THE CAPSULE CLOSET PHENOMENON
— A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH CAPSULE CLOSETS

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Abstract

The idea for this paper resulted out of a curiosity for minimalist lifestyle concepts, namely capsule closets and the missing research about this topic as well as the importance of this concept for the society, the environment and the future of the fashion and textile industry. The study describes a phenomenological study in which the researcher explored participants’ lived experiences with capsule closets in order to provide a better understanding of the capsule closet experience. Fixed-interval diaries and semi-structured in-depth interviews with five women were conducted. Using descriptive phenomenological analysis, the researcher identified seven essential themes representing the lived experiences found in participants’ experience with capsule closets: 1) Feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined; 2) Feeling relived and satisfied; 3) Experiencing struggles and challenges; 4) Feelings of guilt and regret; 5) Feeling limited, bored and less creative; 6) Feelings of accomplishment and proudness; 7) Learning experience. These findings both support and contribute to existing literature related to this topic and provide new insights and add new aspects to the knowledge of the capsule closet experience.

Keywords: capsule closets, minimalism, minimalist lifestyle concepts, mass consumption, phenomenology, lived experiences
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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the capsule closet concept. It provides an insight into the research and problem area, the purpose of this study and the research question that guided this research. Research delimitations provide the borders and gaps of this study.

1.1. Background

"Minimalism is not defined by what is not there but by the rightness of what is and the richness with which this is experienced." John Pawson (Into-mind.com, 2012)

Research in any field begins with curiosity, in this case, a curiosity for minimalism and capsule closets. Minimalism can be defined as a lifestyle, style, technique, philosophy, a mindset or tool that is characterized by sparseness, simplicity and almost always some type of reduction (Obendorf, 2009). It comes from the French word ‘minimum’ and means the least or the smallest amount needed for something (Inan, 2014). While in the past, minimalism was mainly associated with art, music and architecture it is nowadays more and more often connected with fashion. In this sense, minimalism became popular as a style including simple forms, clean lines and monochromatic color palettes adopted by brands such as Jil Sander and Calvin Klein. Lately however, minimalism as a lifestyle has gained increased attention by not focusing (although it can) on the visually but instead the physically minimalistic. Minimalist lifestyle concepts embrace the concept of ‘the smallest amount needed’ by removing non-essentials (Into-mind.com, 2012).

Among the minimalist concepts, the capsule closet is probably one of the most popular and widespread phenomena, focusing on something very close to peoples’ hearts – their closets. Whether it's called capsule closet, apparel diet, closet detox or lean wardrobe, capsule closets minimize the clothes in peoples’ closets and empower people to let go of non-essentials. The result is a clutter free closet, with a strong focus on quality rather than quantity, including essential, long lasting and versatile pieces that reflect one’s personal style (Rector, 2014). By reducing peoples’ consumption and changing how consumers shop and value clothes, minimalistic concepts such as the capsule closet cannot only positively effect the society and the environment but also the clothing industry. They can play a vital part in the future of the fashion and textile industry by changing consumer mindset, demand and desire away from maximalism to minimalism, from fast fashion to slow fashion and from materialism to idealism; thereby, encouraging companies to change their value chains (from design, to production, logistics, sales and marketing) to adapt to new consumer needs.

Benefits of minimalist lifestyle concepts are according to Hill (2011) less environmental footprint, more money, more time and more happiness. Leo Babauta from mnmlist.com agrees that minimalism has many benefits such as: less stress, less debt, more time for love, peace and joy (Babauta, 2016). The reasons for the increased interest in minimalism are not exactly known but are often explained by an act against mass consumption, increased social responsibility and interest in sustainability, the increased complexities in life and the thereby associated wish for simplicity (Obendorf, 2009). However, at this point, little is known about minimalist lifestyle concepts such as the capsule closet, one of the reasons why this study was conducted.
1.2. The capsule closet concept

In its simplest form, a capsule closet is “a collection of clothes and accessories that include only items considered essential” (The free dictionary, 2016). Caroline Rector from the blog unfancy.com describes the concept as “a mini wardrobe made up of 37 really versatile pieces that you completely love to wear” (Rector, 2014). A more defined and personal definition comes from Courtney Carver, author of the blog bemorewithless.com, who defines it as “a small collection of 33 items including clothing, shoes and accessories built for use during a 3 month period of time.” (Carver, 2011). The majority of capsule closet followers pursue a ready made set of rules like or similar to the one shown in Figure 1. However, depending on a person’s lifestyle, needs and preferences capsule closets can vary in the type and the number of clothes included as well as in their duration. Nonetheless, the universal thought behind the concept should stay the same: less is more.

Even though the concept is often hyped as a new phenomenon, the history of capsule closets goes back to the 1970s when London fashion boutique owner Susie Faux first created the term ‘capsule wardrobe’. According to her, the basic idea behind the capsule closet was that “by building a capsule wardrobe you will buy fewer clothes of a higher quality that you will wear more often. You will look and feel confident and successful because the quality will show and because you know that the overall look works.” (Dougher, 2015) Her ideal capsule closet consisted of fewer than a dozen items including jackets, skirts, pants, blouses, sweaters, dresses and accessories. Later in 1985 Donna Karen revived capsule closets when she took the concept to the USA and created her first line called ‘Seven Easy Pieces’ (Dougher, 2015). These pieces included her iconic black body suit and tights, a skirt, loose trousers, a tailored jacket, a cashmere sweater and a white shirt, which could all be mixed and matched to create a variety of different outfits.

Nowadays, the capsule closet is mainly an online phenomenon that is talked about by bloggers and their followers in online communities. The concept is mostly known in western societies and is mainly done by women of almost any age group. A capsule closet is usually done for one season (Three months) and includes between 30-40 pieces. After three months a new capsule closet is created including items from the last capsule closet, old items that were stored as well as new clothes.

![Figure 1: Capsule closet rules by unfancy.com](image)
1.3. State of the art

The minimalism movement of the past couple of years resulted in the emergence of a variety of minimalistic contributors, entrepreneurs and role models. Among the most popular minimalism contributors are Marie Kondo, the publisher of the #1 Bestseller book “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing” (Kondo, 2014), Graham Hill, the founder of LifeEdited.com, a website with tips to design life in a way that includes more money, health and happiness with less stuff, space and energy (Hill, 2016) and Matilda Kahl (Figure 2), with her inspiring article on “Why I wear the exact same thing to work every day”, which went viral around the world (Kahl, 2015).

When it comes to minimalist concepts, the capsule closet queues with a variety of other challenges such as the ‘100 Thing challenge’, a challenge in which supporters unhook themselves from consumerism by winnowing down their life’s possessions to 100 things in one year (Bruno, 2008) or the ‘30-day Minimalism Game’ where members get rid of excess stuff (including furniture, electronics, decorations, clothes et cetera.) by getting rid of one thing on the first day of the challenge, two things on the second and so on. (Fields Millburn & Nicodemus, 2015).

When it comes to capsule closets where the focus lies entirely on peoples’ clothes, two women and their blogs have greatly contributed to the capsule closet phenomenon: un-fancy.com by Caroline Rector and Project 333 by Courtney Carver. In 2014 Caroline Rector launched her blog un-fancy.com in which she describes her personal experience with the capsule closet concept, which started out of a personal desire to find her style and curb her shopping habit. Or as she put it: “I wanted a change. I wanted to stop spending money on emotional purchases. I wanted to stop buying clothes that were going to end up in the donation pile after a month. I wanted to start making more intentional buying choices. I wanted to start finding my style and confidence.” (Rector, 2014). Nowadays, her blog motivates and inspires thousands of women worldwide on how to create versatile and great looking outfits with a limited number of clothes and accessories. Her capsule closet consists of 37 pieces including tops, bottoms, dresses, outerwear, accessories and shoes that are worn for a period of three months.

Project 333 was launched in 2010 when Courtney Carver decided to share her story and help people discover the joy of living with less. On her website bemorewithess.com Courtney motivates her readers to be part of a challenge called Project 333 - how to pare down a wardrobe to just 33 items and live with it for three months. According to Courtney, there is a growing need for services to help people declutter their lives.

Figure 2: Matilda Kahl in her work uniform
Both women post their daily outfit posts on their blogs and thereby show their followers how versatile capsule closets can be, despite the limited amount of clothes included in it. Figure 3 and 4 show excerpts of both women’s capsule closet outfits.

1.4. Research problem and gap

Capsule closets even though they are not new are an innovative concept in the sense that they emphasize on the role of the consumer instead of the fashion companies in contributing to a more sustainable world. Whereas nowadays fashion companies update their business models and leverage on responsibility and technological innovation for a more sustainable production, the role of the consumer and how she or he can add to a more sustainable world is often left out. This is supported by Ehrenfeld (2013, p.232) who says, “Consumers are a relatively untapped source of power for change”. According to him, consumers have to start to take personal responsibility for the way that they live and consume. Research that provides a better understanding about how capsule closets are experienced can provide a basis for further studies that provide insights on what impact and influence these concepts can have on society, environment and the fashion and textile industry.

Considering the positive benefits of minimalist lifestyle concepts on the society and the environment and the impact those concepts can have on the fashion and textile industry one suspects a vast interest of researchers in the areas of minimalism as well as related areas such as simplicity and reductionism. The majority of research in these fields however studies minimalism as a form of style in areas such as art, fashion and architecture rather than a lifestyle. This explains the lack of research and understanding about minimalist concepts such as the capsule closet. Existing literature focuses instead on the opposite of minimalism, which includes areas such as maximalism, mass consumption, materialism and consumerism and its history, emergence and effect on society, the economy and the environment. This
can be seen by the extensive research that can be found about consumer cultures and consumption theories by for example Veblen (1899) and Arnould & Thompson (2005) and literature such as Kaufmann’s handbook of research on consumerism (2014).

Furthermore, as far as known there has been little phenomenological research addressing consumers’ lived experiences. Especially when it comes to fashion and clothes, lived experiences are an underdeveloped topic (Guy et al., 2001). Lived experiences have however respective implications in consumer research, which is supported by Thompson et al. (1989, p.133) who state that phenomenology and the study of experiences can “provide empirically based and methodologically rigorous understanding of consumer phenomena”.

The importance of minimalist lifestyle concepts for the future of the society, the environment and the fashion and textile industry, the lack of research in this area coupled with the lack to include lived experiences in consumer research supported the need for phenomenological research that examined the lived experiences of consumers following minimalist concepts such as the capsule closet.

**1.5. Research purpose**

Out of the just mentioned problems the purpose of this research emerged. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to provide a better understanding of the capsule closet experience by capturing and describing the phenomenon as it was lived by the study participants. The outcome of this study is therefore a description that presents the essence of the capsule closet phenomenon by providing the reader with an understanding of what it was like to have experienced the capsule closet. Furthermore, this study aimed to provide the initial research in the area of capsule closets on which future and more conclusive research can be build upon.

**1.6. Research question**

In phenomenological research the research question focuses on what it was like for people to have experienced a specific phenomenon (van Manen, 2003). Therefore, the primary research question that guided this research was, “What are participants’ lived experiences with capsule closets?”

Lived experiences can be defined as the “everyday experiences that are real to those experiencing them” (Connell, 2003). In case of this study, they were the experiences that were lived by the study participants while they did the capsule closet. The reason for not formulating a more detailed question was to keep an open mind about the experiences that were made by the participants, which aligns with the aim of a phenomenological study (Groenewald, 2004).
1.7. Delimitations

The researcher limited this research to the description of lived capsule closet experiences made by the study participants themselves during the capsule closet experiment (01. March – 31. March 2016). This study followed the descriptive phenomenological philosophy and did not include interpretations common for interpretive phenomenological studies. These two types of phenomenological research are describes in detail in Chapter 3.1: Research philosophy. The study solely aimed to describe the lived experiences and did not go further by providing insights in what led up to the experience, what outcomes and consequences the experience might have had for the individual and what the concomitants and other factors associated with the experience were. This aligns with the aim of phenomenological studies, which is not to problem-solve, look for cause and effect relationships or provide solutions or recommendations. As Penner and McClement (2008, p.93) note, “a phenomenological analysis does not aim to explain or discover causes”, it is “to clarify the meanings of phenomena from lived experiences”.

1.8. Thesis outline

Chapter one, Introduction, introduces the reader to the background of the research area by providing him/her with a solid explanation of the capsule closet concept and state of the art examples. Furthermore, this chapter provides motivations for why this study was conducted by presenting the research problem, purpose and question as well as research delimitations.

Chapter two, Theoretical framework, presents relevant theories related to the capsule closet. These provide the reader with a better understanding of the emergence, movement and theories of this concept. These theories will later help to answer the research question and build credibility for the conclusion.

Chapter three, Methodological framework, explains how the research was conducted and why, what methods were used to collect the data and how the data was transferred into information.

Chapter four, Findings, presents the main findings of the primary data collected through interviews and diaries. At the end of the chapter the key findings are provided.

Chapter five, Analysis, analyses the key findings and puts them in relation to the theories presented in chapter two, Theoretical framework. Further, the answer of the research question is provided.

Chapter six, Discussion, presents this study’s contributions as well as limitations.

Chapter seven, Conclusion, concludes this paper and states that the purpose of this study was fulfilled. Additionally, further research directions are provided.
2. Theoretical framework

No research in regards to minimalist lifestyle concepts or capsule closets were found which explains the missing of previous studies as well as academic and scientific literature specifically related to these areas. Therefore, this chapter presents relevant theories closely related to the capsule closet concept in order to provide a better understanding of the concept’s emergence, movement and influence. Due to this study’s consumer focus, this chapter focuses on the consumer rather than the company perspective.

