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O enfeite nosso de todo dia: significados atribuídos por *tweens* brasileiras aos acessórios de moda.

Our daily ornaments: the meanings of accessories to Brazilian *tweens*.

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RESUMO

Tweens são consideradas as crianças incluídas em uma faixa etária que pode variar de sete a quatorze anos e, portanto, estão em um estágio entre a infância e a adolescência. Amparado por teorias sobre a participação das crianças no universo do consumo e sobre a atribuição de significado aos bens, o estudo aqui alvitrado apresenta, por meio de análise interpretativista, com método de pesquisa de inspiração etnográfica, os significados que dez *tweens* atribuíram a acessórios pessoais. Os resultados convergem para o uso dos acessórios como instrumentos importantes de ajuste social. Em nível mais particular, os acessórios se prestam igualmente a práticas performáticas lúdicas e de competências, e ainda são instrumentos bastante úteis à aproximação e reforço de laços afetivos.

Palavras-chave: *Tweens*, consumo, significados.

ABSTRACT

Tweens are children included in an age group that can vary from seven to fourteen years of age. As consumers, they have behavioral quirks and attitudes due to their social and emotional experiences. As they participate in society as consumers they have become increasingly eloquent and active in their consumer relations. Ethnographic inspiration was chosen as an effective research method during four months of

fieldwork. The results reveal the use of accessories as important tools for social adjustment since they "play the game" of social life and also to establish and strengthen emotional ties.

Keywords: *Tweens*, consumption, meanings.

INTRODUCTION

To unravel the world of assets and their attributions in people's daily lives is essential for the comprehension of contemporary society, since the consideration of consumption culture is one of its most remarkable aspects (Kasser & Kanner, 2004). This allows to say that the scrutiny of relations that human beings establish with objects which they consume may be a useful tool to identify and understand some individual and social characteristics established in the current world. In turn, such identification and understanding should be capable of paving new theoretical and practical roads in the field of consumer behavior when consumption experience is seen as an expanded phenomenon, extrapolated, from simple utilitarianism of products and services (Montesinos, Suárez, & Pulido-Fernández, 2015; Silva & Barbosa, 2018.

In fact, if there were the substitution of family names, of traditions, or religion, of race and of nationality before by the capacity of objects in printing differentiation to individuals (Lipovetsky, 2004; Lira, Santos, Campos & Costa, 2020), now they are more likely to express individual styles, preferences and aspirations. It is through assets that individuals have compose themselves as social identities (Baudrillard, 2009; Belk, 1988; Campbell, 2006; Lipovetsky, 2004; Slater, 2000), getting to know themselves and recognizing themselves in each object's meaning (Barbosa, 2010).

The possibility of investigation of consumption phenomenon regarding its symbolic dimension is favored, still, not only by the new conceptual lens inherent to this approach – which allow new

interpretations to already studied phenomenon – but, mainly, since the myriad of today available products in the market offer a broad field to accept the most varied hypothesis on symbolic exchanges. In addition to the panoply of goods and services able to mark the relation consumption-meaning, there are still several backgrounds of such relations (new family formats, new forms of communication, technological advances) and the roles which individuals from modern civilization assume in it, opening, therefore, a fruitful field of investigation.

Therefore, once the world reorganizes itself socially, new combinations are expected among such factors (consumers, objects and situation), demanding different research paths and of practice. One important social alteration is the participation each day earlier and with higher intensity of children in several scopes of society and in consumption activities, in particular (Brusdal & Lavik, 2008; Buckingham & Tingstad, 2010; Hill, 2011).

Still within such scope, another movement is the definition, in the children' segment, of a sub-categorization – the so-called tween, commonly considered as children within eight and twelve years of age (Andersen, Tufte, Rasmussen, & Chan, 2007; Lindstrom, 2007; Siegell, Coffey, & Livingston, 2004) and are called in such manner by being in a in-be-tween age range (Cook & Kaiser, 2004), between childhood and adolescent (Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Siegel , 2004) and whose purchase power and influence on the family consumption have been significantly growing (Carrillo, Gonçalo-Sparks, & Salcedo, 2018).

