource in self-completion if the individual has a sense of lacking a certain personal quality (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998). The creation of meaning is not deterministic and unidirectional, but consumers may ascribe different and inconsistent cultural meanings to consumption. Thus, any product or activity may carry a variety of meanings.

Identity construction is about trying to be who you want to be and trying not to be who you do not want to be. The narratives show that consumption offers a broad range of symbolic meanings for grandparents in their identity construction. Consumption seems to be a legitimate, visible and understandable tool for contemporary grandparents to both stand out from the crowd and show belongingness. Consumption works both as a boundary and as a proof of community. As a confirmation of Elliott & Wattanasuwan's (1998) suggestion, consumption is also used as a resource in self-completion to overcome feelings of insecurity or incompetence. To better understand the apparent dualism in consumer identity work, I have divided the meanings I identified into private and public meanings, referring to the personal and socio-cultural drivers for these meanings. By private meanings, I emphasize the individual side of the identity work, the aim of being different and unique, apart from the roles we play. Public meanings, on the contrary, refer to the external requirements, ideals and socio-cultural factors illuminating grandparenthood and grandparents' role expectations. While private meanings may include elements of public meanings, the role of personal history in relation to the object/activity is significant (Richins 1994, 506). Additionally, I have separated the meanings based on their main focus, whether on

the self, or on others. Self-focused meanings refer directly to identity construction and tend to reflect the more static essence of grandparenthood, thereby answering the questions: *Who am I?* and *What am I like?* and seeking balance between being simultaneously the same and different. In contrast, other-focused meanings refer to identity realization, to a more active grandparenthood, thereby answering the question: *What do I do?*

Based on their focus and personal/socio-cultural drivers, I identified four fundamental meanings for grandparental consumption (Figure 16): *grandparental authenticity, grandparental legitimacy, grandparental heritage* and *grandparental care*. While grandparental authenticity and grandparental heritage stand for individual pursuits (private meanings), grandparental legitimacy and grandparental care encapsulate a more social pursuit (public meanings). The focus on self is emphasized in grandparental authenticity and grandparental legitimacy, in contrast to grandparental heritage and grandparental care, which shift the focus onto the 'other'. Simplified statements for all four meanings are as follows: grandparental authenticity looks at the self, seeking confirmation for the statement: *I am unique*. Grandparental legitimacy also concentrates on the self, but aims to ensure that: *I am competent*. Grandparental heritage looks at the other (grandchild/family), with the statements: *you are learning*; and *you are part of a chain*. Finally, grandparental care focuses on the other with the statements: *you will be a good citizen*; and *you will make it*.

Figure 16. Meanings of grandparental consumption

The meanings also differ in terms of their temporal focus. Grandparental authenticity has its roots in the past, stretching its focus temporally from past to present, while grandparental legitimacy relies strictly only on the present. Grandparental care focuses both on the present and on the future, and grandparental heritage looks mainly to the future. Figure 17 illustrates the temporal orientation of these meanings.

Figure 17. Temporal orientation of the consumption meanings

In the following four sections, I will introduce and analyse all the main categories of consumption meanings in an order that follows their temporal orientation, starting from the self-focused meanings (authenticity and legitimacy) and ending up at the other-focused meanings (care and heritage).

4.3.1   Grandparental authenticity

I hope she'll get to know me as who I am and what I am like, not as any stereotypic grandma.

Marjo, mummu of 1

Scholars from across the social sciences contend that people have a drive to be different. Prior research indicates that individuals experience a negative emotional reaction when they feel overly similar to others (e.g. Berger & Heath 2007; Brewer

1991). Consequently, consumers consume to seek distinction (Belk 1988; 1990). The self-focused private meanings involve the construction of an authentic grandparental identity. Through consumption, grandparents are able to differentiate themselves from other grandparents, to relive their own past and to feel needed.

The biggest dilemma in any identity construction is the question of difference and sameness. In particular, because grandparenthood is a role that is given to an individual without requiring their decision, it can easily generate an attempt to stand out from stereotypes. ***Differentiation from others*** reflects the need to be unique, to differ from other grandparents, because – after all – it is not about the role, but about the individual.

> God save us from roles, aren't we at our best when we are free to be who we are?
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

Trying to find an ordinary, contemporary grandparent in my pilot study, my biggest finding was that all the informants were extraordinary – according to their own descriptions. Not only did they refuse to fit any stereotype, but some of them also actively produced prejudices of old and tight-faced grandparents. Despite being a multifaceted, liberal and rather fragmented status today, grandparenthood still carries an echo of ageing and being old. Any identity that has an association with chronological age is problematic and may result in experienced ambivalence. In our youth-admiring society, an identity that involves traditions, as well as age- and competence-related stereotypes and presumptions, as grandparenthood does, may cause a threat of stereotyping, which turns into a threat to self-esteem. Age-related prejudices and archetypal identities are common themes to be tackled in self-reflection. According to Reed et al. (2012, 318), a longer lifespan means that it is becoming more common for individuals to perceive an inconsistency between their own identities and those that society expects from people of their age. A possible identity conflict may result in a lower level of identification with such identities, or into reconstruction of their meaning.

> I'm totally aware of being a very different grandma...with the smell of buns, yes, but just as easily, I can go to a gig to see Popeda with her.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

> We just laughed that here go the grandmas, to rock and roll! Normally it's probably a folk dance place where they go.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

When belonging to a negatively stereotyped group, individuals can defend against the stereotypes by using attributions to their advantage and by making the most of intragroup comparisons (Smith & Mackie 2007, 212–216). Reed et al. (2012) suggested that anticipated negative connotations might lead individuals to actively reconstruct the fundamental idea of an identity. An example was given where elderly people strengthened the positive connotations of ageing to reduce the perceived identity conflict. In this study, on the contrary, some informants actively emphasized the negative stereotypes of grandparenthood concerning other grandparents and guided attention to their own distinct differences from the 'typical grandparent', thus reconstructing their personal meaning of grandparenthood. Confirmed in the study of Papaoikonomou et al. (2016), stereotyping is not only positive when considering the in-group, and negative when considering the out-group, but participants form homogeneous perceptions of how the out-group negatively stereotypes them. This reinforces their identity as a minority through feelings of perceived marginalization. Thus, negative stereotyping of the in-group may facilitate the construction and reinforcement of authenticity.

> I'm not like those grandmothers who wear jackets and a tight face and disapprove of everything young people do or say.
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*

Individuals criticizing other in-group members and considering themselves exceptions rather than typical group members can be interpreted as forms of dis-identification (Smith & Mackie 2007, 212–216). By rejecting the perceived group culture, individuals distance themselves from it.

> Already in the beginning of my grandmotherhood, I knew that I would never become an ordinary grandma, so I named myself 'funma'. Our grandchildren have two biological grandmas, who have naturally and willingly accepted the traditional role and tasks of grandmothers.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

In their study of the third age, positioned in the wealthy and healthy years of later adulthood, Gilleard and Higgs (2007, 25) considered it a cultural field, whose logic is structured by consumption that supports the search for distinction and implicitly or explicitly rejects, denies or marginalizes 'old age'. These field-defining practices are the routines of individualized consumption as examples of what Foucault (1988) referred to as 'technologies of the self' (1988). Indeed, consumption seems to offer a fruitful arena for individuals to differentiate themselves and to evaluate

themselves and other grandparents based on *what is done*. The informants seem to be well informed about what other grandparents – whether known or archetypal – do, even to the extent that they actively produce the stereotypes themselves. Grandparents also tend to create new subgroups and categorize themselves by consumption activities, thus drawing new borderlines between the stereotypes of grandparenting, which they represent, and those they do not.

> I'm not the playing grandma, nor the material grandma...I'm probably more like the cultural grandma.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*
>
> I want us to do these ordinary family things together, not those like 'I had a fine holiday abroad with grandma!'
>
> *Eija, mamma of 1*
>
> I remember when we were shopping around and stopped by at a store that didn't seem really tempting. She [the granddaughter] said spontaneously that 'This is not our store; there is only grandmas' stuff.' Then a long silence, tight thinking and she continued: 'Well you are a grandma, but that is not your stuff anyway.'
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

Riitta offers a fine example of differentiating through consumption. She considers herself a *nonsense-grandma* or *funma*, not a real one, hence having liberty to stay out of the stereotypical duties of grandparents. That way, she also tactfully draws a line between the two other grandmothers of her grandchildren. Having no biological children of her own, she is convinced of lacking the 'maternal instinct', required to fully complete the care-giving role of a grandmother. Instead, she has adopted the role of fun and play – and gains a great deal from it. She talks about Barbie weddings, karaoke nights and girls' days out. She plans to take her eldest granddaughter to London as a confirmation present and to create a new tradition in the family. The activities she carries out with her grandchildren are activities she herself enjoys: as a choir member, karaoke nights are a must; as a verbally talented presenter, being pastor at a Barbie wedding is pure joy; and as an enthusiastic shopper, she loves shopping for, and with, her grandchildren. She insists upon having an easy-going relationship with her grandchildren, and she is proud of being able to discuss anything with them.

> We have this deal that none of us gets a tattoo or a piercing alone, but we discuss it first and if we decide on the tattoo or piercing, we all get one together.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

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Connection with the past is an important source of authenticity (Beverland & Farrelly 2010, 839) and integral to our sense of who we are (Belk 1988, 148). Our memories constitute our lives: they are us (Belk 1990). Only by having a notion of how we have become and where we are going can we create a sense of who we are (Giddens 1991, 54). Grandparental consumption serves the meaning of authenticity by offering the individuals the chance to *relive their own past*.

> You kind of watch your own and your children's life cycle from the auditorium – this is like a new show.

Seppo, vaari of 3

Informants telling stories from their own childhood to their grandchildren plays a significant role in the renewal of their own youth. Their own childhood events offer popular bedtime stories for the younger generation, and the joy and interest of the grandchildren are the best possible reward. This was especially concretized in one of my interviews when the informant shared some of those stories with me, laughing all the time at the funny events from her childhood and at her grandchildren's reaction.

> I told them about my school times: how we walked six kilometres and how the snow cut the roads in the winter. On those days, our horse took us to school and returned home. The school bus of my childhood. Anniina listened to the story all quiet, without saying a word. Then afterwards, she had only one question: 'Were you allowed to use your mobile phones during classes?'

Katri, mummu of 11

The importance of possessions and materials is emphasized in individuals reliving their own past. According to Belk, (1988, 148) as our identities continually change over the course of life, objects anchor our memories of these changes. Possessions are a convenient means of storing the memories and feelings that attach us to our sense of past. Our life history is often marked by photographs, souvenirs, trophies and more mundane everyday objects that act as repositories for memories and meanings in our lives. Such possessions have become intertwined with personal histories and are experienced as authenticating (Arnould & Price 2000). According to Price et al. (2000, 187), consumers link cherished possessions with life review and use them as narrative scaffolding to create a personal and durable sense of identity. We also tend to believe that our past is accumulated somewhere among the material artefacts our lives have touched (Belk 1990). Objects of the past are often intentionally acquired and retained by people to remember pleasant times in

their past (Belk 1988, 149), or to provide an embracing feeling of warmth that McCracken (1989) calls *'homeyness'*. These objects are also likely to evoke proud memories or generate feelings of nostalgia, thus enabling us to view the past with both sadness and longing.

> I just love to see him walking around in his mother's old pyjamas!
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

Materials that constitute grandparental authenticity also include possessions and items that represent evidence of importance and affection and connect grandparents to their grandchildren. When visiting informants, their grandchildren were tangibly present in photos, greeting cards, drawings, pieces of handcrafting and letters. According to Wallendorf and Arnould (1988), gifts from significant others are considered to be evidence of love. There were several examples in the data of how grandparents found comfort or joy in objects from their grandchildren. Through materials, people collect evidence of being loved and respected. Thus, what was presented or what was there, is not a random selection of items, but an outcome of conscious selection. In the stream of conversation, informants picked up several materials representing their authentic grandparenthood, including grandchildren's letters, cards and drawings (Figure 18), or home-made kettle holders – as in the case of Katri, who had taught all her granddaughters knitting and had saved their first creations.

Figure 18. Examples of grandparental treasures

Renewal of individuals' own youth is present in grandparental consumption, for example, in terms of buying new editions of their own childhood storybooks and comics. The informants had also saved many of their children's old books, toys and clothes for the youngest generation.

> They loved especially 'Kieku ja Kaiku', we had that old book. And then I found some more in 'Kotiliesi' and ripped them. I had read them myself as a child. The poetry, they were just funny, such good-aiming humour. I loved to read them.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Reliving their own past through sharing childhood stories and reading 'good old storybooks' was actually one of the aspects that informants had expected from grandparenthood in advance. However, expectations and reality do not always coincide.

> I had this dream that I could read storybooks for them: new ones and those adorable stories from my childhood. I bought the most loved stories of Astrid Lindgren and the wonderful poems of Kirsi Kunnas. I dag my old 'Pekka Töpöhäntä' books from the basement and waited. And I'm still waiting. For my great disappointment the children have never had time to listen to storybooks...Probably I end up reading the books all by myself.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

Grandparenthood offers an individual a second chance to be a child, and to experience those elements of childhood that – for one reason or another – could not be experienced the first time around. It gives pleasure to grandparents to be financially capable of buying the toys of their own childhood dreams – and to actually do it. It does not matter if the grandchild is too small, or unwilling to play with them. Regardless of the child's age, some childhood dreams turn into reality immediately upon entering grandparenthood.

> Well, actually I already bought a doll-house for her...There it was, in the window, and my eyes went like in Donald Duck, surrruurrrr, oh, I just had to buy it! We opened it and saw what it looked like. Oh, I would have wanted to build it so badly! I told Piritta, 'You'll see, now that we've opened this, I have probably changed the tapestry and the colours many times before she got it.' 'Don't touch it!' she said.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Grandparenthood also offers a second chance to be a parent. Many of today's grandparents have worked hard and been busy during their children's childhood, and they want to experience that phase of having young children around one more

time, this time more carefully and consciously, and able to take time to be with the child. In particular, grandfathers seem to value the opportunity to be involved with babies and young children, something they did not, or could not, do when their own children were young. However, that is not uncomplicated the second time round, either. The majority of today's new grandparents are still at work, and even retired grandparents have their own hobbies and interests, voluntary work, projects and studies. In any case, plans exist.

> We got divorced so early, they were like 2 and 3, and then it started, being alone with them and trying to manage financially, so I had never time to do anything with them...So I notice now that I somehow try to live that phase again.

> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

> My greatest sorrow was that when the kids were small, my calendar was full of things I didn't like...And it has been a real trauma for me that I wasn't able to travel abroad with my kids.

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

> And I have plans to take them into the nature and do everyday things with them, those I never did with my own children.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Grandparental consumption frequently reflects memories from parental consumption, leading to either strengthening, rejecting, or compensating for previous behaviour. Ulla always wants to bring something for her grandson whenever she sees him. That is new to her.

> It's perhaps because I was the kind of first child's mother who insisted that the child only plays with wooden sticks and ragdolls, and absolutely no guns or anything, and my family made fun of me. Then one summer I bought Sami [the son] a water gun and they made a huge fuss about it: 'Ulla, what have you done?'

> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

Anitta wants to seize a second chance by teaching her granddaughter to cook. She remembers a pivotal experience from the past, which inspires her to make sure that the girl learns everything she needs to know in the kitchen.

> I'm no master chef myself, but this mania comes from the girls' childhood. They were four and five years old, and there was a pastry brush on the floor. They asked me: 'Mum, is that a yeast?' 'What? Oh my God, don't you know what this is? Don't you know anything about baking?' Well, neither did I, but at that very moment I took a flour bag, there's a recipe on its side, so 'Let's bake buns!' I showed them

how to hold the bowl, with one hand each, the other two hands mixing dough. Turned my back, and there were four hands in the dough! But this is the lesson I've carried all the way, this time, this little miss will never ask anyone if a pastry brush is yeast!

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Parenting adult children is said to be a process of 'letting go'. Involvement with younger generations is concrete proof of still being important and needed instead of staying in the shadows as an outsider. For some grandparents, *being important* was apparent from the beginning, as they helped their children with babysitting and everyday practicalities. For me as a researcher, it was surprising to learn how deep and wide the involvement was in some families; the grandparents are like full-time family members who share all joys, sorrows and the tiniest details of the young family's everyday experience.

- Mum? Will Grandma be here in the morning?

- Yes, as always.

- Good.

Pirkko, mummu of 10

For grandparents other than those immediately immersed in the young family through babysitting and everyday care, it may take some time to find their own position in the new person's life. The desire to belong to the new extended family exists, but finding the right way to be there is not always straightforward. Ilpo, for instance, draws an image of a very philosophical and self-reflective grandfather. The first impression is quite distant, but the conversation with him reveals a different image. He recalls how he first wanted to figure out grandparenthood and his role in it. Becoming a grandfather felt unreal at first, and he observed the new situation from a distance, wondering carefully how to behave, what should be done, or better yet, not done.

