NEW FASHION MINIMALISM IN AN AFFLUENT SOCIETY:
– A PARADigm SHIFT?

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Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

Leonardo Da Vinci
Abstract
During the last several years, a fast growing interest in minimalist chic has been observed among fashion bloggers around the world. Many of them mention being tired of trends, a shift to inner values and a desire for more simplicity as a moving cause.

Buying behaviour that is assumed to be sustainable requires a paradigm shift away from unbridled consumerism towards more mindful consumption. Understanding the current minimalist trend is a key to determining if in fact a paradigm shift is taking place, since that would have direct relevance for future fashion business models.

This research aims to research and identify the motivations behind the changed way of dressing. It is discussed whether the new aesthetic is an indicator of an actual cultural shift. Finally, real minimalism is differentiated from the phenomenon of “faux-minimalism”. Specific attention is paid to the question whether a more simplistic wardrobe can lead to emotional liberation and increased happiness.

30 fashion blogs associated with minimalist style were observed to gather data that can give insights into the motivating causes for the phenomenon. To answer further questions, eight bloggers were interviewed. The gathered data from both observations and interviews was analysed and showed that the main reasons for minimalist style are both practical as well as emotional. On one hand, the bloggers cited limited space and finite financial resources. On the other hand, they discussed a desire to live a decelerated, simpler, more “authentic” life that prioritizes “being” rather than “having”.

Keywords:
Minimalism, Sustainability, Paradigm Shift, Having and Being, Trend, Blogs, Concept Wardrobe, Flourishing, Social Media, Decluttering
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1 Introduction

The thesis describes the current minimalist fashion trend among bloggers from high-income industrial countries and its significance for sustainable for a sustainable consumption behaviour.

1.1 Area of Research

Ephemerality, innovation and hyper-individualism are dominating today’s digitally interconnected society of consumption. The establishment of social media platforms has made fashion changes faster than ever before (Abnett, 2015). Trends surface and expire overnight, and huge financial and temporal investment is necessary for fashion followers to keep up with the dernier cri.

Illustration 1

Minimalism isn't just a fashion trend for me it's honestly a life changing experience. minimizing my life has been the best decision I've made in quite a while.

Image and quote: griztriz.blogspot.com

Despite or perhaps directly because of this escalating development, an increasing interest in minimalist chic has been observed across the blogosphere for the last two years. The dimensions of the aesthetic movement are impressively reflected on the fashion, culture and
community website Lookbook.nu, where bloggers can post their outfits and rate each other. Having a user base of over 50,000 individuals worldwide (Lookbook, 2015), it is a powerful tool to observe niche trends as well as major shifts. Looking at the 100 highest rated outfits of the last twelve months, more than one third of them catch the eye and can be described as very simplistic, with mainly non-colours such as black, grey, white, cream and nude. Judging from the user profiles, the affinity to simplistic outfits is geographically wide spread. Adherents of that style can mainly be found in Central and Northern Europe, North America, Australia and Eastern Asia, but occasionally even in South Africa and Latin America, where traditionally colours and patterns are highly appreciated and popular. With an age range between approximately 15 and 35, minimalist outfits seem to be a common denominator for the millennial generation.

Illustration 2

Sometimes I just am really in the mood for less.
Have less on my mind. Wear less.
Have less. Think less.
Image and quote: lovelybylucy.com

Innumerable bloggers who formerly seemed eager to be dressed in colourful, patterned, physical and up-to-date outfits, have suddenly turned towards a clean, simple aesthetic. The new style is not only characterized by unobtrusive colours, but also by the lack of
embellishment. If patterns are used, they are mostly simple, geometrical and abstract. With clean cuts and plain materials, the garments are androgynous and simplistic yet speak a sophisticated visual language. Just a few or no accessories are used to avoid distraction. Materials range from ordinary cloth to seemingly futuristic materials such as neoprene rubber and foil. Wearing comfort seems to be a central aspect in design and compilation of the outfits.

The photographic backdrop, once mainly shabby-chic dominated indoor situations, parks or neighborhood streets, have changed into brick- or concrete walls and abandoned industrial estates. With an almost art gallery-like ambience of sobriety, rectangular structures and untreated surfaces complement the plain garments. Recurrently the images resemble an urban dystopia that is strangely comforting in its serenity, a science fiction world of achromia.

Illustration 3

Possibilities of basics always excite me.
Non colors black, white and grey are always appropriate, never boring, never outdated.

Image and quote: love-aesthetics.blogspot.se

Noteworthy is not only the changed visual approach, but also the apparent attitude many bloggers have started to communicate through their posts. It seems to be a consensus that increased freedom is aspired through a simplified wardrobe. Non-colors increase the amount of possible matches and therefore fewer purchases are necessary. Values other than external appearance move into focus, the beauty of being nothing special seems desirable. Plain yet
tasteful clothes direct the attention to the wearer, enhancing and accentuating the personality instead of distorting it. The artificial needs created by marketing strategists seem to be exposed, and formerly eager trend followers try to escape the hamster wheel of novelty.

In contrast to the blog posts that may be indicative of a paradigm shift, quite a few bloggers seem to adopt an aesthetic of faux-minimalism. In spite of explicitly wanting to liberate themselves through simplifying their wardrobe, photographs of new outfits are posted nearly every day, featuring monochromatic basics that adopt the metonymy of authentic minimalism. So the amount of the purchased items gets by no means smaller, and simplicity is merely used as a stylistic device. This development has been detected by mass-market retailers such as Zara H&M and Asos, all of which have jumped onto the bandwagon with minimalistic collections and limited editions. Thus, minimalism has also been transformed into a mainstream fashion trend that is flooding the shelves. In the course of this research, it is analysed what keeps faux-minimalists from complying with their own ideals and under which conditions genuine minimalism can be realized.

1.2 Blogs as Social Indicators and Influencers

Blogs, image-heavy online diaries of varying editorial quality, have risen to a new mass medium over the last decade. As a source of information and inspiration, online bloggers today are in direct competition with established publications such as magazines and newspapers (Amster, 2008).

While many bloggers started writing about their interests as a leisure activity, an increasing number have turned commercial and become financially sound via advertisements and sponsorships. Hence, new high-quality content can be released on a daily basis, a frequency that traditional publications cannot keep up with (Carlson, 2009). Mirroring the journey of video site YouTube, which was once ridiculed as a repository of low-grade clips uploaded by amateurs but transformed into a polished and professional platform, many blogs now represent a respectable form of journalism (Kabadayi, 2014).

Recognizing the high viral marketing potential, brands make use of blogs as a seemingly more authentic and trustworthy source of information (Khodadad, 2010). The BlogHer Women and Social Media Study (2014) indicates that 78 percent of American females are visiting blogs
on a regular basis, with 20 percent feeling encouraged to purchase promoted items. Furthermore, almost half of the readers use blogs as a source to discover trends and ideas, and 35 percent search for authentic descriptions of products they consider buying. In search for authenticity and “realness”, the younger generations identify with their favourite bloggers and take them as a benchmark (Chai and Kim, 2010).

But blogs do not only have great significance as influencers, but also as indicators. Unfolding their thoughts, feelings, interests and desires to the public, the immense amount of daily blog posts can be seen as a reflection of the social climate in a society. The blogosphere, due to its viral nature, makes lingering interests and concerns apparent. If a blog hits a nerve, it is going to be spread, to be shared, and imitated. (Kopp, 2014). Thus, blogs can play an important role in trend forecasting. If the same message can be seen on more and more blogs, the probability of it developing into a trend is fairly high. This type of trend development can even be observed across various disciplines. The digital art phenomenon “Seapunk” (Detrick, 2012) is a good example for how a trend started on graphic design blogs, then influenced fashion and finally ended up as a new musical genre with its own theme parties and clubs. Spotting a movement like this can provide the observer with the awareness of a trend long before the latter becomes mainstream.

Connecting mainly young people around the globe, blogs can function as the mouthpiece of a generation. Not only can blogs indicate trend changes, they are themselves an epitome of a cultural shift. The new form of word-of-mouth communication, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Cheung and Lee, 2012), has become an important factor in shaping purchase behaviour and public opinion. The blogosphere is a source for new digital collectives based on shared interests. In this environment, individuals with a collective motive share their thoughts for the sake of the entire group rather than personal return (Cheoung and Lee, 2012). According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), individuals who identify themselves as part of a collective tend to define themselves through it.

1.3 Minimalism in the Context of the Research

During the long history of fashion, minimalism has repeatedly influenced shapes and colour schemes. Especially the 1980s brought with them a wave of simplification, when Yoji Yamamoto and Comme des Garçons celebrated significant successes with their minimalism-
inspired collections. In the 1990s, fashion was strongly influenced by the demands of successful business women. Calvin Klein and Donna Karan both created signature looks that were characterized by “an indulgence in superbly executed cut, quiet plays of colour tones and clean, strong shape” (Lea, 2014). Today’s minimalism has moved away from the human body as a primary structure and instead shifted to a futuristic, dystopian and digital aesthetic. While in the past, prestigious designers were introducing minimalism to the audience, today it is mainly street style that influences the taste of the general public (Business Insider, 2011).

In the process of this research, two types of minimalism could be observed in fashion. One way for fashion to be minimalist is through style, as mentioned above. Clean shapes, no frills, unobtrusive colors and focus on material instead of embellishment make garments minimalist in an optical sense.

But a wardrobe can also be minimalist in a material sense that it only contains the most essential items, regardless of their style and colour. This second interpretation of minimalism seems to become increasingly popular. Social media movements such as the Six Items Challenge (Labour Behind the Label, 2015), Project 333 (2015) or the Great American Apparel Diet (2015) show material minimalism in practice.

Both types can occur as separate phenomena. An essential-minimalist wardrobe doesn’t necessarily have to be all black, white and grey, and a friend of basic colours and shapes might own a stuffed closet. But there can be overlaps. It is easier to keep the number of garments small if the few items in it match. Optical simplicity facilitates an essential lifestyle with fewer possessions.

In this research, the focus does not lie on minimalists who are only so by consciously reducing their amount of clothes. Instead, the thesis wants to explore the connections between both types. Do bloggers with a minimalist style dress this way to declutter their wardrobe? And is it a conscious process? It might be that the current trend-towards minimalism—is only a visual and ephemeral phenomenon, but blog posts and the sociocultural context, which will both be discussed in later chapters, suggest otherwise.
1.4 Background

Looking at recent bestseller lists such as New York Times Bestsellers, Amazon Bestsellers and Spiegel Bestsellers, literature dealing with simplification and minimalism are in high demand. Ted talks and podcasts as well as magazines on the subject attract a rapidly increasing audience, and even Nobel Prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman suggests that much points to a transition from an economy of having to an economy of being (Kahneman and Krueger 2006) This indicates a lingering dissatisfaction with societal conditions throughout the high-income industrial countries, mainly among the younger generations (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). The importance of restraint is emphasized by various thinkers throughout time. In this thesis, the theories of having and being are discussed as well as concepts of sustainability as a holistic mind shift and approaches of combining ethics and aesthetics.

The simplified wardrobe is a sustainability approach that receives less attention than for instance supply chain improvements or recycling systems. Matching basics reduce the overall number of items needed to create a harmonious outfit. Moreover, plain and timeless outfit are less prone to trend changes. These two aspects combined lead to longer garment lifetimes and less textile waste.

Looking at the recent past, only little or no willingness could be observed among bloggers to stop emulating fads. Promoting essentialism as a lifestyle would have appealed little to most fashion followers. But with the apparent aesthetic change in mind and the openly communicated desire for deceleration and moderation, there might be increased potential to establish a new attitude towards fashion consumption. Fashion, as a cultural and creative force that is highly competent in the areas of communication and change, can contribute to remodeling society and lasting prosperity (Carbonaro and Goldsmith, 2013).

If the idea of minimalism as a purchase pattern can be distributed widely, it would not only lead to sustainability in the sense of decreasing unsustainability, but to consumption in accordance with John Ehrenfeld’s (2013) sustainability-as-flourishing concept. The environmental benefits could likely be accompanied by spiritual growth. Exposure and defeat of artificially induced needs might eventually lead to increased satisfaction and mindfulness, to a paradigm shift towards being instead of having.
Careful analysis of the mindset of the observed cases reveals the motivations and impediments that affect excessive consumption as well as restraint. The outcomes of the research can prove valuable for the establishment of advanced business models with a focus on both environmental and spiritual prosperity.

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of minimalist chic in the blogosphere to see if it is a potential indicator of a shift of society away from having towards being. Another objective is to find out what keeps people who explicitly want to become more essential from reaching their goal in practice. The focus on fashion bloggers, a population group that often has little concern for sustainability in the classical sense, can provide valuable new insights in how to establish a future-oriented shopping behaviour among mainstream consumers.

1.6 Research Gap

While subcultural alternative and sustainable clothing models have been analysed and discussed to a vast extent, little research has yet been done on signs of a value shift in mainstream fashion. The motivational causes behind the current minimalism trend among fashion bloggers are yet unknown, as are the implications and challenges it involves.

1.7 Hypothesis and Research Questions

The minimalism trend observed on blogs is an indicator of a value shift towards more authenticity.