The present study aims at identifying which the meanings attributed to the fashion accessories by eight to twelve year-old tweens. Such items were chosen by presenting, at first, a category of dispensable products for the social living of the child. Nonetheless, it is notorious the use, each day more, of such items by children of the feminine gender (Thyne et al., 2016). The assumption is that, while clothing and shoes are indispensable to the individuals, objects such as jewelry, purses, belts,

hair accessories etc., when elected, may end intentions of communication regarding who uses them with greater forcefulness. Clothing and shoes also carry such expressions, but they come in a adjacent way in those looks. Another assumption is that dressing the child are expecting gesture by parents and, with that, such items may have meanings to them and not to their children, which may not happen with accessories, which, here, are supposed to be asked for by children.

Despite the tradition from academic writing in making authors "talk with each other" within a paradigmatic north – in the sense of being coherent to the way as a phenomenon is seen – researchers with different theoretical orientations were considered in some parts of this study, since, in some way, have contributed to a higher comprehension regarding the meaning of assets. Although, the consumption culture is labeled in a distinct form, on the basis of its line of thought is the value of symbolic and cultural aspects of consumption goods rather than its utilitarian aspect and, dismissed the more radical focus regarding the origin and, due to this, the interpretation that is done of consumption under such view, may make things clearer.

As for the research method, given the nature of the phenomenon to be studies, it was chosen a qualitative approach, molded by a interpretation guidance, which would be more appropriate to investigate the problem here exposed. A quasi-ethnography with ten tweens, was, then, performed during eleven months.

CONSUMPTION AND IDENTITY

Identity, in the classical sense of an individual's characterization, which for a long period of time established the social world, has been in decline (Hall, 2006). In first place, the basis of modern identity have been altered; if before they were traced by social, economic or religious

aspects from the individuals, in modern era, it is much more a reflex of its lifestyle, of its posture in face of the facts and of the others. Second, the permanent and constant character from the old identity gives places to multi-faced personalities and in constant change. Therefore, a same person may express different identities depending on the occasion or on the people met. For Charon (2000, p.71), "the group of characteristics referred to labels, created in the social structured, is called identity. It is the name that the individual gives oneself and that habitually informs others in one's actions".

Such dynamic and transitory characteristic of the identity is an answer to the dialectical nature of the relation between the individual and the society, since, according to Berger & Luckman (1999) the identity remains incomprehensible unless it is located in a world. Therefore, the identity is the function of the world. Now, if the world, then, assumes new configurations, nothing is more predictable, therefore, than that the identity doing the same. Giddens (2002) explains that the new order for the "being" in high modernity echoes in the construction of a lifestyle, which by him is defined as "a group more or less integrated of practices that an individual embraces, not only since those practices fills up utilitarian needs, but because they give material shape to a particular narrative of self-identity" (Giddens, 2002, p.79).

Such argument allows to state that the identity is also reconfigured in the so-called consumption society. In fact, consumption culture, characteristic of such time, is really considered a prominent arena for the production and circulation of identity positions, having in assets a way for which such positions are incorporated, reproduced and perceived by the individuals (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988; Hogg & Mitchell, 1996). By the myriad of products offered in the marked and free from structural ties that determined, in the past, their identities, people now act freely to construct and to express themselves as best as they please (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Solomon (1983) clears that the relation between consumption and identity is thought in function of the individual's projection that, in turn, is consolidated form the meanings contained in objects. Under such scope, people are what they buy, but also are bought in accordance with what it is (or is believed to be) or with what someone intends to become, being the assets, therefore, a reflection of such identities (Belk, 1988).

Follmann (2001) corroborates with such vision, clarifying that the identity concentrates on the real dimension of the individuals, and one another, to which they aspire, in addition to an expectation or third-party demands For the authors, the identity forms itself by conjugating what one believes to be, what one wants to be and what others expect one to be. This same libertarian character, fluid and amorphous from modern identity imposes to the individuals the responsibility (and perhaps the obligation) of self-defining by the systematic appropriation of symbolic amounts of assets (McCracken, 1986).