Then it started to show that there was a need for you, help was needed in practicalities. Pappa had the chance to impress with his craft talents. 'Bring that, take it, build these, fix those, build that.' And I loved to help. It was obvious that some things just would not happen without pappa.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

Also, if the grandparent is missing an obvious trait or capacity that is generally or personally considered important, it is possible to feel insecure and unimportant at first. Riitta's clear distinction from other grandparents serves the meaning of authenticity through rejecting the unpleasant stereotypes; however, it created a threat in terms of feeling needed and important. Ulla feels sad at being unable to share grandparenthood with a spouse like her grandsons' other grandparents.

> Because I am not a mother myself, I cannot care for children the way mothers do...So it is justifiable to ask what is my role then? Am I worth anything in their lives? Luckily there are different roles, too. I see myself as an important, close, grown-up friend.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*
>
> I am a very family-centred grandma. I got divorced a few years ago, and I feel sad for not being able to offer that…I envy those grandparents who can share these things, do it together.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

Awareness of other people's prejudices or threats of stereotyping may also lead to redefining group characteristics in positive terms to emphasize alternative dimensions in which group members are superior. Ilpo offers an example of this kind of social creativity in influencing others' thinking about grandparenthood. Parallel to being needed in various ways, from care-giver to close friend, he has identified a more fundamental need for grandparents.

> And it didn't have to be anything special. It was enough to just be there. Grandpa is essential; it is good to have one.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

4.3.2   Grandparental legitimacy

> You really don't become a grandparent, you have to learn it.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Who is a good grandparent? What are good grandparents like? Despite being a 'role-less role' with no precise task description, grandparenthood is assumed to include certain unspoken rules, legitimated behaviour, and even qualities that competent grandparents *should* have. Although grandparents in our society have no written rights or duties, there are certain societal expectations and cultural norms

set for grandparenthood. Previous research (e.g. Fournier 1998; Holt 2002) has recognized the market as a legitimating institution for consumer identities, that is, in creating and maintaining congruence with dominant norms, values and institutions. It has been suggested that legitimacy can be constrained or enabled by the marketplace, and that consumers apply legitimating performances to legitimate a new identity. The public, self-focused meaning of grandparental legitimacy involves issues concerning grandparental identification, grandparental competence and proof of grandparenthood, including distinct *rites de passage* – the consumption rituals of becoming a grandparent.

For individuals to justify themselves as legitimate grandparents, it is essential to show belongingness to other grandparents, despite the prejudices and threat of stereotyping, introduced in association with the meaning of grandparental authenticity. In our primitive quest for unity between self and society (Arnould & Price 2000), we use rituals, rules and traditions as collectively orientated cultural displays that offer integration and a collective sense of identity. ***Identifying with other grandparents*** is made possible through consumption, particularly in various shared consumption experiences, such as those that Marjatta tells about. She and her husband organize special *Grandpa and Grandma Days* for their grandchildren, along with the children's other grandparents. The regular days in the amusement park are not only filled with fun and play, but also with a deeper message. For Marjatta, these get-togethers are important because they show the children that there are 'four of us' who take care of them in addition to their parents. Referring to the study by Arnould and Price (2000), these days out can be seen as an example of authoritative performances, which seek to establish group identity through the creation of a shared experience.

Anitta tells how she began to build her grandmotherhood with a friend in the same situation. Together they strolled in the boutiques and prepared themselves for grandmotherhood. Preparations started even before the 'big news', on a holiday where they both expressed anticipation for grandparenthood.

> We came to a store and they had these almost invisibly small Ugg boots, and you know, just immediately we both rushed in, to the shoes and shouted: 'These!'
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Later, as Anitta's pregnant daughter was very strict about her making any purchases for the baby, she describes how she helped her friend in shopping baby necessities and enjoyed the opportunity to prepare for their joint new role that way.

Ulla tells about having a very close relationship with the other grandparents of her grandsons. She tells how they regularly get together and spend all holidays as a big extended family. Her strong bond with the other grandmother is highly important for her in terms of managing grandparenthood, and she feels great belongingness and companionship with her.

> Sometimes we give each other a certain look, like 'All right, now let's stay out of this'. Like at his [the grandson's] birthday party. It was us who needed to ask *them* for advice on when to blow the candles, when to give the presents, when to sing and so. After having all these children, we had to ask the lady of the house how to operate!

> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

In addition to identifying with friends and relatives in terms of grandparenthood, there are ways and places to connect with other, unknown grandparents. Thematic leisure activities for grandparents offer one possibility, and rare online fora another. Katri has taken her grandchildren on package holidays, which were specifically designed for grandparents and grandchildren travelling together. She tells that the entire holiday concept was her initiative.

> After taking them [the grandchildren] there [on a package tour] twice already I told the tour operator that they should organize something special for grandparents and grandchildren. So that the travel program would be interesting to both sides...And then we got this real 'Grandma's tour'; it was very nicely put together. And our guide was a grandma herself. It was really interesting, both for the kids and me.

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Possessions play a major role in the construction of grandparental legitimacy. Products hold an important quality as vessels of cultural and personal meanings, which consumers use to communicate things about themselves to others – and to themselves (Belk 1988; McCracken 1988, Holt 1995). Sartre (1943) suggested that the only reason we want something is to enlarge our sense of self, and the only way to know who we are is to observe what we have. Accordingly, possessions are important to knowing who we are, as we seek, express and confirm a sense of being through what we have (Belk 1988, 146). There are several material signs supporting the identification of a legitimate grandparent. In this study, the *proof of grandparenthood* included numerous material possessions that either informed outsiders of grandparental status and competence, or connected grandparents with their grandchildren. Personal possessions not only express our individual sense of identity, but also our sense of belonging to a group and group identity (Richins

1994, 523). When not living in the same household, the meaning of possessions seems to be increasingly important for retaining a sense of family.

> After she was born, I carried her picture everywhere. I showed it to everyone, although the photo itself was not that good, and they were not so interested.

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

> When Aida was born, Roosa bought me a nightgown with the Superman logo, and it says 'mummu'. I wear it all the time, even this morning, just changed it away before I left.

> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

Despite their significance for liminal consumers, in the construction of new grandparenthood, material objects do not seem to reduce in importance over time; instead, their variety increases. Photos are obviously a popular element of grandparental legitimacy. Currently, taking and sharing a limitless number of digital photos instead of cherishing the grandchild's unique yearly school photo in the wallet reflects the ways in which dispersed family life spurs disembodied and dematerialized interactions (Epp et al. 2014, 81). However, the family photos on the walls and shelves have managed to maintain their strong position, despite the information technology revolution. One living-room where I was invited to carry out an interview was covered with photos up to the ceiling. The informant's children, their spouses and their own children were on one side of the room, one wall was dedicated to past generations, the informant's own parents and grandparents, and one wall was covered with photos of the grandchildren's pets.

Tuija beautifully sums up the importance of family photos:

> We don't have any pricey paintings on our walls. We have our children on the walls: they are the most precious things we have.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Photos also construct family through indicating who is, and who is not, part of the family. The choice of exposed photos can be a sensitive issue for grandparents, particularly when there are divorces and new marriages. Photos of informants' children's ex-spouses create ambivalence: while their adult children would appreciate removal of the photos, grandparents often consider that the photos need to stay to show the grandchildren that both parents are still part of the wider family – at least at first.

He [the grandchildren's father] made me so awfully mad that I got really angry, and when I came home, I said that I would not look at that man's face in my own house. And that's when the photo left.

Pirkko, mummu of 10

In the past, as people entered new roles in life, there were culturally prescribed rituals, *rites of passage*, which supported the individual during a role transition and made the change concrete and visible for the self and others. Schouten (1991) suggests that in our modernized and secularized world, consumption activities have replaced cultural transition rituals: consumption supports the consumer in the acquisition of a new role or identity. Both new motherhood and fatherhood are celebrated in (consumption-centred) rituals, and the popularity of baby showers is ever increasing. For new grandparents, there are no specific rituals, but that does not prevent them from creating some themselves.

When Elmo was born, we celebrated it with champagne and strawberries.

Tuija, mummu of 2

I was having lunch with a friend, and I said all right, I've become a granny! And just right then, off we went to have a cider!

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Some parents-to-be understand the great value of the first grandchild and initiate a special event to celebrate the new grandparenthood. This is often related to the moment when the upcoming happy event is announced.

It was a real ceremony. We had been on holiday, and after our return, Sanna and Lasse stopped by, and Sanna had a little package, wrapped-up, a little book named 'The Happiness of Grandparenthood'. And she said: 'This is your welcome present'.

Marjatta, mummi of 3

For many informants, grandparenthood began in the shops, or in the cellar. In particular, for those who had not expected to become grandparents, it seemed natural to rush into the shops to find 'real grandparenthood'.

My first memories as a grandma take me to the children's clothing departments. Those pink paradises just made me nuts. Princess dresses, bows, flounces, glimmer, glitter, adorable miniature shoes – who could resist them? I bought, bought and bought.

Riitta, funma of 4

In addition, an anticipated and long-awaited grandparenthood can take the fresh grandparents – at least grandmothers – to children's departments after hearing the ´big news´. Marjatta recalled how she and the other grandmother of the baby had ended up in the same store at the same time. For them, this particular shop was the scene for the grandparental rite of passage.

> I went immediately to Kekäle, to the children's department. And Lasse's mother was there too, at the same time, for the same reason. And all the salespeople heard what had happened and joined our joy.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

Considering the first baby purchases made by new grandparents, it is apparently not so important what is bought, rather, what is important is the act of buying. That way, the newborn baby is welcomed into the family, and the newborn grandparent is officially allowed to shop as a grandparent. Financing purchases, such as prams or car seats, in advance does not seem to raise such strong emotions as the first purchase made after the child has been born. However, not every grandparent is excited about baby purchases. Ulla has seen the sinister side of grandparental consumption and wants to stay out of it.

> I used to run a children's clothing store, where I saw these hysterical grandmas, and I decided to never ever become one of them. Of course, I immediately started to dream about baby playsuits and knitting and all, but especially as I know that my daughter has her own taste, I always want to ask first, what they need.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

In spite of her dedication, even Ulla's first grandson got his welcome present.

> Well, I had to buy a basketball and sneakers right then, I guess that was a little foolish.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

Another location for rites of passage is a cellar or a storeroom, where grandparents-to-be have saved and cherished baby necessities for many years. They are like personal treasure caches held in secrecy until permission to touch them again is officially given in the promise of grandparenthood.

And when I finally got the permission to publish it, oh, I got all those little clothes from the storeroom and washed them in the bathroom. They were drying on the line, all the clothes and teddy bears. And I published a photo on Facebook titled 'My laundry day'. It was like I was having the baby. It felt just the same.

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Referring to the consumption power dyad of parents and grandparents, it can be problematic if there are external influencers disturbing the grandparental rites of passage. Some grandparents talked about feelings of frustration and disappointment if they could not enter grandparenthood when and how they liked. Normally, it was the parents' desire to keep the pregnancy secret, or to make all decisions concerning baby purchases, which prevented the grandparent-to-be from acting like a grandparent from the beginning.

I was kept a little too far...I started to plan everything and I wanted to buy this and that, but no, she wants to decide everything. Of course, I was irritated.

Anitta, mummukka of 1

A third element of grandparental legitimacy is ***competence***. Becoming a competent grandparent is not straightforward. For new grandparents, it is not easy to find information about what is expected and how to behave. Some do not even look for this, but trust their own instincts instead, while other grandparents would appreciate a useful source of information about their role and the challenges in managing it well.

Considering the child's view of grandparents, I don't have it at all. So I kind of have no experience of how to behave as a grandpa. I have no model at all.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

It has been quite a year of learning...that somehow you still have to be humble, in a positive way, I mean, and learn that all right, just let the others steer and you're just sitting there in the back seat...I compare it to playing golf: how many times have I decided to sell the set or throw it to hell…but it's funny how it develops the character. This is just the same. Sometimes you want to shout at her: 'Keep your brat and never come back!' But then you get over it, let her make the decisions and accept it. You really don't become a grandparent, you have to learn it.

Anitta, mummukka of 1

Considering the increased number of grandparents, the salience of the role, its age-centred identity conflict that provokes prejudices, the challenges of power relations

and the dynamics of 'being there' versus interfering, it is surprising that there is no well-organized, systematic training for new grandparents. Apart from the scarce self-help literature, grandparents have a limited number of sources available to quench their thirst for information. While new parents rarely have time to take courses, new grandparents – survivors of the rush-hour years – might well have the time.

> It would be good to have some training courses on grandparenthood. I tried to search on the Internet if someone organizes them, but I couldn't find anything. I only found one master's thesis on the subject and read it through.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2* (pre-interview email)

Among the informants, there seemed to be both born-to-be grandparents and those for whom it took longer to find their role and place in their grandchildren's lives. Becoming a grandparent may feel unreal and it requires careful consideration about how to behave, what to do and what not to do. Or as Ilpo articulated it, there was a need *'to figure out grandparenthood and my role in it'*.

Consumption supports both requiring and showing grandparental competence through compensating for possible deficits that the individual may have identified in comparison to other (archetypal or actual) grandparents. For the informants, there seems to be an unwritten understanding of the things that 'other' grandparents do with their grandchildren. When not following the mainstream, an equal activity is often mentioned to fill the perceived deficit.

> Other grandmothers are more cultural. I won't take them to theatres but we travel instead.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*
>
> I'm not like...I want to take them to Lapland and to the theatre and the movies and to concerts, I don't think I'll ever...I really am not into crafting and baking or such, I prefer something more memorable.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

For many informants, grandparental competence also involves the capability to *do grandparenting* for as long as possible. Grandparents recognize the value and finiteness of the time they share with their grandchildren. When reflecting on future plans and newly created traditions with grandchildren, the informants typically mentioned the conditionality of their realization, or a need to do something to ensure that the plan could be fulfilled and the new tradition

actualized, even with the youngest grandchild. In terms of consumption, future plans inspire grandparents to take care of themselves both mentally and physically. Although contemporary grandparents are principally healthier and more active than their predecessors, grandparenthood as such also seems to be an input for a healthier lifestyle.

> You never know if there will be a chance to do these things. It is important for me to take care of myself. I have always taken care of myself, like treatments, massages and suchlike. And now we decided with the other grandma to take a mindfulness course on Sunday. We thought that we should go together, so we can keep doing it afterwards, too.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*
>
> We'll go to the movies, concerts and theatre…then travel on holidays, depending on our health.
>
> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

An important sign of succeeding in grandparenting is the joy of grandchildren. For the informants, fun was a sort of master meaning, present in all talk about consumption, and it also served as evidence of good grandparenting. Fun may also temporally stretch the borders of good grandparenting in situations that could mostly be interpreted as questionable grandparenting. Katri ended up at a liquor store with her teenage grandson, and on another journey, she made her young grandsons walk for a long time after having an unconventional breakfast. She sees all this being accepted without any doubt because of the happiness of the grandchildren.

> Looking back now, we should have gone sightseeing by ourselves, but we wanted to stay in the group and so we ended up at the huge liquor store. But that was an experience for him. We laughed a lot.
>
> It was so early that we only had breakfast after we arrived in Kolmården: pancakes and meatballs. They had so much fun, it was quite a hard day though: I walked on the pathway, but they must have walked three times longer, or run. They were so happy, and how they slept like babies afterwards!
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

A more minor aspect of fun is making fun of the middle generation, the children's parents. It belongs to the experience of grandparenthood and serves as glue that binds together the eldest and the youngest. Grandparenthood can make it acceptable to laugh at own parents and at own children.

We [grandmother and granddaughter] had so much fun there. Kaisa [the granddaughter's mother] had tried to call us, she had sent us messages, but we had a very late dinner and we didn't get them. We had sent her a funny message about how we're not sure where we are and how our luggage was sent to Rome. And we had so much fun while thinking of her reaction! She was terribly frightened: 'Two of those on travel together!'

Katri, mummu of 11

4.3.3   Grandparental care

My great idea and aim is to keep this family together, so that they always share that nice feeling of belongingness.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

If I could have thickened the diverse content of the consumer narratives into one single master theme, without any concern about its relevance for research, it would have been *care*. All the narratives dealt with care and concern: caring for grandchildren, taking care of the family, taking care that children learn the most important lessons in life and caring for a better future. Care can be described as a strong other-focused meaning of grandparental consumption. It neatly reflects the expectations and assumed duties that grandparents have concerning their role, allowing us to characterize it as a public meaning, despite the overwhelming willingness to help, which is present in all narratives. The narratives of grandparents talk about ***paving the way***, helping the child and grandchild to have a smooth life. Much of this kind of care is actualized in mundane everyday help, but it can also involve purchases, gifts and money deposits, or taking grandchildren on holiday when their everyday life is becoming problematic.