In order to explore this, the following research questions were used:

- What are the moving causes behind the currently popular minimalist aesthetic?
- Is the popularity of minimalism an indicator of a paradigm shift or just an ephemeral trend?
- Why does the phenomenon of faux-minimalism exist?
  - What makes people continue shopping even though they want to stop?
- Does maintaining a simplistic wardrobe increase happiness?
- What Does the Minimalism Trend mean for Sustainability?
2 Philosophical Background

Insights into the socio-cultural benefits of minimalism and simplicity can be gained through exploring the background of today’s economic system, its implications on the western value system and on sustainability. Furthermore, a look at the interconnectedness of ethics and aesthetics in eastern philosophy will shed more light on the intellectual reasons behind stylistic choices.

2.1 Sustainability and Social Paradigm Shift

It is well known that our world in its current state is in acute need of more sustainable consumption behaviour. Having been reduced to a mainly environmental matter in the past, sustainability in a holistic sense has only recently caught the attention of social researchers (Entwistle, 2014). As John Ehrenfeld and Andrew J. Hoffman (2013) discuss in their book “Flourishing”, sustainability can not be achieved by the avoidance of unsustainability, but by a cultural paradigm shift. Practices such as eco-efficient production and fair trade are not reprehensible in themselves, but don’t entail true sustainability-as-flourishing. Only the establishment of a society renouncing consumerism and thereby decelerating the market can lead to prosperity in a long term sense. Ehrenfeld emphasizes the importance of embracing true authenticity to accomplish the shift from a culture of possession to a culture of spirituality and transcendence. The predominance of the Cartesian model in economy must be replaced by the concept of caring. It is this lack of caring and true authenticity in western culture that, according to Carbonaro and Votava (2009), has lead to the increased popularity of “authentic” products. They argue that despite economic professionals still predicting a hedonistic consumer culture in the future, “homo ludens” wishes to escape the inhuman conditions of the consumerist treadmill of artificially created desires. Hoskins (2014) expresses her conviction that the current capitalist model can not be reformed. She points out that in order to improve the global situation, the goal needs to change and not the method.

2.2 Having and Being

Despite the benefits brought about by the Age of Enlightenment, the roots of our society’s spiritual poverty mentioned by Ehrenfeld (2013) can be traced back to that era. Scottish
Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith introduced the term “free market”, which implies the concept of combining purely rational factors to ensure material prosperity, while spiritual aspects are abandoned. A key aspect of Smith’s economic ideas was the conviction that the purpose of markets is to satisfy spontaneous human needs and thus market activity equals satisfaction and well-being (Mcdonald, 1996). This thought is the base for the persistent assumption that consumption leads to emotional wellbeing. The marketing strategies developed in the 20th century added fuel to the fire through the creation of dissatisfaction and never fulfilled desires. In the course of this development, the dialogue between material and immaterial values fell silent (McDonald, 1996) and people attempted to fill the spiritual gap with consumption.

The German social psychologist and humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm (1976) analyses the resulting crisis in his book *To have or to be*. He differentiates between two possible conditions an individual or a society can be in. The “having mode” and the “being mode”.

### 2.2.1 Having Mode

Present-day western societies are dominated by characteristics of the having mode. Purchases are made to enhance one’s ego, and are disposed of after a relatively short period of time only to be replaced by something mostly only seemingly superior. People do not only have proprietary feelings towards material objects, but also towards fellow humans and their feelings. It is the state of mind that is often condemned as “craving” and “coveting” by the major religions. The relationship between the possessor and the possessed is one of deadness and passiveness, since it transforms both of them equally into things. This harmful form of having, which Fromm calls “characterological having”, needs to be distinguished from existential having, which refers to prerequisites necessary for survival such as food, shelter and basic clothing.

### 2.2.2 Being Mode

In contrast to the having mode, which is based on possession, the being mode attaches little importance to material goods. According to Fromm, the being mode is not to be mixed up with asceticism. Ascetics, through their permanent fixation on non-enjoyment, are just as preoccupied with consumption culture as non-ascetics are, they are just reversing the phenomenon. An individual in the being mode is rather uninterested in material possession
because the emotional fulfilment results from being active and searching experiences that are incorporeal as well as from pursuing talents. In his characterization of the “New Man”, Fromm describes him as being willing to give up having for the sake of being, which entails being caring and sharing with others as well as being compassionate and interested.

In a conclusion of Fromm’s work, the economist E.F. Schumacher (1973) is quoted, who compares economics as a raison d’être to alcoholism and drug addiction. Fromm argues that without a paradigm shift from having to being, without renouncing the technocratic view, the dehumanized “having” individual will inevitably turn mad. However, just like Ehrenfeld (2013), he is not without hope and sees a budding value change towards nature, ethics, solidarity and cooperation. He also perceives an increasing display of dissatisfaction with the western social structure. An increasing number of individuals become aware of the depression and emptiness of the having mode. One aspect that is repeatedly pointed out is the necessity of a new, non-theistic, non-institutionalized belief system with an emphasis on the being mode, to stop the vain attempt to fill the spiritual gap with consumption.

Illustration 4
The key characteristics of Having and Being Mode, based on Fromm (1976).
2.3 Correlations between Material Possession and Life Satisfaction

The correlation between possession and life satisfaction is extensively analysed by various researchers in the book “International Differences in Well-Being”, edited by Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener and John Helliwell. Di Tella and MacCulloch (2010) come to the realization that once “basic needs” are satisfied, more wealth and belongings do not lead to an increase in happiness. Using three data sets (individual panel data from Germany, well-being data on over 600,000 Europeans from 1075–2002 and the Gallup World Poll 2005), the study indicates that with a monthly income of more than £1960.00 per capita, satisfaction stagnates and does not change through further material enhancements. Inglehart (2010) conducts in-depth analysis of the factors which contribute to a high degree of satisfaction. According to his research findings, the high level of subjective well-being in Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland) is easily explained. The combination of high income, a functioning welfare system, high social tolerance and stable democratic governments forms a solid foundation for happiness. What is rather surprising is Inglehart’s (2010) observation that Latin American countries feature a level of subjective well-being that is comparable to Nordic countries, while experiencing far less prosperity and democracy. This remarkable circumstance is confirmed by other reports, such as the Happy Planet Index (2015). As a reason, Inglehart (2010) identifies the balance between aspirations and attainment. The typically very spiritual Latin American population is encouraged by their belief system to be content with their situation and not to be avaricious. This supports the assumption that a functioning ethical or spiritual code can lead to just as much or even more life satisfaction than material belongings.

2.4 Ethics and Aesthetics in Traditional Eastern Philosophy

Returning to Erich Fromm’s (1976) chain of reasoning, it is interesting to look at the parallels he draws between the conditions he considers necessary to change human character from having mode to being mode, and the Four Noble Truths that express the basic orientation of Buddhism. Fromm’s four conditions are:

1) We are suffering and are aware that we are.
2) We recognize the origin of our ill-being.
3) We recognize that there is a way to overcome our ill-being.
4) We accept that in order to overcome our ill-being we must follow certain norms of life and change our present life practices.

In comparison, the four noble truths (Samyutta-Nikaya 56.11) go as follows:

1) All temporary things and states are unsatisfying.
2) Yet we crave and cling to these things and states; thereby, we’re continuously reborn.
3) If we stop craving and clinging, we won’t be reborn.
4) By following the Noble Eightfold Path, namely behaving decently, not acting on impulses, and practicing mindfulness and meditation, we can end the unsatisfying state.

Fromm (1976) emphasizes the importance of a belief system for the establishment of the being mode. Due to the similarities between widely non-theistic Buddhism and the being mode as well as the eye-catching parallels between minimalism and Zen aesthetics, it is worth taking a closer look at the connections between ethics and aesthetics in East Asian philosophy.

Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one’s own being (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010). It is the purpose of Zen to provide a framework for overcoming mundane aspirations through the transcendence of comforting but imprisoning beliefs, to attain a higher level of consciousness (Ramírez and Ravetz, 2005). By the avoidance of distractions, awareness and identity forming can take place. The mind is in the centre of Zen philosophy, and to reach Enlightenment, one must pursue a simple and clean lifestyle (Weihua, 2010). Applying the mindset to economics, Zen tries to clarify the conflict between benefit and damage for the human being when it comes to production and consumption. It encourages to take a path between the mundane and metaphysical (Schumacher, 1973).

The Ethics of Zen are inextricably linked with its aesthetics. Chinese landscape painter Qiu Shihua (n.a.) states that “without rendering and decoration, not to please the vision with gorgeous colors and not to move them in pretense”, authenticity must be aspired. Simplicity is preferable to abundance, because it provides space to think. The focus lies on the mind, not on the shape (Weihua, 2010).

Avoiding distraction and aiming at perfect simplicity, Zen aesthetics share common ground with minimalism. Emptiness and simplicity in a Zen sense does not imply simplification, but
a higher state of enhanced beauty. An environment of pure elegance without distracting frills provides ideal surrounding for equanimity and mental growth. The less materialism the more spirituality (Xiaoyi, 2007). Serene, unobtrusive, authentic and clear, Zen avails itself of subdued colour systems ranging from black and white to grey, nude and dark brown while abolishing all functionless detail (Weihua, 2010).

What differentiates these principles from other belief systems is that aesthetics are not dismissed as entirely insignificant or too worldly, on the contrary, refined design is a key factor to fulfilled being. Zen seems to show a way to realize the being mode without asceticism or renunciation of physical elegance.

Illustration 5
Zen inspired sushi set.
Image source: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com
3 Sociocultural Context

Examining the sociocultural context of the current minimalist fashion trend shows up the preconditions from which it emerged, and makes its existence comprehensible.

3.1 Millennial Minimalism

In order to understand whether the current minimalist aesthetic is a reflection of cultural paradigm shift, it is helpful to pay attention to the general mindset of Generation M, young adults with birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. Despite probably being the most educated generation in Western and East Asian history, Generation M is faced with global economic recession, poor career prospects and lack of direction (Altavena, 2012). The result is a conscious frugality and active reconsideration of material possessions and their roles in life (Millennial Marketing, 2010) According to multinational professional services network PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), seventy-two percent of Generation M reconsidered their purchase behaviour due to the effects of the economic downturn (PwC, 2010). With the insight that material prosperity will come at a much higher price than it did for the previous generation, many millennials search for satisfaction in a different direction. Having seen their parents fall victim to downsizing and frequent layoffs in spite of long working hours made them wary of pursuing the same path. “Making a life” is favoured over “Making a living” (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). Repelled by a world in which people are absolutely inundated and bombarded with information, the financially weak generation M seeks for the essential and plain (Millennial Marketing, 2010). What the digital natives really want is a less cluttered and more meaningful life, experience instead of possession and a more balanced life than that of their baby-boomer parents (Graham, 2012).

Cheuvront (2010) states that minimalism spreads through all areas of a young adult’s life these days. One of the most impressive examples he mentions is the iPhone. Being a prime example for clean elegance without unnecessary frills, it is an extremely efficient all-in-one package that has made lots of items redundant. But also social media platforms and online services such as Facebook, Twitter and Google bring pragmatism and simplicity to a whole new level. Even packaging design has taken a step back from an overpowering buy-me look to more subtle communication of essential information.
Understanding this mindset, the appeal of simple garments feels like a natural consequence. A paradigm shift seems to happen among the younger generation, and the indications suggest that the observed style is a symptom of it.

3.2 Boom of Simplicity Guidebooks

A turn towards essentialism is clearly reflected in literature. A vast number of guidance books has been flooding the bestseller lists in recent years.

In his New York Times Bestseller book “Essentialism – the disciplined pursuit of less”. McKeown (2014) combines the concepts of a commensurate work-life balance with the downsizing of possessions. The importance of living by design and not by default, of eliminating nonessentials and of deliberately distinguishing the vital few from the trivial many is the leitmotiv of McKeown’s (2014) work. Essentialism in this context is a systematic approach for determining priorities, which will eventually lead to a meaningful and satisfied state of being.

Also featuring in the New York Times Bestseller List is Marie Kondo’s (2014) work “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing”. While the book’s emphasis lies on tidying and structuring, major attention is dedicated to the disposal of redundant and superfluous items and the concentration on essentials. Kondo (2014) advises to “discard everything that does not spark joy”.

Amazon’s list of best selling self-help books was for a long period lead by Fields Milburn and Nicodemus’ (2011) publication entitled “Minimalism – Living a meaningful life. Having exchanged six-figure corporate careers for a life almost free of material possessions, the authors draw from their pool of experience when they guide the reader towards an authentic and fulfilled life. The book examines why working long hours, wasteful spending habits and ephemeral indulgences inevitably lead to depression, and how removing the excess makes room for more: more time, more passion, more experiences, more growth, contribution and contentment (Milburn and Nicodemus, 2011). With appearances, inter alia at Harvard Business School, Apple, and several large conferences such as SXSW, TEDx and World Domination Summit, Milburn and Nicodemus’ message of restraint has been widely heard.
Remarkable success has also been achieved by British Journalist Lucy Siegle, captivating large audiences with reports on ethical consumerism, sustainability and environmental issues. In her book “To die for” (Siegle, 2011), she focuses on the irresponsible practices of the contemporary fashion world and offers solutions on how to be a “responsible fashionista”. Communicating through successful mass media such as The Observer, Marie Claire, Grazia, Elle, Sky News and BBC, the message of an alternative lifestyle has spread widely into mainstream culture.

With the above selection of representative works just being the tip of the iceberg, it can be said that the subject hits a nerve. The change in attitude points at a lack of meaning and essential values in western society that people are becoming eager to compensate for.