2.1. Mass consumption in consumer societies

A mass consuming society can be defined as “a society, in which the majority of families enjoy the benefits of increased productivity and constantly expand their range of consumer goods” (Matsuyama, 2002). Therefore, mass consumption can be seen as a contributor to the recent capsule closet movement by providing the fundament on which capsule closets can unfold; without people’s need to continuously expand their range of clothes, capsule closets might not exist in the first place.

But why do consumers continue to consume even though they have everything they need? According to Veblen, “the consumption of goods serves, in addition to the conventionally accepted function to satisfy needs, to indicate people’s personal level of wealth and social status” (Friese, 2000, p.17). Veblen calls this behavior ‘conspicuous consumption’. A theory that states that consumers do not only consume to fulfill personal needs but also cultural and social due to emulation, pride and envy (Veblen, 1899). Veblen argues that lower classes admired the style of upper classes and tried to imitate them in order to move towards a higher class. However, in order for upper classes to stay ahead of the masses, they continually had to follow and invent new fashion trends (Friese, 2000). Veblen hereby shows how easily fashion items loose value after being adopted by lower classes. He also states that social standing and knowing what is trending can become a sign of social class.

Simmel’s (1904) trickle-down theory supports Veblen’s (1899) theory that fashion trends move down from upper to lower classes. The imitation of upper classes caused rapidly changing fashion trends, which led to items not being used because they were out of fashion; even though their utility was not used up. This also caused an increase in consumer demand because of the ongoing pursuit for novelty, which still can be seen nowadays. Nowadays, consumers still copy those whom they aspire or want to embody (Dittmar, 2008). McCracken (1988) agrees that clothes are used to come closer to a desired lifestyle. However, clothing is not just, according to Veblen and Simmel, used for imitation but also differentiation. This paradox of imitation and differentiation can nowadays be seen by the paradox of wanting to fit in and stand out at the same time. This provides the basis for another argument missed by Veblen and Simmel. According to them, comparing one self’s style to someone else’s almost always leads to emulation and envy. However, comparison can also lead to satisfaction with one’s own style. Furthermore, fashion nowadays, rather than to show social class, can also be used to hide it. Today, it has become much easier for people of lower classes to copy higher classes due to fast fashion imitating luxury brands.
Nowadays, the consumption of fashion has become an all-rounder fulfilling personal, social and cultural needs. Consumer goods are vital for the “construction, expression and maintenance of identity as the subjective self-concept held by a person” (Dittmar, 2008). According to Dittmar, consumers’ motivation to consume is often led by the desire to express and/or enhance one’s own identity. Campbell (2004) agrees by saying that consumption is used to discover one’s identity and to be sure of one’s existence. Shopping is seen as a diversion from the routine of life, a form of recreation and family entertainment, a way of learning about trends, styling and product innovation, a self-gratifying activity or a reward for long working hours, a means of self-enhancement, a physical or psychological therapy or a stress buster similar to a message or a vacation (Woodruffe-Burton et al., 2006; Friese, 2000). Concepts such as hedonic shopping, impulsive purchasing, compulsive consumption, addictive consumption, compensatory consumption, recreational shopping and self-gift giving have developed (Woodruffe-Burton et al., 2006). Placing the development of these concepts in connection with the socio-cultural problems that have developed from mass consumption, a framework out of which capsule closets emerged can be developed. The fact that consumer goods have gone way beyond their initial aim to fulfill personal needs and are instead often used as communicators and identity creators can explain consumer’s desires to consume beyond necessity.

2.2. The emergence of fast fashion

Socio cultural changes (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010) as well as the above-mentioned principle of the desire to buy new clothes to fulfill personal social and cultural needs has allowed for ‘throwaway’ or fast fashion to emerge. Fast fashion can be defined as “marketing approach to respond to the latest trends by turning the inventory at a rapid time (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). It is a business model which can be characterized by: permanent assortment rotation, limited supply, low prices, an efficient and agile supply chain and short lead times (Byun & Sternquist, 2008).

Fast fashion allows consumers to fill their closets fast by spending relatively low amounts of money. It thereby provides consumers with immediate gratification for their temporary identities (Bauman, 2005), because as Binkley (2008, p.602) says, “the idea of multiple selves in evolution is central to the role of fast fashion supporters”. Especially young women of the Generation Y frequently consume low-quality, cheap and fashionable clothes (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). These items are however often only worn a couple of times before they are disposed and replaced by new merchandise. Fast fashion items from brands such as H&M, TopShop and Zara, are expected to be used less than ten times (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). This change in consumption behavior has also caused a change in the relationship people have with their clothes. Clothes are worn less frequently and therefore people don’t get attached to clothes as much. However, the increased trend for sustainable fashion production has caused young consumers, often conscious of green values, struggle to balance their continual need for ever-newer fashion with their presumed commitment to environmental sustainability (Joy et al., 2012).
2.3. Material possessions and the pursuit of happiness

Research indicates that it’s a widespread and counter-intuitive fact that people with more money and material goods are not more satisfied with their lives or more physically healthy (Kasser, 2002). In fact research says that once people are above poverty levels of income and their basic needs are satisfied, gains in wealth have little to no incremental payoff in terms off happiness or well being (Kasser, 2002). However, Lebergott (2014) argues that in western societies consumption choices are still made in the pursuit of happiness.

Existing research shows that materialistic values and goals even though often associated as key to success, happiness and rewarding interpersonal relationships are actually related to detrimental affects on well-being, psychological health and social functioning (Garðarsdóttir & Dittmar, 2012). By trying to fulfill personal and social goals with material purchases people often engage in over spending as well as compulsive buys which can have a negative impact on their psychological health (Garðarsdóttir & Dittmar, 2012). Instead of causing happiness, mass consumption can therefore cause dissatisfaction among consumers. Furthermore, people who value material goods are more likely to have financial worries because of worse money-management skills (Garðarsdóttir & Dittmar, 2012, p.471).

Today, there is a good amount of scientific research about the relationship between materialism and happiness and money and health reporting clear and consistent findings that people are happier with less. Happiness expert Ed Diener said in a 2006 New York Times article that materialism can lead to chronic feelings of dissatisfaction. "As we amass more and more possessions, we don't get any happier, we simply raise our reference point," says James Roberts (Gabay, 2015, p.251). "If we aren't fulfilled, rather than question the premise that consumerism isn't the ticket to happiness, we assume that we simply don't have enough money or possessions yet to purchase that all-important ticket" (Woodruffe-Burton et al., 2006, p.260). Many of these research outcomes are the reason for the increased trend for minimalism and simplicity. Campbell (2004, p.186) explains the low happiness levels by saying, "The inexhaustibility of wants lies in the inevitable gap between the perfected pleasures of the dream and the imperfect joys of reality". In other words, due to the gap between dream and reality, wants continue to exist and are hard to satisfy. This suggests that, “Consumption dreams are experienced as pleasurable and that the greatest pleasure lies in letting the dream come true” (Friese, 2000, p.23). Consumption goods therefore represent the reality of the fantasy. This is supported by studies by Belk et al. (1997) who say that the acquisition of a consumer good is connected to positive feelings of joy, excitement, pride and accomplishment. However, after the acquisition, negative feelings of frustration, regret and disinterest change the consumer’s experience, satisfaction and happiness levels. Consumers continuously crave for new possessions, which indicates that the thrill in consuming lies more in the desire rather than the realization (Friese, 2000). This is supported by Dittmar (2008, p.202) who states, “Novel products provide only a momentary high.” This means that after a product was acquired the desire for a new product is inevitable. These theories provide reasoning behind people’s closets filled with possessions that only provide a brief state of happiness and result in dissatisfaction afterwards. The gap that lies between the consumption dream and reality and the ever increasing consumer expectations can explain why consumers experience feelings of dissatisfaction even though they converted all of their dreams into reality.
2.4. The paradox of choice

In western countries the number of choices that people have when it comes to their shopping objectives is almost unlimited. Choice, as many other things in life works according to the principle, the more the better. Because the more choice we have, the freer we are to choose good things and therefore the happier we will be (Kinjo & Ebina, 2013). Empirical research indeed suggests, “people as well as animals tend to prefer large assortments and large variety over smaller ones” (Scheibehenne, 2008). Having choice has certainly a variety of benefits. It can provide individuals with a feeling of personal freedom and autonomy as well as a chance to differentiate oneself from others by choosing differently which aligns with Veblen’s (1899) and Simmel’s (1904) consumption theories. Furthermore, an increased variety to choose from can satisfy the human need for change and novelty (Scheibehenne, 2008). The reason why choice is offered to consumers in the first place though is the financial benefit that companies experience with it. A study by Rolls, Rowe, Rolls, Kingston, Megson, & Gunary, 1981 found that “Human subjects who received a large quantity of three different flavors of yogurt consumed an average of 23% more yogurt compared to people who received the same quantity of yogurt of only one flavor” (Scheibehenne, 2008).

However, too much choice can have negative effects. One of the first studies in the field of choice was done by Miller (1956) who studied information overload. According to Miller, every choice contains a set of information whereby too much choice can lead to information overload. Another famous study by Iyenger and Lepper (2000) focused on choices in supermarkets. It concluded that people with fewer choices are not only more likely to select and purchase a product, they are also more satisfied with their choice compared to people with more choices. These studies support a popular theory by Barry Schwartz (2004), which he calls ‘The Paradox of Choice’. Schwartz agrees that choice is good but that too much choice can contribute to decreased satisfaction and increased depression rates. According to him, the level of choice that people have nowadays exceeds the optimum level and therefore has negative impacts on consumers. Making a choice becomes a mentally challenging event, which can lead to fatigue syndromes, sleep deprivation, less creativity, poor listening and so forth (Mick et al., 2004). Following these theories one can conclude that the increased number of choices that people have available in their closets resulting from mass consumption and the continuous pursuit for happiness can help to explain the increased interest in capsule closets, which help people to declutter and limit choices.

2.5. Decision fatigue

Fashion consumption often restricts itself to the visible and worn and the collecting and gathering of clothes and their intended meaning. Thereby it overlooks the problems and anxieties that relate to clothes and closets in people’s every day lives, especially in people’s homes. In today’s western societies, mass consumption of fashions and the increasing number of choices involved with the accumulation of goods has made the picking of an outfit “a complex task, fraught with difficulties and diverse options” (Guy et al., 2001, p.1). Putting together an outfit involves a considerable amount of information gathering, weighting up of various options as well as the asking of whole series of questions. ‘Where
am I going and who is going to be there?’ ‘What kind of mood am I in?’ ‘Does this top match the skirt?’ and so on.

Making all of these decisions can lead to dissatisfaction and something called decision fatigue. Just like a muscle in the body when used to often, also decision-making can get tired or fatigued. Decision fatigue is closely linked to the ever-increasing availability of choices. Decision fatigue can lead to a reduced ability to make trade-offs, poor decision-making, impaired self-regulation, impulsive buys as well as the avoidance of making decisions at all (Vohs et al., 2005; Anderson, 2003).

When it comes to outfits, a poor decision on an outfit has the ability to affect the wearer’s mood, confidence and feeling and can cause dissatisfaction (Guy et al., 2001). On the other hand, social scientists like Kaiser, Freeman and Chandler (1993) argue that people’s favorite outfit has the capacity to change the way they express themselves and interact with others. Furthermore, a big closet filled with clothes can be a burden because once all of these goods are possessed they have to be maintained, upgraded, replaced, insured and constantly be managed (Kasser, 2002). Moreover, the outfit is not the only decision that people have to make during the day. This is why many people try to decrease the amount of decisions that have to be made by applying the capsule closet concept. With the concept, people try to simplify their wardrobes by decreasing the number of items in the closet, which leads to a decrease in choices available. With this theory in mind, one can try to make assumptions about why many famous and successful men are known for wearing the same outfits over and over again. As Obama once said: “You’ll see I wear only gray or blue suits, I’m trying to pare down decisions. I don’t want to make decisions about what I’m eating or wearing. Because I have too many other decisions to make.” (Baer, 2015) And Obama is not the only one that wears the same outfit at almost any day of the year. Other examples are Karl Lagerfeld with his traditional suit, Mark Zuckerberg’s grey t-shirt and Steve Jobs’ black turtleneck.

2.6. Minimalist lifestyle

The rise of fast fashion has also led to the rise of something called minimalist lifestyle, simple living or anti consumerism. As previously mentioned, theories about minimalists are rare. However, terms such as simple living, anti consumerism as well as consumer resistance,
rebellion, boycotting, countercultural movements, and non-consumption are often used in this context (Joy et al., 2012). Simple living can be defined as a voluntary choice to simplify one’s lifestyle. This in many cases includes the reduction of possessions and material goods and can therefore be referred to as minimalism (Pierce, 2000). This lifestyle is not new and its roots can be found in a variety of religious and spiritual traditions of Buddhist Monks who were only allowed to own eight possessions, John the Baptist or Jesus who told people that life does not consist in an abundance of possessions (Echlin, 2006). Nowadays, consumers are more aware than ever about the negative consequences of mass consumption and fast fashion, which can explain the increased trend for concepts that support minimalist lifestyles. Even though it’s not proven, supporters of minimalism often claim that it not only has environmental and financial but also psychological, physical and social benefits (Becker, 2015). By spending less money on material goods, the time spent to earn money can be reduced which can lead to more free time used to improve quality of life. Therefore, people choose to own less for many reasons such as less stress, better health, more freedom, time and money, less pressure, more opportunities to be creative and resourceful, more joyful and a greener planet (Jay, 2016).
3. Methodological Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to present how this study was designed and conducted. It provides a description of the steps that were taken to address the research problem and provides reasoning for methodological decisions made. This chapter starts with an introduction to phenomenology, a research philosophy used to study human experiences.