Ever since, I went there [to the grandchildren's] every morning before work and before Marja [the daughter] left for work…Liine was so sensitive. If she woke up and mum wasn't there, it was just terrible…Now I go there before seven every day, wait for them to wake up and take the dogs out. And I stay and make sure that everything is in order and the tables are empty, so that the dogs won't get anything. And then I go home… And then I go back and cook for them so that the meal is ready when they come home from school.

Pirjo, mummu of 10

Honestly, it was because things had got a little complicated for Atte. There had been the divorce, and he had problems at school, he was not really into it. We took his schoolbooks along, and had already finished his history homework at the airport.

Katri, mummu of 11

Ilpo compares the entire essence of grandparenthood with a good insurance policy.

Obviously, the greatest value of grandparents is that they exist. That you have such things as grandparents. Somehow, you could compare them with a 'just in case' insurance, for if something would happen.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

Some narratives talk about a desire by informants to pass on the benefits they have obtained in the form of help. Yet, both the experience of receiving, and not receiving, help have inspired grandparents to help their own offspring. Reflecting on their own experience as young parents, grandparents understand the pressures and troubles of their children and want to lighten the burden.

We had no grandpas or grandmas or anyone near. They were like hundreds of kilometres away, and it was really hard sometimes. So I want them [own children] to know that it is not necessary to cope alone, but we are here to help.

Seppo, vaari of 3

So it's like my mum has taken so much care of them, and they are so close now...Somehow, you want to pass on what you have got. She was such a great help and pillar of support many times, so you somehow want to help your own children in the same way, to pass forward what you once got.

Tuija, mummu of 2

Sometimes, there is an identifiable key moment that has encouraged grandparents to help more in everyday practicalities. For instance, in the event of divorce or death, or a family member being injured or diseased, the need for help is not questioned. The first days of Tuomo's eldest grandchild's life were dramatic, with several post-natal complications and threats of incurable disabilities. He describes how that moment was pivotal for defining his grandparental role.

At that moment I decided that no matter what comes up, I will help her, my help is needed.

Tuomo, pappa of 2

The ambivalence in balancing between 'being there' and interfering is clearly apparent when paving the way. Some informants spoke about an urge to interfere, despite knowing that it would not be a good decision, and others insisted that their offspring would 'never make it' without their assistance. In any case, paving the way takes place within certain limits.

> I cannot give up on everything; that is not the thing that I indulge and spoil this child.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

> If someone decides to become a bum, I won't rescue him. Then it's time to take the responsibility of one's own life.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Ideally, paving the way includes providing help and giving possibilities, but also letting the children and grandchildren make their own mistakes. The value of solving problems and learning lessons is considered to be greater than that of avoiding them in the first place.

> Then I somehow, which may sound awful...I can't help thinking that for the rest of her life it [a misfortune] is so good. That you can't always succeed in every single thing, because life just won't go that way.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

> After all, we all must have the opportunity to make a mistake, so that we learn what it is. Just like the best CFOs are those who have made mistakes and learnt from them.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

> He stopped by for a coffee and told us about his financial worries. But all he got from us was some lunch and life advice.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

In addition to providing care for a family, grandparents also talk about how they *care for the family* itself. As noted earlier, family is the primary factor for the grandparents in this study: family in its extended form and also the smaller family units inside it. Gauthier (2002, 301) describes how family is the place for a genuine underground economy, whose main protagonists are the grandparents. They make efforts to keep it together, whether it means setting up regular get-togethers, giving exactly the same amount of support to all their children to avoid any possible

conflicts, or organizing their lives so that they can help the younger families take care of their families. Despite the fragmentation of contemporary families and the rarity of traditional nuclear families, there still exists a group of grandparents praising the power of tight-knit families. Conversely, keeping the family together can also present a source of anxiety for grandparents, if they – for some reason or other – are not happy with the current situation, or are afraid of a negative change due to their own actions. It is also common for grandparents to compare their own families with known or anticipated others.

> Sometimes I watch and envy those big family get-togethers, where they really are 'us'…We have never been that and we won't become that. I wonder why some families make it and others don't.

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

For the informants, taking care of the family also translates into taking care that their own children can conduct their parenthood well. Not only do grandparents carry out activities with their grandchildren, but they also do their share of letting the young family have some special time together, for instance, through organizing opportunities and the money to fund them.

> So I bought Roosa [the daughter] skates, too, as a birthday present. I thought that they [daughter and granddaughter] should go skating together. I want to support things that they can do together. But also the parents should do things together, like when I bought Roosa and Riku those festival tickets. I promised to take care of Aida that night.

> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

After taking her grandson abroad during the time of his parents' divorce, when 'things were a little complicated', Katri got the best possible reward when seeing the troubled teenager showing compassion to his mother.

> As he got off the bus and Saara [the daughter] was there, he was so happy that he ran to give his mother a hug, proudly in his new clothes.

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Most informants spontaneously talked about the important role they had in letting young parents spend some time alone, away from the everyday hassle of having small children. Taking care of the family includes providing assistance in taking care of their grandchildren's parents' mutual relationship, helping them have some time together without their children.

I would like us to travel together, I kind of see it as offering the young people some time to breathe and do something together. Taking care of your relationship is so important; it must not be just child care and living through the child.

Tuija, mummu of 2

In its most thoughtful aspect, the informants helping their own children to conduct parenthood well – thus recognizing the legitimacy of their parental authority – expands to giving their adult children the gift of giving. For Ilpo, this means regulating the money spent on his grandchildren to avoid encroaching on his own children's territory. Instead, he talks about how he channels his support to his adult children, who can then 'bring it forward' to support their own children.

Why not give it [money] away? To those who have use for it. Isn't that natural? But then again, not too much to the grandchildren, because you have to give your own children that chance too, to take this forward, finance their own children, I mean. So you shouldn't bypass them.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

Grandparenting, rather than being a *here and now* role, is strongly oriented towards the future. It is important for grandparents to be able to guide their grandchildren towards happy adulthood and ***good citizenship***. This stretches the temporal dimension of grandparental care from the present to the future. Although contemporary grandparents are normally not involved in their grandchildren's education, they see that their long life experience obligates them to extend the perspectives of the youngest generation. Parallel to important personal and family values, communal values, good manners and knowing right from wrong are essential to pass on to support good citizenship. These values usually count more than strict rules in everyday routines, such as when it is permissible to eat sweets, or stay up late.

Grandparents find it important to teach their grandchildren respect for work and education, and to reject the attraction of consumerism. Taking grandchildren abroad on holiday to see other cultures, or teaching them work ethics and consumption skills by regulating money transfers according to school success, are examples of discrete ways of developing good, thoughtful and sophisticated citizens. Teaching independence is an essential element of good citizenship, relating more to cultural teaching than teaching personal skills (Section 4.3.4). Teaching independence can be translated into supporting the children's growing up through giving them the necessary tools and helping them to develop the appropriate competences to manage everyday life. This kind of cultural education

begins early in childhood, in terms of good manners and the basic principles of good citizenship. Gradually, the child will be socialized into more challenging situations and activities.

> I would like him to be open to everything. I don't really like such...we just talked about this with my daughter. She was buying Easter eggs and there were some pink ones in the store and he [the grandson] had said: 'Girls' eggs, yack!' That's what I don't want him to...I want him to be open-minded and tolerant.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

The meaning of good citizenship is heavily emphasized in some narratives. For instance, Katri seems to dedicate her grandparenthood to developing healthy, well-behaved and hardworking citizens. In addition to talking about teaching her grandchildren many kinds of skills, she recalls their funny trips abroad. Yet, even travel seems to be part of a more important educational agenda: it ensures that the children become international and sophisticated adults who have had the chance to see more than their home village. Katri has taken nearly all her grandchildren travelling, to '*show them the world*', or to '*civilize them a little*'.

> Atte was my next travel mate. He was at that age when he needed to be civilized a little...And I thought he could learn some good manners there.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Riitta, the funma, thinks that supporting good citizenship is one of her key tasks as a grandparent who is not involved with 'typical grandparenting' tasks, such as babysitting and playing.

> I haven't, and I won't, start raising them, but I want to make a point with my own example about what is right and what is wrong in life. And what the things are you should cherish in the long run. I think it's necessary to expand their perspectives in their typical 'here and now' thinking and attitudes. I keep emphasizing that you should really consider the decisions you make and the consequences they may have.
>
> *Riitta, funma of 4*

Concerned for the future of their grandchildren, grandparents want to do their share in guiding the younger generations towards sustainable values and a good quality of life. Consumerism and materialism are frequent enemies in the informants' narratives. The resistance towards buying toys is an expression of anti-materialistic lessons that grandparents want to share with their grandchildren. Buying things is not a value in itself, and it can even cause anxiety.

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> It is so shocking…It is the thing that worries me the most as a grandmother, that the children never develop a sense of reality in the middle of all that stuff.

> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

> People seem to think that you must get this and that, because there is a rooted belief that the more you consume, the better your standard of living is. Which is a really awkward association. I've always thought that the real quality in living is that you don't have to struggle that much to change your environment into something you eventually don't like.

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

Work-orientation is another important value that grandparents want to pass on. According to the narratives, diligence is definitely one of the seven virtues, essential for achieving good citizenship and independent adulthood. To be more effective, the lessons of work ethics include elements of rewarding well-accomplished tasks in terms of pocket money, treats, or even holidays.

> I always talk about working. Like now that you go to day care, that is your workplace, and then we go to the cabin and work there. Once we left a load of wood there, and he kept asking: 'When will we go to pile it?' He loves to participate in working, otherwise he is lazy, but he likes to do these things.

> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

> Atte was our summer hand, and as a reward I took him to Tallinn. That was his reward.

> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Grandparents feel that it is their responsibility to assist in the religious education of grandchildren. However, the narratives revealed a slight resistance or insecurity about passing on religious values. Some remembered their own grandparents as being highly religious, which made them appear frightening, and they did not want to repeat that, while others felt insecure to discuss religion if their own belief was weak. Yet another group of grandparents considered religion to be a highly personal subject, which should not be pushed. They hoped that their grandchildren would discover their religion for themselves and follow their own routes.

> As a child, I was afraid of God…My grandma was a believer…they didn't have a TV and we sat in the cabin and listened to the service on the radio…you were not allowed to interrupt it…But then she got dementia and she forgot to listen to it…and she started to swear and shout for cognac! That's how deep her belief was!

> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

I pray every day, but I don't know how to teach them that because there are things like 'If I should die before I wake', and I've thought that it might get scary for them. But I've tried to take them to religious events, hoping they would be inspired...but I've started to have doubts myself, and I don't know what to say if they ask about the times of Jesus. Because I don't know it myself. I do believe, though, but not everything. I once asked at the men's night that how can we know about the Bible if there are things they have added like three or four hundred years afterwards. How can there be any witnesses? We had a test in the army, with twenty boys on the bench, and the one at one end said something to the boy next to him, and we whispered it all the way to the boy at the other end. And the story changed totally, although it was on its way for like ten minutes. I thought that, how can you keep a story unchanged for three hundred years if not for ten minutes?

Tapio, pappa of 4

It was my idea to take him there [to a religious daycare]...But Anni, she really has nothing against religion, but she said that it is too religious for her, and she's kind of right, it is a double-edged sward, and I don't want any brainwash either. Like if you've learnt your good-night prayer, it should be enough, but no brainwash.

Tuomo, pappa of 2

Teaching and learning good citizenship are not straightforward. Despite their long life experience, grandparents only see limited possibilities in guiding their offspring onto the right routes. Grandparents are quite realistic about their ability to directly instil positive values in their grandchildren. It is considered important to have discussions and offer new angles and perspectives, but to really have an effect is another story. Instead, it is preferable to tell inspiring stories that evoke ideas, give birth to new thoughts, and above all, create possibilities for good development.

I won't guide too much if he's just not into it. I give him the possibilities, but if it doesn't interest him, then I just let it be.

Tuomo, pappa of 3

I've tried to do my share in raising them but honestly, I have poor opportunities in that. My thoughts are rarely such that their Grandma would approve.

Tapio, pappa of 4

You can, of course, discuss everything with the grandchildren, but by this age, you kind of realize that it's not necessary to teach them so much. There are really only those two things, which we all practice in unique ways: how do you love your neighbour, and how do you make sure that things go right? This is the problematics you should pass on without too much telling and teaching. Just by giving birth to a new thought.

Ilpo, pappa of 9

Convinced of the power of positive childhood memories in making the child a happy and empathetic adult, the informants repeatedly emphasized how grandchildren had fun, whatever they were doing. Even when the mission is to educate or instil values, it seems more important to have fun while doing it, not to mention the role of joy in shopping days, or on holidays. All of these activities include the double pleasure of grandparents being delighted at seeing the children's joy, although they primarily serve to make the child happy. Whether travelling far away or nearby, grandparents want to help their grandchildren have some 'highlights' and new experiences outside ordinary, everyday life. In the narratives, these peak events were often described through the eyes of the children.

> Seeing a huge ferry for the first time, they were totally astonished. In the middle of the sea, they thought they saw fish-basket markers, and in Sweden they thought they saw lake Längelmävesi!
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*
>
> For Niilo, driving a car was a peak experience, when he was the one driving and Grandma was a passenger. He steered and had a real gas pedal and brakes and all.
>
> *Seppo, vaari of 3*
>
> It was Atte's first time in an airplane, and he even loved the food on board...And he was so interested. He went out alone, I gave him some money, and I let him go to the grocery store nearby to get some snacks. He was so independent. He went up to the castle with the funicular...He was so interested in everything, especially in that robber cave. Do I still have the picture? The legend was so fascinating...Atte was so interested in this story. He still remembers every detail of it. He was so satisfied with his holiday.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

Marjo is happy that she can offer her granddaughter experiences and 'everyday luxury' that the girl's parents could not afford. Like her daughter, she was also a student when she had her two eldest daughters, so she knows from personal experience how tough it can be for young families to balance their incomes and expenses.

> I want to give her [the granddaughter] the opportunity to try different things, take her to places where her parents wouldn't take her, or if they feel it is too luxurious or they cannot afford it. We also go out dining a lot. So that Aida is with us. I believe it is good for the child to learn it, from the beginning.
>
> *Marjo, mummu of 1*

4.3.4   Grandparental heritage

> The most important thing is that life goes on, and that we can make it possible.
>
> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

Regarding the meaning of grandparental heritage, grandparents are eager to ***teach skills*** that they master and enjoy, without paying much attention to wider cultural acceptance, or requirements to obtain skills, such as for the caring meaning of teaching independence (Section 4.3.3). According to the narratives, the most popular lessons involve useful productive skills, such as cooking, baking and crafting, which are based on the grandparents' interests. Music, photography, travel, nature and sports are also popular, as well as consumer skills, such as shopping or saving for the future. One of the richest narratives in terms of teaching grandchildren comes from Katri, a retired teacher, who seems dedicated to educating her grandchildren. She talks about how she coaches them with their school work, gives lectures and demonstrations about nature and history, and teaches them new skills, whether in handcraft, in the kitchen, or in the garden.

> I love it how the kids enjoy working. I want them to learn to do something useful, because it's fun and you can see your own achievements…I've taught Anniina to craft, knit and sew…even Henni, although it's not that easy, and the results are not so perfect…It is fun to work together with the little ones when they still love it.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

The importance of teaching skills is visibly present in the strong emphasis on productivity in the consumer narratives relating to productive consumption, and in the purposeful gifts that grandparents prefer. Carrying out activities with the grandchild is the most desired mode of grandparenting, and being able to teach their grandchildren is a natural and rewarding element of it. Productive consumption also involves a weaker focus on leisure and a stronger one on work, thus emphasizing the serious/reasonable component of the 'serious leisure' construct (Moisio et al. 2013, 313), as in Katri's example above. Instead of merely having a good time with the grandchild, the precious moments can be devoted to teaching something useful.

The chain of generations is strongly present in grandparental consumption, in an attempt to ***pass on and create family traditions***. Family traditions are significant because they transmit shared values, stories and goals from one

generation to the next. Respect for nature and entrepreneurship are examples of family values that are often tied together with a family tradition learnt from previous generations.

> My Dad had a strong respect for nature. He was a hunter; he loved to ski and icefish, and suchlike. So, bringing that forward is important, I love skiing myself, that respect for nature and living on the terms of nature. That if it rains or blows, you cannot change it, you just have to organize your doings accordingly...In Lapland, you must never ski that fast that you don't have time to look around. All the animal footprints, singing birds, all that, the nature, there are such pieces of art all over that sometimes you just can't stop photographing.

> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

> I want to pass forward an entrepreneurial way of thinking, not as 'life is all work', but this doing things together, entrepreneurial way of life. A positive attitude, interest in everything, thirst for information, so that you are always open-minded in new situations.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Many family traditions have been passed down through multiple generations, and continuing them in the new generation is seen as an opportunity to teach grandchildren about family history and to pass on the skills and ways of life that have characterized the family. In terms of identity, traditions encourage collective identities through strengthening a sense of community, but they also add to personal identities. Grandparents both incorporate old family traditions from their childhood and launch new ones, hoping that they will also last into subsequent generations. The significance of old habits and traditions lies in the positive associations and pleasant memories that grandparents want to share with their offspring's children.

> I bake the best buns in our entire family. That baby doesn't know how young she'll be when she learns to do it. That is something I want to share on…It dates back to my grandma already. She has also made us bake barley bread, we all know how to do that. I don't think my dad and mum have ever bought white bread, they bake it all the time. No one ever had a recipe, but we saw how grandma did it and learnt from that.

> *Eija, mamma of 1*

Some old family rituals are transferred as they are, as they have always been, but others are modernized to make them last longer. To maintain the enthusiasm for Lapland inherited from her father, Marjatta bought a cabin in the north with her

husband. It serves as a site for extended family get-togethers during Christmas holidays and as a place of recreation for the families. Later, she hopes, the children will continue the tradition with their grandchildren.

> I was three months old when they took me to Lapland for the first time. And the tradition remained. First with them, then with the scouts, and now we have the cabin. It is great to have the opportunity to take the children there and teach them the life there, to make them understand that it's not just entertainment like in the ski resorts, but you can show them what it really is.

> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

New traditions that grandparents create themselves are often born with the first grandchild and later repeated with others. New traditions commonly refer to certain types of confirmation, graduation, or birthday presents that follow a particular rule, or regularly held special rituals, such as 'girls' shopping trips' or 'boys' days'. These traditions are more personal and meant to last for one lifetime, while others include a silent wish to be passed on to future generations. Examples of more lasting traditions include mundane family rituals, such as Sunday lunches, and more festive ones, such as anniversary dinners and Christmas celebrations. In addition to serving as vehicles in transition, rituals are major forces that cement relationships and bind the extended family together (Hogg et al. 2004, 250). Travel is a popular way of launching new consumption traditions, whether as a present for a certain accomplishment, or just as a form of leisure carried out in turn with each grandchild.

> We promised to take her to London as a confirmation present. Our plan is to travel on her terms, to do only those things she wants, and to visit the places that she is interested in. Her younger brother has already made us promise that it will be a tradition.

> *Riitta, funma of 4*

> We took him to Disneyland in the spring before his first school year. And we promised to take them all at their turn, right after preschool. Now it's her turn, this spring, and hopefully, we'll still have the possibility to go with the others.

> *Marjatta, mummi of 3*

> Every year, on the day when Marja's summer vacation begins, we visit the car museum, then the ostrich farm, and finally the strawberry fields of Niitty-Seppälä. We celebrate the end of the summer trip and have some coffee and ice cream there.

> *Mikko, vaari of 10*

Grandchildren are concrete evidence of a thread from grandparents' lives persisting into the future, giving a dimension of immortality to the individual and to family ancestry. *Leaving a trace* can be considered a significant meaning of grandparenthood. Whether it is expressed in the personal relationship with the grandchild, or in more concrete accomplishments, such as building and crafting artefacts for future generations, leaving a good trace and good memories is highly important and appreciated by the informants. The most concrete traces that grandparents leave can range from building a house through to knitting, crafting, furnishing and painting various objects. The informants share a realistic and practical view about their creations, but there are signs of strong emotions towards the more important pieces of work that the informants want to be saved, even beyond their grandchildren. The idea that we invest parts of ourselves in the objects we create appears to be a universal belief. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), we invest psychic energy in an object to which we have directed our efforts, time and attention. This energy and its products are regarded as a part of the self because they have grown or emerged from the self (Belk 1988, 144). In his study, Unruh (1983) detected a solidification of identity through letters, journals, memos and poems that were left behind. Additional artefacts, including photographs and jewellery, were passed on to persons who were believed to be willing to care for them. In the objects, the chain of generations moves in both directions; there are examples of precious items that the grandparents themselves once received from their own grandparents and now save for own grandchildren.

The more abstract traces include good memories that remain post mortem. Even this meaning had its roots in the past links of the generational chain.

> It has to do with this: how my children have beautiful memories of my mum and dad. It's kind of the same. I want to save something from further past to be passed on...I just love it how my children and their cousins talk about my parents, it's really astonishing. Especially my daughter says often, that 'If only Grandma Anna was here. Everything would be fine then.' That is what I want, too. That they remember.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

Leaving an embodied trace can be identified as shared similarities with grandchildren, whether regarding consumption preferences, common hobbies, taste, sense of humour, or other personal traits. Any evidence of leaving a trace of this kind was proudly mentioned, although some with a humorous notion about life probably being easier if the children were more unlike their grandparents.

Some traces of my foolishness have already transmitted to her. She went to a toy store with her real grandmother in order to buy a toy. Instead, she wanted to have nail polish! They had already bought her a lipstick earlier, and her father thinks it's obvious, who has inspired her.

Riitta, funma of 4

It is like a confirmation of the power of example that when I took photos on our trip, he also took some with his toy camera. Now we bought him a new real camera, he has really taken some good photos. And now he just needed to have a similar bag to grandpa's camera bag.

Seppo, vaari of 3

I nearly cried one day, when Aida suddenly started to sing Omnayja Shimayjaa in the backseat, just by herself. Singing it happily...And sometimes she talks about Amma. Spirituality is so important to me, but I won't push it.

Marjo, mummu of 1

4.4   Consumption and grandparental identity

Analysing the four meanings and their implementation in grandparental-consumer behaviour, and viewing them in the light of consumer identity work, leads to a conclusion about the meaning of grandparental consumption: it serves as a means to construct a unique but legitimate grandparental identity (self-focused meanings), to take care of the youngest generation and to leave a trace (other-focused meanings). The link between the self-focused meanings and identity is straightforward: through symbolic consumption, an individual is entitled to construct a grandparental identity that is authenticated and reflects the 'true self' beyond the stereotypes. At the same time, it connects individuals with other grandparents in a way that makes them feel authorized and legitimate, thus serving the primitive human quest for unity between self and society.

Instead, how do other-focused meanings serve the construction of grandparental identity? As separate meanings, both *heritage* and *care* would possibly provide interesting angles for an academic study, but bundling them together reveals another perspective that may be even more relevant and new in terms of consumer identity work: *generativity*. Generativity is a word first coined by Erik H. Erikson in 1950 to describe a concern for, and commitment to, promoting the well-being of future generations (Erikson 1963; McAdams & de St. Aubin 1992). More than fifty years later, generativity is still valid and worth further research, and

importantly, no longer understood as a concept within the individual, but as a relational and multiply contextualized construct that links the person with the social world (Kruse & Schmitt 2012, 3). Both meanings of heritage and taking care are inherent in the concept of generativity, a concept that is highly relevant for identity construction. Thus, in addition to providing grandparents with an arena for unifying and differentiating identity work, consumption provides grandparents with a tool to express generativity, which can be seen as an important component of the grandparental-identity narrative. In other words, with the help of symbolic consumption, grandparents seem entitled to realize their grandparental identity through constructing and living out a 'generativity script', which ties their identity narrative together and makes it meaningful.

In the following chapter, I will give a brief introduction to the concept of generativity and its contribution to consumer research. As a creative synthesis of previous studies in generativity, consumer generativity and the narratives of this study, I will also offer a new conceptualization for generative consumption. Finally, I will extract the generativity script from the narratives of grandparents and weave them together into a new coherent narrative of grandparental consumption.

5 GENERATIVE CONSUMPTION IN GRANDPARENTAL NARRATIVES

5.1 Generativity and its origins

> Generativity is a concept that invites us to see the entire range of ways human beings leave their stamp on the future.

(Kotre 1996, 7)

Despite the wide variety of meanings of grandparental consumption, the stories engage in a common ideology, a kind of generative narration. Within the group of informants, all grandparental narratives reflect powerful signs of generativity: a distinct desire to be remembered and to nurture the younger generation. Furthermore, in addition to supporting their own children and grandchildren, informants also show guidance to other younger people – in the workplace, for instance. It would seem inappropriate to ignore the value of this finding, although I recognize the possibility of identifying more than one theme that could have been further explored. Adding the perspective of generativity into grandparental consumption originates exclusively from the narratives and stresses both the logical and also the innovative character of abduction. As a logical inference, the aspect of generativity is reasonable and academic, but it also extends into the realm of discovering profound insight and thus generates new knowledge. The context of discovery is related to the conception of new ideas and constructs or to the creative synthesis of existing ideas, which all advance theory development (Yadav 2010, 2). Abduction is intended to help researchers make new discoveries in a logically and methodologically ordered way (Reichertz 2010). By integrating the multidisciplinary findings in generativity with the cultural perspective of consumer identity work, I attempt to generate new insight, synthesize existing ideas and,

most importantly, provide a new vocabulary to understand grandparent consumers.

5.1.1 From developmental stage to a component of identity

The concept of generativity was first introduced in Erik H. Erikson's psychosocial theory of personality development (Erikson 1963, 267). According to the original definition, generativity is the wish to nurture, guide and ensure the well-being of future generations and, ultimately, to leave a lasting legacy – both tangible and intangible – after death (Rubinstein et al. 2014). From a more sociological point of view, generativity is a resource encouraging people towards the public good, maintaining continuity from one generation to the next. In Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, generativity appears at the seventh of eight successive stages in the human life cycle, a stage associated with the developmental task of generativity versus stagnation and an existential question: *'Can I make my life count?'* At this stage, typically in middle adulthood, individuals should be ready to commit themselves to younger and future generations and become increasingly concerned with the effect of their life on others and on the world. Erikson (1968, 138) proposed that achieving generativity was the normative ideal: to leave a positive legacy of the self in the world by demonstrating care for future generations, as well as promoting their well-being and success. Those failing in this developmental task are more likely to feel uninvolved and fall into a state of stagnation, viewing themselves as having little or no effect on others, feeling unable to leave a positive mark on their world, and showing little interest in sharing knowledge or experience with younger generations. The new virtue of the seventh psychosocial life stage is care, that is, the commitment to take care of persons, products and ideas. Erikson had a straightforward view of the consequences of failing at developmental tasks. Although generative people can have occasional feelings of stagnation, those individuals in the stagnation stage begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own – and only – child (Erikson 1968, 138). The fruit of generativity appears in the eighth stage of the life cycle, which is ego-integrity, the feeling that life has been full, worthwhile and rewarding (Kotre 1996, 8), or as Erikson suggests: *'the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions.'*

Following Erikson's pioneering writings, the concept of generativity was largely ignored in research for more than two decades. When interest re-emerged in the

1980s, this occurred without the original psychodynamic theoretical assumptions (Villar 2012, 1095). The first theorist to rediscover generativity was Kotre (1984), who expanded the concept, freed it from a fixed chronological position and highlighted the importance of culture on generative expression. According to Kotre (1996), generativity appears more as an impulse than a stage – as a desire to live in such a way that what is done will last beyond an individual's own life. Generativity may appear at various stages of human life, even as early as it is possible to procreate. McAdams (1993, 65) challenged the entire Eriksonian idea of generativity as an identity task and posited that generativity is incorporated into identity as the individual develops. McAdams and Logan (2004) concluded that because the course of adult development is not neat and predictable, different aspects of generativity may ebb and flow at different times over the course of life, and generative concerns and issues can arise at almost any point in adult life. According to them, generativity script is a component of every life story, a *'vision of exactly what one hopes to put into life and get out of life before one is too old to be generative'*.

5.1.2   Types and dimensions of generativity

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the topic of generativity, and the research has concentrated on generativity conceptualizations beyond a developmental stage (Hebblethwaite & Norris 2011, 124). Several theorists have suggested that generativity is not developed sequentially as in the Eriksonian model. Instead, it is a component of the self that is constructed as a part of the ongoing negotiation of adult personality commitments (McAdams 2001) and is shaped by individual development, as well as by social and cultural forces (McAdams & Logan 2004).

According to Kotre (1996), the reason that Erikson's original schedule for the seventh stage failed was his inability to identify different types of generativity. Generativity implies not simply having and raising children, but also contributing to society and future generations. Not all parents are particularly generative, and generativity is not limited to the domain of parenthood. Generative responsibility includes the generational responsibility of adults to bear, nurture and guide younger people, as well as to develop and maintain those societal institutions and natural resources without which future generations could not survive (Schoklitsch & Baumann 2012, 263). Individuals may be generative in a wide variety of life pursuits: in work life, volunteering endeavours, religious and political

organizations, neighbourhood, friendships, or leisure activities. Kotre (2000, 65) concluded that generativity is individuals' desire to be fertile in the broadest sense of the term, that is, with the desire to make their life count. This is the leading thought inspiring the generativity orientation in this study.

Kotre (1996, 12−14) proposed that there are four different forms of generativity: *biological, parental, technical* and *cultural.* Biological generativity is about begetting, bearing and nursing children; parental generativity is about feeding, clothing, sheltering, loving and disciplining children, as well as initiating them into a family's traditions. In the narratives in this study, biological generativity is only touched upon in the meanings that the grandparents associated with the physical transmission of life and in the great importance of keeping the family going, which was spontaneously mentioned in almost every conversation.

> It was like I was having the baby. It felt just the same.
>
> *Anitta, mummukka of 1*

Parental generativity, however, was present in every narrative. There is an interesting tension between parenting children and parenting grandchildren. Although the object of parental generativity can be the child, the grandchild or both, there seems to be some variation in the focus of parental generativity. While some grandparents have turned their focus entirely on the grandchild − especially when the child is very young − others identify themselves primarily as parents of their adult children and focus their parental generativity onto these children to help them be parentally generative towards their own children.

> The best thing [about grandparenthood] is that your own children experience what you have experienced, that is, being a mother and a father. Like they have probably thought sometimes, when we have done something, or been worried, and they may have thought: 'What is the big deal?' It's like they just can't understand it before they have children of their own. You just won't understand motherhood or fatherhood before. So perhaps now they know how we have felt and how important they are to us. Even though we keep saying that we love each other, we say it a lot, and we hug, but you just can't transfer the emotion. You just have to feel it yourself.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Technical generativity is accomplished in teaching and passing on various skills, such as how to read, how to fish or how to cook. One of the objects of legacy-making is the apprentice, with whom the instructor identifies as a way of reliving past experiences of mastery and extending those experiences into the future.

Another object of generativity is the skill itself, whose life is vicariously the possessor's, who keeps the craft alive. Teaching only becomes generative when it is imbued with the sense of extending the self into the apprentice, or attaching the self to a lasting art. Likewise, skills are not transmitted in isolation, but within a culture. As Kotre (1996, 13) puts it:

> When an old man shows his grandson how to preserve seeds from the best produce in his crop, he is ostensibly passing on a craft. But he is also...passing on a culture - a belief...in the 'miracle of life'.

However, during skill transmission, culture remains in the background, in the role of setting the scene. When teaching mastery of a skill, the teacher also indirectly teaches what it means. To the extent that body and mind can be separated, teaching a technique concerns the body of a culture, but not yet its mind (Kotre 1996, 14).

Technical generativity in the form of passing on skills was touched upon in all narratives; every grandparent in this study talks about teaching, or planning to teach, their grandchild some useful skills. The myriad of skills, as such, does not reveal much that is new, and it is more interesting to explore the meanings behind those skills, which takes us closer to cultural generativity.

> It is so important that they see the result of their own efforts, what they have made all by themselves. And that they delight others by helping them.
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*

While all 'grandparent teachers' emphasize the significance of teaching *independence* and *being capable* and the importance of learning the required skills to *manage everyday life*, there is also an ethos of *courtesy* and *self-respect* in the lessons for acquiring new skills. In cultural generativity, teachers move from passing on skills to passing on their meanings, being directly concerned with the mind. Teaching moves on from 'how to do it' and turns into 'what it means', and the teacher passes on the idea behind the skill instead of the skill itself. For example, instead of teaching someone how to play the piano, the teacher instead teaches the idea of music and is no longer a teacher with an apprentice, but a mentor with a disciple (Kotre 1996, 14). Generativity is expressed in the creation of new symbols, in the renovation of existing ones to ensure their relevance for future generations, and in the conservation of symbols in the form in which they already exist. The targets of reproduction are both the culture and the disciple, which need to stay in balance. Focusing merely on developing the disciple, the mentor would neglect the culture's

central symbols, and focusing on the preservation of culture would turn disciples into anonymous receptacles. Cultural generativity is free from ties with a particular phase in adult life. Its relevance from an evolutionary point of view is that it promotes the survival of children and grandchildren through social instead of biological mechanisms (Kotre 1996, 15). Cultural generativity ensures the transmission of culture, which is vital to human survival. Snarey (1993) and Schoklitsch and Baumann (2012) refer to technical and cultural generativity as societal generativity that includes all aspects of caring for other, younger adults: 'serving as a mentor, providing leadership, and generally contributing to the strength and continuity of subsequent generations' (Snarey 1993, 22).