3.3 Minimalist Lifestyle on Social Media

It is hardly surprising that a mindset that mostly appeals to digital natives is spread through various outlets of social media. And the echo is immense. The Facebook page “Becoming Minimalist”, regularly posting advice on a more simple life, records up to 100 new followers every day.

The sustainable little sister of the Ice Bucket Challenge, called Six Items Challenge (Labour Behind the Label, 2015), went viral on the web, inviting people to document how they dress with only six pieces of garments, over a period of six weeks. The same concept, only with a bigger amount of allowed items, is featured in Project 333 (2015). Every season, 33 pieces of garment are allowed in the wardrobe. With the change of the season, systematic replacements must be performed.

A Weight Watchers equivalent for clothes under the name “The Great American Apparel Diet” (2015) motivates its participants to overcome trend addiction as a group. The vocabulary used is strongly reminiscent of actual self-help groups for substance abuse. In a journal article, Wu, et al. (2012) analyse the “Great American Apparel Diet” and provide insight into the internal and external factors that influence consumers to moderate their shopping behaviour. Six general motivational themes were identified by conducting contextual analysis of blog entries: Personal, Lifestyle, Social, Economic, Financial and
Environmental, with Personal Motivation being the most frequently cited theme. The most important internal motivation was found to be a financial one, i.e. the desire to make or save money. Also, the intention to gain control over daily activities and to minimize consumption and dependency is often mentioned by the “Diet” participants. The most powerful external motivations seem to be related to growing environmental awareness and social concerns. Also, the community support that comes with “Diet” participation is highly appreciated.

“30 Days of Mindfulness” and the associated Facebook page is a widely spread task plan that involves getting rid of selected material belongings as well as increasing awareness towards personal goals, time management and mental equilibrium.

That has only been a selection of the many social media projects concerned with essentialism and minimalism. Ranging from large to small and from global to local, these communities are supported by a rapidly increasing audience.
3.4 The Triumph of Plain

It hit the fashion world like a thunderbolt when New York based trend forecasting group K-Hole, notorious for its pioneering essays, proclaimed the era of Normcore (K-Hole, 2013). The prediction that the golden days of openly displayed individualism are numbered and that the future belongs to assimilation and inconspicuousness was first met with disbelief and ridicule, but critics soon had to give in as the truth in K-Hole’s essay became obvious. According to the authors, Normcore’s basic idea is that in the recent past, too much energy has been spent on defining individuality through style. Dropping the pretense and learning to throw oneself into a mainstream aesthetic is the natural consequence of hyper-individualism (Williams, 2014). Lynch and Strauss (2007) agree on the fact that in times of self-promotion via social networks, individualism stops being individual and entails normality as rebellion. A shift back from fashion and trends towards clothes and real craftsmanship is necessary to meet contemporary demands, states Li Edelkoort (Hendriksz, 2015).

With Normcore’s message still being contemplated among the fashion scene, the next key word was not long in coming. Health Goth joined Normcore in 2014. Named after a Facebook page, founders Mike Grabarek and Jeremy Scott define Health Goth as a subculture lifestyle that combines 3D-rendered hi-tech images, sportswear and a futuristic-monochrome aesthetic (Horne, 2014). A strong emphasis of the movement lies on health, meditation, a balanced diet and clean environments. Trend forecasters predict that Health Goth will last because of its simplicity (Beiene, 2015). With over 25,000 likes to date, the unusual combination of simplicity and sports appears to be extremely popular.
Even apart and beyond extreme subcultural movements, there seems to be a desire for plain. Cochrane (2014) states in a Guardian article that “Boring [...] isn't boring anymore. It's exciting. Another source quoted in The Guardian (Cartner-Morley, 2010) elaborates: “Now that outrageous outfits are becoming seen-it-all-before dull, simplicity is the new trump card”. Luxury brand Prada consents and adds: “Simplicity is observed as the ultimate form of perfection” as well as “boring is the new beautiful” (Vogue, 2013).

It is the essence of simplicity, normalness and serenity combined that characterizes all these recent fashion phenomena. This strengthens the hypothesis that the New Minimalism, in whichever form it may come, is the epitome of a paradigm shift.
4 Method

To investigate the incentives, emotions and impediments behind minimalist chic, research was conducted through both observation and interviews.

4.1 Research Approach

With the topic being based on highly varying individual perceptions, observation and analysis of the bloggers’ views and opinions contributes more to an understanding than would the collection of quantitatively measurable data. A qualitative approach leaves room for unanticipated and idiosyncratic outcomes, while ensuring the consideration of small details in a bigger context (Bryman, 2012). The research focus lies on understanding the reality concepts of the observed fashion bloggers as well as the ramifications of purchase behaviour and life satisfaction. The gathered data was then put in relation to the philosophical and sociocultural background, in order to derive an encompassing picture of the case.

4.2 Data Collection Process

Data in this research is defined as observed discourse as well as image material and interview responses. In a first step, I created a database of 30 bloggers associated with minimalist chic, which I mainly discovered through the platform Lookbook.nu. I considered Lookbook.nu a suitable source to find relevant cases, since it is one of the most established and largest platforms for fashion bloggers. The number of 30 was chosen in order to match the limited timeframe, while still being big enough to represent a variety of cases with their different motivations. Statements made in blog posts as well as the frequency with which new outfits are posted were documented for further analysis. After identifying the most informative cases, I conducted interviews with eight bloggers via email. The goal was to get responses from all of the bloggers, but since many of them reacted too late or not at all, the number is eight.

I adapted and altered the interview questionnaire depending to the respective case to get more informative responses, because while some cases quite deliberately chose a minimalist dressing style, others seemed to have done so less consciously, or might even only show traces of the style. Using the same set of questions on such different interviewees would not have lead to informative and satisfying answers.
The complete interviews as well as the documented blog posts and blog addresses can be found in the appendices 10.1 – 10.3.

4.2.1 Performance of Interviews

I chose the semi-structured interview technique to allow the interviewees to respond in an unconstrained and extensive way. This rather informal approach provides the opportunity to ask for more detailed information where necessary and to steer the interview into directions previously unforeseen and unplanned (Bryman, 2012). Formulating the interview questions in a way that encourages full-sentence answers rather than simple yes and no increases the probability of gaining significant insights (Wengraf, 2001). Anonymity was granted in case answers were considered too sensitive to be published with a name.

4.2.2 Selecting Samples for Observation and Interviews

Modal instance sampling (Milton and Rodgers, 2013) was used to gather an appropriate amount of cases. This means that cases were purposefully chosen based on being “typical” for the observed behaviour. Relevant for research are individuals between 16 and 35 years of age, both male and female, representing Generation M (Altavena, 2012), while also being the most blog-using age group (Sysmos, 2010). To be considered for analysis, a blog had to at least partially fulfil the visual criteria described in the introductory text and/or feature blog posts in which minimalism and the motivating cause behind the style is referred to. Even though minimalist fashion bloggers are most likely to be found in Western and East Asian countries, the global nature of blogs implies the possibility of finding relevant samples literally anywhere in the world.

Eight cases among the observed bloggers were chosen to be interviewed. This amount covers a range of different voices while being small enough to investigate each of them in greater depth. As stated before, the goal was to get responses from all 30 bloggers, but that proved to be impossible. Both male and female interviewees were given the chance to express their opinions. The chosen interviewees represent the diversity that exists within the New Minimalism style phenomenon. That is to say that some of the respondents follow the simplicity trend only partially and don’t seem to think much about it, others dedicate their whole blog to the topic as well as holding seminars and write publications. The collection of
such a wide range of opinions helped to highlight commonalities and to get a better understanding of the bigger picture.

4.3 Data Analysis

I summarized the data sets of both blog observations and interviews, to make them more accessible and to add structure to the findings. I scanned the answers for commonalities from which conclusions could be drawn, but also for unexpected discrepancies between blog data and interview responses that could lead to a new insight.

For drawing conclusions from the gathered data it had to be analysed using an adequate method. Aspiration and reality often seem to diverge on minimalist fashion blogs, and despite a declared want for more simplicity, people continue purchasing as usual. Critical analysis of images and written statements is an appropriate way to uncover the divergences between actual behaviour and ideal (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Contradictions could be revealed and explained through focusing on the wording and formulation of blog posts.

4.4 Validity, Reliability and Ethical Considerations

To ensure transparency and traceability, the research approach as well as the data collection techniques have been presented above.

The study’s validity, meaning the correct correlation between data and conclusion (Bryman, 2012), has limitations due to its qualitative nature and limited time frame. The conclusion can not be seen as ultimate evidence, but rather as a confirmation of the theory. However, documentation of responses and findings has been carried out to give the reader an opportunity to reflect critically on the correlation between data and conclusion themselves.

Proving reliability through replication of the study (Lecompte and Goets, 1982) might be possible to a certain degree. If the same questions were asked to similar groups of people within the next months, this could generate overlapping results. But again as mentioned above, since this is a qualitative research, data is highly individual and a perfect copy of the study could never be conducted.
To protect the cases’ privacy, only personal information already provided on blogs is used without being made anonymous. The identities of the interviewees are hidden behind pseudonyms, to give them the chance to respond uninhibitedly and without restraints. The participants were fully informed about the context in which their responses would be used as well as about the purpose of the thesis.
5 Results Of Investigation into the Blogs and Interviews

To give structure to the gathered data from both blog observations and interviews, I classified the information into categories. In the first sections of this chapter, I describe the results of the blog observations, followed by the interviews based on the latter. The blogs are named by their web address rather than by the authors, since some of the blogs have multiple authors or the author is not named.

5.1 Blog Posts: Most Frequent Themes

The observed bloggers mention a variety of reasons for their shift towards more minimalist outfits. I identified the causes most often cited and sorted them by frequency, starting with the largest number.

5.1.1 The Comfort of a Simplified Life

The number one reason for basic and minimalist dressing seems to be the wish for a simplified and more comfortable life. This is reflected in more than one third of the observed blogs. Fake-leather.com as well as love-aesthetics.blogspot.se agree that their new simple clothing style enables them to spend less time in front of the mirror and to “dress up in the dark and still come out victorious” (love-aesthetics.blogspot.com). Black, grey and white just matches and it is unnecessary to spend a lot of thought on getting dressed. Justporsh.com, littleveggierunner.blogspot.com and dejligedays.com all observe that minimalist style decreases the problem of “nothing to wear”. Justporsh.com states:

The complexities of outfits put together by most stylists, bloggers etc can be quite overwhelming. You open your closet to look for what to wear and pick up a pair of jeans and a shirt but you are not ok with it. (...) Most times outfits should be kept simple rather than made complex.

Functionality seems to be of big importance to the observed group. Thefashioncuisine.com mentions that to balance her university life and her blogging activity, she needs to dress comfortably and casually. Love-aesthetics.blogspot.se adds that in her pursuit of functionality,
she does not care about her reader’s expectations. Messagesonanapkin.blogspot.com even describes her outfit as:

_This looks like my mom, just twenty years ago. Back when she was too busy with chasing me down the hallway and forcing me to take the pants off of my head to really care about what she put on in the morning._

Bybrittanygoldwyn.com, gardenista.com and internet-persona.blogspot.se feel like simplicity generally brings “freedom from stress, worry, poor health and bad days in general” (brittanygoldwyn.com) as well as peace and comfort.

### 5.1.2 Authenticity and Visibility of the Real Self

The second most frequently mentioned reason for a minimalist wardrobe is the desire to be more authentic. In this context, the word *authentic* is used in the sense of Kernis and Goldman (2006) – being real, in a natural state, not overly influenced by the opinions of others, true to oneself.

It is repeatedly stated that it is important to the blog authors to wear outfits that leave room for personality. The real self is supposed to be in the centre of attention, rather than an artificial identity created and imposed on the individual by externals. Minimalist-chic.tumblr.com writes:

_For me, minimalism connotes power. When you wear [sic] minimalist attire, you have the power to control what others think about you purely based on you as a person. There are no connotations from colour or unnecessary frills. No one can jump to any conclusions when you give them no clues._

Blog.wantering.com compares outfits to telling a story about oneself. She wants to tell the story in a more simplified way, and feels that she is “more with less”. Similar words are used by oteea-land.com:

_I figured out simplicity was my kind of thing, I realized I loved all silhouettes that bear a minimal, clean, basic feel. I found out you could actually say a lot with just a little,
and I also understood that my style should be all about me, not about what people want to see me wear.

This already leads to another interpretation of authenticity. Many of the observed bloggers don’t only see their style as a white canvas to accentuate their personality, but they also point out that it is important to dress for “yourself and not for others” (modernmanjournal.com/blog).

Both Intro-mind.com and littleveggierunner.blogspot.com report that a simple way of dressing allowed them to become more aware of their personal style and of what really suits them.

5.1.3 Less is More

Similarly important as authenticity is the idea of being happier through less material belongings. Gardenista.com, as many others, states: “I was sick of feeling as if my clothes owned me”. The unanimous opinion is: “I want to live with less” (blog.wantering.com).

Decluttering is a logical solution for the problem. And indeed it does appear to successfully enhance overall satisfaction of the bloggers. Un-fancy.com, becomingminimalist.com and bleedforfashion.com all report that fewer possessions made them feel enriched, contented and more at ease.

However, not all the bloggers seem to find it easy to comply with their ideal. Lovelybylucy.com states that even though she’d like to be able to live with less, “somehow it doesn’t always turn out that way”.

5.1.4 A Well-Ordered Life

Opting for more structure in both a physical and mental way appears to be another motivator for a minimalist style.