3.1. Research philosophy

“From the standpoint of the natural attitude, a minute of time is simply a minute of time - regardless of how and where we spend it. However, from the point of view of the phenomenological standpoint, a minute of time depends upon how we experience it. For instance, a minute of time might pass quickly if we are excited or slowly if we are bored.” (Husserl and the Adventure of Phenomenology, 2015)

Phenomenology is the research of lived experiences (van Manen, 2003). It’s about understanding social phenomena and how these were experienced by the individual (Kvale, 2009). The philosophy of phenomenology is a widespread concept, which emerged through the protest of the positivist paradigm during the 19th century (Reiners, 2012). The word phenomenology comes from the Greek word ‘phenomenon’, which means “to manifest” or “to bring to light” (Giorgi, 1999, p.68). Nowadays, phenomenology is a qualitative research philosophy often used in healthcare, particularly nursing research. It is based on the writings of Edmund Husserl (descriptive) and Martin Heidegger (interpretive) (Reiners, 2012). Phenomenology can be descriptive or interpretive. Both types of phenomenological research are still practiced today. Husserl the founder of descriptive phenomenology believed that everyday conscious experiences could be analyzed and described. Heidegger, Husserl’s student and the founder of interpretive phenomenology, developed Husserl’s theory further and moved beyond the description of human experiences by interpreting it (Dahlberg et al., 2008). This study followed the descriptive phenomenological research philosophy of Husserl because the researcher was more interested in participants’ descriptions of the capsule closet experience and less into how these could be interpreted. The aim of the descriptive phenomenological design was “to describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p.57). This aim aligns with the purpose of this study, which was to provide a better understanding of the capsule closet experience by capturing and describing the phenomenon as it is lived by the participants.

Phenomenology is a philosophy without presupposition, which means that the researcher does not make any judgments about the reality of a phenomenon until it is supported by data from the study participant (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it is based on the belief that the truth and the reality about a phenomenon are grounded in everyday human experiences. It is a way of thinking that describes (or interprets) people’s experiences of life events. Phenomenology therefore does not see human experience as an unreliable source of data but as a cornerstone of knowledge in describing human phenomena (van Manen, 2003). Another important characteristic of phenomenology is that compared to other research approaches, phenomenology does not problem solve. This means that phenomenological questions are usually meaning questions that can be better or more deeply understood but which are not supposed to be solved.
3.2. Research approach

As previously mentioned, research and literature regarding capsule closet experiences are limited with little to no knowledge and insights available. As such, a qualitative research method was chosen to gain detailed information about capsule closet experiences and to identify essential themes that describe these experiences. This is supported by Caelli (2001) who states that when seeking to understand human behavior and thoughts, qualitative research can be in some ways superior to quantitative research. A phenomenological approach was selected because it provides rich and in-depth descriptive (or interpretive) insights to better understand the capsule closet phenomenon as it was lived and experienced from the perspective of the study participants. An exploratory research approach was used because the aim of the study was not to provide a final answer to the research question but to deeply explore the research topic (Patton, 2002). This aligned with the purpose of this research, which was to provide a better understanding to this topic area upon which the basis for further and more conclusive research can follow. This research followed an inductive approach because this study aimed to get a better understanding of how capsules closets were experienced and to then develop theories from it. Therefore, theories and concepts arose from the data collected in this study, which made this study rather data-driven than theory-driven. Crowther and Lancaster (2008) support this by stating that a phenomenological philosophy is often associated with an inductive approach.

In order to obtain the necessary data to answer the research question, the researcher asked volunteers to participate in a capsule closet experiment. In the month of March 2016, five participants changed their closets into capsule closets and lived with them for the time period of one month. To include an experiment in this phenomenological research resulted first and foremost out of the wish to interview first-time capsule closet users and the lack of finding these. First time capsule closet users experience the capsule closet for the first time, which results in new experiences that participants have not been faced with before. It was thought that new experiences provide more interesting insights and a more real reflection of the capsule closet experience than experiences from people who are doing or have done a capsule closet already. Furthermore, due to the various ways that the capsule closet concept can be interpreted, implemented and executed, the experiment allowed for a more controlled environment by determining practice codes such as: the duration of the capsule closet, which steps to follow to design the capsule closet and rules such as ‘no shopping’. These were the same for all participants. Further, the experiment permitted the researcher to monitor participants’ experiences more closely.

This means that the capsule closet experience was experimentally investigated on the basis of the participants’ verbal and written responses that were produced by the experiment. Therefore, the experiment was a physical manipulation that allowed the analysis of everyday capsule closet experiences in a more controlled environment. Before the start of the study, all participants received a capsule closet handbook, which was designed specifically for this study. The handbook included general information about the study as well as capsule closets and some rules as well as guidelines on how to create a capsule closet. This way, participants knew what to expect and to do. Please refer to Appendix I: Capsule closet handbook to see the booklet.
3.3. Sampling technique

To find suitable study participants, snowball sampling was used. In phenomenology it is most important to find study participants that have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), which was achieved by the inclusion of an experiment. Once two participants were found that have not done a capsule closet before, they were recruited to assist in finding study volunteers in their social environment (Babbie, 2013). Snowball sampling was used because it was believed that people who want to participate in the experiment and do a capsule closet for one month are a minority and hard to identify. Snowball sampling can help to find these minorities, which in the end turned out to be in the researcher’s closer environment. This had the advantage that it increased confidence in the relationship between researcher and volunteer which can be a good indicator for sincerity and can increase research validity (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). It was considered, that this type of sampling method includes sample bias because the participants were interrelated through their social network (Burns & Grove, 1997). Furthermore, it was known that snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, which led to study outcomes that are non-generalizable and not representative for a population. However, due to the small sample size in phenomenological studies, demographics such as gender, age, and nationality were not considered and were not thought to have an impact on this study’s outcome.

In the end, six women were found with one participant dropping out of the study half way through the capsule closet month, which resulted in a study with five participants. For participant demographics see Chapter 4.1: Participant descriptions. Boyd (2001) says that two to ten research participants are sufficient to reach saturation, which is supported by Creswell (2007, p.65) who recommends up to ten participants for a phenomenological study. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form upon participation. The consent form provided information about the study purpose, procedure, commitments and confidentiality (see Appendix II: Consent form).

3.4. Data collection methods

Since it is impossible to co-experience an individual’s perspective of lived experiences, the best and only record of the experience exists within the individual’s memory (Broomé, 2011). Therefore, interviews and written diaries were gathered. Multiple data generation in this study led to a more complete and holistic picture of the capsule closet experience than either of these two methods alone could have provided. Furthermore, combining interviews and diaries led to a higher degree of accuracy and completeness of the study findings. Please refer to Table 1 for an overview of the data collection methods.
Table 1: Overview of data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Semi-structured in-depth</td>
<td>Vocal data collection</td>
<td>Once at the end of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>Fixed-interval w/ open-ended questions</td>
<td>Written data collection</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews
The researcher conducted five semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participants were aware of the interview purpose and gave written consent to the audio recording of the interview. The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen because as Patton (2002, p.104) says, “how they perceive a phenomenon, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interview with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have ‘lived experience’.” The goal of the phenomenological interviews was to obtain a as complete as possible first-person description of the experience that the participant has lived through. During the interview the focus lay on what was going on within the participants while they did the capsule closet. Therefore, each interview started with the following question: “In as much detail as possible, what was it like for you to do a capsule closet?” This open-ended question gave participants a wide range to describe their experience without restraining them or leading them towards a direction. Follow-up questions were based on the participants’ responses and aimed to encourage the participants to clarify and elicit further on their experiences. ‘Why questions’ were avoided because they often generate feelings of prejugement and shift the focus away from the description of an experience to a more distant and abstract discussion (Thompson et al., 1989). Furthermore the interviews were used to clarify diary content or expand the content collected from diaries by filling in details that were omitted in order to increase the breadth and depth of information.

The interviews were rather informal because as Bailey (1996, p.72) says, “informal interviews are a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person.” Due to the participants’ geographical dispersion, video interviews through Skype were conducted a week after the capsule closet month finished (04.04-10.04.2016) to decrease recall error. Skype interviews allow for a higher degree of flexibility and comfort due to the interviewees’ familiar environment. Furthermore, access to verbal and nonverbal cues in Skype are comparable with those of face-to-face interviews (Janghorban et al., 2014); these were however not in the focus of the interview because they did not add to the participants’ description of the experience. However, interviews via Skype face a higher chance for error due to connection problems.

The interviews also had limitations. Due to the fact that interviews were conducted only once at the end of the study, a higher recall error might have affected the data because
participants might not have remembered all the details of their experience. Furthermore, interviews are more prone to social considerations (Kvale, 2009) than other data collection methods because the interviewee might feel uncomfortable to speak honestly about personal experiences in front of the interviewer. The nature of the semi-structured interviews led to different questions being asked to different participants, which led to different information being collected. However, standardized questions could have reduced the flexibility of the researcher, which may have impeded getting to the core of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p.349). For more information on the type of questions asked during the interview see Appendix III: Interview guide.

Diaries
In addition to the five interviews that were conducted, participants wrote a diary in which they recalled and reflected weekly on their experiences. In order to examine lived experiences, one of the most straightforward methods in phenomenological research is to ask the individuals to write their experiences down (van Manen, 2003). This way, participants were able to express and describe their experiences on their own terms. Furthermore, diaries have often been employed to provide insight into personal phenomena that are difficult to access through other methods (Woll, 2014). Diaries contributed greatly to this study because they counterbalanced some of the interview limitations. One of the main reasons why diaries were added to this study was that they reduced the amount of time that passed between the experience and the account of this experience. Due to the fact that diaries rely on short-term memory they have a smaller recall error than interviews have. Diary research is also subject to what researchers refer to as the ‘first day’s effect’. This term describes the tendency for most relevant information to be produced during the early period of the diary writing process (Woll, 2014), which is information that could not be grasped by the interviews. Moreover, diaries provided a fundamental benefit to this study because they allowed for the examination of experiences in their natural and spontaneous context (Bolger et al., 2002). Furthermore, diaries are less subject to social considerations compared to interviews in which the participant might want to produce a more interesting narrative. A possible reason for this relates to one of the major strengths of the diary, which is that it is often much easier to write about certain things than it is to speak about them (Woll, 2014). Additionally, the diary entries had the ability to study how the experience might have changed over the time period of one month. According to Giorgi (1997), when collecting diary descriptions and interviews, the diary description usually comes first and is used as a basis for further elaboration during the interview, which was the case in this study.

In designing the type of diary it was important to consider:

- Acceptable participant burden
- Acceptable time lag between experience and the description of it
- Acceptable time lag to reflect on experience
- Acceptable time lag to reveal enough experience of interest

For this study a fixed interval schedule was chosen in which the participants provided diary entries once a week for the period of four weeks. Bolger (2002, p.589) supports this decision by saying, “phenomena such as ongoing experiences are best addressed with a fixed interval schedule”. Further, it was chosen because it provides enough time for experiences to
emerge and reflected on but had the limitation that the chance for recall error was slightly increased. The goal was to reach a sufficient quality and quantity of diary entries, which would lead to a suitable amount of insights while at the same time, not increase participant burden. As Bolger (2002, pp.585-86) adds, “diary designs place a greater burden on participants” and therefore it is important that such designs are best implemented at times when change is likely to occur. Keeping this in mind, the researcher decided that a weekly diary entry would be most suitable. To limit the content of the diary but still provide room for descriptive expressions, each week’s diary was guided by open-ended questions (e.g. How have you experienced your first week with your capsule closet (talk about your mood, feelings, emotions etc.)) to narrow the content of the diary and keep the focus on the capsule closet experience while not limiting it (please refer to Appendix IV: Diary questions for the weekly diary questions). Participants were asked to use a word file to document their experiences due to convenience, coherence and simplicity.

As any data collection method also diaries have limitations. One of the most common problems in diary studies is to obtain qualitatively good data (Woll, 2014). Therefore, participant commitment and dedication is one of the most important criteria to obtain reliable, deep and valid insights about their experiences. In order to increase the chance for reliable data, participants were informed about the goal and the importance of these diaries for the study but also about the benefit of a diary for their own account.

3.5. Data analysis

In phenomenology the focus is on the phenomenon rather than the individual, therefore when analyzing the data it was not of great importance from which participant or which data collection method the content was collected (Cooper et al., 2012). Therefore, no distinctions between diaries and interviews were made. This was also partly possible because both methods complemented rather than competed one another and no major differences between diary and interview content could be found.

To analyze the data collected through the interviews and the diaries, the following seven steps of Hycner’s (1985) Guidelines for Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis were used.

1. Transcription
2. Examine transcripts for a sense of the whole
3. Bracketing
4. Separate data into meaning units and label them
5. Eliminate non-relevant meaning units
6. Cluster relevant meaning units
7. Determine essential theme

1. Transcription
Written data from diaries only had to be collected. However, vocal data from the interviews had to be transcribed and included literal statements of each participant.
2. Examine transcripts for a sense of the whole
After the interviews were transcribed, both interview transcripts and diaries were examined by reading and re-reading the data one by one several times. This way a general idea of the whole experience of each participant was constructed.

3. Bracketing
While reading the transcripts, a phenomenological tool called ‘bracketing’ was used. ‘Bracketing’ helps to isolate the researcher’s personal experience from the participant’s personal phenomenon (Connell, 2003). Munhall (1994, p.54) describes bracketing as the position of standing before an experience with an attitude of unknowing, even if, and especially if, one has lived the experience personally. At this stage, the researcher attempted to put herself in the shoes of the participant and live through the experience.