The most obvious contribution of the narratives focuses on the domain of cultural generativity. Grandparenthood seems to represent a phase in life when people let go of those myths and beliefs about life that have proven to be false. According to Levinson (1986, 3), midlife, in particular, is the time for disillusionment, but also for creating a legacy. Having let go of illusions that failed in reality, people start amplifying those aspects of the self that are truly present and are idealized by their culture, and they even begin to care for the culture itself. Most informants suggested that they have an important task, which involves passing on their knowledge, their experience and their values as role models. Grandparents also talked about having different relationships with their grandchildren than with their own children. For many informants, it seems easier to be flexible, tolerant and understanding with their grandchildren than it was with their own children years ago, when they were young. All this indicates a sense of generativity. It is notable that the targets of cultural generativity not only include the informants' own children and grandchildren, but also other younger people, such as students and colleagues. Ilpo talks about guiding hundreds of high-schoolers during his career, while Tuija shares more recent stories about mentoring team members in her workplace.

> It was quite astonishing, when one of the boys, who had dramatically dropped school in the middle of 8th grade, and I had told him that if you ever face a situation in life where you need the diploma after all, you are always welcome back. It took more than 10 years but then he comes, one ninety and something tall, bows at my door and asks if I still remember him. Of course I did. So he came and told me word by word what I had said years before. It made me feel that wow, right words in the right place. I had kind of planed the doorstep for him, so he was able to come back and have a second chance.
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

> Then again, when you notice that you've really given a hard time to someone, and still nothing happens, but then suddenly it takes a new turn. It is so great. Like now, I have this one young mother, who has clearly shaped up. It makes me feel so good, like you have really done well in spite of all that pushing. You have made her finally realize what is expected from her.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Erikson (1963) suggested that generativity stems from both inner drives and external societal forces. Elaborating on his early suggestions, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) see generativity as a multifaceted construct that includes seven psychosocial components. These features cover all facets of generativity, from causes to consequences. Figure 19 displays the seven features and their proposed interrelations.
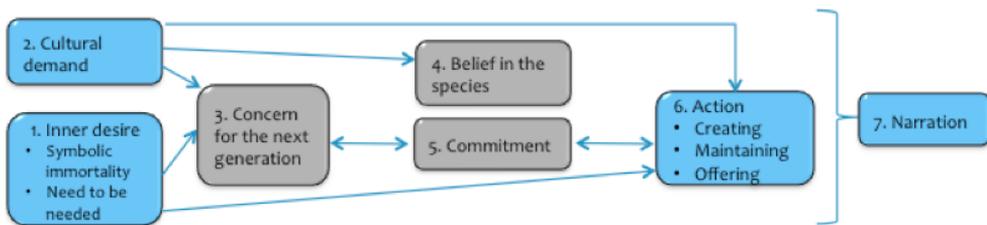

Figure 19. Seven features of generativity (McAdams et al., 1998)

A full understanding of generativity requires a full examination of all seven features. However, considering the consumption perspective and narrative approach of this study, it is justifiable to limit the main focus to four features: orientation for generativity (1, 2), generative action (6) and generative narration (7). The other three features are more briefly addressed.

The first two features, cultural demand and inner desire, are considered as the ultimate sources of generativity. Inner desires combine symbolic immortality with the need to be needed, while cultural demand is viewed as an external source of generativity. Together, they promote an adult's concern for the next generation. In the theory of McAdams et al. (1998, 20), generative concern was referred to as an overall orientation or attitude regarding generativity in an individual's own life and social world. It is the extent to which an individual wishes to invest in caring for, and providing some kind of generative contribution to the next generation. With the support of a belief in the quality and goodness of the human species, concern

may stimulate generative commitment towards future generations, which can be evidenced by goal setting that seeks to take responsibility for the next generation. In turn, generative commitments may also influence belief and concern. Generative action can either obtain its impulse directly from cultural demand and/or inner desire, or originate from commitments to generative endeavours and goals. Reciprocally, generative action may influence generative commitments. Finally, the particular meanings of demand, desire, concern, belief, commitment and action are determined by the person's narration of generativity: the subjective, unique and self-defining story the adult creates about providing for the next generation.

5.2   Conceptualizing generative consumption

5.2.1   Orientation for generative consumption

McAdams et al. (1998) suggested that the sources of generativity were found in inner desires and cultural demand. Complying with the cultural perspective of this study, I reject the juxtaposition of the terms 'inner' and 'cultural', and refer to both features as sources of generativity. This leads us to three sources: 1) a *desire for symbolic immortality*, 2) a *desire to be needed by others* and 3) *cultural demand*. First, the wish to be generative is, in many ways, similar to the wish to live forever. One of the common traits of the human life cycle is that the older individuals become, the stronger their sense of mortality and the inevitability of an end become. Kotre (1996, 10) defines generativity as individuals' desire to invest their substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self. These investments are ways of achieving material and symbolic unity with an extensive, enduring future. Symbolic immortality is a generative way to express agency, to defy death and to leave an enduring and positive mark behind.

> It has to do with this: how my children have beautiful memories of my mum and dad. It's kind of the same. I want to save something from further past to be passed on.
>
> *Ulla, mummi of 2*

McAdams (1993) describes generativity partly as a construction of self-defining legacies that live on. Lifton (1974) defines immortality as a compelling universal urge to maintain a sense of continuous symbolic relationship over time and space, with the various elements of life. It can be expressed in individuals' sense of *'living on through and in their sons and daughters and their sons and daughters'* (Lifton 1974) and also through work in the sense that any contribution once made will not die, but that the writings, teachings and human influences will live on. Kornhaber (1996, 192) refers to continuity as the way that all knowledge, experience and personal essence are passed on from generation to generation.

> ...it [the most important thing about grandparenthood] is that our family remains, and we remain, our lives go on in those children.

> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

> It's most important that the life goes on, and that we can make it possible.

> *Tuomo, pappa of 2*

According to Lifton (1974), through our children and grandchildren, we get as close to immortality as is possible for an average person. Such living legacies are strongly desired extensions of self. He identified five ways through which people may attempt to ensure that their selves will extend beyond death: 1) through their children, 2) through belief in life after death, 3) through their work, 4) through identification with nature and 5) through experiential transcendence. A sixth way, according to Belk (1988), is for possessions live on through heirs.

The second source of generativity, the need to be needed, manifests in communion and refers to generative adults' desire to nurture, assist, or be of any important use to others.

> In all that fuss and noise, you feel that life goes on, including your own. After all, I am not totally unneeded, yet.

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

The feature of cultural demand can be identified as a third source of generativity, representing society's normative, age-graded, developmental expectations that adults will contribute to the well-being and future of subsequent generations. It encompasses a wide spectrum of societal factors and forces that guide adults towards taking responsibility for the next generation in their roles as parents, teachers, mentors, leaders, organizers, creative 'ritualizers', and keepers of meaning. Cultural demand also encompasses occupational, ideological, and lifestyle

opportunities (i.e. experience, knowledge and time), material resources and constraints that a society offers its adults to shape and motivate their generative inclinations (Kruse & Wahl 2009; McAdams & de St. Aubin 1992, 1004). One form of cultural opportunity is time, which appeared in the conversations with informants. If grandparents have retired, or otherwise exited work life, they may feel obliged to help in the daily care of grandchildren, whose parents are at work. Among the informants, there are grandparents who are still at work, but prioritize their children's career over their own. Tuija and her husband have planned to work reduced hours to enable their daughter-in-law to return to work. Pirkko tells how she has organized her working days so that she can spend every morning at her daughter's house, helping the children get up and go to school, and again in the afternoon, preparing the family meal.

It is the dualism of selfish and unselfish factors leading to generative thought, action and narration, which makes the entire phenomenon of generativity interesting and valid for consumer identity research. Should the generativity literature only concentrate on the more altruistic side of 'doing good for others', it would not offer such an interesting focus for this research. According to Kotre (1996), expressing any type of generativity may originate from the individual or from the other, depending on whether life interest falls more heavily on the self, or on the generative object. Based on this division, he divides the sources of generativity into *communal* and *agentic*. The desire for immortality is a manifestation of agency, a tendency to assert, expand and develop the self, while the need to be needed expresses communion and a tendency to relate to others through loving and caring (McAdams & de St. Aubin 1992, 1005).

Hence, generativity can be expressed by individuals to produce, generate, or create something in their own image (agentic), or to care for, nurture and give independence to that which has been produced, generated, or created (communal). According to psychologist David Bakan, communality refers to 'the participation of the individual in a mutual, interpersonal reality or in some larger organism' (ref. Kotre 1996, 17). Communal generativity stems from individuals' desire to be needed and willingness to sacrifice their own good for the sake of loved ones. Thus, life interest falls more heavily on the other than on the self. Agentic generativity, however, represents the self-asserting, self-protecting and self-expanding existence of the individual, leading to agentic generativity that only focuses on the self. The individual needs to have a permanent influence on others, and to be remembered after death (symbolic immortality). Thus, although generative behaviour often implies willingness to accept costs for the benefit of

others, engagement for younger generations can reflect both self-interest and altruism (Kruse & Schmitt 2012).

Importantly, although dualism easily leads to a conclusion that agentic generativity is 'bad' and communal generativity is 'good', this logic only works at the extremes. Kotre (1996) suggests that highly generative people present a combination of both agentic and communal input into generativity. In addition, despite being referred to as a desirable achievement in life (e.g. Erikson 1950), generativity itself cannot only be viewed as a thoroughly positive concept. Kotre (1996, 9) suggests that generativity can be channelled into both vice and virtue. Generativity entails an inherent possibility of leaving a heritage of active destruction, a sinister side that emerges when generativity becomes exclusive. In the world history, there are numerous examples of excessive narcissism and destruction made acceptable through relying upon the noble notion of 'making the world a better place for our children'.

In viewing the meanings of grandparental consumption through a generative lens, the active, identity-realizing side of the chart, that is, grandparental heritage and grandparental care, strongly relate to generative action. Grandparental heritage − teaching self-defining skills and values, creating and passing on traditions and leaving a trace − refers to more agentic forms of generativity, leaving a positive legacy of the self. Grandparental care − making good citizens, paving the way, and caring for the family − reflects the actions of more communal generativity, taking care of future generations. The borderline between the two motivations is scattered and thin, and my methodology would fail to manage motivation, so there is no point trying to classify each consumption activity according to its ultimate motivation. Instead, there are elements of both forms of generativity in most grandparental consumption. In addition, none of the generative activities represents an extreme at either end of the scale. Table 7 illustrates the relationship between consumption activities, consumption meanings and generativity through examples from the narratives.

Table 7. Examples of agentic and communal generativity in grandparental consumption

Meaning of consumption	Example	Communal generativity	Agentic generativity
Grandparental heritage	**Teaching new skills** *Traveling with the grandchild*	Feeling needed Helping both child and parents	Legitimacy for own interests Positive legacy of the self via joint memories
	Passing on traditions *Lapland enthusiasm of own parents*	Taking care of and connecting past and future generations	Outliving the self in a tradition
Grandparental care	**Paving the way** *Depositing money for the grandchild*	Feeling needed Sacrifice of own good (money)	Control Positive legacy of the self
	Caring for the family *Help in everyday*	Feeling needed Sacrifice of own good (time)	Control Positive legacy of the self

In conclusion, consumption offers individuals a tool to express both communal and agentic modes of generativity. It serves the human need to be needed and individuals' willingness to sacrifice something of themselves for the sake of people who are important to them. However, consumption also provides us with the means to use control, leave a positive legacy of the self, and finally, to outlive the self. So, a wish to be generative also reflects a wish to live forever.

5.2.2 Grandparental consumption as a generative action

In marketing, generativity research has focused on philanthropy and prosocial behaviours related to ethics (Giacalone et al. 2005) and environment (Urien & Kilbourne 2011), and indirectly on the field of gift-giving (Price et al. 2000). Lacroix and Jolibert (2015, 785) have defined *consumer generativity* as adults' motivation to invest themselves in consumption activities in a way that benefits future generations, whether by taking care of them (communal generativity) or by leaving a positive legacy of the self (agentic generativity). Although the consumption meanings revealed in this study follow this division, I find it somewhat confusing and inadequate because it only evaluates whether the

consuming activity is agentic or communal in nature. Noting that all generative consumption can originate from both agentic and communal sources, determining whether the outcome is agentic or communal only reveals one layer of the phenomenon. For example, individuals can take care of their grandchildren generously through providing shelter, money and presents, but do it merely for more self-focused reasons, such as showing power and influence, and to leave a positive legacy of gratitude.

Returning to the original definition by Lacroix and Jolibert (2015), these consumption activities encompass increasing consumption of goods and services. However, they also include divesting the self of some materials, or even not buying, to conserve financial resources as a hedge against future uncertainty, or for the direct financial benefit of subsequent generations. In the narratives of this study, there were examples of such non-consumption. For instance, Katri preferred saving money for the future, while Ilpo transferred his savings for use by his children and grandchildren.

> I don't want a future where they have to take care of us. Let them just put us to a residential care…and hopefully visit us sometimes!
>
> *Katri, mummu of 11*
>
> ... we don't have any use for money. Why not give it away? To those who have use. Isn't that natural?
>
> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

Generative action is defined as creating, maintaining and offering tangible or intangible products of the self (goods, ideas, children, knowledge) that promote the well-being of future generations. The generative individual strives to preserve what has been created and then offers it to succeeding generations as a gift or bequest (McAdams et al. 1998). Rubinstein et al. (2014) extended previous definitions of generativity by identifying four foci of generativity: people, groups, things and activities. They also identified a form of generativity orientated to the past in which relationships with preceding generations formed a kind of generative action. Rubinstein et al. (2014) draw attention to the anthropological concept of 'the dividual' as a distinction from 'the individual', which refers to someone who is not distinct, but known through culturally particular affiliation of the self or its parts with others (ref. Sahlins 2013). They suggest that generativity is not so much a matter of outliving the self, as Kotre defines it, as passing elements of the self to others who live after the individual's own death (Rubinstein et al. 2014, 2).

In the ethnographic study by Rubinstein et al. (2014), the focus on people as objects of generativity was pervasive. The second focus, which was groups, referred to generative expressions through work, which served as an arena for the desired expression of technical or cultural generativity and as a source of personal meaning. The third focus refers to things, that is, personally significant objects that can include items such as photos, art, collections, diaries, antiques, houses and places to which individuals feel attached and that may potentially outlive them. These items can serve both as objects and as representations of generative care. The fourth focus, activities, refers to behaviours that feature a significant investment of the self in others by the social actor. These may vary from playing particular social roles within groups to dyadic activities as in a mentor–mentee relationship, and to solitary activities, such as art, writing and gardening, which give pleasure both to the self and to others. The activities serve as a small investment of the self in others in a pleasurable way and may outlive the self through connections with other people. In this study, children and grandchildren represent the most common objects of grandparents' generativity, but other objects can also be identified, for instance, in family houses, forests, summer cabins and collections, which are intended to be passed forward to 'someone who cares', or in creating photo books and crafting items for the offspring.

By translating the above into consumption, grandparents may, for instance, build, craft, cook and bake for their grandchildren, and create new skills and new traditions. They want to maintain important values and traditions, pass on familial skills and maintain the environment for future generations. Grandparents offer their grandchildren new experiences through travel, culture, sports and everyday life. Bequests and gifts are concrete examples of offerings, but ideas are also offered or initiated. Table 8 presents consumption examples for all three aspects of generative action.

Table 8. Grandparental consumption as a generative action

Creating	Maintaining	Offering
New products	Values	Experiences
New skills	Skills	Bequests, gifts
New traditions	Traditions	Ideas
	Environment	
I want them to learn to do something useful, because it's fun and you can see your own achievements...I've taught Anniina to craft, knit, and sew. Katri, mummu of 11	*My Dad had a strong respect for nature, he was a hunter, he loved to ski and icefish and such. So bringing that forward is important.* Marjatta, mummi of 3	*I want to give her the opportunity to try different things, take her to places where her parents wouldn't take her, or if they feel it is too luxurious or they cannot afford it.* Marjo, mummu of 1

Based on the narratives, the objects of grandparental generative consumption can be divided into three main categories: materials (products, environment), experiences (including traditions and learning) and ideas (including values).