A lot of effort is put into the planning stage of a simplistic wardrobe. Annagrm.blogspot.co.uk writes:
I drew up a mood board on Pinterest consisting of outfit ideas that I think will be suitable for the season and for me.

After the planning stage, the effort apparently pays off. Love-aesthetics.blogspot.se describes one of her outfits as “all white – worked out perfectly without looking cluttered”. And littleveggierunner.blogspot.com even goes further than changing the mere visual appearance by adding: “Clearing my physical space certainly cleared my mental space”.

Clutter is generally regarded as something to be avoided. Eclectic is seen as bad and suffocating, while structure leads to personal evolvement and freedom. Again, Lovelybylucy.com admits that reality is sometimes different than the idea, and against her intentions her environment is “a mess and there is clothes and other stuff everywhere”.

5.1.5 A Versatile Wardrobe

Timelessness and a versatile wearability is a major criterion for the observed group’s choices of styles. Love-aesthetics.blogspot.com describes the non-colours black, white and grey as “always appropriate, never boring, never outdated”. According to afterdrk.com, it is less likely to get bored with simple pieces.

In addition to their longer lifetime, itscamilleco.com states that basics can be reinvented and are not at all boring or predictable. Exchangeable details make it possible to wear a classic black polo even in 20 or 30 years without looking dated or old-fashioned. Long product lifetime apparently is the new need. Clothedmuch.com expresses her desire to have “long-lasting clothes for less, not cheap clothes for less”.

5.1.6 Style

Aside from all the lifestyle-related reasons for minimalist outfits, aesthetic preferences are of course one of the major motivating causes. Being tired of clashing prints and bright colours, simplicity is considered to be optically soothing (trini-g.com). Many of the observed bloggers agree that the ideal of classic elegance influences them in their stylistic choices. The principles of unobtrusive beauty are well described by afterdrk.com:
I think that simple pieces, where the beauty lies in the fabric and the cut and small details, in some way manage to draw the attention to the completeness of the whole appearance, where for example sometimes pieces with print or very bright colors can distract from the overall presentation and make it look off balance by putting emphasis on just part(s) of your look when the beauty in a look actually lies in the outfit as a whole.

Even though, according to messagesonanapkin.blogspot.com, it is easy to overlook the elegance in simplicity, in that it discretely represents grace and taste. Or as Justporsh.com puts it in simple items, it is “hard to go wrong”.

5.1.7 Practical Reasons
Financial reasons as well as living conditions play a decisive role in making fashion choices. As the observed group of bloggers are younger people without exception, who usually tend to have rather limited financial resources, economic reasons for choosing a minimalist style are mentioned by many authors. Ekaterinasedia.com, for example states that limited living space forced her to rethink her purchase behaviour, while Littleveggierunner wants to be able to be flexible by packing “almost the entire wardrobe into one suitcase in under five minutes”.

5.1.8 Alternative Values
To some of the bloggers, the stylistic chance comes hand in hand with more spiritual awareness and a shift towards inner values. Dayinmydreams.com describes her metamorphosis as an “enlightening experience, shedding past burdens, and flooding life with new meaning – transcending the old into a more pure version of oneself.”

This inner advancement is especially outlined by griztriz.blogspot.com, who sees a connection between him dressing basic and having more time to meditate, follow interests, read and see friends. He explains:

(...) there is way more to ourselves then just an outfit ... and some of us need to remind ourselves this (sic). We thrive off materialistic objects when we can thrive off happiness and just life in general.
Nancy-zhang.com also writes about minimalism and spiritual flourishing, and states that “simplicity makes people more relaxed, more active and connected”.

5.1.9 Being Normal
Being normal is a desirable state to the writer behind lovelybylucy.com. She draws a connection between the current minimalism trend and the Normcore phenomenon, and wonders whether her generation seeks to find “liberation in being nothing special”.

5.2 Outfit Photos
Regardless of the statements described above, 12 out of 30 bloggers post one or more new outfits per week, mostly featuring newly acquired items. This number excludes un-fancy.com and bybrittanygoldwyn, who both post another outfit photo every day to document their capsule wardrobe project. 18 out of 30 bloggers post a new outfit at least every two months, while the rest cannot be quantified due to multiple authors or photos of other people’s outfits.

5.3 Interviews: Central Findings
While the written posts described above revealed a lot about the motivations behind the bloggers’ outfit choices, I wanted to collect further information by conducting semi-structured interviews with selected cases. The eight respondents are made anonymous and given the letters A-H. As in the previously described blog post results, I divided the gathered information into categories to provide more structure for the reader.

5.2.1 Motivations
When describing the reasons for dressing basic, some recurring statements can be observed.

Money for example seems to play a major role for half of the interviewees. Respondents A, D, E and G admit that their financial situation influences stylistic decisions.

Respondents A, E and G like to keep their wardrobe small and simple because of limited living space or frequent relocation.
Equally practical is the motivation of respondents A, B and E. They claim that a clean and simple style reduces the problem of “nothing to wear” and saves time. Respondent H thinks similarly and considers complicated outfits a “waste of time”. Having more time for books and friends is given higher priority.

Respondents A, B and F feel that minimalist outfits make them look more professional, while B and D claim that they have simply always liked black garments.

5.2.2 Attitudes Toward Sustainability

Overall, the respondents showed little concern for sustainability and environmental issues, but some admitted to feel to a certain degree guilty about their lack of interest.

Respondents A, B and G state sustainability does not really influence their purchase decision, but agree that a high amount of waste or bad labour conditions in some producing countries are to be condemned. C does not consider sustainability to be the main focus when shopping, but sees it as an “additional value”. D and F are at least partially interested in sustainable behaviour, emphasizing that durability is important to them.

5.2.3 Trend Affinities

Trends seem to affect all interviewees in different ways, though generally most cases tend to have a negative or indifferent attitude towards them. B, D and F claim not to feel any pressure to follow trends, while A and C mention the opposite. They do not want to look old-fashioned in the eyes of others. E and G follow trends in a more long-term sense, by not buying every latest fad. Only H writes that he truly enjoys trends.

5.2.4 Timelessness of Basics

A, B and C agree that simple items have a longer lifespan than bright colours and patterns, which usually vary with the season. This influences their purchase decision. D and H, however, argue that even the most basic garments can look dated after a certain time.
5.2.5 Emotional Impacts of Minimalist Clothing on the General Condition

Comfortable, free, balanced and relaxed are the words that are most often used by the respondents when describing the effect of simple outfits on their mind. C, D, F, G and H explicitly point this out. A, F and G further mention to feel more like themselves when wearing basic outfits because they “leave more space to the person”. Minimalism also seems to provide a certain level of security. B argues that a simple outfit “can’t go wrong”, and it prevents “looking like a clown”. Furthermore, respondent B likes the flattering properties of black to look skinnier.

5.2.6 Minimalism in Daily Life

A, C and F affirm that minimalism or essentialism plays a part in their daily lives outside fashion beyond fashion. Their responses indicate that it is mainly referred to possession in general. As a reason, A again mentions the benefits of being able to relocate quickly in order to pursue a career in a different city if necessary.

5.2.7 Triggers for Impulse Buying

The interviewees were asked to identify conditions that trigger impulse buying. B, E, F and H apply “retail therapy” to make themselves feel better when they are stressed, bored, sad or have low self-esteem. A, C and E make spontaneous purchases to feel more accepted by other people, to get compliments and to feel beautiful. Respondent C even goes as far as claiming that being a woman makes her buy things she doesn’t need.

5.2.8 Perfect Garments

When it comes to describing the properties of a perfect garment, respondent E, who frequently holds minimalism seminars for interested newcomers, puts it into a nutshell: “Does it fit my style concept? Do I like the fit and fabric? What place or function will it have in my wardrobe? Will it fill a gap in my wardrobe? And can I think of at least 3 outfits to wear with it?” If all of these questions can be answered with yes, the item is worth buying. A and G add that timelessness is another important criterion. A, B, F, G and H all expect a perfect garment to have a special fabric structure and little details that set it apart from the mass, while still being understated and classy. For respondent C, it is most important that the garment makes the wearer feel and look good without disguising the personality.
6 Analysis and Discussion

Looking at the results of both blog observations and semi-structured interviews, the findings largely appear to support the hypothesis. Against the backdrop of today’s socio-cultural situation in high-income industrial countries, most of the outcomes stand to reason. Both practical and emotional reasons for dressing simple could be identified. While in the blog posts, the emphasis is rather laid on emotions, the same individuals pointed out more practical motivations when interviewed. However, some discrepancies catch the eye – between blog posts and photographs as well as between blog posts and interviews.

6.1 Emotional Motivations

The majority of motivating causes between a minimalist clothing approach are rather of an emotional nature. This aspect was mostly mentioned and explicitly stressed in the blog posts.

6.1.1 Deceleration and Simplification of Everyday Life

Digital interconnectedness, globalization and constant availability through technical devices have accelerated the speed of daily life drastically. Thus it is no surprise that the quintessence of many blog posts is a need for more consistency and simplification. The establishment of fast fashion and its marketing via digital media has made many people believe that a state of happiness can be achieved through the purchase of constantly changing new outfits. With up to twelve new collections per year, fast fashion retailers dictate a speed that is almost impossible to keep up with. Constantly feeling the urge to keep up to date with the latest fad, this leads to a permanent feeling of dissatisfaction or even frustration. With consumers becoming more critical towards the messages of marketing and advertising (Olenski, 2013), the raison d'être of fast fashion is increasingly questioned, at least among the cohort represented by these bloggers. The New Minimalism phenomenon might be the consequence of consumers trying to break the diktat of marketing and to decelerate their lives. Not having to run after the latest must-haves and to think about their combination possibilities is repeatedly mentioned in blog posts as a liberating experience and the major motivating cause for minimalist style. A well-matched, simple wardrobe seems to make creating tasteful outfits easier and faster, needs less attention and saves time. As un-fancy.com puts it:
Well, not too long ago I looked around and saw that all of the stuff I’d accumulated needed my time and attention. I wondered if I could trade my stuff for more time, contentment, and joy.

Due to the longer product lifetime of basic garments often confirmed in the interviews, the wardrobe needs less updates and thereby might reduce the worry of not matching the current trend. Minimalist style seems to have the potential to contribute to a less hectic lifestyle.

6.1.2 The Nothing-to-Wear Problem and the Era of Unlimited Options

In many blog posts, fashion followers complain about having a cluttered wardrobe and yet nothing to wear. In contrast, after creating a more minimalist wardrobe, bloggers seem to have solved this problem. Un-fancy.com writes: (...) it turned out, having less in my closet made me feel like I had more. Firstly, this makes sense because obviously basic-coloured items can more easily be combined than very individual pieces, a fact that is confirmed by the bloggers in both blog posts as well as interviews. Secondly, this circumstance can be seen in the context of too much choice. In a time of unlimited options, moderation might be a way to reduce stress. As soon as an abundant choice of items becomes standard, it loses its specialness and turns into a burden. As ironic as it may sound, if faced with too much choice, consumers tend not to choose at all or to go for the most standard option (Iyengar, 2010) – transferred to wardrobes, this could explain why the observed group is repelled by a cluttered overwhelming collection and instead refers back to basic outfit.

6.1.3 Hyper-Individualism and Personality

In today’s high-income industrialized countries, most people have the possibility to express their personalities visually without being exposed to overly harsh criticism. Except for some shrinking areas of social life where strict dress codes still exist, everybody can create a visual persona that reflects how he or she wants to be perceived. While freedom of visual expression in itself is a positive development, social media and global interconnectedness have caused the rise of hyper-individualism. With everybody trying to be individual, individualism becomes normality (González, 2012). Because of the highly appearance-based image cultivation on social networks, style has become less of a way to express the personality but a tool to create the perfect self. Authenticity is often lost in the process.
This interpretation needs to be kept in mind when reading blog posts and interview responses claiming that minimalism creates room to show the “real” and “authentic” self. Lovelybylucy.com calls it the liberation of being nothing special, and compares her simple style to Normcore (K-Hole, 2013) and its concept of blending in with the crowd. Reduction, according to many of the observed blogs, provides an opportunity to show the true personality, not hidden or distorted by distracting frills but genuine and pure.

While this makes sense to a certain degree, it can be argued that simple and reduced outfits, in turn, come with many associations and are by no means neutral. Basic black turtleneck sweaters for example are said to be popular among architects, designers and creative people in general. Thus, minimalist style can just as much be used as an image cultivation device as any other style.

### 6.1.4 Changed Priorities

As previously mentioned in chapter 3.1, the work-life situation of Generation M is very different than it was for their parent generation. Often faced with bad career prospects due to the recession, millennials are forced to reconsider the priorities in their lives (Graham, 2012). Knowing that greater material prosperity might not be achievable in the near future, the pursuit of happiness has to go into a different direction. Griztriz.blogspot.com writes: We thrive off materialistic objects when we can thrive off happiness and just life in general. In an interview, respondent E argues that great satisfaction can be obtained through learning something new. Other blogs such as griztriz.com mention creative work, meditation and social contacts as essential keys to a content life. In this logic, it makes sense to cut back on possession and save resources to pursue more sustainable activities.