Whether, generically, the issue of identity is relevant, as states Giddens (2002), it becomes especially critical to some groups which their position in society are not well accepted, well defined or are intermediate. Tweens, when do not see themselves as belonging to the group of children, nor therefore include themselves, more specifically, as teenagers, counting a number of anguishes in the attempt to understand what socially construct them or what they should resort to adjust themselves in face of the groups which they attend or aspire (Cody, Lawlor, & McLaren, 2010). In general, the meaning of products becomes more important during the pre-adolescent phase (correspondent to the ages of tweens), since the individuals in this age range see assets as material symbols of identity and also make inferences on third-party identities on this possessions (Roper & La Niece, 2009).

Some authors who treat the identity question exerted from consumption practices by tweens, specifically, highlight that such fact of not consuming a certain product may also be seen as a symbolic action (Kjeldgaard, 2009). When refusing the consumption of certain items, individuals choose to resemble or become different from a social sphere (Brusdal & Lavik, 2008). Such practice of "not being" installs a duality in which "one of the terms is always more uplifted than the other: one is the rule and the other is 'the other' – seen as 'divergent' or 'outsider" (Woodward, 2009, p. 51).

CONSUMPTION AS MEANING

Meaning is a group of subjective interpretations or affective reactions that human beings apply to an experience, person or object, giving it sense (Kleine & Kernan, 1988; Richins, 1994). It is the perception and the interpretation of something according to the vision of the world from the subjects (Kleine & Kernan, 1991) and, although it is essential property of the object (Sahlins, 2006), it only manifests itself through the interaction between individuals, the object and the context (Friedman, 1986; Kleine & Kernan, 1988; McCracken, 2003).

In practically all cultures the products carry social status meanings, of identity and of prestige from their owner (Belk, 1982). Thus, in contemporary society, more than a functional attribute the symbolic attributes specify and guide the social relations (Barbosa & Campbell, 2006; Rocha & Barros, 2006). The functional utility becomes the more basic and indistinct part of a product and gives place to the capacity of the asset to satisfy hedonistic needs from consumers linked to their objects of subjective desires, their "fantasies and multi-sensorial emotions" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982, p.92; Silva, Barbosa & Farias, 2019).

On the account of this symbolic constitution of products, therefore, is what Rocha (2002) admits that the consumption is an indispensable element to the functioning of society, considering that, if it weren't for the consumption good, people would have difficulties in making meanings circulate or ordering one's social universe. Within this perspective, the essence of a product, therefore, does not come from its physical constitution or from functional attributes, it becomes the result between the asset, its owner and the rest of the society, being this especially true for products in which a higher social visibility is found (Hyatt, 1992).

Rocha & Barros (2004) summarize such ideas by stating that the consumption in modernity is seen as 1) a meaning system, which the primary need that is provisioned is symbolic; 2) a code, through which social relations are assimilated and 3) a classification system of things, people, products and groups. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, in the same line, state that consumption uses assets to become firm and visible a private group of judgments in the processes of classifying people and situations: "assets are neutral, their uses are social; may be used as fences or bridges" (Douglas & Isherwood, 2009, p.36).

In a study on the utility and the meanings of personal ornaments and their relation with personal attraction, Bloch & Richins (1992) assert that the primary social function of meanings of assets assume three conditions: the role to be played is important and desirable; the success of the social role implies in the use and display of a certain object; and the individual is not safe from the competence to play the role.

For McCracken (2003), the higher the symbolic value of a product the bigger the capacity to generate meanings related to the identity and social status. To the young public, such symbolism is particularly interesting since youngsters found themselves in a period of uncertainty and material assets become a way of defining their identities and obtain prestige (Belk, 1988).

The meaning, therefore, runs through the veins of culture, of the consumer and of the own consumption asset itself.

The culture is the own sum of shared meanings by their members (Peter & Olson, 2009). Thus, if the consumption contours are defined under cultural aspects, the symbolic meanings of assets are found highly related to the people's culture (Dittmar, 1992). It is by the symbolic character, therefore, from the products that the consumer gets out of the purely economic sphere and assumes a cultural dimension in which rational and individual interpretations give place to collective and public.