Lacroix and Jolibert (2015) studied the consumer behaviour of highly generative people and noticed that people who care about the welfare of future generations buy products that have a long life cycle, are reusable, are considered to be an investment, or seem to present real value. This study provides confirmation of the importance of the first two attributes: grandparents spontaneously talk about buying good-quality items that will last from one child to another. Baby equipment is one example of products supplied to each family with the assumption that they will benefit the firstborn child, but possibly also younger siblings. Alternatively, some products circulate even between extended family members, for instance, to second cousins.

> This time, we didn't buy that much in advance. We had bought things for Elmo, presuming that if Noora gets pregnant, they will pass those things over to her. And so they have done.
>
> *Tuija, mummu of 2*

Lacroix and Jolibert (2002, 786) noted that the product categories of generative consumers included environmentally friendly products, financial products, ethical

products, educational products and products that meet individuals' primary needs. The list was almost entirely confirmed in this study.

In their study of older consumers' disposition towards special objects, Price et al. noticed that disposition was seen as a generalized gift-giving to future generations in which something of the giver's self endures (2000, 196) A possession transfer to a younger family member resulted in an extension of the self of an older family member into that of the recipient. The researchers suggest that possession transfers are a way to influence the future lives of others and the biographies of special things, even an act of ensuring a good home for a meaningful thing. Giving a significant object to younger family members is also an act of transferring cultural capital to a new generation. To leave a legacy that validates their lives and affirms relationships with important survivors, deciding what will become of cherished goods becomes a significant and, in many cases, a burdensome responsibility for older consumers (McCracken 1988). In fact, reciprocity is an important aspect in generativity. As Kotre (1995) pointed out, generativity needs a giver, but also a recipient. He raised the question: *What if no one is interested in what I want to leave behind?'* Hebblethwaite and Norris (2011) suggest that generativity is a dynamic process constructed from the interaction between generations: grandparents in their study could leave a legacy because their grandchildren were open to receiving it. Having family heirlooms, or other possessions that the grandchildren are willing to take over, provides a sense of familial self-continuity that extends beyond death. Kornhaber (1996, 58) refers to grandparenting as a process, which ideally leads to 'mattering' and immortality, leaving behind aspects of the self, whereas its opposite is disappearance, that is, leaving nothing behind.

Price et al. (2000) considered the various tactics that their informants applied to choose the best possible recipient for important possessions. The tactics for targeting a recipient ranged from unquestioned enactment of cultural norms (such as giving to the eldest son/daughter) to the expedient of giving to the person who asks first. A bundle of interesting middle-way tactics focused on the person who was most likely to appreciate the object, who would carry on the work, who cared the most, or who was the most deserving of all possible recipients (2000, 193). This careful decision-making was also apparent in the present study. In addition to balancing with the required equality towards all his children, Ilpo wanted to be certain that his heritage would be enjoyed by the recipient and that she was willing to accept it.

> I asked her if she really wants this [an old farm]. I see this more as a burden than as a present: you have to be ready to work hard and still enjoy it...I couldn't imagine that the others would organize their lives so that they would be ready for this.

> *Ilpo, pappa of 9*

According to Price et al. (2000, 196), by choosing the best possible recipient for significant possessions, even while considering their transfer over multiple generations, consumers try to ensure that their contributions do not die with their bodies. Thus, giving a bequest to the 'right person' is considered a good way of achieving symbolic immortality. As evidenced in the many informant quotes already provided, consumers seek to transfer not just their possessions, but also their values, stories and memories of themselves, and even traits and personalities. Consistent with the idea of symbolic immortality, some grandparents explicitly refer to distributing 'pieces' of themselves to their children and grandchildren.

> Some traces of my foolishness have already transmitted to her. She went to a toy store with her real grandmother in order to buy a toy. Instead, she wanted to have nail polish! They had already bought her a lipstick earlier, and her father thinks it's obvious, who has inspired her.

> *Riitta, funma of 4*

Looking back at Lacroix and Jolibert's (2012) categorization of generative products, it is easy to notice that the same attributes also apply to consumption experiences. The informants respect nature and environment in their choices, and they want to pass that trait on to younger generations. Joint leisure activities can be characterized by teaching and education, and the supreme aspect of fun in all activities indicates grandparents' hope of fulfilling their grandchildren's primary needs.

Hebblethwaite and Norris (2011) studied North American grandparents and their adult grandchildren and found that family leisure played an important role in the experience and expression of generativity. Their examples show how grandparents use family leisure as a means of investing in their grandchildren, with the hope of leaving a legacy that extends beyond the grandchild's generation and carries on in the family for multiple future generations (Hebblethwaite & Norris 2011, 127). Leisure experiences were important and deliberate means for the transfer of knowledge and values across generations. As such, they capture the essence of generativity as promoting the greater good, but also benefiting the person by enhancing feelings of self-worth.

Combining the definition of consumer generativity (Lacroix & Jolibert 2012) with ideas about generative action (McAdams 1998; Rubinstein et al. 2014) and with the grandparental narratives, it is possible to redefine generative consumption as *a communal or agentic investment of self in consumption activities that promote the well-being of future generations*. Whether agentic or communal in its orientation, generative consumption can actualize through creating, maintaining, or offering materials, experiences and ideas, or other tangible or intangible products of the self to support the well-being of younger generations.
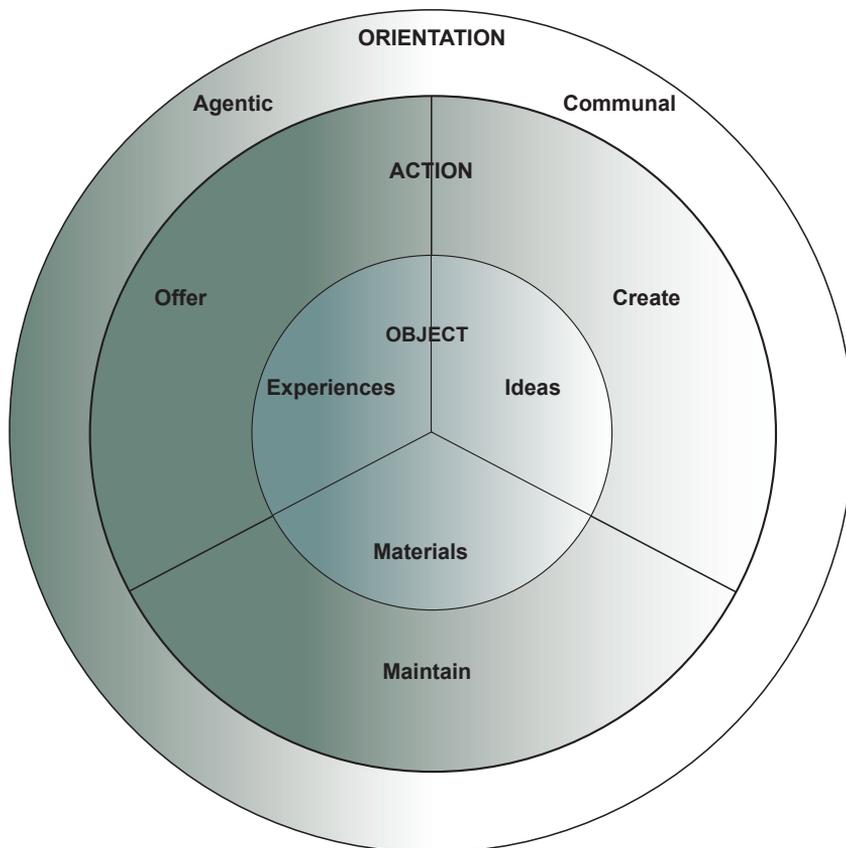

Figure 20. Generative consumption: orientation, action and object

Figure 20 summarizes the gestalt of generative consumption at all three levels, as a construction of orientation, action and object.

5.3 Outliving the self: Generative narration of grandparental consumption

Narrative psychologist McAdams (et al. 1993) describes the generativity script as an 'inner narration', where generativity fits into a person's life and is then fed back to all constructs of the conceptual model (Figure 19, page 180). From a more socio-cultural standpoint, the generativity script can be considered to be a master narrative of generativity, accepted and expected from a culturally competent identity narrative. Generative narration concerns constructing a generative story about individuals and their social world. It is the subjective story, which the adult creates about providing for the next generation. This narrative makes sense of the life story that constitutes identities and serves as an envisioned legacy. From the perspective of the life story theory of adult identity, adults construct and try to live out a 'generativity script', which not only reflects past generative action, but also current generative concerns and commitments. The notion of a generativity script is also important in understanding what is worth allowing to outlive the self and what should be transmitted to others to live on through generative efforts (Kruse & Schmitt 2012). People define themselves and their position in society in terms of a life story that provides life with unity, purpose and meaning.

In this chapter, I will try to synthesize the idea of generative grandparental consumption as it appears in the narratives. I will combine the thoughts and ideas of all my informants and weave them together into a portrait of a fictive grandparental narrative. This is the narrative analysis, the synthesis of this study, its reformation in a new light of generativity. Due to its synthesizing purpose and nature, I will no longer refer to separate informants in association with the chosen citations but let them seamlessly speak together as one for the entire master narrative.

The following narrative does not hold to the conventions of unambiguous academic writing, but it is more informal: midway between social language and literature. I hope this allows the reader to experience the text from a more personal point of view.

5.3.1   Prologue: Orientation

> In all that fuss and noise, you feel that life goes on, including your own. After all, I am not totally unneeded, yet.

A roleless role, they say. No handbooks, no guidelines, just be there and be yourself − and try to behave. But how can you be yourself with something that is built deep in your culture? Parents take care of their children; the elders look after the younger ones, seniors coach juniors. It is like a gigantic book of unspoken norms. Roleless perhaps, but not ruleless: I know what I am supposed to do. Not that I always succeed in it, but at least I know.

Leaving it all up to culture would not have been wise. It is in our DNA, too. I want to see my family tree grow new branches, my bloodline live out through the ages, my own life count. What will be left there after I have gone? A box of clothes no one's taste, a stuffy room asking for airing, a memory that will fade away, like I once did. Or will it?

What if I could leave a trace, live on a little longer, sneak in when everyone believes I am already gone? Be alive after death − not in flesh and blood, but in more important minor things: in a phrase or a gesture, in a garden or a field, in a skill that will never get useless, in a story that will be heard again and again?

5.3.2   Chapter 1: Communal generativity – taking care

> This is my way to at least try to do something, so that the second and third generations would not have to experience all that I have gone through.

There are other people, even grandparents themselves, who judge me for giving too much of my everything: my money, my time, my love. They pretend to be interested in my well-being; think that I sacrifice my life for someone else's. I could be sarcastic and say: 'Yes, and not just for someone but for someone special.' Is it dangerous to do things for the benefit of your loved ones? I think it is a privilege, not sacrificing, but living my life in all its colours.

At the same time, I acknowledge that this grandparenting thing might easily get out of hand. To be honest, when I promised to buy our evening star a new seat for their car, I did not quite imagine that it would cost me a half month's salary. The

old one served our family for two generations; this one will get its photo on the Facebook Buy and Sell in three months from now – profit for the baby, of course. My car has no five star safety seats, but the front seat gets an odour of body spray twice a week. Driving the teenagers to the sports hall three kilometres from home felt insane at first; when I was young, no one took me to my hobbies by car – not that I had any hobbies either. But now, these drives in the dark are the brightest highlights of my week: my unique opportunity to meet the busy young people. Besides, the traffic is horrible these days, so it would make little sense to make them walk. Things are different now, but one thing remains: you want your children to be safe. You want to take care of them.

Taking care takes so many targets and forms when you are a grandparent. You take care of both your child and your grandchild; either way, you have to be careful. You feel the responsibility to guide your children to become good parents and their children to become good citizens. The spectrum of caring is endless: you realize it before the precious new family member is even born, in a shopping tour in the middle of dozens of prams, as technical and pricey as a cutting-edge car, in refurnishing your two-adult-household to meet the high standards of a postmodern baby guest, in the silence of the night, crossing your hands and wishing that everything goes well. Later, you take care that the child gets care, that the parents can be carefree for a passing moment. You are the all-inclusive babysitter who brings food for the family, cleans the windows, repairs the bikes, and gives money for the taxi when the parents leave for their night-off. Together with the child, you do things that you care for: read and draw, go to sports events and summer cabins, bake Christmas cookies in July. In the forests and on the lakes, you teach them to care about Nature, in the kitchen and library, to take care of themselves. School holidays turn into working days, you become a full-time parent again, yet taking care that it is not everyday life for the child, but a week full of entertaining, eyes-opening and educational peak moments, preferably abroad, or at least on a crowded ferry to Stockholm. In the queue outside the buffet restaurant, with hundreds of other grandparents and -children, you blame yourself for the lack of imagination, but by dessert, after the second (and last) glass of free house wine, you have forgiven yourself. All of a sudden, this became your peak moment, too.

Being a grandparent, you do not stop being a parent. So you keep taking care of your children, too, in their new role as parents. This is the trickiest part. After successfully being a parent for so long now, you have a wide array of experience and advices that you would love to share with your children, now that they finally

understand. Yet, they do not want you to. They say you interfere too much, try to take care of things that are not your territory. *Their* family has different rules that you must accept and respect. *They* do not give spinach to a baby – have you not heard how dangerous that is? *Their* child must not hear the traumatic novel about 'The Brothers Lionheart' – yet it is ok for an 8-year-old to wipe an iPad touchscreen for hours, dressing up an anorexic movie star character and aiming at online fame and fortune among anonymous co-players.

> – And besides, we have enough woollen socks for the rest of our lives – please don't bring any more of them.

So you sigh and submit. But you keep on taking care, just by taking care that it does not show too much.

You also take care of your own parents and grandparents – do your best so they will be remembered. You are paying homage to them, to the ancient chain of generations, to those who once took care of you. Whether it was more distant and speechless care, a thin envelope and a nod of acceptance on the day of your graduation, or more dedicated helicopter care: being there for you in every turn of your life. You only realise it afterwards, when taking the role they once had, how important you were to them. They did not have much, no possibilities to show their love in money and material goods, nor the cultural freedom to express it in words. You understand it now, when looking at your own offspring. So, it is your turn to pay it back and pay it forward – just by doing everything a little better, because now you can.

Furthermore, you take care of other young people, not only those of your own. You do not want to live at their cost, to squeeze the world empty and leave nothing behind. You contribute to entire society that way: do your part for the next generation. Like wise people say: '*The world was not left to us by our parents but lent to us by our children*'. So, you cherish it and try to make sustainable choices for a brighter future. You only buy products that last for a lifetime – how hard has that become! You save and recycle, repair instead of buying new, consume less for yourself and produce more for the future. Watching the careless young adults destroying their own world soul by soul and tree by tree makes you post a nasty comment on a newspaper website. You just cannot stand by when the hopes of the future are running full speed towards an inevitable dead-end. By this age, you can see behind the corner, you know how the world spins and what is primary in life. Young people cannot see what you see, they are too busy to stop and look

around, but you can try to turn their heads into the right direction for a passing moment. If their eyes see it now, their minds will hopefully understand it later.

Finally, you take care of yourself – you have to. How else could you care for others, be by their side for long, long enough to finally believe that they are strongly standing on their own? Age is only a number – the rest is up to you. A rolling stone gathers no moss, and my entire body knows exactly what it means. I have never felt this energetic and capable before, definitely not when I was young. Perhaps it is the fistful of goji berries in my morning porridge, the fading solar energy of the weeks in the Caribbean, or the badminton games you make me play – holding a racket makes me feel young and strong again. Either way, I have learnt to respect my mind and body enough to take care of both. There are too many dreams left, too many plans to implement. Things are fine now, but I want to be there when my grandchildren need me: be available and be able.

5.3.3 Chapter 2: Agentic generativity - be remembered

> I would like them to remember us and the time we spent together. So that they will appreciate how we made things happen for them, and even something extra.

Remember our bus journey to Kolmården? The longest hour of your life. Or the hot summer day in the park when you got lost? The longest hour of mine. What about that rainy afternoon in the shopping mall café, after your parents' break-up? Grey will never be as grey again. Remember the theatre masterpiece that we both missed, because the desperate (teenage) love of your life was in the audience? I was not able to choose between the comedy on the stage and the drama by my side. How about our spectacular spring break in London, your confirmation present? Our credit account has required a double confirmation ever since. Do you remember?