4. Separate data into meaning units and label them
After the transcripts were examined and the essence of the whole experience was grasped, the words and sentences were separated by meanings in order to develop meaning units (Giorgi, 1997). To do so, a line was put whenever one idea ended and another one began. Afterwards, each meaning unit was labeled with descriptive comments, which described the content of the meaning unit. This resulted in transcripts that looked like this:

   (...) and I really felt, if I would have to continue the capsule closet for 2 more weeks I would really have a very big problem| (problem if cc continues), because it was a very huge climate change| (problem due to climate), you know I came from 4 degrees to 24 degrees in Croatia| (big climate change), with a capsule collection full of winter clothes (...)

5. Eliminate non-relevant meaning units
Then, the researcher addresses each meaning unit to the research question. Meaning units irrelevant to the participants’ capsule closet experience as well as repetitive or overlapping data was eliminated.

6. Cluster unit of relevant meaning
Afterwards, relevant meaning units with a common theme were clustered and put into categories (e.g. all comments involving climate struggles). Afterwards, categories common to most or even to all of the participants’ data were identified without dismissing unique themes.

7. Determine essential themes
In the end, all clusters of relevant meaning units were examined to find out if there is a central or essential theme that expresses the essence of these clusters. (e.g. struggles and challenges). These themes were then supported by descriptive comments made by the study participants. Please refer to Chapter 4: Findings to see the essential themes and supporting comments.
3.6. Validity and reliability

The concepts of validity and reliability were applied to this study in order to determine the quality of this research. Generalizability was not included because studies with phenomenological research designs do not typically generalize well (Ensslen, 2013). Validity in this study can be defined as “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them.” (Creswell & Miller, 2010, p.124). Giorgi (1988) states that validity in phenomenological research can be achieved “If the essential description of a phenomenon truly captures the intuited essence”. Reliability can be observed when one can use this essential description consistently (Giorgi, 1988).

Using multiple data collection methods and comparing and analyzing interview as well as diary data strengthened the validity of this study. Giorgi (1988) warns that interviewer bias and past knowledge and experiences can error the phenomenon under study and can therefore weaken the study’s validity. Due to the researcher’s lack of own capsule closet experiences, interviewer bias was decreased. Furthermore, the researcher followed Patton’s (2002, p.553) recommendation to “explore one’s predispositions, making biases explicit, to the extent possible, and engaging in mental cleansing processes” to decrease researcher bias. It is very important that the researcher acknowledges own prepositions and believes early in the research process (Creswell & Miller, 2010). Participant bias can take place when the comments, tone or non-verbal behavior of the interviewer create a bias in the way that the interviewee responds to the questions being asked (Gatto, 2009). The researcher however tried to keep a natural opinion. Nevertheless, participants’ interview answers might have been unconsciously directed towards a specific answer due to the researcher’s non-verbal communication such as facial expression or body language (Gatto, 2009). Further, validity was increased by a “prolonged engagement in the field” (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

“Working with people day in and day out for long periods of time is what gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality” (Creswell & Miller, 2010, p.128). During the one-month period, the researcher had daily contact with all participants, which helped to build trust and establish rapport. This increased the chance for participants to disclose personal information in diaries as well as interviews and decreased chances of participant bias. However, due to the very personal nature of Skype interviews, participants may have withheld personal information, which may have increased participant bias. However, as Sica (2006) says, “it is difficult or even impossible to completely eliminate bias”, therefore the goal for the researcher was to minimize bias and to comprehend its residual effects. The awareness of a bias can already allow for a more meaningful examination of the research findings and the conclusion. Furthermore, conducting anonymous interviews decreased participant bias and increased the probability of the interviewees to feel more comfortable and free to state the truth. To further strengthen the credibility of the study, rich descriptions of the settings, methods used and participants were provided in this report that may help the reader to apply the findings to other settings or similar contexts (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

The study’s reliability could have been weakened by the decision to find study participants through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling “does not allow for confident generalizations nor does it control for selection bias (Gatto, 2009, p.9). Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to populations outside of the context of this study. Additionally, snowball sampling resulted in participants that were not only close to the researcher but also to each other (e.g. some participants were friends) which resulted in sharing experiences among
each other. Therefore, common elements in the data analysis might have resulted from the shared experiences among the participants. Differences in age, background and nationality as well as demands and expectations among the participants may have had an effect on the data collected. Moreover, Saunders, et al. (2009, p.326) point out a number of data quality issues, which can be identified in relation to the use of unstructured and in-depth interviews. Specifically, the lack of standardization in those interviews may lead to reliability concerns.

3.7. Ethical consideration

Saunders, et al. (2009, p.184) define ethics as the “norms or standards of behavior that guide moral choices about our behavior and our relationships with others”. Because this research was about human experiences and included people in their real life context, ethics were of significant importance. Ethical issues were found in various steps throughout the research process such as: formulating and clarifying the research topic, designing the research and gaining access, collecting data, processing and storing data, analyzing data and while writing up the research findings (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the research was based on the MRS Code of Conduct to assure research that is carried out in a professional and ethical manner (MRS, 2010). The principles of the Code are as follows:

1. Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.

2. Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.

3. Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.

4. Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their professional activities.

5. Researchers shall respect the rights and well being of all individuals.

6. Researchers shall ensure that respondents are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.

7. Researchers shall balance the needs of individuals, clients and their professional activities.

8. Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgment in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.

9. Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.

10. Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession.
4. Findings

This chapter provides the reader with an overview of the research findings developed as a result of Hycner’s (1985) Guidelines for Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis, which was described above. These findings reflect the focus of this phenomenological study, which was participants’ lived experiences with capsule closets. The analyzing process revealed seven essential themes, which are presented in Figure 6.

These essential themes aim to illustrate how the participants have experienced the capsule closet phenomenon. The essential themes in Chapter 4.2. include to a great extent descriptive comments collected from participants’ diaries and interviews. Phenomenological studies gain their scientific rigor and trustworthiness from participants’ comments, which help to illustrate lived experiences and bring the reader closer to the phenomenon (Halling, 2002). The data collected from the diaries and interviews were cumulative, meaning that the results from both methods are tied closely together and can therefore not be presented separately. This can be seen in the similarity between diary and interview questions. Research findings from interviews and diaries were therefore put together.

Furthermore, it has to be noted that this part includes some interpretations and conjecture in deciding what findings to select and include and how to order them (Lester, 1999). This is partly due to the nature of qualitative data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews and diaries. The analysis of this kind of data can be considered rather messy because “data doesn’t tend to fall into neat categories and there can be many ways of linking between different parts of discussions or observations”. (Lester, 1999, p.2). However, here it has to be noted one more time that the main role in this study was to describe rather than to interpret or explain. Further, as previously explained, no distinction between diary and interview content was made.

![Figure 6: Seven essential themes](image)
4.1. Participant descriptions

As previously mentioned, participant demographics were not of importance for this study. However, in the following, brief descriptions of the study participants are given which aim to make it easier for the reader to put him/herself into the participants’ capsule closet experiences. Names used are not the participants’ given names. Pseudonyms are used to provide reasonable confidentiality to the women who volunteered for this study.

Table 2: Participant descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Capsule closet size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Essential themes

Table 3 presents the essential themes found in participants’ interviews and diaries. The table shows which participant spoke to which essential theme. Hereby, it has to be noted that just because a participant did not speak about a specific essential theme doesn’t mean that she did not experience it; it just means it was not mentioned in the diaries or the interview.

Table 3: Essential themes and participant input

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential theme</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1) Feeling excited</th>
<th>2) Feeling relieved</th>
<th>3) Struggles/challenges</th>
<th>4) Feeling guilty</th>
<th>5) Feeling limited</th>
<th>6) Feeling proud</th>
<th>7) Learning experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ✔ Participant spoke to this essential theme
4.2.1. Feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined

Almost all participants, some more and some less than others, experienced some feelings of excitement, enthusiasm and determination while doing a capsule closet. These feelings occurred mostly right before the start of the capsule closet project as well as during their first capsule closet week. Beth recalled: “The first week was new, exciting, a new challenge (...)” The same accounted for Emma who said: “Firstly, the capsule closet concept means a potential new start for me. New start in terms of creating kind of a closet I never thought about, something new and exciting.” When Emma was asked specifically how she experienced her first capsule closet day she answered:

“Yes, I was excited like a little child, I called my mom, my dad, my boyfriend and I announced to everyone that now I am putting my clothes into three boxes, and I had to tell everyone what I am doing, so my whole family, they all knew that I am doing a capsule closet, so yeah, I really felt like Carrie Bradshaw from Sex and the City, you know when you throw everything out and you see everything that you have (...).”

Also Dana had positive memories of her first capsule closet day, which she described like this: “In the beginning I was really looking forward to the project, so I was very happy on this morning. Opening my closet thinking: This is what I want to wear! Feels great.” In the past, participants mentioned that they were quiet familiar with ‘I don’t have anything to wear’ situations, which were associated with stress, especially in the morning. According to Dana, the capsule closet removed these struggles. Similarly, Claire experienced her first capsule closet day: “My first day, I was really excited, I was like: Now I can wear my first outfit, which I of course knew already what I wanted to wear.” Interviews and diaries have also shown that participants frequently used words such as holiday or vacation feelings in relation with the capsule closet. This can be seen in case of Claire who gave a quite good explanation of what the capsule closet reminded her off:

“It was kind of like being on holidays, packing all of your stuff, and then just having these clothes, and being a little bit limited in your selection, but it was really good, I didn’t miss as many clothes as I thought in the beginning.”

Claire compared the capsule closet with a situation that many people can relate to, going on vacation. Beth did the same but related it to the relaxed and good feeling that people experience when being on holiday: “After the first week I am still absolutely in a kind of holiday feeling. I think the frustration will not start until the end of week 2.” At the end of week 2, Beth then stated: “Now at the end of the second week I have to admit that I am a little worried about the next few weeks. What am I going to do if we have 20 degrees for Eastern? Winterboots?” Some of the participants also felt very determined at the start of the project. They expressed strong feelings about what the project means for them which can be seen in case of Beth who said: “I don’t want this to be just a project; I want this to become a some kind of new philosophy how to see life and how I live.” Emma was also very determined when it came to the decision on which items to throw out, donate or give away:

“In the beginning I was so excited, I was so determined, I got rid of so many clothes I was very determined which I really liked because finally I threw out
everything that I had to throw out, which was maybe the biggest and the best decision in the whole capsule collection.”

However, when looking back at her determination, Emma later expressed that retrospectively she thinks that she might have been a little too determined.

“I’ll be honest maybe I was at some point a little too strict because now, I mean I got rid of things that now I am thinking: What the fuck, was I crazy? Because some of those things were not cheap and some of those things I even bought recently, recently like 2-3 months before that, yeah but then...with time you forget that you have it, and now its ok.”

4.2.2. Feeling relieved and satisfied

All participants, at some point, experienced feelings of relief and/or great satisfaction. These feelings were experienced in situations such as right at the start of the capsule closet when participants threw out and gave away all of the clothes that they believed they don’t need anymore or when they first looked at their finished capsule closet. Some participants also felt good about the limited choices in their capsule closet and the positive effect of not being allowed to shop. Claire got rid of many of her clothes, but instead of being sad or regretting her decision she said that throwing out clothes, “makes me feel like I lost some weight of my shoulders.” Claire described the processes of getting rid of the clothes as “a kind of self cleaning process; getting rid of stuff you don’t need and keep a focus on those clothes you really like.” She added, “I felt very relieved, it was really good, it was like a big stone falling of my back.” This positive feeling when throwing out the clothes that don’t fit anymore, are broken, that one hasn’t worn in a long time or that just don’t reflect ones personal style or taste was shared by several participants in this study. Also Beth described how she felt about the clothes that she gave away:

“Well, you can see that a lot of clothes are missing in the closet, but its not like I feel bad about it...or that I think I would have liked to keep them, actually I feel freer now, now that I have thrown out all of these clothes.”

Emma was probably the most consequent participant when it came to throwing out her clothes, she said: “I would say that I got rid of almost half of my closet”. Even though she said goodbye to half of the pieces she had in her closet she experienced this moment as “a great relief”. “For me that was really the biggest decision and the biggest action I did and the biggest relieve I felt after.” She even encouraged her family and friends to do a capsule closet by telling them “how much easier will their life and morning be and how much relief they will feel.” Another very satisfying moment was experienced when participants first saw their finished capsule closet. Anna, even though she admitted that she was struggling with the creation of her capsule closet, could not hide her satisfaction when she looked at her finished capsule closet. She remembered how she felt:

“And then the moment you put all these things in your closet and you see, you feel this is enough for one month, you are not going to have too little to wear, and you see how clean, and how nice your closet looks, also how coherent with
colors and everything, patterns, that’s a really really satisfying feeling I have to say.”

Anna provided insights into how she used to feel when she opened the doors to her old closet and compared it with the feeling she now has with the capsule closet: “I really liked this first feeling of opening my closet and not having a huge choice, not having this overwhelming choice of clothes and just knowing what to wear.” When asked to further exemplify on what she used to experience with her old closet she said:

“Usually I open my closet and I knew I only had 10 min. left to get dressed and leave for work or for university or I would probably freak out because I wouldn’t know what to pick out because I lost the overview of the things I have but now I just look into my closet and I know the single pieces that are in there already so sometimes I already know what to wear before actually looking inside the closet because I know what’s inside and it takes me 5 min. maximum maybe and I am done.”

Participants repeatedly mentioned how relieved and satisfied they felt with the capsule closet because of the limited choices of clothes it provided. Anne remembered: “In the mornings I was very satisfied with how little time it took me to decide what to wear, simply because there was not a great choice.” Also Claire explained that the capsule closet and the limited choices of clothes available made her life simpler.

“I am glad that the capsule closet makes my choice-making easier, I anyways have a lot of things going on in my head (Master thesis, job searching, maybe moving somewhere else – so big things to think about) and therefore I am really glad to have something where I do not need to worry a lot about.”