### 6.1.5 Aesthetic Silence in a Loud Word

The modern world in general is characterized by a loud image language and an overload of visual messages. Products are designed to outdo each other by being increasingly flashy. This leads to a certain indifference with the consumer due to overstimulation. Just as being normal equaks being individual more and more, plain design is becoming more eye-catching in its quietness than conventional design. A good example for this is the Apple brand and its elegant, unobtrusive style.
This circumstance is exactly reflected in many of the blog posts. Through qualifying adjectives such as *soothing, refreshing, liberating* for example. It can be said that visual reduction relaxes both the eye and mind of the beholder.

6.2 Practical Motivations

In the interviews, most of the respondents gave more practical reasons for their choice of style than in the blog posts. This might be due to the nature of the questions, or maybe even a consequence of the anonymity of the questionnaires.

6.2.1 Budget Lifestyle

Both the observed and interviewed bloggers frequently mention the financial savings generated by minimalism. Since, as stated earlier, members of Generation M tend to often only have limited financial resources available, and with many of them still studying or doing unpaid internships, it is essential for them to take account of their situation when it comes to making purchases. In an environment in which looks are often considered to be very important, looking good with less requires a system. Minimalism can provide a framework to build up and maintain a wardrobe that is both affordable and tasteful with only a few key items.

However, whereas it is highly probable that many fashion bloggers do struggle financially, others do not seem to have budgeting as their motivation, judging from the frequency of new purchases and the price range of the items talked about in their blogs.

6.2.2 Mobile Lives and Limited Space

In an increasingly globalized world, willingness to travel and relocate for one's career is often expected. While previous generations often lived in one place for their entire life, it is quite common for younger people to change their residence and even their country several times right from the start of their professional careers. Nowadays, gathering work or study experience abroad are almost mandatory to pursue jobs in certain fields (Goodman and Nevandomski Berdan, 2014). Hence, it is not surprising that many of the blog posts as well as interview responses mention foreign assignments, business trips or relocations as a reason to keep the number of possessions small. Having to live out of a suitcase or knowing that the
next relocation is only a matter of time gives a very good sense for what is important and what is not, as interview respondent G puts it. This is especially true when moving to a metropolitan region for education, internship or a job, where rents are often exceptionally high, even for small rooms in shared flats. It is therefore reasonable to maintain a wardrobe with few carefully selected, matching items to avoid clutter and save space.

6.3 Contradictions

The large amount of new outfit purchases featured in frequent photo posts described in chapter 5.2 often conflicts with the key message of the blog posts and interview responses. Many of the bloggers point out that, for the reasons mentioned above, a simplistic and clean style with less items is an aspiration. Even though some of those interviewed do indeed live their minimalist approach and comply with their ideals, for some it appears as if there is a gap between reality and aspiration. Not only does it seem as if new outfits are bought constantly, but the purchased items are also often quite pricy, according to the image captions. This is surprising, considering that saving money is one of the most frequently-mentioned reasons for minimalist style given by the interview respondents.

But why would bloggers not be frank about their true intentions when writing their posts or anonymous interviews? Although a thorough analysis of this phenomenon would exceed the scope of this research, the interview responses themselves provide some enlightening information.

What is remarkable is that when asked directly, many respondents admitted to be prone to impulse buys, even if they didn’t want to make a purchase in the first place. When asked about the circumstances in which this behaviour occurs, they mentioned stress, boredom, low self-esteem and sadness as a cause. It seems that shopping for clothes is used as a way to make oneself feel better, a retail therapy as respondent B calls it. This is clearly in line with the marketing theories discussed in chapter 2.2, according to which consumption leads to increased happiness, or more precisely, that is the message conveyed by marketing specialists as they want people to believe that consumption will be followed by satisfaction (McDonald, 1996). Of course this is often not the case (Fromm, 1976) and instead of satisfaction, new
desires arise. Some of the interview respondents confirm this by stating that such purchases usually don’t make them as happy as expected.

The power of advertising and marketing shouldn’t be underestimated. It is possible that the bloggers are actually honest when expressing their desire for a more simple life, but the long history of consumerist habits in high-income industrialized countries often represents an obstacle. As British journalist and writer on environmental issues Lucy Siegle (2011) points out, especially the younger generations show clear signs of addictive behaviour when it comes to fashion consumption, and many are not in control over their shopping habits. It might be that the observed cases unintentionally resume their old behaviours and only gradually adopt a new world view and learn to live their philosophy in practice.

It also seems plausible to assum that, due to the current strong trend towards a decelerated lifestyle, decluttering and more essentialism as described in chapter 3, many people don’t actually share this mindset but have just jumped on the bandwagon. So a small group of trendsetters and early adopters who are sincere about their ideas and motivations may just be followed by a less critical mass who imitates the style as well as the communicated values. It might be the attributes associated with minimalist chic that makes many trend followers adopt it in order to create an identity as outlined in chapter 6.1.3. So, just as the Hippie and Punk movements some decades earlier started as new life concepts and faded out into styles, the minimalism trend might have a more serious core surrounded by fellow-travellers.
7 Conclusion and Answers to the Research Questions

Based on the collected data useful conclusions can be drawn which provide a range of answers to the research questions.

7.1 What are the Moving Causes Behind the Currently Popular Minimalist Aesthetic?

A whole set of major motivating causes have been observed. Among the most frequently mentioned ones are the desire for deceleration and simplification of everyday life, the wish to be more authentic as a person (Kernis and Goldman, 2006), having structure, being flexible, to get by financially or just a preference for clean design for aesthetic and optical reasons. Most of these motivations seem to be deeply rooted in the problems that arose in consumerist high-income industrialized societies during the time of recession, or maybe even earlier, which explains why most of the observed cases are located in such countries. It became apparent that phenomena such as the minimalism trend could be indicators of a lingering dissatisfaction among younger generations, as well as an attempt to change the situation. In this, the style might be seen in the context of a long history of "rebellious" clothing styles, as a statement against and an escape from a malfunctioning system. It seems as if new paths are searched, to get closer to a world in which being is more important than having (Fromm, 1976). The whole situation that the millennial generation is confronted with, described in Chapter 3.1, is very different from that of their parent generation’s. Minimalism, just as other fashion movements just as Normcore or Health Goth, focus on reduction. Observing this in the context of recession and frequent relocation, it is understandable why this concept is appealing to many young people.

7.2 Is the Popularity of Minimalism an Indicator of a Paradigm Shift or Just an Ephemeral Trend?

This answer might be the hardest to answer. As it was pointed out in the last chapter, in a discrepancy between actual purchase behaviour and proclaimed ideals is often noticeable. Yet, a closer look at how fashion bloggers talk about consuming less, living more simple, being less superficial and striving for more essential satisfaction reveals that there is a certain
awareness about the downsides of a consumerist society. The millennial generation seems to at least partially recognize that opulent consumerism might not lead to the satisfaction they are striving for, and thus begins to search for alternatives. This is also confirmed my the strong increase of simplicity guidebooks in international bestseller lists, as described in Chapter 3.2. Never before has it been so easy to spread new thoughts and ideas around the globe. Through the internet, concepts such as minimalistic wardrobes or even just simple blog posts about simplicity have the potential to reach millions of readers. Even if minimalism as a style might be out of fashion soon, it is the mindset that will remain present, through social media, an endless number of shares, likes and reposts (Kopp, 2014).

7.3 Why Does the Phenomenon of Faux-Minimalism Exist?

In the context of this research, I defined "faux-minimalism" as dressing in a minimalist style and sometimes even claiming deeper intentions, while apparently still shopping lots of new garments very frequently, and thereby not complying with the own alleged ideals. As stated in chapter 6.3, the data points to the fact that consumption is still widely used as a way to feel better. The influence of marketing strategies is strong, and it might often be hard to ignore the promises of enhancing happiness and life quality. Addiction-like behaviour is reported by many interview respondents when it comes to impulse buying. Furthermore, it can be assumed that perhaps some of the faux minimalists are nothing but superficial imitators of a smaller group of actual minimalists.

7.4 Can Maintaining a Simplistic Wardrobe Increase Happiness?

Many of the blog posts as well as the interview responses strongly suggest that this is the case. When talking about their new decluttered lifestyle, most bloggers describe themselves as feeling freer, satisfied, less stressed and more genuine. This does not come as a surprise, since, as discussed in Chapter 6, many of the characteristics of minimalism match well with the changed condition of a fast, hyper-individualist and interconnected world. Looking at Chapter 3, a variety of recognized authors such as Fromm (1976) and Ehrenfeld (2014) emphasize increased life satisfaction and sustainability-as-flourishing through moderation. Thus, the gathered data seems to confirm the theory.
7.5 What Does the Minimalism Trend Mean for Sustainability?

As emphasized by Ehrenfeld (2014), sustainability does not consist in the avoidance of un-sustainability, but should enable a complete paradigm shift from the having to the being mode. This concept is widely in accordance with statements made by the bloggers in both interviews and posts. Even though research showed that the observed bloggers are mostly indifferent towards sustainability issues, the concept of a simplified wardrobe automatically leads to less waste and therefore leaves a smaller environmental footprint, even though the individual does not deliberately act out of concern for the environment. Many of the bloggers are probably not even aware of the global benefit that their altered consumption behaviour might bring. Even though, as previously stated, the amount of purchases is still high in many cases, it is repeatedly pointed out that matching basics usually keep the number of needed garments smaller than in a conventional cluttered wardrobe. Contemporary minimalist aesthetics can definitely support the rise of sustainability-as flourishing as defined by Ehrenfeld (2014) through encouraging the shift from the having mode to the being mode (Fromm, 1976).
8 Future Research

During the course of this research, new issues were raised that could not be included due to the limited time and resources. Many of them could provide a good starting point for future research.

A question which I find very intriguing is which role addictive behaviour plays in contemporary fashion consumption. The responses of many interviewees indicated that impulse purchases are sometimes made to increase the general well-being, and that the desired effect is only temporary or even switches completely. In this context, it could also be explored why avoiding over-consumption is easy for some, but difficult for others.

Another relevant subject area might be the viability of business models selling fewer units. If indeed a paradigm shift is happening among younger generations, new strategies could be applied which take the changed mindset into consideration. This could be a step towards more sustainability in fashion business.

While in this research, word "minimalism" is used in the context of high-income countries, it would be interesting to learn how minimum is minimum in a globalized finite world. Minimalism from a western point of view is in the most cases still abundance if compared to the living standards in developing countries. The last question of my interview questions, “how do you know when you are living a minimalist live?”, was often not answered or lead to confusion. This indicates that the ambiguity of the term, depending on the cultural context, might be worth exploring.

To further explore whether the current minimalism phenomenon is here to stay or just an ephemeral trend it would be very interesting to conduct the same research at a later point in time. If the observed cases still stick to their ideals or even improved on realizing them, it could support the theory that a paradigm shift is indeed happening.
9 References

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[Accessed 20 April 2015].

[Accessed 15 April 2015].

[Accessed 20 April 2015].


[Accessed 05 June 2015].


Fromm, E., 1976. *To have or to be?* New York: Continuum.


Samyutta-Nikaya, contemporary English version, tr C. A. F. Rhys Davids & F. L. Woodward, Bristol, Pali Text Society


10 Appendices

In the appendices, you can find the blog addresses, the original quotes as well as the complete interviews.

10.1 Blog Addresses

lovelybylucy.com
fake-leather.com
love-aesthetics.blogspot.se
into-Mind.com
un-fancy.com
becomingminimalist.com
minimalist-chic.tumblr.com
modernmanjournal.com/blog/
griztriz.blogspot.com
Trini-g.com
thefashioncuisine.com
just-another.me
bleedforfashion.com
afterdrk.com
blog.wantering.com
bybrittanygoldwyn.com
ekaterinasedia.com
Gardenista.com
clothedmuch.com
Justporsh.com
Oteea-land.com
Itscamilleco.com
Littleveggierunner.blogspot.com
Messagesonanapkin.blogspot.com
dejligedays.com
notsofrenchfries.blogspot.se
internet-persona.blogspot.se
nancy-zhang.com
dayinmydreams.com
annagrm.blogspot.co.uk
10.2 Blog Data

1) lovelybylucy.com (New outfit post almost every day)

(8 June 2014)
Dear Zara, (...) you do minimalistic chic so well lately. You enable my hunger for simplicity.

(8 February 2015)
Normcore. The word to describe people dressing ‘normal’ to avoid standing out. There’s no getting around normcore, but I’m not always sure it’s about dressing normal because I feel it’s become more of an intentional thing. A trend. It’s cool to be normcore so let’s all try our best and act like we didn’t put effort into our carefully selected look. Then again, over the past 2 years already I’ve really enjoyed shifts in fashion towards minimalism, cleanliness, simplicity and comfort. I sometimes wonder what how this fashion era would be described by our kids. Will it be all about the minimalism, no nonsense, the need to simplify, or will we be described as ‘those kids that did their very best to look normal or minimalist. I’m actually not sure because I sometimes find the minimalism around me a little forced. Nevertheless, when following it’s definition, normcore applies to many of my looks. But I’d rather apply it to myself in the definition it was originally meant to be: not really a way of dressing but more of an attitude: finding liberation in being nothing special.

(24 April 2014)
I’m not always as good at minimalism as I’d like to be. I love images of a clean white house with only the essential furniture and a really cool accessory here and there, but somehow my studio is always a mess and there’s clothes and other stuff everywhere. I like looking at very small, clean wardrobes with only black, grey, and whites – but I also love adding a touch of color or leopard or cat-print to my wardrobe every now and then. I’d like to be able to live with less, but somehow it doesn’t always turn out that way (...). Sometimes I just am really in the mood for less. Have less on my mind. Wear less. Have less. Think less.