Culture and its group of symbols, rituals and classifications are sources from the meanings of assets (McCracken, 2003; Slater, 2002; Solomon, 1983; Woodward, 2009), appropriated by the individuals through their consumption of possession (McCracken, 2003; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Although the meanings are originated in a culturally constituted world, the idea is that they take shape from the interaction between people and, therefore, would be appropriate to say that they are socially constructed (Cuche, 1999). Therefore, due to the need of collective agreements, signs are created and through the practical sharing of them, meanings emerge (Bronckart, 1999).

Richins (1994) divide the sources of meanings in dimensions. According to the author, an object may assume a meaning due to *i*) its utility or function, which assumes a certain competence of the user when using the product; *ii*) the pleasure of fun it provides; *iii*) the capacity to represent interpersonal bonds ; and *iv*) the capacity of the product to express personal identity.

Not very differently from Richins, Fournier (1991) attributes to the assets three main roles: functional, from experience and from identity. The first is related to products that solve a problem imposed by the external environment. Assets or services which offer pleasure, aesthetic satisfaction, fun or excitement, which provide sense of security and

comfort to their users, are assets whose main function is purely due to experience. The third role is characteristic, for example, of sports cars and certain types of clothing or sports capable of expressing self-concept, individuality, promote family bonding, to make past experiences and relationships more tangible and to help in the creation and "management" of group identities and society announcing social positions.

Susan Fournier highlights that the categories are not static regarding the products it concentrates, since they depend on the history and the consumer's culture, on the polysemic character of the assets and on the context. The author proposes, still, a typology composed by eight meanings form an assets' classification, clarifying that the center of meaning is the consumer's benefit and not the product's utility. Fournier (1991), therefore, disposes that:

Utility objects are objects whose meaning is linked to their attributes and their capacity to satisfy needs. The use of the product is directed to a problem which demands a solution.

Action objects, unlike utility assets, they are not focused on the object, but on the stimulating experiences and emotions they provide. The object stimulate a sensation on the user.

Appreciation objects also deliver an emotional experience of fun and pleasure to the user, but the object is the center of the feeling.

Transition objects provide to their users the feeling of security, comfort, nurturing and coziness in times of change.

Childhood objects are those that were used during childhood and came back to the user's life. They do not evoke special memories from people or situations, but they give sensation of familiarity.

Personal identification objects refer to the assets which express something regarding its user in terms of what one really is or aspires to be, one's interests, etc.

Position objects speak of the individual at cultural level, situating or integrating the individual in the social environment in which one transits or to which one aspires.

Ritual re-enforcers are objects whose meaning strongly depend on the context. Apart from the ritual, the object does not have any meaning to its owner.

Another contribution regarding meanings categories which may classify the assets beyond their functional attributes appear in the study of Tharp & Scott (1990). For these authors, some objects may be considered *totems* when represent any type of ethnic or heritage; items such as irreverent clothing or some sort of drink served at a dinner, on the other hand, are considered as having a meaning of interpersonal communication (inter-personal environment), since they serve as interlocutors between individuals in their social interactions; social status is the meaning of consumption goods that are capable of indicating the social group to whom someone belong; transcendent is a meaning attributed to assets linked to religion or to mysticism; expression of *self* for Tharp & Scott (1990) is a private meaning and is related to an ideal "me"; objects from the past which remind of individual experiences or represent time with a group have a meaning of experiences memories; source of pleasure is a meaning attributed to assets capable of providing hedonistic answers and, at last, the utilitarian meaning of assets, just as it is in Fournier (1991) & Richins (1994), which come purely from the functional attributes of the product or service.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Due to the theoretical marks and to the cut of the research, it was defined as subject of the present study girls with age varying from eight to twelve (Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Siegel et al., 2004). In a way to make sure that the participant children had access and possibility of purchasing the

same consumption assets and to a same group of market information, the group was composed by children from the same social class. Therefore, three basic criteria were defined for the pre-selection of the participants: being of the female gender, being between eight and twelve years of age and belonging to class A or B. The research was performed in 2019, in a city from the countryside of Minas Gerais, with population approximately of 600.000 inhabitants.