Similar to Claire, Emma also noted that the capsule closet made her life easier by removing some of the decisions she had to make during her everyday life: “This week was probably the easiest one because there was so much going on, which is probably good because I saw how good it can be to have a capsule closet. I didn't even think about what I am wearing and just picked the outfits that were safe.” Thinking about what to wear the next day was experienced as a struggle or burden for some of the participants. Therefore, not to think about what one is going to wear the next day was experienced as satisfying and relieving by the participants. Dana explained, ” Normally I plan every evening what I am going to wear for work the next day but since I have my capsule closet, I am not doing this anymore. I am not even thinking about what to wear the next day. Every morning I stand in front of my closet and know exactly what to wear.”

Some participants also experienced relief. Due to the fact that the participants were not allowed to purchase new clothes, some participants noted that the usual bills that accumulated at the end of one month weren’t there. This can be seen in case of Dana who said, “It was easier not to shop this week than last week. I think I am getting used to it and I like that I am not afraid to look in my bank account.” Also Beth noted, “I don’t buy anything anymore, so usually at the end of the month there were all these bills, now there are no bills, I feel good with that.”
4.2.3. Experiencing struggles and challenges

Capsule closet creation
At some point during the capsule closet month each participant experienced some kind of struggles and challenges. One of the first struggles the participants were confronted with was right at the start of their capsule closet month, the creation of the capsule closet. Anna described how she experienced the moment when she laid out all of her clothes, shoes and accessories in her room in order to decide which items to include in the capsule closet, which ones to store and which ones to give away:

“First of all I was shocked again about how many clothes I have. I was simply shocked, I took photos of my apartment because seriously the entire floor, every piece of floor that could have been covered by clothes was covered, even in several layers, so it was a lot, and then you get a little frustrated because you don’t know where to start, its huge, it looks like too much and you have no idea where to start and where to decide what to put into your capsule closet or not. And you really feel that from that probably I have hundreds of pieces of clothes you will not be able to get a capsule closet of 30 pieces. You feel like you will never going to get there.”

Similarly, Beth explained how she experienced the struggled to create her capsule closet:

“Actually one really wonders how many clothes one owns. Honestly, I have to say that I took a lot of time to collect all of the clothes together, to lie them down and then I had to have a break because I seriously had no idea how to continue. This break actually lasted a couple of hours. Until I then had an idea, on how to continue. And then I made those 3 piles, the yes, no and maybe pile, and then I had 3 piles ready, and then I left the room again because I was again overwhelmed and thought: What should I do now?”

Both, Anna and Beth experienced some kind of frustration after seeing all of the clothes they own. When Dana created her capsule closet she actually started counting some of her items and was shocked about how much she actually owns: “While starting my capsule closet, I counted my clothes and was a little bit shocked that I have 88 blouses, I knew, that I have a lot of clothes, but I have never counted them.” While creating the capsule closet, Dana felt like: “Am I really doing this?” She was struggling because according to her every piece in her closet is nice enough to be included into the capsule closet: “I looked into my closet deciding on what to include and not to include and I was thinking: this is nice, and this is nice, and this is nice, this is nice...!”

Wearing the capsule closet
Some participants also experienced some struggles when it came to the wearing of their capsule closet items. While in the first week, participants were not yet challenged to find suitable daily outfits, the following weeks revealed some challenges when it came to the mixing and matching of different items. Participants in general stated that they do not like to wear outfits twice in a row and that they like to be creative with their outfits. Even though Anna experienced the mixing and matching as “it’s still fun”, she also admitted:
“It gets more and more challenging, the longer one does the capsule closet. I am a tiny bit nervous about how I will wear the same items differently and combine them in different looks the next weeks because I simply do not like to look the same every single day, fashion is still a major thing to communicate the own personality.”

Also Emma admitted that she had some “stuck moments” where she felt “I didn’t feel like wearing any of this.” Beth was faced with challenges because since the clothes were worn more often they also had to be washed faster. This resulted in her having to wear her ‘good’ clothes for activities such as cleaning or gardening: “This week I was challenged by the fact that most of my clothes were in the laundry. I didn’t have any pants or long-sleeved shirts. I wore my good pants and shirts for cleaning and gardening because all of my other clothes were dirty.”

**Weather conditions and special occasions**

Furthermore, weather conditions as well as special occasions such as parties or events caused some participants to struggle with their capsule closets. Weather was something that participants could not foresee and which can change unexpectedly. This meant that for some participants the capsule closet did not always offer the right type of clothing appropriate for the current temperature. Beth and Emma both felt that the weather sometimes negatively influenced their capsule closet experience. Emma, who travelled during her capsule closet month from Sweden to Croatia, was faced with a great climate difference. She remembered, “I really had a very big problem, because it was a very huge climate change, you know I came from 4 degrees to 24 degrees in Croatia, with a capsule collection full of winter clothes.” This actually caused Emma to wear clothes, which were not included in her capsule closet. Also Beth, even though she did not travel, struggled with the German weather conditions, which forced her to wear winter boots in warm temperatures: “Its becoming more and more difficult to find outfits for all kinds of weather conditions, because I only have really warm winter boots in my capsule closet, I also had to wear these boots during 15 degrees sunshine which was really uncomfortable.” Also Claire stated: ”Meanwhile, there was one day in the month where we had around 25 degrees and it was too warm for my winter jackets and my winter boots.”

Also special occasions challenged some of the participants. Dana described a situation in which she was invited to a birthday party and felt like she didn’t include any suitable pieces for this occasion in her capsule closet. This situation caused her to look through all of her items that she owns but did not include in the capsule close:

“On Saturday, I was invited to a friend’s birthday party and I was a little bit stressed that I have only my capsule closet and really wanted to have something special for this evening. Since I am working and I am also in a weekend relationship, I am not going out very often, so I wanted to have something that’s pretty, chic as well as fashionable. I was looking through my “old clothes” that are not included in the capsule closet and I had immediately the problem that I have nothing to wear in this bunch of clothes. I didn’t want to cheat, but I felt sad that I am not able to wear all my other pretty clothes, so
I just wanted to know what I would wear if I had all possibilities. However, in the end I felt pretty, chic as well as fashionable with exactly the clothes of my capsule closet and my boyfriend liked it pretty much as well. So I have experienced again, that it is way more difficult to find a suitable outfit when you have more clothes than when you only have a limited range of clothes.”

Similarly, Claire felt like she did not include the right outfit for a job interview that she had. “Last week I was stressed with the fact that I do not have so many pieces to select for the interview, but now I feel liked I have accepted the fact that I use less garments.”

The no shopping rule
Another challenge for almost all of the participants was the limitation that they were not allowed to shop and buy new clothes during the entire capsule closet month. Participants in general admitted that they went to various stores or shopping malls but refused to buy something because they knew it was not allowed. However, to go shopping and not being allowed to buy something is experienced as a challenge by many of the participants. Anna for example described how she experienced it to go shopping knowing that she is not allowed to buy something:

“I did experience a little challenge this week when going for a shopping trip with my sister, because shopping and strolling through shops used to be a great “hobby” or weekend-activity for me. I did not always used to buy a lot on these shopping trips, but the option to buy one or two little things was always nice to have. Now, when going shopping and strolling through shops for hours I find it a lot more exhausting and a lot less exciting than I used to.”

Even though Anna experienced the shopping trip as less exciting she added: “After the last shopping trip however, I was simply much less excited about the entire thing but also very satisfied with coming home to all the beautiful clothes I have without having bought anything. And as a student I feel I haven’t literally wasted the money I do not have anyway on something I do not need.” Also Dana experienced the ‘no shopping rule’ as a challenge. She remembered, “That was the hardest part, that was really hard, because normally I order twice per month at Zara or H&M so yes, this was really really hard for me.” Dana added that she is “missing the feeling of wearing something new, when you feel especially pretty and fashionable as well as I am missing to go shopping and buying some new trends.” Beth also struggled not to buy anything because “It’s like a routine, you have the feeling that you have to buy something, just because it was, it was part of my life and I always did it like that.” However, she made some positive experiences when she went shopping with a friend. Instead of having the focus on buying, she explained how the focus of the shopping trip was on spending some quality time with a friend: “I told my friend about the capsule closet, so when we went shopping, the focus was not on clothes but on beauty products or electronics or books, we even sat down and talked for 1 ½ hours in the restaurant, went through the mall for another hour and then we sat down and had a drink and talked again.” Claire also described some times during the capsule closet month where she really felt like buying something. According to her, the ‘no shopping’ rule of the capsule closet reminded her of doing a diet.
“I still do define this project a little bit like a diet, where you experience weak time as well, just like during a diet you want something you are not allowed to have very desperately, even though you don’t need it for real. I think it was the same last week when I really wanted to buy something and the things in the shop were so tempting. This week I was over that weak phase and that’s same during a diet, I think.”

4.2.4. Feelings of guilt and regret

Participants admitted that there were moments during the capsule closet month when they experienced feelings of guilt and regret. Anna even used the word ‘ashamed’ when she described how she felt about all of the clothes that she used to own.

“A few days ago I went through my outfit pictures of the past 10 days and figured how comfortable I felt in every single one of them. None of them, however, includes a lot of color. So when thinking about very colorful pieces in my storage, I almost start to feel ashamed. Or better: I start to feel a bit frustrated that I spent money on something I do not enjoy to wear really and that does not suit my closet or my typical style either. I have one belt and one bag in my capsule closet that match with everything in my closet. It makes me wonder why I even own more than that one belt and much more bags than that one.”

Furthermore, she talked about another situation, which made her feel ashamed: “To be really honest, and I am ashamed to say this, after few weeks of not buying anything, my last purchase was about 3 ½ weeks ago, I do start to feel like purchasing new again.” She said that she was hoping that the capsule closet would change her wish to frequently buy new things, but came to the conclusion “It still did not stop that I see something online or in a shop window and want to have it. I did try on things, like shoes and fashion items but of course did not buy them. However, I put them on a ‘after capsule closet wish list’ and will think about buying them afterwards. That makes me feel a bit ashamed.”

Also Emma experienced feelings of regret when thinking about what she purchased in the past. For her it was hard to admit that while going through all of the things she owns she realized that “Half of my closet was cheap and poor made garments. I had so much clothes that I never wore or wore only once, so much clothes of a bad quality from fast fashion retailers and so many clothes that don’t even fit me.” According to her, the capsule closet was “a big eye opener”. Claire on the other hand experienced some guilt after admitting that she wore an item, which was not included in her capsule closet. Claire, because she lives close to her work during the week and drives home over the weekends to the apartment she shares with her boyfriend has to take and pack her capsule closet every week. When she forgot her sports clothes at her other apartment she was faced with a difficult situation:

“I was away and I had my gym stuff in my other apartment and I went home, and it wasn’t planned but there was this gymnastic evening where my boyfriend goes so I thought it might be good going there because I was struggling with my back but of course I forgot the gym stuff, so I was thinking: I
really want to go and that’s just stupid, so I cheated in that way, so I took one of my forbidden things.”

After asking her how she felt about that Claire said: “I felt like I cheated on the whole thing, and its not good, I was thinking: well, I have my stuff why should I take something else. That’s not good. It wasn’t good, I didn’t feel good with it.” Also Emma wore an item which was not included in her capsule closet:

“I also did one mistake I did not really take clothes for going out and clubbing, you know something a little bit more nice or...something like that. So then I had a real challenge, I think I went out 2 or 3 times that month and the first two times were ok but third time I couldn’t go in the same outfit so you know I didn’t have anything to exchange which would still look very nice and really for going out, a top or something, I had a closet full of sweaters...yeah so that day was extremely annoying, that day was the day when I pulled out the shirt from the “maybe pile”.

When asking her how she felt about that she answered, “Guilty! I don’t know why.”

### 4.2.5. Feeling limited, bored and less creative

As previously mentioned the start of the capsule closet as well as the first week were very exciting for the participants. However, throughout the rest of the capsule closet month participants also experienced moments of boredom with the clothes available in the capsule closet and moments where they felt limited in their choices or less creative. Anna described how she experienced these moments and explains how relieved she was knowing that the capsule closet was for one month only:

“Here and there, of course, I do get bored of items. I cannot wait to exchange single items, because looking at the exact same for weeks can get a bit boring. I have to say that, if I had to wear the exact same things for the next two months too, as other capsule closet bloggers do it, I would definitely get bored.”

Emma also wished to switch some of the items included in her capsule closet. She described herself as a person “Who likes changes, who doesn't have a certain style, likes to switch garments and doesn't like to be too limited”. She said: “I still sometimes stand in front of the closet thinking that I have nothing to wear. I feel like I already wore all the garments and that it could become quite boring for me not to switch things every now and then.”

Also Dana got a little frustrated after her first capsule closet week was over. Even though she previously mentioned that she liked the fact that the capsule closet makes her decision on what to wear easier, at the same time she said: “It was nice to not think about what I am going to wear but in the end I was like: I want to have something different. I wanted, I don’t know, it felt boring.” Also Beth experienced some down moments after her initial excitement. According to her, week three was the most challenging: “The third week was the most extreme when it comes to my mood, in the third week, it was the first time that I was thinking: Do I still have clothes to wear? I really didn’t like the choices I had in my closet.”
Some of the participants also mentioned that they feel that the capsule closet limits them in their creativity. Anna for example said, “The only negative thing I felt some days was that, because I chose very basic, casual, go-to pieces for my capsule closet, simply since they are more easily combinable, I was a little hold back from getting creative with my outfits.” Claire felt similar, however, according to her choosing simple and basic pieces in the capsule closet can also have its advantages. “The capsule closet makes me feel less creative but I also must admit it makes me less frustrated in the morning.” Emma also mentioned that she struggled with the feeling of being limited. She provided a quite good description of how she likes to dress according to her mood and what she feels if her outfit and mood do not match.