2) fake-leather.com (22 February 2015) (New outfit post about every second day)
Some things in life are better when they are simple. (...) a bunch of basic pieces in your closet that will match no matter the order you put them. You could as well dress up in the dark and still come out victorious.

3) love-aesthetics.blogspot.se (New outfit post every 1-2 weeks)

(7 September 2013)
Possibilities of basics always excite me. Non colors black, white and grey are always appropriate, never boring, never outdated.

(18 March 2013)
Slowly building a basic wardrobe with almost no colors is paying off; the times of standing in front of a mirror for hours coordinating different pieces together are over. Now I can almost pull out stuff with my eyes closed and it will match because of the black/grey/white pallet. Yesterday I layered an oversized jacket, over a cozy sweatshirt, over a fitted turtleneck, all white - worked out perfectly without looking cluttered.

(23 March 2015)
Sometimes I’m a bit hesitant wether to post an outfit or not, often I only wear basics and am not afraid to repeat an outfit. I ask myself aren’t ‘fashion bloggers’ expected to be more extravagant, is what I’m wearing too simple, too easy, too plain? But then my answer is nnahh, who cares about expectations, I like functional dressing, unpretentious clothes and finding simplicity.

4) into-Mind.com (3 February 2015) (New outfit post every 1-2 months)
Instead of stuffing your closet with impulse buys, bargains and a ton of stuff that you only half-like, you take the time to really think about what kind of pieces would best work with your style and your lifestyle, regardless of what’s trendy right now, what other people say or fashion magazines prescribe.

5) www.un-fancy.com (2014) (not applicable - capsule wardrobe)
Well, not too long ago I looked around and saw that all of the stuff I’d accumulated needed my time and attention. I wondered if I could trade my stuff for more time, contentment, and joy. So I started to release my stuff, one thing at a time, and continue on my journey — a little lighter and a little happier. (...) I thought I’d hate it. I mean, shopping was my thing. But it turned out, having less in my closet made me feel like I had more. Less made me feel prettier. Less was nicer to my bank account. Less actually reflected my style with dazzling clarity. Less made me happier.

6) becomingminimalist.com (16 August 2014) (not applicable)
Minimalism isn’t about having the least amount of items; it’s about having enough. When you realize you have a sufficient amount of items. It’s easy to live a life of contentment and avoid consuming in excess.

7) minimalist-chic.tumblr.com (16 September 2013) (not applicable)
For me, minimalism connotes power. When you wear minimalist attire, you have the power to control what others think about you purely based on you as a person. There are no connotations from colour or unnecessary frills. No one can jump to any conclusions when you give them no clues.

8) modernmanjournal.com/blog/ (25 March 2015) (New outfit post every 1-2 weeks)
Over the past few years, we have come to a conclusion that to dress boring or normal is "basic". Why do we have to dress for attention, but rather just dress in whatever we feel comfortable with. Dress for yourself not for others. To dress “normal” is the height of chic, yet to call someone “basic” is the chicest put-down, one that shows no signs of disappearing.

9) griztriz.blogspot.com (24 April 2014) (New outfit post about once a week)
Minimalism isn’t just a fashion trend for me it’s honestly a life changing experience. minimizing my life has been the best decision I've made in quiet a while. Minimizing my life
was not just dressing a certain way but releasing and getting rid of all clutter, from getting rid of stuff and clothes I don't use or wear to, clearing all the stress in my life and in my mind to live a stress free peaceful Zen lifestyle.

Since my transition I've let go of a lot of garments that I only kept just because the thought in my mind that I had it and completely doing a makeover to my room ... I mean complete aha. I've also got more involved with Yin Yoga and Meditate on a daily now, now don't get me wrong I dont necessary call myself a minimalist yet but it's all about the journey that makes minimizing your life the best. instead of spending my money on clothing and unnecessary stuff I find myself working on fun DIY project smoking bud and just enjoying every moment of this short life we have to live, I like to keep myself grounded and reminded that being able to live this life is surely a blessing

I've literally been wearing the same clothes for awhile and spend my days reading, meditating practicing yoga, and spending time with positive friends. see there is way more to ourselves then just an outfit ... and some of us need to remind ourselves this. We thrive off materialistic objects when we can thrive off happiness and just life in General ..... Yeah you can clearly see where my head has been

10) Trini-g.com (New outfit post about every second day)

(16 February 2012)
Personally i'm so tired of all the overload in prints with bright colors that crash with each other being repeated over and over again in so many collections that this is soothing, at least for me.

(13 November 2012)
I believe my style has become over the years more and more simple. In times when fashion is all about colors, prints, mixing everything together and adding more and more accessories to outfits I do not see myself in any of those things. I find what really catches my attention are simple garments, neutral colors, just plain classic elegance. I will mainly focus my blog on all this things, and in the main idea that a woman does not need to take a risk with fashion when she knows what looks good on her. Period.
11) thefashioncuisine.com (1 May 2015) (New outfit post about every 2nd day)
It’s not a surprise that I always been an admirer of simplicity in all of my looks. (...) Now that I have to balance my university life and blogging, I tend to choose comfort over everything. That’s why my style lately is all about super casual looks that are easy to run around in.

12) just-another.me (28 February 2014) (New outfit post about every 2nd day)
The simple outfits are usually my favourite, because they feel effortless and equally timeless. I won’t look back in a few years and think, oh gosh, what was I wearing?! I’ll probably still be wearing it. And it’s just always such an easy thing to fall back on. Your favourite jeans with an oversized white shirt and a black pea coat thrown over.

13) bleedforfashion.com (15 January 2015) (New outfit post about twice a week)
My closet mainly consist of black and grey, which won’t come as a surprise if you’ve been following my blog for a while. I’ve gotten so good at minimizing and maximizing my wardrobe over the last few months, that I’m now the complete opposite of a hoarder and wear the same thing (almost) every day. In the words of Joshua Becker, “Never underestimate the importance of abandoning crap you don’t need.” NEVER.

14) afterdrk.com (31 January 2012) (New outfit post about once a week)
“Reduction” is something that used to resonate as boring or even snob to my own ears. I remember when I was a practically a child in the early 90’s (in the initial emergence of minimalism in fashion) that it was described as “anti-fashion”. However, as one travels through ostentantious experimentation and high “a la mode” practices, can only develop and grow to embrace the beauty in simplicity, high construction, tailoring and understatement as opposed to flamboyant or overdesigned pieces. Inventiveness and beauty can be found in simplicity and this is evident in nature itself. Minimalism thriving in form and content of all things around us: The vastness of the blue sky, the air through the clouds, the form of the leaves. Intricate but oh so lucid and quiet. Yet, everpresent and limitless. “Less is more” an aesthetic tactic of arranging complicated components to create an illusion of simplicity. That is
art. Art is fashion and quality can be more meaningful than quantity. To me and advocates of “simplicity” such as my dear Sabrina, that’s the essence of beauty and tastefulness.

I think that simple pieces, where the beauty lies in the fabric and the cut and small details, in some way manage to draw the attention to the completeness of the whole appearance, where for example sometimes pieces with print or very bright colors can distract from the overall presentation and make it look off balance by putting emphasis on just part(s) of your look when the beauty in a look actually lies in the outfit as a whole. (...) simple pieces are timeless and you can vary them with (almost) everything, you don’t get easily bored of them.

15) blog.wantering.com (date unknown) (New outfit post not applicable)
I’ve always been drawn to shapes and structures in neutral colors tan to patterns and colors. I feel like they suit my personality more. It’s thos “Be more with less and less is more” attitude. I think that we spend too much time thinking about what we wear, so it is time to simplify the concept of getting dressed and stop giving it so much attention. Firstly and very simply, I want to live with less, and secondly, I have used clothing to express my creativity, and tell a story about who I am. Now, I am ready to tell the story myself in a more simplified way and yes I think that minimalist style is more eye-catching at times. Minimalism is a way of life and so is style and fashion, they go well hand in hand.

16) bybrittanygoldwyn.com (unknown date) (not applicable - capsule wardrobe)
I definitely think that simplifying life brings freedom from stress, worry, poor health, and bad days in general.

17) ekaterinasedia.com (21 September 2014) (New outfit post about every two months)
Lately, many of the fashion blogs I read have been pushing the whole minimalism thing. Not just in clothing cuts, where the runways indeed having tended toward the spare and the monochrome and the beautifully sculptural, as Phoebe Philo, Jil Sander, and Stella
McCartney reached farther and deeper into the fashion psyche. I am of course down with that — 99% of my stuff is black, cream, grey and blush. But there is also another kind of minimalism happening: shopping diets, various challenges with artificially restricted wardrobes, epic closet purges, and the general impetus to simplify one’s life and getting dressed in the morning. While I am not a fan of the idea that anyone’s wardrobe MUST be a certain size, I am certainly down with the simplification as well. Most of it is practical: we have one walk-in closet (not a large one), and husband and I share it 50-50. (…) 

18) Gardenista.com (22 April 2013) (not applicable)
It was time to clean out the closet, drastically and once-and-for-all. I was sick of feeling as if my clothes owned me. I came up with a new strategy: define the season's wardrobe as minimally as possible—I pared down to ten pieces—and put everything else into organized deep storage. I know ten pieces sounds pretty draconian. But if you look at a weather map, you'll see most of us live in climates defined by three-month stretches that don't vary that much. And more minimal is always more peaceful.

19) clothedmuch.com (29 July 2010) (not applicable)
My closet wasn't always that small. When I got married, I had to reevaluate my spending habits of what wereally needed versus what I wanted. Marriage has really helped me to have a frugal mindset. I can't afford to go shopping often. It also helps that my husband and I are both very practical when it comes to things. We only keep items in our home that we need or use regularly. Otherwise, we either find a way to make money off of it or donate it. I've borrowed that mentality for my wardrobe. That's how my closet stays minimal. (…) My strategy for shopping is to not even touch the clothes. I scan them. I look at the print. I see what kind of fabric it is before I touch it to see what it really feels/looks like. This helps me to sift through the cheap fabrics and colors/prints I don't care for. I don't buy cheap fabric clothes because (a) they look cheap, (b) they don't last, and (c) most are trendy and not classic - I want long-lasting clothes for less, not cheap clothes for less.

20) Justporsh.com (9 June 2013) (New outfit post about every two weeks)
Fashion these days have gone over the top! The complexities of outfits put together by most stylists, bloggers etc can be quite overwhelming. You open your closet to look for what to wear and pick up a pair of jeans and a shirt but you are not ok with it. You are looking for something extra to ‘wow’ peeps. You keep digging and rummaging thru your stuffs until your entire clothes are on the floor. lol 90% of y'all are guilty of this, including me! Most times outfits should be kept simple rather than made complex. Yea I know most of my outfits are really simple (I know I've said this before, I'm a really lazy dresser.) I wear such outfits on most of my 'off' days i.e whenever I don't put up an Outfit post. I thrive on simplicity. This old classic rule is a good rule to apply to most areas of your life. From work to design to dressing yourself - Keep It Simple and you can't go wrong!

21) Oteea-land.com (27 February 2015) (New outfit post about every week)
I would have loved to start off this blog a few years back already knowing who I was and what style suit me best. The road would have been less bumpy, but I didn’t know, I had no clue. My wardrobe was all over the place at that time, so I went from nothing to trying out a little bit of everything. I flirted with the sporty, I played with prints, I bought fitted dresses and super short skirts, I went boyish and sometimes even super-colorful. But in the midst of everything, I did found myself.
I figured out simplicity was my kind of thing, I realized I loved all silhouettes that bear a minimal, clean, basic feel. I found out you could actually say a lot with just a little, and I also understood that my style should be all about me, not about what people want to see me wear.

22) Itscamilleco.com (7 February 2014) (New outfit post about every second day)
Basics will never go out of style, but that doesn’t mean you can’t reinvent them. If you want to spice them up without losing their classic appeal, go for basics in fresh silhouettes and cuts.
Take this polo for example. I can see myself wearing it 10, even 20 years from now. It’s definitely for keeps. But at the same time, it’s neither boring nor predictable. If you look at my entire outfit, all the pieces I’m wearing are of the same principle. It’s a classic black and white outfit but with little details that make it just a bit more interesting.

23) Littleveggierunner.blogspot.com (14 July 2014) (not applicable)
My love for clothing and love for minimalism have always seemed like two colliding forces - a bit of an unstoppable force meets immovable object scenario. When I first discovered minimalism, I had multiple wardrobes overflowing with clothing. My shopping habit was so extreme that I once had to send a box full of clothes home from an overseas holiday so that I could fit everything else I had in my luggage (even then, my suitcase still exceeded the weight limit on my flight home...). Moving out of home changed all of that for me. I hadn't realise how much stuff I had accumulated over the years and during the moving process I had the sudden urge to purge.

I read minimalist blogs, books and magazines and suddenly I was so immersed in minimalism that I found myself moving with only one suitcase full of clothing and my love of fashion had taken a backseat to my new clean and simple life.

Clearing my physical space certainly cleared my mental space. It was easier to keep track of everything I owned and my minimalist surroundings left more room for more important things in my life. I never lost my love of a beautiful piece of clothing however, and I sometimes felt torn between buying that new top and keeping my set 33 items of clothing. It didn't always feel this way but sometimes I felt perhaps I was depriving myself of something I really wanted.