I know you do. Last time we met, you asked me when we could go 'on tour' again, maybe not far, just to Tallinn, to exactly same place we have been before. That is our place of escape, a few hours away from the everyday. We would criss-cross the city by tram, have hot cappuccinos by the main square, shop the outlets dry. This time you would pay me a dinner in return, you said, in that fancy old-town restaurant – *do you remember, grandpa?*

Oh, yes do, I remember it all. That was our relationship from the beginning: memorable. With you time stops, flows back and forth, and never ends. With you I

flow, too, from here to eternity. So please do not do anything for me in return. Nothing would compare anyway. What equals a gift of living forever? That is your gift to me. Just give me the chance to give, take it, approve it, accept it. That is all. It is not a loan, but a gift, something of me, from me, to you. It is all yours now. And it is all you now. Giving has an unexplained power. When I give you something of me, it does not make me any lesser, but it makes you more. What was me becomes a part of you. And when I am no longer, that part of me still is.

Just look around. Look at this garden that my mother cherished. Without you it would only be trees and bushes; now it is a priceless treasure from history, a meeting point for you and your great-grandmother, a place without the limits of time. Our days together are my garden: I hope to meet your grandchildren one day, in a travel story full of funny episodes, or in an old saying you slip out without knowing why, then excusing yourself that your grandpa used to say that. (In case you cannot think of any, here are some: *'Enjoy the little things in life', 'Believe in yourself'*, and my favourite one: *'Never argue with stupid people!'*). I wonder who will sit down onto your sofa on the 6th of December, the Day of Independence, when you are old, and tirelessly recite 'The Unknown Soldier', like you did with me. Someone precious, definitely.

So, never mind the money and material things I may have given to you, because that is all it is: money and things. There is really nothing to be grateful for. Mind more about the moments we shared, the new ideas we came up with together, the flashes of time and emotion that made a difference. Those are the things I remember, the things you remember, and finally: the things they will remember.

5.3.4   Epilogue: Outliving the self

> Looking into the mirror, I see a little ragged, but somehow matured and satisfied grandpa.

My mum loved parties, any celebrations that brought us all together. There was not a single event without her: first as our tireless host, later as a guest of honour, resting on the sofa and smiling, as a statement that we had done well. Now she is our house goddess, who ensures the success of each family get-together. I take the kids to see her grave; we buy flowers, candles, and think about her. The youngest ones never met her, but they know her as if they had.

That is what I want, too. Becoming what she has become would be the greatest achievement in life I can imagine. To be able to leave behind something that matters in the passing of years, maybe just a nice feeling of belongingness, homeyness, a sense of nostalgia that brings a smile on your face when you think of me. To somehow live on in the memories you have, in the gifts I gave, in the skills I taught, in the places we visited, in you and your children.

Looking into the mirror, I see a little ragged, but somehow matured and satisfied grandpa, not a straight-A student in life, but one who might pass it anyway – one who, after all, built a life that mattered to himself and even some others. So, what was its purpose? The most difficult question in life, the one that 'no one can answer', the question that has tortured mankind for millions of years. Funny how obvious it is now, there is no mystic, no mysteriousness. The purpose of my life was to let life go on, to make it possible in all imaginable ways.

Looking back one day later, I think I will be able to say that I did pretty well. There were some dark chapters I had to write in my book, but much more of the colourful ones. Being grandparent was definitely one of the coloured episodes: not the brightest yellow, not red or green, but something orange: overflowing energy, vitality, youth and joy, yet, with a hint of sunset and nostalgia, an ambiguous cavalcade of new beginnings and ends of eras.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Research summary

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the interplay between consumption and identity construction in grandparental narratives. To achieve its purpose, the study had three interrelated objectives:

- To identify the meanings of grandparental consumption.

- To analyse how these meanings constitute grandparental identity narratives.

- To create a synthesizing master narrative of grandparental consumption.

The conceptual background of this study was built on consumer identity work and identity construction in particular, within the domain of CCT, located in the consumer behaviour field of marketing research. The interpretative framework of the study was based on narrative research concerning ontological and epistemological presumptions, data generation and the method of analysis. In terms of research philosophy, the narrative turn in this study followed the paradigm of interpretivism, thus adopting a concern with subjective and shared meanings and an aim to understand the research phenomenon and interpret its meanings from the perspective of its participants. Relying upon the ontology of social constructionism, the study shared a belief that there is no single external reality, but that reality is socially constructed by interconnected patterns of communication. Epistemologically, the study adopted a constructionist perspective, which implies that knowledge is relative and co-constructed in specific social interactions. As a thread of narratives, knowledge is constantly forming and changing, and similarly, the composition of our identities is based on the ever-

changing narratives of self. The research data, 14 experience-centred narratives, were generated in conversational narrative interviews with grandparent informants. The analysis of the study included structural and thematic analyses of the narratives, and a synthesizing narrative analysis based on narrative cognition. In the analysis of narratives, the meanings of grandparental consumption were identified (objective 1) and their role in constructing a grandparental identity narrative was analysed (objective 2). As an outcome of abductive inference, grandparental consumer narratives were analysed from the perspective of generativity. In the narrative analysis, a new master narrative was written as a synthesis of grandparental consumption (objective 3).

6.1.1   Consuming into grandparenthood

Contemporary grandparenting is an arena for diverse consumption. Consuming for their grandchildren, grandparents buy necessities, clothes and sports equipment, or finance their grandchildren's hobbies, among other things. Considering gift-giving, grandparents dislike buying toys, instead preferring purposeful gifts, such as educational presents and money deposits. With their grandchildren, grandparents consume in the form of travelling, culture and sports events, shopping and entertainment, as well as in various nature-related activities, such as gardening, fishing and hunting, or in more home-related ones, such as baking and crafting. Grandparents also consume because of their grandparental role: some decorate their own house to fulfil the needs of a baby guest, while others take language or yoga courses, or learn new technology, to better immerse themselves in the lives of the new generation. Considering the findings of Hogg et al. (2004) about empty-nest families and how they construct meanings of family via consumption, it currently seems that grandparenthood inspires more productivity in consumption. Despite the various consumption highlights of grandparent–grandchild leisure, grandparenthood also seems to return the main scene of family to the home, from which it was removed during the empty-nest stage. Consumption plays a significant role in the construction of grandparenthood, but in contrast with Hogg et al. (2004), production-related activities dominate in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren.

The narratives show that consumption offers a broad range of symbolic meanings for grandparents in their identity construction. The meanings of grandparental consumption can be divided into private and public meanings and

further into four main categories based on their focus on the self or other. These categories are: *grandparental authenticity, grandparental legitimacy, grandparental heritage* and *grandparental care.* The meanings also differ in terms of their temporal focus. Grandparental authenticity has its roots in the past, stretching its focus temporally from past to the present, while grandparental legitimacy only relies strictly upon the present. Grandparental care focuses both on the present and on the future, and grandparental heritage looks primarily into the future.

Bridging consumption and the identity of grandparents, we can see that while some self-focused consumption activities and meanings serve individuality and confirm grandparental authenticity, others encapsulate a more social pursuit, thereby gaining and expressing grandparental legitimacy. Thus, consumption seems to be a visible and understandable tool for contemporary grandparents to both stand out from the crowd and to show belongingness. Consumption works both as a boundary and as proof of community. Considering the meanings of grandparental consumption, self-focused meanings serve to construct grandparental identity directly, but the connection between other-focused meanings and identity makes a curve via the concept of generativity (Figure 21). In light of the narratives, consumption serves as an arena to implement generativity through the meanings of grandparental heritage and grandparental care and thus to realize the grandparental identity. Living out such a 'generativity script' is considered a fundamental life task in human development. Despite having its roots in the psychosocial theory of development (Erikson, 1968), generativity is no longer understood as a concept within the individual, but as a relational and multiply contextualized construct that links the person with the social world (Kruse & Schmitt 2012, 3). A generativity script gives meaning and purpose to our identity narratives and clarifies what is worth allowing to outlive the self and what should be transmitted to others to live on through generative efforts (Kruse & Schmitt 2012).
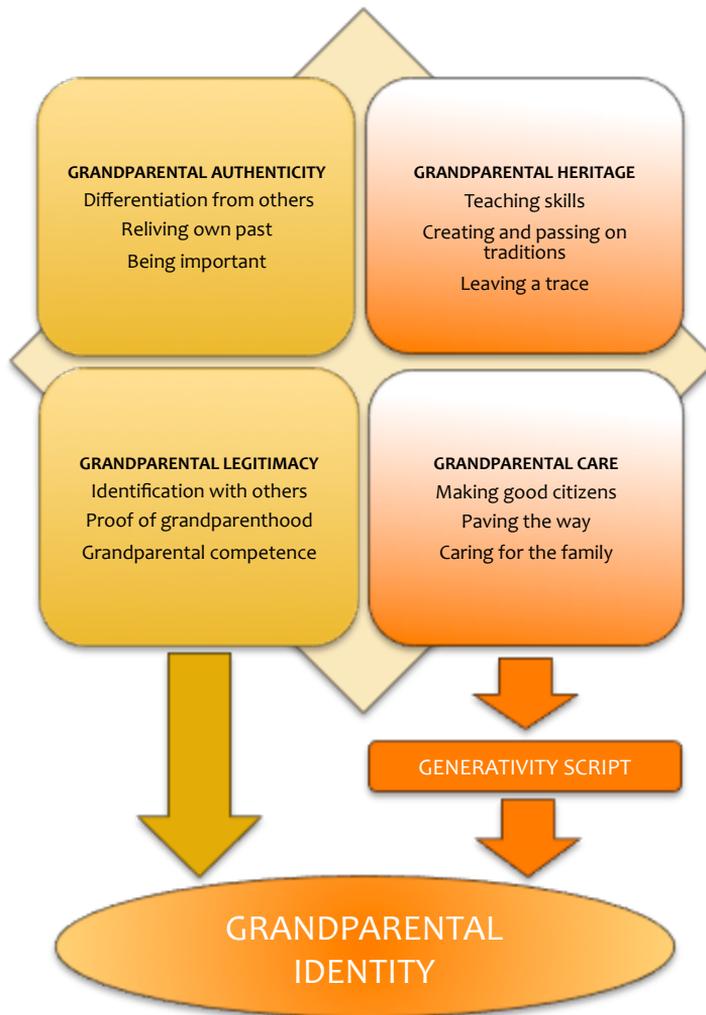
Figure 21. Construction of grandparental identity through the meanings of consumption

Based on previous research and the narratives of this study, generative consumption can be defined as *a communal or agentic investment of self in consumption activities that promote the well-being of future generations.* Generative consumption can actualize in creating, maintaining, or offering materials, experiences and ideas, or other tangible or intangible products of the self. Through generative consumption, grandparents express care for family and younger people in general, and promote the well-being and success of future generations. They invest in raising children,

teaching skills, paving the way, and passing on traditions to work for a positive future and to leave a positive legacy in the world. Despite presenting itself as an almost altruistic phenomenon, generativity stems from both communal and agentic orientations. Communality refers to our willingness as participants in a mutually interpersonal reality to sacrifice our own good for the sake of others. Agentic generativity includes a need to have a lasting influence on others and a desire for symbolic immortality, that is, to live in such a way that what is done by individuals will last beyond their own lives. This dualism in generative consumption, as in all generativity, makes it especially interesting for this study and for further research.

6.1.2   From extended self to outliving the self

Almost 30 years ago, Belk's pioneering publication about the extended self (1988) changed the landscape and lexicon of consumer research (Schau 1998; Ladik et al. 2015). Belk suggested that we incorporate objects from our environment into our identities. This ground-breaking idea implies that our identities are spatially enlarged by such extensions of self (Belk, 1990). However, there is another dimension in which our selves can be extended: the dimension of time. According to Ricoeur (1992), we come to know ourselves by the narratives we construct to situate ourselves in time and place. In addition to our possessions, our pasts and our futures also define us.

Belk's (1988) recognition that a part of the (extended) self can be shared with others is helpful in explaining acts of civic responsibility and charity. But it was Fromm (1976), who took a step closer to generativity in his criticism towards industrialized societies, which – according to him – neglect being in favour of having and so inhibit self-actualization. Fromm suggested that we should realize the self by sharing, giving and sacrificing, instead of merely having. Elderly people often have a concern for the next generation, including their own children and grandchildren. This concern expands to the entire world and its people: elderly people are generally highly interested in world events and participate actively in voting and volunteering. In this narrative study, grandparents talked about participating in various volunteering and charity activities, including eldercare and providing activities and clubs for the elderly, professional coaching, sports coaching, development aid, doing odd jobs at a nursing home, and church volunteering: these were all spontaneously mentioned in the stream of the narratives. Following Belk's explanation, such acts of 'apparent altruism' are based

on aggrandizing a broader level of self than that confined to an individual's own body and mind. Such nonreciprocal altruism entails acts that benefit the broader communities incorporated within the extended self. Even acts of self-sacrifice for an important reference group can be considered as supporting the extended self, even to the extent that this broader self obtains the ability to live indefinitely. This is where the extended self touches upon the core of generativity. As Erikson (1982) stated, significant relations in older age are extended from the personal to 'humanity' in general. In other words, by linking with those who are at the beginning of their lives, elders complete a full circle in the journey of life and leave something of themselves behind in the minds of others (Kornhaber 1996, 58).

According to McAdams et al. (1998), generativity is one of the richest concepts to appear in the theoretical literature on adult personality development. Erikson et al. (1986) suggest that grandparenthood offers individuals a second chance at generativity. It enables them to be generative in different ways and provides people with chances to reface previously unresolved generativity-related parenting issues (Thiele & Whelan 2008). Moreover, Kruse & Schmitt (2012) go beyond the theoretical contributions of Erikson and McAdams by arguing that generativity is an important concern in both the third and fourth ages, which present an opportunity to realize generativity based on acquired idealistic and material resources. Now, the present study suggests that applying generativity through consumption plays an important role in constructing grandparental identity.

As a conclusion of previous studies and this thesis, consumption not only serves as an arena for extending the self, but also in stretching it temporally, in outliving the self. Such a sense of temporal extension, or even symbolic immortality through implementing generativity in consumption, has an important role in identity construction. Generativity makes us consider what in our lives is worth allowing to outlive the self. It seals our life narratives with purpose and meaningfulness. Generative consumption lends us the understandable means to leave a trace in various ways and to be remembered.

6.2   Research contribution

This thesis contributes to consumer identity studies, specifically to the studies about consumer identity construction. Hence, to evaluate the theoretical contribution of the study, it is necessary to discuss whether it provides new insights into that particular stream of marketing research. Following the model of

Ladik and Stewart (2008, 162), the contribution of this study can be traced to a combination of theory, context and method.

6.2.1   Theoretical contribution

The main purpose of this study was to identify the meanings of grandparental consumption and to analyse their role in the construction of a grandparental identity narrative. In terms of the main purpose, there was one major theoretical research gap that the study aimed to cover: to expand the knowledge of consumer identity work from younger life stages to later adulthood. Positioned in a research stream rich in ideas and insight, or as Janiszewski et al. (2016) formulate it, on a 'lush branch of the tree of knowledge', the anticipated contribution of the study was more incremental than revelatory. Yet, orientated into a process of discovery, the study allowed new ideas to emerge from the empirical data. Bridging the disciplines of developmental psychology and consumer research, it introduced the concept of generative consumption and initiated a new area of inquiry. MacInnis (2011, 136) calls these contributions *envisioning*: identifying something new and using new information to determine what has been identified in a different way.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis can be divided into three sub-areas. The first conceptual contribution is made to the field of consumer identity research by expanding the life cycle it covers into later adulthood. Using the metaphor of Janiszewski et al. (2016, 203), the study adds a leaf to a pre-existing branch by identifying and filling a gap in the literature. The study provides a multidimensional categorization of the meanings of grandparental consumption and analyses their role in the identity construction of grandparents. It suggests that while the self-focused meanings construct grandparental identity directly, the other-focused meanings constitute identity through a 'generativity script'. This is the second theoretical contribution of the thesis: to propose a new perspective and direct attention to the concept of generativity in association with consumer identity construction. Through a 'generativity script' of consumer narratives, the concept of *extended self* (Belk 1988) receives a new temporal dimension, which allows the consumer to symbolically *outlive the self*. Although some consumer studies have previously touched upon symbolic immortality, they have not considered its nature and origins, and have mostly concerned the material possessions that people want to pass on. This thesis suggests that consumption has an inherent possibility to extend our identities temporally, even beyond materialistic heirlooms. Hence, it

also offers new perspectives to the raising discussion of death in consumption, which has previously focused mostly on the rituals surrounding death, in particular among tribes outside the Western culture (e.g. Bonsu & DeBerry-Spence 2008, Bonsu & Belk 2003), or on narratives of the afterlife (Ruvio et al. 2013).