“I felt really limited. I am starting to notice that I definitely dress up according to the mood and if the mood is not the pieces I have with me and I don’t have a choice, I really don’t feel well in my outfit. There was a day when I had only one clean shirt that I didn’t feel to wear and I couldn’t wait to come back and take it off of me.”

Claire agreed with Emma when it came to clothes and their connection to a person’s mood:

“Women also have many mixed feelings that they want to mirror in their garments, if you feel unsecure that day, you want to hide in a big sweater and that’s something you can’t do in the capsule closet, you are a little bit more limited in that, you have to reduce these feelings and actually I felt more supported by my garments that they said: no you cannot have these feelings today you have to be more sure about how you are at the moment.”

When asked to further explain what she meant Emma said:

“Yes... you know those situations when you wake up in the morning and you are thinking yeah this is exactly how I want to look today and then you look at your closet and you don’t have it. Or even worse you see something online that you really want to have in your closet but you can’t buy it and then you feel like nothing else from the closet will look good or feel good.”

Almost all participants experienced some kind of ups and downs throughout the four capsule closet weeks. As previously mentioned, after the initial excitement, participants often experienced some kind of recession, which was coupled with feelings of boredom, being limited or less creative. Dana, after being asked how she experienced the entire capsule closet month she explained, “At the beginning I was very happy, then I was kind of bored, then I got used to it and I liked it.” When it comes to the changes how the capsule closet was experienced throughout the entire month Emma provided a concrete example of what this experienced reminded her of:

“I think the excitement just went into, well, you know how it feels, its just like a relationship with a new guy, at the beginning you are very excited and you have all the butterflies in your stomach and everything, for the first few months, and then after 6 months you are totally used to it and you know,
“everything is like you know each other for many years, yes that’s how I was with the capsule closet.”

4.2.6. Feelings of accomplishment and proudness

Almost all participants at one point experienced some success moments when they felt they have accomplished something and were proud of themselves; whether it was when they created their capsule closet, when they resisted to cheat and wear items which were not included in their capsule closet or when they resisted to buy something new. These feelings arouse in some cases because of compliments or input by friends and family, as for example in case of Anna: “I also heard from some friends now that they do not even notice that I am having such a limited number of items in my closet. It seems they would have expected me to walk around in the same, boring outfit for three weeks now, but obviously that is not the case. So I feel very good about my closet when it comes to my outfits”.

Beth, while she was struggling a lot to create her capsule closet, felt proud when she finally did and saw the finished result: “When it comes to the number of pieces in my capsule closet, I again and again thought: no you don’t need that many tops, you can be okay with less, no you also don’t need that many jackets, and in the end I had 35 pieces and I have to say I was quite proud of myself.” Anna was quite surprised of herself that she did not cheat by wearing items that are not included in her capsule closet. She however admitted that there were some moments where she thought: “Why don’t you just do it? Nobody is going to notice, but then I was like, these are the rules, and this is the capsule closet you are going to wear for this month, I was actually impressed of myself that I didn’t exchange anything.”

Anna also resisted and finished the capsule closet without buying a single item. When asked to talk about how it was for her not to buy anything while browsing the stores she answered: “I have to say overall it got easier and easier. I remember in the fourth week I was actually so proud of myself for not having bought anything for four weeks so I wanted to continue the project just because I was so proud and I felt so comfortable with not buying anything.” Beth remembered her shopping trip with a friend and a situation where she was quite close to buying something.

“You know I saw these pair of white jeans and I was thinking that now for the summer they would be perfect. But I don’t need them right now because its not summer, and first I want to check how many white jeans I already have at home, so I just walked by and didn’t buy them, and it felt good, it felt really good not to get out my wallet and just leave it in my bag.”

Beth even remembered the entire shopping trip as “a great day and I was very very proud of myself that I didn’t buy any clothes.” She added, “After a few weeks you don’t even bother anymore about shopping and all of these clothes.” Claire also described how close she was to purchase a clothing item in a store but resisted in the last second.

“I was in H&M and I had these trousers in my hand, and they were colorful and had this pattern that is very in right now, so I was thinking: This is nice to have! Because I don’t have something like that yet. Then I was like: No you are doing
the capsule closet right now, this is a strict rule, you are not going to buy that, maybe I can buy it after the capsule closet project. Then I thought you don’t need it, you have a lot of trousers, you shouldn’t need it. Then I thought maybe I go to the lingerie section because lingerie is not part of the capsule closet, maybe I find something there and of course I found something there, and I was at the cashpoint with the thing and then I thought: No, this is also cheating. I really should not buy it, and I was really struggling with saying yes or now, what should I do, and then I really said loudly. No! and then I put it away. And I walked out of H&M and I was really proud of myself that I didn’t buy anything. And I felt even better not buying it than I would have if I had bought it.”

4.2.7. Learning experience

When participants were asked how they have experienced the capsule closet month, all participants said that they have experienced it as a kind of learning experienced that has taught them something more about themselves. Emma said that what changed is, “The way I perceive clothes and how I care about them, through the capsule closet I have to say that it definitely made me aware of some things, I definitely purchase things way more carefully, way way way more, and I am proud of that.” Through the capsule closet all participants experienced some kind of personal growth. These were gained by realizations about their past habits and behaviors with regards to closets, clothing and consuming as well as an increased awareness about their past, current and future behavior. Anna for example realized that the excitement she experienced in the past when buying clothes actually did not last that long.

“The shopping process compared to before changed a lot because before I also remember when I bought something, and I did that a lot, fashion items, once a month, maybe twice a month…I wasn’t so happy about it, I wasn’t…I bought it, I mean the moment I bought it, I was happy and getting excited, but that excitement seriously, how to say, only… took until I wore that piece the next day for the first time and then it ended up in my closet where it got run over by all the other pieces. So I just forgot about it again and that moment I wasn’t excited about it anymore because that moment I had so much and then I had one more thing added to the already big amount of things I already own. And now I feel, if I bought something now, and I thought about it for a long time and I really feel it’s a good addition I feel I am going to be much more happy and I also feel I am not going to have this, how to call it, bad conscious, when you feel bad about buying something.”

Furthermore Anna said: “I feel like I found my own style much more and I and I feel like I am more independent from trends and what other people tell you. I do not feel like buying anything that is promoted as ‘new trend’ or ‘spring trend 2016’ which usually caught me easily in front of shop windows.” Similarly, Beth described how her interest in buying decreased over the weeks: “After four weeks the interest in shopping, online shopping and catalogues becomes less, I can even go through the shops and can say to myself: I don’t need these things, its nice but I wont wear it anyway. I also realized that I have more time
for more important things.” Also Claire talked about how the capsule closet helped her to see things differently and from another perspective:

“I realized that I do not need that many clothes, in a brutal way, I mean I don’t have that much, I mean I don’t have that many garments, but in the end it, it was hard to realize that you really don’t need that many clothes, how this whole society thing today has changed how you’re thinking that you need so many garments…”

Due to the fact that participants’ capsule closets included considerably less items than their old closets did, they also had to wear items more frequently. While the frequent wearing of an item was experienced as boring or was connected with a feeling of being less creative it also had an advantage. Anna for example stated:

“The more I wear a certain item, which I obviously do more with a capsule closet, so I don’t have that many pieces to chose from, so I wear things more often, I feel like I get a better connection to it, not connection that’s maybe the wrong word, I feel like I appreciate the thing more because I see how versatile it is and I do more with it, I wear it in other situations.”

She added that she feels that the longer and more often she wears an item “The more I appreciate that item because it feels more like “mine” or more “me”, if that makes sense.” While usually the frequent wearing of an item makes some people feel uncomfortable, Anna actually said: “I see myself wearing one and the same sweater for 3 days in a row without feeling uncomfortable.” Also Beth experienced a change when it came to her appreciation for her clothes: “I have to say that I engage with my clothes a lot more than I did before I started the project, I feel, now, I kind of dress more diverse, my outfits look tidier, more put together and not as boring as in the past.” Beth also explained how the capsule closet did not only change her awareness towards clothes but other consumer goods.

“It’s incredible how my awareness not only towards clothes changed but also towards food and decorations, I don’t need more decorations because the house is already full, and why do I need 20 flower pots in the garden? 3 are also enough, the garden looks nice enough, all of these things are more or less disposables that you throw away later anyway. Now I really say to myself that I didn’t want to do this anymore. I also do other things in my free time now, I clean the house because this also makes it look nice, I go for a walk with the dogs, I clean the garden instead of buying new things for it.

Claire on the other hand surprised with this comment: “Even though I liked it to have less things to decide what to wear I also missed the familiar crisis I sometimes had, not knowing what to wear. I liked the changing of outfit’s even though you always end up with those things you usually wear and probably would be anyway in your capsule closet. But that’s also something I realized which applies for this one as well: You always want what you don’t get now.” After asking her how she experienced her first day without the capsule closet and back to her old closet she laughed and admitted:
“Yeah that was a funny day, because I actually didn’t know what to wear, I had a look into my closet and I actually picked something of the capsule closet. Because now I have these combinations and I felt great in the combinations and it was so easy. So...and I looked through the rest of my closet and I was...yeah...overwhelmed. It was so easy before. And I was thinking: Well, I just wear it again!”

Dana experienced the same, after changing back to her old closet she said, “Now that the capsule closet is over and I have my old closet back I am thinking again: what should I wear? Because it’s too much. I am wearing the same things all the time basically.”

### 4.3. Key findings

Table 4 provides a clear and comprehensive overview of the essential themes and key findings, which were presented in detail above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Essential theme</th>
<th>Experienced when</th>
<th>Talked about by whom</th>
<th>Talked about by how many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined</td>
<td>At the start and during the first capsule closet week</td>
<td>Beth, Claire, Dana, Emma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feeling relieved and satisfied</td>
<td>Throwing out non-essential clothes</td>
<td>Beth, Claire, Emma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Looking at finished capsule closet</td>
<td>Anna, Beth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a limited number of clothes</td>
<td>Anna, Claire, Dana, Emma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No shopping</td>
<td>Beth, Dana</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experiencing struggles and challenges</td>
<td>Capsule closet creation</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Dana</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wearing the capsule closet</td>
<td>Anna, Beth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weather and special occasions</td>
<td>Beth, Claire, Dana, Emma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No shopping</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Claire, Dana</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feelings of guilt and regret</td>
<td>About past consumption behavior</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Emma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>Claire, Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feeling limited, bored and less creative</td>
<td>Feeling limited</td>
<td>Claire, Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling bored</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Dana, Emma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling less creative</td>
<td>Anna, Claire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feelings of accomplishment and proudness</td>
<td>Capsule closet creation</td>
<td>Anna, Beth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not cheating</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Claire</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Learning experience</td>
<td>New buying behavior, new way of dressing</td>
<td>Anna, Beth, Claire, Dana, Emma</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Analysis

The main goal of this chapter is to analyze the key findings presented in Table 4 above in relation to the theories introduced in the theoretical framework. Based on the findings and the analysis the answer to the research question is presented at the end of this chapter.

5.1. Essential themes

As previously mentioned, phenomenological research does not aim to provide cause and effect relationships, neither does it try to generalize research findings. The purpose of phenomenology is to “speak to the nature of a particular phenomenon and describe how it is experienced by a subject” (Gatto, 2009); in the case of this study, how participants have experienced the capsule closet phenomenon. Furthermore, it has to be noted that this study did not prove or disapprove existing theories related to the capsule closet phenomenon, which were presented in the theoretical framework. However, some of this study’s findings were consistent with previous research.

Feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined
Participants often shared their excitement and enthusiasm of this new experience, which was experienced right before the start of the project as well as during the first week. One participant noted, “I was excited like a little child.” They were looking forward for the project to start. This can be related to the fact that for all participants, the capsule closet was a first-time experience, something new that they haven’t experienced beforehand. The word ‘new’ for example ‘a new challenge’ or ‘a new start’ were terms often used when participants explained why they felt so excited. It was noticed that regardless of the different experiences that the participants made throughout the four capsule closet weeks, after the project, participants still remembered their excitement and enthusiasm at the start of the project. Some participants also felt very determined which showed how serious they took this project. They saw the capsule closet not just as a fun activity but also as a challenge to prove something to themselves.

Interesting was how some participants compared the capsule closet with the feeling they have when they go on vacation. One participant recalls, “It was kind of like being on holidays, packing all of your stuff, and then just having these clothes.” When packing for holiday people often have to limit themselves to one suitcase. Therefore, only a fraction of the closet can be brought, which means that often a lot of thought is put into the packing of a suitcase in order to have outfits for all kinds of occasions. Participants experienced the capsule closet similar to this feeling of packing for and going on vacation. However, this initial excitement and enthusiasm lasted for most of the participants until the end of the first week for some until the end of the second. During the second part of the month, all participants started to experience some struggles as well as feelings of boredom and limitation, which are analyzed in more detail in the Essential Theme: Feeling bored, limited and less creative.
Feeling relieved and satisfied

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, a number of researchers have theorized how minimalisms and simplicity and getting rid of non-essentials can positively affect peoples’ lives. The majority of participants in this study experienced the part in which they had to minimize themselves and get rid of clothes they believed are non-essential as a relieving and satisfying experience. One participant recalled: “It makes me feel like I lost some weight of my shoulders.” Another one said: “I feel freer now.” Garðarsdóttir and Dittmar (2012) found that material possessions such as clothes can be a burden for people by negatively affecting psychological well-being. Woodruffle-Burton (2006) states that many purchases today result from impulsive or addictive purchasing. One participant said: “Why did I buy all of these clothes? Many of them are comfort buys, sale-buys or ‘I have to have this because this person also has this’ buys (...).” One can conclude that the closet is a constant reminder of this behavior, which is why the removal of these clothes can cause positive feelings. Therefore, also the look at the finalized and finished capsule closet was experienced as satisfying. Participants experienced the capsule closet as clean, tidy and well arranged which gave them a good feeling. Participants stated how good they felt knowing exactly what to wear which was due to the manageable size of the capsule closet. These findings are consistent with Schwartz (2004) who found that too much choice, which can result from too many clothes, is negative and can result in decision fatigue. This can also explain why some study participants experienced the limited choices provided by the capsule closet as relieving and satisfying. According to them it made decision-making easier. At the same time however, participants experienced the limitation as a struggle that made decisions on what to wear more difficult.