I soon learned this was not the case at all; in fact, I have recently realised that by maintaining a minimalist wardrobe, I have become more aware and in love with my style than ever. Since purging my wardrobe of the clothing that I barely wore and cutting back to what I considered my favourite and most essential clothing items, I no longer have the "nothing to wear" syndrome. You know what I mean: a wardrobe full of clothing yet you can't fathom and outfit you'd like to wear. All of that clothing and most of it isn't being worn - either by a regrettable purchase, a 'I'll start wearing it when I'm skinnier' piece, or something you own but don't have anything else to wear with it, so it stays in your wardrobe; unloved and stale from the cold dark space it's been left to rot in.

I can picture every item of clothing in my wardrobe, create more than one outfit with that clothing item, and I feel comfortable and happy in everything I own. I no longer let the clothing in my wardrobe go unworn, and if I find I haven't worn something in over a month, that's when I know it's time to donate it.
Before purchasing a new piece I now think more carefully about it. I ask myself: 'what can I wear this with?'; 'do I feel comfortable in this?'; 'is this really my style - does it suit me?' and 'do I just like this item because it looked nice on the rack or am I in love with it?'. I don't think I've ever thought twice about a piece of clothing I decided not to buy.

Minimalist doesn't have to get in the way of fashion - in fact, it should compliment it. I've avoided many fashion mistakes and regrettable purchases by being more careful about what goes into my wardrobe (I've also save a lot of money!).

Though I now own more than 33 items of clothing, I still maintain a minimalist wardrobe. Recently I was able to spontaneously pack almost my entire wardrobe into one suitcase in under five minutes to travel home and surprise my family with a visit. That is definitely more reward than owning a large wardrobe: being able to pack just about everything I own and knowing that I'll be able to wear any of it and feel comfortable and fashionable at the same time.

24) Messagesonanapkin.blogspot.com (10 April 2015) (New outfit post about every week)

When thinking of minimalism or normcore, I think a lot of us might think of, well...boring outfits. When I first came across it I was looking down at the picture of the smiling brunette in the magazine, wearing nothing but a gray sweater tucked into cigarette pants, with simple bluchers on her feet. And all I could think was: "This looks like my mom, just twenty years ago." Back when she was too busy with chasing me down the hallway and forcing me to take the pants off of my head to really care about what she put on in the morning.

It's simple and down to its bones, which makes it easy to overlook the elegance. It's interesting but in a quiet way, each piece assigned to say its own word. A well tailored pant says "grace", a structured cross-body bag on the hip says "taste", a pair of fringed oxfords quip in "panache". I started to slowly fall into the style because I liked choosing only a handful of pieces and making them tell my story, in four words or less.

25) dejligedays.com (23 April 2015) (not applicable)
My husband often asks how many grey T-shirts, skinny jeans and grey sweatshirts one person needs but that has become my uniform. It makes getting dressed in the morning easy, I think it looks good and I can think about other things rather than a nagging question as to whether the colourful blouse is wearing me rather than the other way around!

26) notsofrenchfries.blogspot.se (24 July 2014) (not applicable)
Last post I told you that I kinda wasn’t inspired by today’s fashion anymore (by fashion I mean today’s contemporary fashion). Well, that’s pretty much what norm core is all about according to me. It’s sorta what a modernistic fashion style, almost to be called a movement. People just trying to put a clean and neat outfit together.

27) internet-persona.blogspot.se (15 September 2014) (not applicable)
Where do I lie? Well, I once considered myself eclectic. I wore just about anything that suited my personal taste and experimented with all trends for the fun of it. In the end, I found that eclectic was too broad for what was really staying in my closet, which was all things minimalist. I was more comfortable in plain black t-shirts with loose jeans than I was wearing maxi skirts paired with broad rim hats. This discovery is as recent as something that happened in the last few months and I want to encourage you to explore your stylistic interests because, in my personal opinion, true personal style is a personal style that can evolve.

28) nancy-zhang.com (18 December 2014) (New outfit post about every two weeks)
Simplicity is the key to understanding complexity the of self. That’s also the reason I become a Minimalist. Simplicity makes people more relaxed, more active and connected, we still don’t need that much things in contemporary society actually.

29) dayinmydreams.com (7 May 2015) (New outfit post about once or twice a week)
If you follow this blog regularly, you probably already know I’m a huge fan of minimalistic blogs Modern Legacy and Love Aesthetics (to name just a couple). The crisp aesthetics with a
stark contrast in monochrome schemes makes my heart skip – and I can’t look away. The minimalist community has always held a part of me captive. From living in micro houses, to a deliberate constriction in wardrobe and lifestyle – it’s really quite beautifully fascinating. And, I’ve given the thought of conversion some serious consideration.

I imagine the metamorphose as an enlightening experience, shedding past burdens, and flooding life with new meaning – transcending the old into a more pure version of oneself. Rebirth.

30) annagrm.blogspot.co.uk (8 April 2015) (not applicable)
It’s officially Spring and this season is a time of... well, Spring cleaning. I decided to clear out my wardrobe to de-clutter my living space when I stumbled across several blog posts talking about a 33/37 piece capsule wardrobe. I figured, I have way too many pieces and I want to cut down. Thus begins my new journey into the 'less is more' lifestyle.

I basically organised my clothes into 2 piles, the first being clothes that I never/hardly wear, and the second being clothes that I wear at least once or twice a week. Then I packed the first pile into some bags and kept them in storage. Now, what to do with the second pile? That's still a lot of clothes.

I drew up a mood board on pinterest consisting of outfit ideas that I think will be suitable for the season and for me. I realised that i’m zooming in onto a more defined style. I guess that is one of the main goals of the capsule wardrobe. So after much contemplation, I have settled in on mostly blacks and whites, fabrics consisting of cotton and chiffon for tops, and a variety for the bottoms.
10.3 Interviews

A

1) Your style includes a lot of very simple cuts and unobtrusive colours. Can you tell me about when you started to dress that way and if there was a special reason?

I think it started about a year ago … I had to move to another city for a job, so I needed to make a good choice what goes into my suitcase. At the same time, I faced the challenge of having to look professional in the new office environment. Before that, I could just wear whatever I wanted for going to University. The combination of these two things made me rethink what pieces are important to have.

2) Is it now a conscious decision to buy many simplistic items or do you just intuitively buy them?

Kind of both actually. As I said before, the changed conditions made it necessary to reconsider my wardrobe, but somehow simple cuts also just appeal to me. I used to own a large amount of colorful, patterned items that looked great by themselves, but just wouldn’t match with anything. So I had to spend a lot of money to buy for example a skirt that goes exactly with that one top. And then I still had no matching shoes. My wardrobe was stuffed and yet I felt that I had nothing to wear. So I guess I was just very tired of this dilemma, and started to buy everything either in black, white or grey so that everything would just work well together. Also, if you have to stuff a matching, professional-looking wardrobe into a suitcase, it is simply not possible with all these very individual items. It needs system.

----- What number of items do you consider necessary in a wardrobe?

Hard to tell… I think I still have quite a lot, but at least I can combine them… Really necessary probably not more than 40, but I like to shop and buy something nice, so it is not my goal to survive with the smallest number possible.

----- What role does money play in your way of dressing?

Quite a lot, this is probably also a reason why I changed my style… If you are rich, you can afford to buy that skirt that only matches one top that I mentioned above, But as a student, this is like a financial trap. It saves a lot of money if you buy things with your entire wardrobe in mind.
3) What role do sustainability concerns play when you make a purchase decision?
I am a bit ashamed to say not very much. If I see a nice piece, I will buy it no matter where it was produced. But I was quite shocked when I last cleared out my wardrobe and suddenly there were three big black bags of clothes that I didn’t want anymore. It felt like such a waste. I don’t want this to happen again to that extent, and I hope buying more matching basics will decrease my clothing waste in the future.

4) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with fast-changing trends?
Actually I feel quite pressured. If I wear something that to me seems dated, it makes me uncomfortable. And new things appear so fast these days, it’s hard to keep up to date, especially if you are short of money.

5) Do you think that minimalistic and basic items have a longer life-span and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?
It decelerates the speed of fashion a lot. I can wear them longer and still feel kind of well dressed. Yes, I consider that when I go shopping.

6) How does minimalist chic make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?
It kind of makes me feel more sophisticated and professional. It’s hard to describe, but it leaves more space for the person. I like to look good in an effortless way, and minimalistic style allows that. Often people just look like they are trying too hard, like buying orange nailpolish that matches the orange laces and earrings, but in the end it still looks kind of weird and artificial. Basic colours have a nice naturalness.

7) Does minimalism or essentialism play a role in other areas in your life (e.g. home, food, job, media usage)?
Yes absolutely. Because I want to be flexible with where to work in the future, I try to keep the number of my belongings as small as possible. I want to be able to throw everything in a car and start a new job in a new city tomorrow. I think too many things are like a big burden that you have to carry with you. With food or media usage I wouldn’t say that I am minimalistic.

8) Did your stylistic change go hand in hand with an attitude change? How?
It did. In the past, I didn’t realize how much unnecessary stuff can tie you down. Then, when I had to move to another apartment, I realized what I was carrying with me. It was such a bad feeling that I wanted to change my behaviour entirely. In the past, I bought everything that I liked. Totally unnecessary stuff like cookie cutters, vases, side tables, games, and so on. I really didn’t even use most of it. It only causes problems to hoard things like that. So at about the same time when I started decluttering my wardrobe, I also decluttered the rest of my apartment.

9) What are major challenges when following your new fashion concept?
Sometimes it is hard to resist a pretty single piece. And sometimes I feel it is challenging to look feminine.

10) Has the number of purchases decreased since your style change?
I would say no, but the purchases are more strategic, so they leave me more satisfied than in the past, when most of my shopping was based on impulse.

----- Does it bother you that you don’t buy less?
Sometimes… I still buy things that I then somehow do not really like to wear. So there is space to improve the conceptual buying.

----- What triggers the urge to shop?
Especially if I want to feel pretty for a certain even, I like to have something new. Also, I grow bored of pieces after wearing them for about a year. I have just seen them too often and want some change. Sometimes I see a new style in magazines or online, and I want to adapt to show to myself and the surrounding that I don’t live behind the moon.

----- How do you feel after the purchase?
Sometimes satisfied, but sometimes also a bit guilty. Especially if I still make impulse buys, it doesn’t make me feel so good. But if I looked for a very special item for a long time and then I finally find it, it can be pretty great.

11) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?
Hard to tell, it’s all about who your compare yourself with. If I look at a friend of mine, I feel like I live a totally simple life. Compared to somebody else, I might be decadent. I think you live a minimalistic life if you only own things that you really use on a regular basis.
12) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?
A perfect garment should be to a certain degree timeless, match with everything, unobtrusive but with a little interesting twist. It should also be changeable and be appropriate for many different occasions, depending how you style it.

B
1) Your style includes a lot of black and basic colours. Can you tell me when you started to dress that way and whether there was a special reason?
I have always worn a lot of black. But when I came to Sweden, I dressed more casual. In the past, I wore a lot of jewelery and big things. But now I don’t want to be so out there.

2) Is it now a conscious decision to buy many black and basic-coloured items or do you just intuitively buy them?
More intuition. Black has the best fit. The best design is usually black. I like if the black things have a specific texture and you can really see it. I am immediately drawn to that.

3) How does wearing black and basic shades make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?
Skinnier. It highlights the figure in the right places. In bright colours I feel not so confident about my shape.
----- would you like to wear bright colours if you didn’t feel self-conscious about your shape?
Maybe more but I still like the look of black.

4) Do you generally like simplicity in outfits? Why/Why not?
Yes, it is easy to mix and match simple outfits. I don’t look like a clown in a simple outfit and it can’t go wrong. I didn’t know what you have to do to look wrong if you wear black. Maybe you can look like a ghost or something.

5) Do you think buying mainly black and basic colours makes creating a good wardrobe easier? If yes, in what way?
Yes of course I think so. If you buy something in a specific colour it will not match with other things. It’s easier.

6) Does wearing lots of neutral colours influence the amount of purchases you make (since everything matches better, maybe less items are needed…)?
To some extent yes, but because I like different shapes and textures it is important for me to have different styles. I’m rather looking for style not colour, that’s why I buy. Everything has a little detail that makes it special.

7) Is it important to you to keep the number of items in your wardrobe small or do you like to own a lot of different clothes? Can you describe why you feel that way?
I like to own lots of different styles but not too many things maybe.

8) Do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?
Stress. If I have some problems, retail therapy is my thing.

9) How do you feel after the purchase?
Sometimes I really feel better if I wanted something for long, but if I only buy something because it’s on sale then I feel guilty. It only lies in the closet and I never wear it.

10) Do you think it would be better to shop less? Why/Why not?
Of course I can say it would be better. To live a sustainable life and take care of the environment and not use the work of poor people in Bangladesh to satisfy our not so important wants. But it is hard because we are all creatures and it is difficult to resist. Sometimes marketing does its job and makes us think we need this stuff.

11) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with fast-changing trends?
I see a lot of trend changing but I do not care. It almost pisses me off. There is this hype for Superstar Adidas and everybody is wearing it. Everybody follows. The older you get you have your own sense of looking at the world.
12) Do you think that black and basic-coloured items have a longer lifespan and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?
Yes. Certain times after one week I was so bored with the print of a shirt and I just get rid of it. So I consider it.

----- how long do you usually keep a garment in your closet?
Maybe a year, sometimes two. Longer than that does not happen often.

13) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?
Good quality. Affordable. perfect cut, perfect style. Should match my closet.

14) Do you prefer to blend in or stand out with your outfit? Why?
Half and half. Because I wear mostly black I probably don’t stand out in Sweden. But sometimes I want to stand out. Then I want to wear something that catches people’s eyes and is not super basic.

C
1) Your style includes a lot of simple cuts and unobtrusive colors. Can you tell me about when you started to dress that way and if there was a special motivating cause?

I always been fascinated by Asian culture, it is all about contrasts, either very modern, minimalistic, and natural or very traditional, extreme with style and artificial. The modern, minimalist and natural part really fascinated me, until the point that I started to adopt this kind of lifestyle, especially in the way I dress, I really love Asian woman style, maybe also because of their minimalistic features aspect, I see an incredible balance and elegance in them.

2) Did your stylistic change go hand in hand with an attitude change? How?

Somehow yes, I started with clothing but quincly it affected also the way I was living my life, and my approach with other people.
Can you give an example for this?
Other people are more important to me now. I especially like going to see friends now more than shopping in the past.

3) Do you generally like simplicity in outfits? Why/Why not?

Yes, I do. It make me feel calm to wear something very plain or simple, it doesn’t need to much effort, too many details creates disorder and I noticed that it also affects my behavior.

4) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with trends?

Not that much, but it can happen, especially if you are a person that is pointed as somebody with style, that either if you want or not, people has certain expectation from you, and this can generate unconsciously stress.

5) Do you think that minimalistic and basic items have a longer lifespan and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?

I think so, and when I buy clothes I keep this in considerations, for example, a simple white dress, can be used for years, it’s the way you match it with all the rest that make is a new piece everytime. That usually doesn’t happens with a piece of cloth that has many details or that is rich in colour, since it is too strong that being changed, so after you have used it once, seldom you will wear it again.

----- How long does a garment usually stay in your wardrobe?
Maybe until 5 years but I also have older garments.

6) How does wearing minimalist outfits make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?

Generally it makes me feel more free and relaxed, more confortable with my self, as if I took off from me all the superficiality to leave just the essencial. When I used to wear colorful stuff
my mood was very affected by the colour I was wearing, I was probably more moody than now.

7) Does wearing lots of neutral colours influence the amount of purchases you make (since everything matches better, maybe less items are needed...)?

It is true that when you wear minimalistic pieces of clothes, since patterns and colours are less, seems that also the choices are the same small. You would think that I don’t urge to buy new stuff, but for me it more a question of quality, if something looks good I still need to buy it, doesn’t matter if I already have 10 different black t-shirt, I might find one with a different texture or made with a good material, i would still buy it.

8) Is it important to you to keep the number of items in your wardrobe small or do you like to own a lot of different clothes? Can you describe why you feel that way?

I like to keep it small, quality instead of quantity is essential for me.

9) Do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?

I think that it is connected with the fact of being a woman, I need to buy things I don’t really need to feel good.

--- Can you somehow describe what makes you feel good about it?
I feel prettier in new outfits and I like to be complemented by people.

10) Does minimalism or essentialism play a role in other areas in your life (e. g. home, food, job, media usage)?

Of course it plays, I think that it is a real and proper state of mind, i dress minimalistic, and I like to be surrounded by it.

11) What role does sustainability concerns play when you make a purchase decision?
It is not my main focus when buying something, but it is an additional value that I take in consideration. It make me feel good from an etical point of you to buy something sustainable.

12) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?

The perfect garment is the one that makes you feel and look good, without disguise your personality.

13) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?

When I am focused on the quality of life leaving all the superficial out of it.

D

1) Your style includes a lot of simple cuts and unobtrusive colours. Can you tell me about when you started to dress that way and if there was a special motivating cause?

I have always enjoyed the color black, but time to time mixed it with colors. Not that I actually wanted more that “I should”. And I think it was about 6-7 years ago i started to be me consequent with dressing in black and more simple.

2) Did your stylistic change go hand in hand with an attitude change? How?

No, not at all.

3) Do you generally like simplicity in outfits? Why/Why not?

Yes, i prefer simplicity over all. and the reason is because simplicity makes me comfortable and its easy.
4) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with trends?

No

5) Do you think that minimalistic and basic items have a longer life-span and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?

No, not necessary. Even minimalistic and basics can have cuts that are dated. I would not wear a suit jacket from 90’s, which was a really minimalistic and androgynous trend for women during the 90’s, today.

6) How does wearing minimalist outfits make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?

The definition of minimalistic is a bit confusing, since I don’t define minimalistic as color black. And even if I dress mostly in black, does it mean that I’m wearing minimalistic clothes.. So this one is a bit hard to answer..

7) Does wearing lots of neutral colors influence the amount of purchases you make (since everything matches better, maybe less items are needed…)?

No, no necessary.

8) Is it important to you to keep the number of items in your wardrobe small or do you like to own a lot of different clothes? Can you describe why you feel that way?

I love the feeling of new stuff but I don’t buy anything since I’m too cheap.

9) Do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?

Yes, it happens. I get some fix idea of that I need something which I actually don’t. So that’s the main reason I buy stuff I don’t need.
10) Does minimalism or essentialism play a role in other areas in your life (e.g. home, food, job, media usage)?

No

11) What role does sustainability concerns play when you make a purchase decision?

A scale from 1-5, i would say 3

12) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?

Good quality in fabric, the same with trims and nice cuttings.

13) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?

Honestly, I have no idea!

1) Your wardrobe is minimalistic not only in a visual sense but also in a conceptual one. Can you describe when minimalism started to influence your lifestyle and if there was a special motivating cause?

I would not say that I ever really became a minimalist, I just some day put a label on it. My dad worked for an international company and therefore we moved often even when I was little. Every time I had to go through my things and decide what I wanted to keep. That gave me a very good sense for what is important and what is not.
2) In which way do you think visual minimalism supports the conceptual one?

I wouldn’t say visual minimalism is absolutely necessary to be a conceptual minimalist. There is nothing like a perfect standard wardrobe that makes everybody happy. Instead the wardrobe should fit the individual character and lifestyle.

But the pieces should be coherent and versatile. For me personally, visual minimalism makes this goal easier. Maybe I’m just lazy or not a good stylist. Maybe some people are able to create a super colorful capsule wardrobe.

3) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?

As I write on my blog, a perfect item can be identified by answering five questions: Does it fit my style concept? Do I like the fit and fabric? What place or function will it have in my wardrobe? Will it fill a gap in my wardrobe? And can I think of at least 3 outfits to wear with it? If you can answer all of these questions with yes, you have found your perfect item.

4) Which role do trends play in your life?

In a long-term sense they do play a role. I buy cuts and shapes that are up-to-date, but nothing too short lived.

5) Despite of your obviously strong minimalist philosophy, do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?

It happens very rarely. Bad mood and low self esteem are probably the most common causes for rash purchases. But I am very balanced and have other things that I know will make me happy when I feel down.
6) On your blog and via seminars you are educating people how to live more essential lives. What are the biggest obstacles they face? What are the most common reasons for them to give up or cling to their old habits?

Most people are scared of social exclusion. They have a fear (sometimes subconsciously) that if they don’t have a large variety of clothes or don’t follow every trend, people will notice and judge them for it. This is why people shop more when they are stressed or sad, they want to feel secure and accepted again.

7) What advice do you give these people? How can they overcome this problem?

They have to tend more for their minds. Find something that gives a more essential sort of fulfillment. I noticed that many people just spend all their free time online or watching movies. Even though that can be fun and relaxing to a certain degree, it is nothing that makes you grow. In my opinion, the best thing that you can do to change the focus of your life is learning something new. It doesn’t really matter what, as long as it gives you a feeling of success and pleasure.

7) As a minimalism coach, do you feel that the interest in minimalism has become bigger in recent years?

It has. Mainly young people want my advice, but now even 40-60 year olds start to be interested.

8) Do you have an explanation for this?

Many people are not doing so well any more when it comes to money and job. Their situation is getting more insecure, so they are looking for something that can give them stability apart from material things.

9) What do you think about the visual minimalism that you can see at Zara or H&M at the moment?
I think it is good and bad at the same time. Lots of the pieces there definitely make good essentials for a minimalist wardrobe, but the quality is often very bad so they do not have a long life time.

10) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?

If you have removed everything that doesn’t add any value to your life and replace it with stuff that really matters.

F

1) Your style includes a lot of simple cuts and unobtrusive colors. Can you tell me about when you started to dress that way and if there was a special motivating cause?

I started to dress this way after I graduated from university. I felt like I needed to express myself in a different way, maybe more matured.

2) Did your stylistic change go hand in hand with an attitude change? How?

Yes, I felt like i need to become more serious somehow.

3) Do you generally like simplicity in outfits? Why/Why not?

yes, but they need to have a special cut or a style that differs from others, yet simplistic.

4) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with trends?
No
----- has it always been like that?
well, as a teenager i was more concerned with trends. i didnt want to be weird.

5) Do you think that minimalistic and basic items have a longer lifespan and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?

yes, well, i dont really think about trends when shopping.

6) How does wearing minimalist outfits make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?

i feel more in balance with myself. Colors make me feel like I am not myself.

7) Does wearing lots of neutral colours influence the amount of purchases you make (since everything matches better, maybe less items are needed...)?

yes

8) Is it important to you to keep the number of items in your wardrobe small or do you like to own a lot of different clothes? Can you describe why you feel that way?

I like to own very few things but they need to be special, yet simple so they can be combined into different styles.

9) Do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?

Very rarely, but when it happens, it doesnt make me feel good.
----- Can you describe the circumstances under which this happens?
Sometimes when im bored or unsatisfied with myself.
10) Does minimalism or essentialism play a role in other areas in your life (e.g. home, food, job, media usage)?

I would say that my home is similar to my personal style, its a similar way in which I can represent who I am.

11) What role does sustainability concerns play when you make a purchase decision?

Well, I think about the quality of the product and its durability, I do not like to buy products that it wont last and that it looks cheap.

12) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?

Black trousers perfectly fitted, white long blouse (silk) and a perfect black long jacket. back shoes for sure.

13) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?

I do not really know how to answer this question, I guess when I prioritize in other matters yet my style will still be great due to its simplistic style.

G

1) Apart from your apparent love for simplistic fashion, you also seem to be quite minimalist in a material sense. Can you describe when minimalism started to influence your lifestyle and if there was a special motivating cause?

After the birth of my daughter. We had no space and money.
2) In which way do you think visual minimalism supports the conceptual one?
Less visual clutter frees my mind

3) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?
Little white dress. Never looks dated. Even better than black

4) Which role do trends play in your life?
I like to observe trends but don’t buy everything

5) Your style is extremely simple, even compared to other minimalist bloggers. How do you avoid getting bored?
I’m obsessed with structures. Structures are never boring for me, even if they are always black and white.

6) How does wearing minimalist outfits make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?
More free. More myself

7) Your blog includes a little shop where you sell your own fashion items. Who is your main customer base?
Mostly female, 20-35 I guess. But I don’t always know who they are.

8) What role does sustainability concerns play when you make a purchase decision?
Not so much although it should
9) Despite of your obviously strong minimalist philosophy, do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?

No. In the past yes. I had not found my style

10) How do you know when you are living a minimalistic life?

Not sure, it depends

H

1) Your style includes a lot of black and basic colours. Can you tell me about when you started to dress that way and if there was a special reason?

when i was younger i even dressed up and made edgy looks just to hang out. but it’s a waste of time now i just want to chill. also i started reading books on quantum physics theorees and the microscopic universe and it made me even more spiritual than i was before.

2) Is it now a conscious decision to buy many black and basic-coloured items or do you just intuitively buy them?

conscious and intuitive both.

3) How does wearing black and basic shades make you feel, compared to wearing colourful or patterned outfits?

basic colors keep me balance and centered and it helps me to get rid of the negatives on my mental bank account. colorful is not my thing.
4) Do you generally like simplicity in outfits? Why/Why not?
i don’t like color but it needs detail. too simple is boring. dramatic is good.

5) Do you think buying mainly black and basic colours makes creating a good wardrobe easier? If yes, in which way?
maybe so. more classy that way.

6) Does wearing lots of neutral colours influence the amount of purchases you make (since everything matches better, maybe less items are needed…)?
most of my outfits come from sponsors so i can’t answer that one.

7) Is it important to you to keep the number of items in your wardrobe small or do you like to own a lot of different clothes? Can you describe why you feel that way?
no but i don’t have a problem getting rid of stuff.

8) Do you sometimes realize that you bought new clothes even though you didn’t really want to? If yes, can you describe what makes you do that?
like i said most is sponsored. but this happened sometimes, mostly because i was bored.

9) How do you feel after the purchase?
sometimes good sometimes it was not a good buy. but we get to appreciate the moment.

10) Do you think it would be better to shop less? Why/Why not?
i don’t shop much

11) Do you sometimes feel pressured to keep up with fast-changing trends?
not bad pressure, i like to follow the vibes.
----- does your image play a role in this?
yes for sure. outfits are a way to control how people perceive you as a person.

12) Do you think that black and basic-coloured items have a longer lifespan and don’t fall out of fashion so quickly? If yes, is that something you consider when buying clothes?
no they can be out
13) What do you think makes a “perfect garment”?
gosh hard question

14) Do you prefer to blend in or stand out with your outfit? Why?
stand out. i want to look dramatic.