Third, the thesis conceptualizes *generative consumption* as a qualitative, integrative revision of previous multidisciplinary studies in generativity and in consumer generativity. Questioning the division of consumer generativity into communal and agentic consumption, this study suggests that any generative consumption can be simultaneously orientated in agency and communion. Previous quantitative research has demonstrated that consumers' generativity affects their consumption preferences so that generative consumers make different choices than less generative consumers. Applying the view of generativity as a relational and multiply contextualized construct that links the person with the social world, the study makes a link between generativity, consumption and narrative identity construction, and it proposes a new research agenda to facilitate further theoretical and empirical work by focusing on consumers in their identity work.

In conclusion, integrating the knowledge of human sciences in generativity and the cultural perspective of consumer identity work generates a new perspective and provides a new vocabulary to better understand the consumer. Relying upon many assumptions that support existing research, this study proposes a novel and diverging assumption independent of pre-existing knowledge. Following the metaphor of Janiszewski et al. (2016, 203), this contribution can be seen as the start of a new branch on the tree of knowledge, which is considered more significant than merely adding a new leaf to a pre-existing branch. Hence, despite originally approaching the 'lush branch of a mature tree', as the research stream of consumer identity construction can be characterized, the study successfully contributes through envisioning, challenging pre-existing assumptions and proposing new assumptions, and finally, it creates a new branch on the tree.

6.2.2   Contextual contribution

The contextual gap in the consumer identity literature called for widening the scope of family consumption. Prior research has sought to understand the identity-related consumption of teenagers, mothers, fathers, families as a unit, and empty nesters, but research on grandparents as consumers and identity constructors has been notably lacking. Furthermore, previous research on family consumption has

traditionally equated family with household, and in terms of the family life cycle, the research on consumption has ended at the empty-nest phase. The present study strengthens the field of family-identity studies by adding the lacking perspective of grandparents and by focusing on a phase beyond the empty nest. The thesis suggests that while empty-nest families construct meanings of family increasingly via consumption (see Hogg et al. 2004), grandparenthood returns the main scene of family to the home and to production-related activities, from which family was once removed during the empty-nest phase. Inspired by the study of Epp and Price (2008), this thesis generates new insight into the dyad of grandparent–grandchild, although the main focus is not on the relational family identity, but on the individual identity of the grandparent. In light of the narratives, grandparental consumption appears to be an arena for multiple, partly complicated, power relations that affect decision-making.

6.2.3   Methodological contribution

Methodologically, narratives are a fruitful and rather underutilized source of rich consumer insight. As identity is constructed in narratives (e.g. Ricoeur 1991; Hermans 2003), during social interaction by telling and listening to stories, a narrative analysis can discover a richer understanding of the interplay of consumption and identity. In the field of consumer identity studies, applying narrative research has previously been limited to a chosen form of data, or a paradigmatic method of analysis. The methodological contribution of this study is to apply narrative analysis in addition to the more traditional analysis of narratives and to create a synthesis of the collected consumer narratives. Narrative analysis is based on narrative cognition, instead of paradigmatic cognition (Bruner 1986), which is projected in the production of a new, thematically proceeding story of events or experiences. As a selective and creative method, narrative analysis is midway between literature and scientific discourses, resembling *evocative representations* as a mode of creative or experimental writing methods (Richardson 1994, 521). Moisander and Valtonen (2006, 163–165) suggest that consumer researchers would benefit from new ways of writing, as conventional forms of academic writing may have become insufficient in representing our understandings and in introducing fresh viewpoints. Through inner dialogue and explanation, narrative analysis allows the reader to experience the text from a specific and personal point of view,

despite the various original voices heard in the text. By applying creative writing, it is possible to add verisimilitude to the requirement for narrative validation.

In contrast to earlier studies on consumer generativity, this study offers the first qualitative perspective into generative consumption through consumer narratives. The sparse previous research in consumer generativity has been quantitative and has searched for causalities and generalizations. However, this thesis provides new understandings and interpretations concerning the importance of implementing generativity in consumption, as well as the role of generativity in the construction of consumer identity narratives.

6.2.4   Managerial implications

As already suggested, bringing grandparenthood into the discussion of consumer identity construction has significant theoretical value for consumer research. However, it also serves more practical concerns. The core managerial implication for this thesis is the new understanding it provides of an important, growing and partly understudied consumer group: grandparents. The voice of an ordinary grandparent has been lacking in marketing literature, but it can now be heard.

Marketers' challenge is to understand how they can support or constrain consumers in their identity work. Only by understanding the diverse lives of contemporary grandparents can marketers better adapt to the needs of this growing market. Instead of relying upon outdated presumptions and extraneous realities about grandparenting, this thesis provides companies with better access to the lives of ordinary grandparents, to their perceived meanings of consumption and, in particular, to the importance of applying a 'generativity script' in consumer narratives. Marketers should pay more attention to consumption that fulfils what Moody (2009) has termed the 'legacy motivation', that is, the desire in later life to have contributed to a collective future that outlives the self.

As one of the few studies concentrating on grandparent consumers, this study can be highly beneficial to any marketing practitioners targeting families. In addition to more minor indicators, or single product and service ideas (courses and seminars on grandparenthood, grandparent–grandchild leisure activities and holidays, support for healthier lifestyles), this study provides useful insight into more major phenomena relevant for grandparent consumers, which concern, for instance, power relations in consumption and a desire for productive consumption.

6.2.5   Social implications

Currently, theoretical papers are increasingly expected to have social implications. By focusing on the narrative identities of grandparents and letting grandparents speak for themselves, this study weakens the echo of redundant stereotypes, prejudices and outdated marketplace myths concerning grandparent consumers. It also develops the notion of the importance of identity-related consumption in later stages of life than adolescence and thus directs interest to the large, expanding and diverse group of 50+ consumers. Considering grandparents themselves, this thesis is one of the few to learn about grandparenthood as experienced by other grandparents. As many informants pointed out, there are no guides or courses to prepare for grandparenthood. Any source of new insight and peer support was considered important and welcome. For those grandparents having mixed emotions and feelings of ambivalence relating to their grandparenthood, I hope to succeed in presenting some opportunities that the acceptance of a new role and a new relationship in life can offer. The idea is not to object the conflicts, threats or inconveniences that may appear, but to provide an alternative perspective of self-fulfillment, joy and richness in life.

Summing up the various fruitful and thoughtful lessons that grandparents shared with me, I could say that grandparenthood is a beginning of a new phase in life but not an end of any. As a heterogeneous group, grandparents are free to be who they are, without a need to 'start acting like a grandparent'. The main duty of a grandparent is simple: to exist, but being a grandparent also contains an opportunity to build a significant, rewarding and meaningful relationship. Grandparenthood also includes a possibility to complete one's own life narrative with indisputable meaningfulness, a so-called generativity script.

In terms of consumption, it is natural for grandparents to turn to markets in order to 'figure out' and 'do' grandparenting, yet not without acknowledging the existence of unspoken rules, norms and power relations that call for compromises and respect for all generations. For those criticizing grandparents for pushing money on their grandchildren or for interfering in their everyday, it may be eyes-opening to take the view of and extended self and see the multiple meanings that grandparental consumption involves.

From a wider social perspective, there is a chance that research and new insight into generativity may generate more generativity. The better that marketers understand consumers' aspiration to support the well-being of future generations, the more possibilities and options will hopefully emerge in the marketplace for

consumers to enact generative consumption, or in Fromm's (1976) terms, to realize the self by sharing, giving and sacrificing, instead of merely having.

6.3   Evaluation of the research

6.3.1   Relevance and timing

To evaluate the quality of the thesis, I will first explore its relevance and timeliness. While the previous chapter indicated a value-added contribution to current thinking, it did not prove that the thesis and its findings are inherently interesting. Conventional norms of science make validity and reliability disproportionately more salient than relevance. Still, the single most important question that authors should ask about their own work is '*so what?*' Authors need to consider whether the findings are obvious, whether the theoretical findings make a difference to practice, and whether the findings could answer some previously unresolved research questions, or spur more research in the area (Levy & Grewal 2007, 250).

Seeing relevance requires the ability to formulate generic questions, those core issues about human behaviour that transcend context and the hooks that motivate professionals from other fields to turn their focus onto consumer research (Zaltman 2000, 424). Although problematic in some areas, the exposure to multidisciplinary influences and the different approaches represented in consumer research are also its strength and provide an opportunity to study a wide range of real-world phenomena (Simonson et al. 2001, 267–269). Evaluating the relevance of this thesis shows that it offers a rich domain for interesting and novel implications. First, it shows how consumption has an inherent possibility to extend our identities temporally through offering 'symbolic immortality', even beyond materialistic heirlooms. Second, it provides an interesting angle to seemingly altruistic consumer behaviour by showing how 'doing good' can also originate from more self-focused and agentic motivations, which should be of interest to marketing practitioners in diverse fields. Third, it is relevant, I think, to consider why things exist. By conceptualizing relationships, marketers can better understand the conditions under which actions will be carried out, as well as how to arrange environments so that desired outcomes can be realized (MacInnis 2001, 141). Importing the concept of generativity from human sciences does not contradict the cultural standpoint of consumer identity work, but provides a new vocabulary

to better understand it. After all, the boundaries for consumer behaviour involve a large number of disciplines in the human, social and natural sciences. The more we learn about how people acquire, consume and dispose of goods, services and ideas, the greater the opportunity and need to explore other disciplines (Zaltman 2000, 424).

In addition to contribution and relevance, it is also reasonable to evaluate the timeliness of a study, regarding its contemporary interest to other scholars. Considering our ageing society and the retirement of the baby-boomer cohort, any research on consumers in later adulthood should be relevant. However, it has been relevant for years now, and both phenomena have been widely known for decades, without resulting in a remarkable rush in the research stream. One reason for the lack of studies on elderly consumers is inherent in the topic title: who is an elderly consumer? Turning the focus from chronological age to perceived age, cohorts, or the third age has resulted in fragmentation of the field, without providing marketers a pivotal key to customer segmentation and understanding. The scarcity of research does not indicate that consumers in later adulthood would not be interesting or important – just that they should not be observed as one gigantic group. Referring to the ideas of Gergen and Gergen (1983), Barnhart and Penaloza (2013, 1136) suggest that the dark ages of ageing are coming to an end, and we are entering a new era of 'positive ageing', in which older people are empowered by their growing economic and demographic power. By concentrating on smaller but salient subgroups and relevant identities of later adulthood, such as grandparenthood, we can gain new understanding that is relevant and highly current for contemporary scholars and practitioners. In a world where grandparents present one third of the population and are considered one of the most powerful and underestimated drivers of the US economy (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), grandparental consumption is surely a theme that will stimulate discussion. Furthermore, regarding the findings about generativity, the concept is now more relevant in consumer research than ever, as sustainable consumption is rapidly gaining attention. The conceptualization of generative consumption provides a new angle for defining the whats, whys (or why-nots) and hows of any consumer behaviour that aims to advance the welfare of future generations.

6.3.2   Conduct

Considering research conduct, it is important to evaluate the logic underlying the argumentation and conclusions of the study. To identify meanings of consumption and their role in constituting identities, it was natural to choose a qualitative research method. Narrative research was chosen due to its unique possibility to interpret and understand the subjective experience of individuals by providing insights into conceptions of self and identity, socialization and culture. The main scepticism addressed to narrative research concerns the danger of over-interpretation, such as deriving massive interpretations from 'a dozen of people sharing their experiences'. While narrative research aims at local and subjective knowledge and seeks to understand how people interpret their lived experiences, its logic can best be evaluated according to the concept of verisimilitude (see Chapter 3). Verisimilitude is not based on argumentations or claims, but on the reader's experience of the story as a simulation of reality (Bruner 1991, 4; Heikkinen 2000, 51). Whether this study has succeeded in achieving verisimilitude can only be evaluated by its readers. Yet, to build and strengthen verisimilitude, all conclusions and arguments have been rooted in the narratives and are supported by the original quotes from the informants.

In terms of its theoretical contribution, this study was orientated in the context of discovery. It directed attention to substantive domains that had not received adequate attention, integrated bodies of knowledge from different areas, and brought to life new interpretations and concepts. Although the new insight was supported by empirical data and analysis, they were not employed to establish the plausibility and acceptability of the findings. Thus, the study conduct should not be regarded as unacceptable due to scarce empirical evidence supporting the conclusions. A more important factor in the evaluation of the study conduct is clarity: is the report well written and enjoyable to read? In terms of improving readability, I have tried to be conclusive in all chapters and commit to a logical presentation of topics. With a rich use of figures and tables, I have tried to make the most central ideas easily accessible.

6.3.3   Limitations

Every study has its limitations. Most often, these limitations concern the context of the study, the extent and depth of the gathered data, and the chosen research

method. Probably the most significant limitations in this study concern the method and the sample of informants. Applying a narrative methodology means that the findings are not generalizable to the reality of all grandparents, not even to that of the informants. As a narrative research, this thesis does not provide truths or generalizations, but new ideas and revised concepts that need and deserve further examination. As an interpretivist researcher, my target was to learn from fewer people, but in more depth; thus, the focus was more on informants' experience than their number. A purposive selection of informants helped to reach the required level of interaction and ensured maximized chances of uncovering important phenomena (Fournier 1998, 347). I believe the study succeeded in that, but I also acknowledge the possibility of encountering entirely different grandparents, different life situations, and different ideas about grandparenthood and consumption. I purposively chose informants who were in frequent contact with their grandchildren; otherwise, it would have been impossible to answer my research questions. I did not have to reject any informant due to lack of interaction with grandchildren, but if my research purpose had been comparative, I would also have approached grandparents with no ties to their offspring. So, I acknowledge that, instead of hearing the narratives of highly engaged and committed grandparents, I might have confronted grandparents who, for some reason, do not participate in their grandchildren's lives in any way. Gauthier (2002, 304) calls them absent or quasi-absent grandparents, who either no longer see their grandchildren at all, or have so many descendants that it is impossible to have privileged and individualized relationships with them all. In terms of both grandparental consumption and grandparental identity, it would be highly important to hear these grandparents, too.

Thus, reflecting on the research contribution, this study offers a rather optimistic view into grandparenthood and therefore a limited perspective into grandparental consumption. However, that does not diminish the value of the analysis, considering the meanings of grandparental consumption and the significance of generativity in consumption, or their role in the construction of a grandparental identity narrative. Drawn by abductive inference, the conclusions about generativity and grandparental consumption were acceptably tied to an incomplete body of evidence. There is a role for future research to extend and complete the ideas developed in this study.

6.4   Further research

Research on grandparent consumers and on generative consumption are both still in their infancy. It would be important to add to the understanding about different grandparents nationally and internationally, using qualitative and quantitative methods. After this rather general study, it is recommended that the focus is turned onto smaller and more specific groups of grandparents and onto certain forms of consumption, such as leisure and travel. Another logical step would add the perspective of grandchildren into the study and explore the aspects of co-consumption between grandchildren and grandparents. Leisure consumption throughout the life span of grandparenthood is of particular interest. Considering the power game of grandparental consumption, it would be interesting to hear the stories of the middle generation as well. The entire triad grandchild-parent-grandparent would presumably offer researchers a fruitful field. Furthermore, parallel to an increase in grandparenthood, great-grandparenthood is also expanding. This creates fascinating new angles for research into intergenerational consumption, two-way socialization and power relations.

Considering the experience of grandparenthood, temporality and trajectory seem to play a major role in numerous aspects. Time is strongly present in the lengthened life cycle of grandparenthood: in its formation from the past, through the precious – but limited – present and to the anticipated – but unknown – future; in identity construction that continues and outlives the self; in the duality of mundane everyday time together and special highlight moments; even in the pseudo-events of shared holidays. A fascinating avenue for future research lies in the examination of the multifaceted meaning of time in grandparental consumption.

From the perspective of generative consumption, one logical research path would turn the focus away from grandparenthood and towards other forms and implementations of generative consumption than those represented in this study. To learn more about later adulthood, it would be possible, for instance, to examine how elderly consumers without offspring realize the generativity script in their narratives. By suggesting it is an important aspect of consumer behaviour, there must be numerous fruitful areas to explore. The fields of sustainable consumption, gift-giving and productive consumption might also benefit from adapting the generativity perspective. It can also open multiple novel pathways for future research on death or afterlife in consumption. Yet another highly interesting

research theme would concentrate on the sinister side of generativity, in which negative phenomena are justified as 'doing good' for future generations.

Considering the limitations of the study, it would also be important to explore the other side of the grandparental coin: grandparents who, for one reason or another, are not involved in their grandchildren's lives, or at least do not invest time or money in their descendants. How do they construct grandparental identities, or have they resigned from them? How do they apply consumption to add a generativity script into their identity narratives and to *outlive the self*?

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