Participants also stated later that they did not miss any of the clothes they threw away, which provides an insight about peoples’ relationship with clothes. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) support these findings by stating that fast fashion items, which are often purchased by young women, are replaced too quickly for customers to build a relationship with.

Even though participants were in general struggling with the capsule closet rule that permits them to purchase new clothes, some participants experienced positive side effects of this rule. The people who participated in this study all like to shop and therefore said that they often struggle with the bills that accumulate at the end of the month. The ‘no shopping rule’ removed the financial burden that results from clothing purchases. One participant reported: “I like that I am not afraid to look in my bank account.” This shows how some participants were struggling with the financial consequences of their shopping behavior. These findings support Garðarsdóttir and Dittmar (2012) who reported that people who put a great focus on materialistic things and therefore purchase frequently struggle with money management and therefore have greater financial worries.

Experiencing struggles and challenges

Another theme in the research findings was the struggles and challenges that were experienced by all of the participants at some point. Right at the start of the capsule closet month participants had to create their capsule closet, which caused feelings of frustration, mostly because participants underestimated the amount of clothes they owned. One participant admitted, “I was simply shocked.” Another one remembered, “I was again overwhelmed.” These findings again support Garðarsdóttir and Dittmar (2012) who state
that clothes can negatively affect well-being. Scheibehenne (2008) explains the quantities of clothes people own nowadays by the fact that people generally prefer large assortments and large varieties. According to Dittmar (2008) these help them with the expression and maintenance of their various identities. Also the emergence of fast-fashion, according to Binkley (2008) and Bauman (2005), helped consumers to purchase products that allow for immediate gratification for people’s temporary identities. When participants created their capsule closet they had to make decisions on which items to include, store or give away which was experienced as stressful. This finding is again supported by Barry Schwartz (2004) who relates the stress experienced by the participants to the paradox of choice, the fact of having to many clothes and therefore too many choices. Even though participants struggled to create their capsule closets it was interesting to notice that none of them seemed to struggle when it came to throwing out clothes, which were considered non-essential.

Furthermore, the study’s participants reported that while not at the beginning of the project but to a later point they were struggling with the wearing of the capsule closet items. The participants’ decision to include basic pieces that are more easily combinable as well as the limited choice of items in the capsule closet caused participants to struggle. The longer participants had the capsule closet for the more challenging they experienced it to mix and match outfits that still represented their different identities. Participants reported that they like to change frequently and to not wear an outfit twice, which aligns with Scheibehenne’s (2008) theory about using clothes to create different identities. Especially when weather conditions changed rapidly or special events occurred, participants experienced struggles to find outfits for their chosen identity. Here it was interesting to see that most participants chose to rather feel uncomfortable wearing clothes not appropriate for the weather condition or event than taking items, which were not included in their capsule closet, which would have been classified as cheating. As can be seen in case of this participant: “I only have really warm winter boots in my capsule closet, I also had to wear these boots during 15 degrees sunshine.”

As previously mentioned the fact that participants were not allowed to shop was experienced as a relief and a challenge at the same time. One participant experienced this rule as “the hardest part”. Participants mentioned that they are used to shop frequently and that shopping is part of their everyday life. One participant admitted, “It’s like a routine, you have the feeling that you have to buy something, just because it was, it was part of my life and I always did it like that.” These findings support Woodruffe-Burton (2006) et al. and Friese (2000) who indicate that people nowadays see shopping as part of their daily routine, a habit or a way to gratify themselves for their daily achievements.

**Feelings of guilt and regret**

There were some moments in which participants experienced feelings of guilt and regret. This could be seen when participants thought about their past buying behavior. One participant said: “Half of my closet was cheap and poor made garments.” In general one got the impression that participants know about the bad impacts of mass consumption and fast-fashion goods, which was a reason for them to participate in this project in the first place. Nevertheless, they still engaged in mass consumption of fast fashion goods. This finding supports Joy at al. (2012) who found that young consumers are very conscious about green values and therefore struggle to balance these values with their continuous need for new
fashion items. Further, as previously mentioned, participants were very determined and took the project quite seriously. Therefore, they felt guilty breaking some of the rules such as wearing an item, which was not included in the capsule closet, or buying new clothing items. Even though participants were not forced to report this behavior to the researcher they felt very comfortable talking about it in the diaries or during the interview. Nevertheless, participants felt bad, almost as if they failed a challenge or lost in a game when they cheated. When participants cheated it was mostly towards the end of the capsule closet month. One participant wore an item, which was not included in her capsule closet. She recalled, “I felt like I cheated on the whole thing.” Another participant bought a clothing item, which in the end made her feel “guilty”. This shows how uncomfortable participants felt about situations and behaviors that were normal to them before they started this project. However, when participants resisted to cheat, they felt very proud and accomplished which is described in more detail in the Essential Theme: Feelings of accomplishment and proudness.

Feeling bored, limited and less creative
As previously mentioned, participants reported that after the initial excitement, there were times when they felt bored, limited and less creative. Even though the limited choice of items in the capsule closet was experienced as positive causing less frustration because outfits were chosen much easier and faster, the limited choice was also experienced as negative. This is again supported by Scheibehenne (2008) who state that choice provides us with personal freedom and autonomy whereas no choice or not enough choice makes us feel unsatisfied and limited. Participants noted that towards the end of the capsule closet month they got tired of the items in their capsule closet. One participant stated: “I do get bored of items!” Participants also felt that they cannot be as creative with their outfits as they usually are because a capsule closet generally includes more basic and easily combinable pieces. Therefore, participants often did not include their favorite colorful statement pieces. In order to bring more excitement into their closets, participants often mentioned their wish to switch some of the items in their capsule closet. One participant even noted that she feels again as if she has nothing to wear, a feeling that most participants have not experienced after they started the capsule closet. She said, “I have nothing to wear. I feel like I already wore all the garments.” The negative feelings of having not enough choice according to the participants can again be ascribed to peoples need to fulfill different identities with their clothes. If the clothes one has do not reflect the identity or the mood one wants to present, one can experience dissatisfaction. This matches with the findings by Guy (2001) who emphasized on the relationship between a poor decision on an outfit and its ability to affect the wearer’s mood. However, the fact that clothes in the capsule closet were worn a lot more often also had an advantage. Some participants felt that it increased the appreciation for a clothing item. One participant said, “I feel like I appreciate the thing more because I see how versatile it is and I do more with it.”

Feelings of accomplishment and proudness
Throughout the capsule closet month participants also experienced some moments in which they felt accomplishment and proudness of what they have achieved. This happened for example when participants finished creating their capsule closet and stood in front of their closet for the first time. Since the creation was associated with struggle and frustration for
some participants they experienced a kind of success moment after the completion of the capsule closet. One participant recalls, “To see how clean, and how nice your closet looks, also how coherent with colors and everything, patterns, that’s a really really satisfying feeling (...).” Participants also felt proud when they resisted breaking a capsule closet rule such as wearing items not included in the capsule closet or buying a clothing item. This finding supports Belk et al. (1997) who state that the acquisition of a consumer good is often connected to positive and happy feelings. However, right after the acquisition people often feel frustration and regret. This can explain why participants felt happier not to purchase than to purchase.

Learning experience
An essential theme that was mentioned frequently by the study participants was also how the capsule closet experience has changed them over the month. It was experienced as a learning experience that taught participants things about themselves and made them more aware and reflect more closely on their past, current and future behavior. One participant said, “I realized that I do not need that many clothes.” Some participants noticed a decreased interest in shopping and stated that they now spend more time with family and friends instead. This finding supports Garðarsdóttir and Dittmar (2012) who state that interpersonal relationships are more closely related to happiness than material possessions. One participant even noticed how the minimalistic thought on clothes has spread to other consumer good categories such as food, technology and decorations. Another participant said that she now dresses more according to what she would define as her style.

5.2. Answer to the research question

The goal of this research was to find an answer to the research question, “What are participants’ lived experiences with capsule closets?” How the participants have experienced the capsule closet is reflected in the seven essential themes.

After analyzing the key results from participants’ diaries and interviews it can be said that participants have experienced the capsule closet feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined at the start as well as during the first capsule closet week. They feel relieved and satisfied throwing out clothes that they thought are non-essential, they were satisfied looking at the result of their finished capsule closet and liked but also struggled with the limited amount of clothes available for wearing. They were satisfied with the financial benefits of the no-shopping rule but otherwise struggled not to shop. They experienced struggles when they had to create and design their capsule closet but not when they had to throw out non-essential clothes. Mixing and matching appropriate outfits and wearing items more often was experienced as struggle but at the same time increased a person’s appreciation for a clothing item. Further, weather and special occasions as well as to not purchase new items challenged them. They felt guilty when they thought about their past consumption behavior or when they broke the rules by wearing an item that was not included in the capsule closet or when they purchased a new clothing item. They felt bored, limited and less creative with the capsule closet, the limited choice of items it included, and the frequent wearing of the more basic items. They felt proud and accomplished right at the
start when they finished the creation and design of their capsule closet as well as when they resisted to cheat and wear an item which was not included in the capsule closet or purchased a new clothing item. They experienced the capsule closet as a learning experience that taught them more about themselves and their buying behavior.

Overall it can be said that participants experienced the capsule closet similar to a roller-coaster ride having its ups and downs. Ups were felt when participants were excited, relieved, proud or learned something. They felt down when they experienced struggles, felt limited or guilty. In the end all of these ups and down that were experienced throughout the month make up the capsule closet experience. In the end every participant learned something about himself or herself, no matter if that means they liked or disliked the capsule closet or if they would do it again or not. There was not an all-positive or an all-negative experience and each experience was in itself unique.
6. Discussion

Based on the previous analysis chapter and the answer to the research question, this chapter provides insights into this study’s contributions as well as limitations.

6.1. Research contributions

This study provided contributions to both knowledge and methodology. The purpose of the study was to increase the understanding of lived capsule closet experiences and thereby contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of minimalist lifestyle concepts; which was achieved by this study. Further, this study provided new insights into a trending and contemporary issue in the society concerning minimalist lifestyle concepts. By researching issues of new research areas and by building literature for this subject this study provided significant contribution to knowledge.

Furthermore, this study can be regarded as contributing to methodology; since to the knowledge of the researcher, a phenomenological study on capsule closets hadn’t been undertaken before. Phenomenology even though it exists for years and is mainly used in nursing research is an underestimated research approach in consumer studies. This study contributed by exploring how a phenomenological methodology can be used in consumer related studies and how it can be used in the capsule closet context. In this study, a phenomenological research philosophy contributed to the acquisition of valuable insights about consumer data by proposing a new approach to the acquisition of this data through qualitative research. The phenomenological methodology was able to provide a much-needed perspective on the human lived experience that is of such relevance in consumer studies. Therefore, this study encourages the field of consumer research to consider phenomenology as an essential component due to its focus and insights on the complexity and wholeness of human experiences. Further, phenomenological research is usually not undertaken in combination with an experiment. This study showed how a phenomenological methodology combined with an experiment can be used if study participants with the needed knowledge and experiences are not available.

6.2. Research limitations

As with any kind of research, also this study has limitations. Phenomenological research even though it is a great way to collect rich and in-depth information has its weaknesses. Findings in phenomenology, as above noted, do not provide insights in what led up to an experience, what outcomes and consequences the experience might have for the individual and what the concomitants and other factors associated with the experience are. Phenomenology focuses on what was experienced without asking why. Further, the choice to use snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method, might have limited the research due to sampling bias. Even though phenomenological studies are known for their small sample size, more participants might have provided more versatile insights as well as allowing for some generalizability. Furthermore, the use of Skype interviews instead of face-to-face resulted in issues that might have affected the interview outcome. During one
occasion, a participant’s flat mate walked in and was present for about five minutes. Another time, Internet connection problems impacted the quality of the Skype interview. In addition, capsule closets are usually done for one season (3 months) and not for one month, as it was the case in this study. A longitudinal study that would have researched participants’ experiences with the capsule closet over a longer period (e.g. 3 months) might have resulted in an experience more similar to the actual capsule closet experience. Additionally, due to the fact that participants participated in a capsule closet experiment they might have felt more obligated or watched which could have influenced their lived experiences. This also raises the question if one should include an experiment in these kinds of research studies. The outcome of this study might have changed by not interviewing first-time capsule closet users but participants who have already done a capsule closet. Since phenomenological studies are usually undertaken by collecting data from participants who have already experienced a specific phenomenon.
7. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the research and shows that the purpose of this study was fulfilled. Future research indications suggest next steps in the area of capsule closet research.

The reason out of which this thesis topic emerged was the focus and attention on what fashion and textile companies do wrong, what problems they have and what they can do to contribute to a more sustainable world by changing their supply chains and technologies and the impression that consumers are kind of left out in this change to a more sustainable world. Minimalist concepts such as the capsule closet focus on the consumer rather than the fashion companies as a power of change for a more sustainable world. Studying and researching these minimalist lifestyle concepts, such as the capsule closet, and how they are experienced by consumers provided valuable insights into further research on how these concepts can be used by consumers, organizations or fashion and textile companies to contribute to a more sustainable world.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to provide a better understanding of the capsule closet experience by capturing and describing the phenomenon as it was lived by the study participants. Answering the research question, which provided the seven essential themes that made up the participants’ lived capsule closet experiences, fulfilled this purpose. These essential themes were 1) Feeling excited, enthusiastic and determined; 2) Feeling relived and satisfied; 3) Experiencing struggles and challenges; 4) Feelings of guilt and regret; 5) Feeling limited, bored and less creative; 6) Feelings of accomplishment and proudness; 7) Learning experience.

It has to be noted that this study did not come to a firm conclusion, but rather aimed to provide initial research and point out to implications or ways to further study the capsule closet concept. In this sense it is important to further continue research in this area and ask questions about how people experience minimalist lifestyle concepts and to further research and learn about these experiences from the viewpoint of those who have lived them. As previously mentioned, no qualitative research about people’s experiences with minimalist lifestyle concepts such as capsule closets were found. Therefore, my hope was that this research would draw attention to this topic and will help to start to fill this gap. With this research future researchers have the chance to construct a more accurate picture of lived capsule closet experiences.

Again this study was just a start that hopefully is the basis for further research that focuses not on what we think but learn from those who have actually experienced it.

7.1. Future research

As previously mentioned this research is a starting point; it was a first step to gather information to better understand the capsule closet phenomenon. The findings of this research show that this study has implications for research, associations and institutions concerned with minimalist consumption, consumers as well as fashion and textile companies.
These research findings inspire a variety of new studies that are interested in how capsule closets can actually change consumer behavior and how it can change not only in the short but also long term which has implications for consumers as well as companies. Since this research did not try to answer ‘why’ questions, it could be interesting to further research what factors (e.g. participants background, social environment or education) led up to the capsule closet experience. Furthermore, this study’s findings encouraged research to optimize or change the capsule closet concept to make it more efficient and effective. During the interviews and diaries participants often mentioned ideas on what would make the concept better (e.g. being allowed to purchase one item per month, make a trial capsule closet week, lengthen capsule closet to 3 months etc.). Additionally, it can be interesting to research ways so that companies can use the concept (marketing strategies, store concepts etc.). A variety of start-up businesses that are concerned with minimalism and sustainability already picked up the capsule closet concept and used it as a business idea (e.g. the brand Vetta). Moreover, it would be interesting to know more about the psychology and behavioral theories behind the minimalistic way of thinking of why less is more because research in this area is rather rare.
8. References


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9. Appendices

I. Capsule closet handbook

The Capsule Closet Booklet
Guidelines and information material
Thank you for participating
General information

It is important for you to know that there are only a few requirements and rules on how to do the capsule closet in this study. The reason for this is that this should be your personal experience. You are free to decide on how to use and interpret the concept of capsule closets for yourself and make this to your own unique experience. The idea is to make this concept work for your personal lifestyle, interests and preferences. This means that you can decide for yourself how many items to include into the capsule closet (but remember: less is more), what kind of clothing items to include or exclude (are shoes, bags and outerwear going to be part of the capsule closet?), what to sell, give away or store. Remember that mistakes are allowed and are part of the process and that there is no perfect closet. So use the mistakes you make to learn for the future. Feel free to continue the capsule closet after the study.

Your goal should be to make this experience as meaningful, considerate but also as fun as possible. This should not be seen as a competition but as a challenge for yourself. This means that you should consider the goal of this concept and the fact that this capsule closet only lasts for one month when designing your capsule closet. Feel free to inform yourself and get inspired by online bloggers and articles.

In the following, I will provide you with the most common capsule closet guidelines. I would like you to read the following information in order to get a basic idea on what a capsule closet is, how to start and what requirements you have to fulfill. So please study this booklet carefully since it provides you with most of the information needed to start and go through with this experience.

Feel free to research and check whatever information you can find and that interests you besides the one provided by me. Please contact me if there should be any questions or misunderstandings.

Giuliana Heger
Phone: +46 7000 666 25 (also via WhatsApp)
Email: giuliana.heger@gmail.com
It is important for you to know that there are only a few requirements and rules on how to do the capsule closet in this study. The reason for this is that this should be your personal experience. You are free to decide on how to use and interpret the concept of capsule closets for yourself and make this to your own unique experience. The idea is to make this concept work for your personal lifestyle, interests and preferences. This means that you can decide for yourself how many items to include into the capsule closet (but remember: less is more), what kind of clothing items to include or exclude (are shoes, bags and outerwear going to be part of the capsule closet?), what to sell, give away or store. Remember that mistakes are allowed and are part of the process and that there is no perfect closet. So use the mistakes you make to learn for the future. Feel free to continue the capsule closet after the study. Your goal should be to make this experience as meaningful, considerate but also as fun as possible. This should not be seen as a competition but as a challenge for your self. This means that you should consider the goal of this concept and the fact that this capsule closet only lasts for one month when designing your capsule closet. Feel free to inform yourself and get inspired by online bloggers and articles. In the following, I will provide you with the most common capsule closet guidelines. I would like you to read the following information in order to get a basic idea on what a capsule closet is, how to start and what requirements you have to fulfill. So please study this booklet carefully since it provides you with most of the information needed to start and go through with this experience. Feel free to research and check whatever information you can find and that interests you besides the one provided by me. Please contact me if there should be any questions or misunderstandings.

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Common search terms
- Capsule closet
- Capsule wardrobe
- Lean closet

Capsule closet history
Capsule closets date back to the 1970s when London boutique owner Susie Faux first created the term 'capsule wardrobe'. According to her, "The basic idea is simple: by building a capsule wardrobe you will buy fewer clothes of a higher quality that you will wear more often. You will look and feel confident and successful because the quality will show and because you know that the overall look works". Her ideal capsule closet consisted of fewer than a dozen items including jackets, skirts, pants, blouses, sweaters, dresses and accessories. Later in 1985 Donna Karen revived capsule closets when she took the concept to the USA with her first line called 'Seven Easy Pieces'. Nowadays, capsule closets received momentum with bloggers such as Caroline Rector from un-fancy.com, Project 333 by bemorewithless.com or the famous article "Why I wear the same to work every day", by Matilda Kahl.

Capsule closet goal
To live with a small, high quality wardrobe, and still have enough to wear, impeccable style and plenty of options for any occasion without owning excessive items of clothing and accessories

Useful websites
- Un-fancy.com
  www.un-fancy.com
- Project 333 by bemorewithless.com
  bemorewithless.com/project-333/
- Matilda Day
  www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a10441/why-i-wear-the-same-thing-to-work-everyday/
- Thekardiablog.com
  http://www.thekardia.com/2015/04/capsule-wardrobe-the-beginning/
5 General rules

Below are some useful guidelines widely given for creating a capsule closet.

1. Choose a color scheme. This would typically involve choosing one or two base colors that go with everything, such as black, white, brown, grey, or navy. Items such as trousers, handbags or coats would be bought in shades of these colors, so that they can be put with anything else in the wardrobe. After choosing the base colors, choose one or two accent colors, which are brighter than the base colors, and co-ordinate with each other. These would typically be used for items such as tops, dresses, or accessories; once a color scheme is established, all the items in a wardrobe should be interchangeable, as the color of the pieces always complement each other.

2. Consider your body shape. Some cuts of clothing are more flattering than others; for instance, stylists often advise that women with wider hips wear cap sleeves, as they make the shoulders appear wider, and more proportionate to the hips. If the items of clothing chosen are flattering, the wearer is more likely to want to keep them in their wardrobe.

3. Consider your complexion. As with cuts of clothing, some colors are more flattering than others, to both skin tone and body shape. If the colors are well chosen, then the items are more likely to remain in favor.

4. Choose classic shapes and patterns. While some cuts and patterns of clothing go in and out of fashion, others are considered ‘classic’ because they do not date. It is wise to choose classic pieces for a capsule wardrobe, as the wearer intends to keep them for a number of years.

5. Choose high-quality fabrics. As the idea of a capsule wardrobe is to own a few items of clothing that can be worn different ways, individual pieces get lots of wear. Therefore, it is a good idea to choose clothing that is well made and continues to look good despite wear.
A step-by-step guide

Please use this step-by-step guide to start your capsule closet.

1. **Pick a number**...  
   and limit your capsule closet to that number. Decide what clothing items you want to include or exclude (e.g. shoes, bags and outerwear). This is an important step, which should be well thought through. Pick a number that considers your lifestyle, that makes you feel comfortable and good but that challenges you. There is no right or wrong but if you cut down the number of pieces in your closet from for example 50 to 40 you might overthink if this really is a capsule closet. In the end remember, this capsule closet is for one month only.

2. **Empty your entire closet**...  
   and lay out all of your clothes and accessories on the floor.

3. **Try on every piece**...  
   and sort each item into one of the following three piles.

4. **Make a 'yes' pile**...  
   and put these items back in your closet. These items are pieces that you love and that you would wear right now, they fit, they are right for your lifestyle, easy to mix and match and you feel comfortable and confident wearing them.

5. **Make a 'no' pile**...  
   and donate, swap with a friend or sell the items that are broken, do not fit anymore, are not your style or that you have not worn in a very long time.

6. **Make a 'maybe' pile**...  
   and include items that you have not worn but that have sentimental value or that were very expensive and you can not say goodbye yet. Also include items that you love but that do not fit the season (e.g. Wool coat in summer). Put these items in a box and store them under your bed or in the garage (somewhere out of your closet and out of your sight). You might use these items in your next capsule closet if you decide to continue after the month of March.

7. **Fill your closet with the 'yes' pile**...  
   and assess what is left in your closet.

8. **Wear the capsule closet**...  
   for one entire month. Try not to change your initial capsule closet if you do not really feel you have to.

9. **Do not shop**...  
   for one month and use the time and the money to hang out with your loved ones.
Your duties :)

Please remember that it is important for me to gain as many insights of your capsule closet experience as possible in order to make this research reasonable.

1. Approximately one week before the 1. March inform yourself about capsule closets and read the booklet

2. Go through with the step-by-step guide before the 1. March so that your capsule closet is ready by then

3. Start the capsule closet on 1. March

4. After each week (preferably every Sunday) you write around one A4 page about the experiences that you have made during the week. At the start of each week I will provide you with some questions that should guide the content of your diary post. But please feel free to talk about everything that you feel you want to mention. Please use the weekend to reflect on your experience and write the diary. Remember to be as honest, specific and detailed as possible.

5. Do the capsule closet until at least 31. March.

6. At the end of March I will contact you to arrange an interview.

7. Do not forget to have fun :) 

Don't hesitate to contact me if you should have questions.
Thank you very much for participating.
II. Consent form

Participant consent form
Thank you for your interest in participating in this study conducted by me, Giuliana Heger, as a part of my master thesis for The Swedish School of Textiles.

Research topic
An exploration of the capsule closet experience

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences that participants make when doing a capsule closet and therefore will explore the following question: “What has been your experience with the capsule closet?”.

Study procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would like to ask you to do the following things:

You are asked to do a capsule closet for the month of March 2016 (1.03 - 31.03.2016). During the month of March you will have to take a photograph of your outfit every day of the week and send it to me as soon as possible. Furthermore, you are asked to write a diary entry once a week. In the diary you will be asked to write about what you have experienced during this one week. Diary entries as well as photographs will be made anonymous in the final report.

At the end of the month you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face or Skype interview. During this interview you will be asked questions about what it was like to do a capsule closet. Interviews can range from 1 hour to 2 hours and will be conducted sometime between the 1st and 15th of April 2016. With your permission, the interview will be recorded by a digital recording device and then transcribed to written form. All transcripts will be confidential, meaning that your real name will not appear anywhere in the final report.

For the second part of the research, you will be asked to read over the written description of your experience. This will provide you with the opportunity to add and/or make changes to your story and see if the transcript truly captures what is was like for you to do a capsule closet. A final copy of the report will also be made available to you if you are interested in receiving it.

Participation and withdrawal
You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study.

Consent
Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

As there is little to no research done regarding experiences of capsule closets, your participation will be very helpful.

Participant name:
Signature and Date
III. Interview guide

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. During this interview I want you to talk about what it was like to do the capsule closet. I do have some broad questions so feel free to talk about anything that you want to about your capsule closet experience. You can stop the interview at any time. You can also refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study. The interview is anonymous.

Are you comfortable if I record this interview?

Interview questions:

• **Lead question:** In as much detail as possible, what was it like for you to do a capsule closet?
  o How have you experienced: different steps, sorting out, the finished capsule closet, no shopping
• Tell me what it was like for you the first day of the capsule closet project?
• What is a normal day for you like now that you have the capsule closet?
• How did you feel with your outfits during the day?
• Has your experience changed in the past 4 weeks?
• Now that you have done a capsule closet, suppose I am debating of doing a capsule closet. What would you tell me it will be like?

• That is all of the questions I have. Is there anything else you would like to share that you didn’t have change to speak about?
IV. Diary questions

Week 1 (01.03-06.03.2016)

1. What does the capsule closet concept mean to you?
2. How would you describe your own capsule closet to a friend?
3. How have you experienced your first week with your capsule closet (talk about your mood, feelings, emotions etc.)?

Week 2 (07.03-13.03.2016)

1. In as much detail as possible how have you experienced this week with your capsule closet? (include your mood, feelings, emotions etc.)
2. Compare this week’s experience with that of last week.

Week 3 (14.03-20.03.2016)

1. In as much detail as possible how have you experienced this week with your capsule closet? (include your mood, feelings, emotions etc.)
2. How would you describe your closet before it turned into a capsule closet?
3. In as much detail as possible how have you experienced your old closet?

Week 4 (21.03-31.03.2016)

1. In as much detail as possible how have you experienced this week with your capsule closet? (include your mood, feelings, emotions etc.)
2. If you could do the capsule closet all over again, what would you change?
3. Are you planning to continue the capsule closet after this study? If yes, why? If no, why?