The following step was to identify children from such profile who used personal accessories. A private school attended by children from high class families was, then, selected and the educational supervisors provided the schedule of the breaks in which it would be possible to proceed the observation of the girls form the ideal age range and that were using some accessory. A list of 35 children was elaborated and the mothers were contacted for the authorization of the research with their daughters. Eighteen children were authorized to participate, but only ten were chosen – with the help of the education supervisors – for having a less shy personality and, with this, presenting higher probability of manifesting being more comfortable during the research.

The five months of encounters with the tween, in their residences, generated an approximate total of 201 raw hours of taping-recording, composed by informal dialogues, unscripted, but always trying to direct the focus of the conversation to the issue of using and possession of accessories.

Other forms of data construction involved photograph analysis, videos and other several materials in possession of the children and that had relation with the theme to be approached. In addition, although it is not legally authorized their use in Brazil by underage individuals, four participants had Facebook and/or Instagram accounts and, frequently, posted on those social media useful information to the study. Suggested magazines by the participants themselves were also researched and, sometimes, projection techniques were applied through such material.

These options of material allowed the triangulation proposed for studies of ethnographic investigation (Graue & Walsh, 2003), not so much as confirmation instruments, but as complements of the information obtained through the visits and by the interviews. Having found, after some encounters, the common behavior of the majority of the participants of accessing fashion blogs, those also became part of the analysis material.

Considering the symbolic nature and the social-representative focus of the relations to be investigated in this work, the resulting material from the field research – conversation with the tween, interviews, recorded depositions from mothers, store owners and other family members – was investigated under an interpretative perspective. In a first moment, repeated and exhausting reading from the textual material as a whole (intratext) was performed, to identify the meanings present in it; Later, their parts were analyzed separately (intertexts), but cross-checked among themselves and reflected from the overall.

The quasi-ethnographic characteristic (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003) is fit to the method since key-principles of dense description throughout time were adopted, but they have deviated from the tradition ethnography regarding duration and intensity of the data gathering. This is because, for such purpose, it would have been very useful the presence of the researcher, for instance, either in the classroom, in the transport to school or at the moments which the tweens were getting ready for some event, which is not possible due to the intimate nature of such situations and institutional rules.

RESULTS

Expressive meanings

The first and most prominent meaning of the accessories to arise from the speeches of the tweens derived from their potential to make

them more beautiful, and due to this, made them feel good about themselves. The term "potential" is pertinent since the tweens believe that accessories make someone prettier, not being able to offer beauty in itself. In addition to beauty, meaning that compose such group helped the tween to express and identify, in others, style, sense of identity, social status and humor.

The *tweens* recognize the social importance of a fine appearance (Bloch & Richins, 1992; Cardoso, 2004; Chang, Colwell, & Walisky, 2018) from their mother's examples, from other women in the family, from celebrities and their peers – specially school colleagues – and, therefore, they feel at ease, adjusted to the environment they live in when feeling beautiful: "We have to be pretty for the girls, for the boys, for everybody to think that we are cool" (T9). They also value more "produced" people, in one of the activities with figures, tweens were presented to three women and several objects, which they would use to present the models. Most participants delivered more items to the women and pointer her as being the most beautiful.

"Vain" and "stylish" were two adjectives repeatedly mentioned by the tweens when speaking on how they felt when using necklaces, bracelets and other items or how they identified such attributes in a woman. "Vain" is a term used by the younger tweens, frequently, both as a substitute as a superlative of "beautiful" in case of accessories. When looking at the figures which I presented them or when speaking about themselves, the younger tweens attributed the adjective "beautiful" to a woman with no or little accessories and "vain" to a model with several accessories (and makeup). They understood that clothing played a role to let them beautiful, but accessories made them "vain" – something bigger than beauty, an extra diligence with the appearance. Such past of the empiric research converge to the evidences of the study of Abdala (2008) that pointed accessories such as earrings, bracelets and rings strong markers of female vanity.

'Stype' and its appropriation has become a predominant market speech in consumption society, specially among young people and, their practice, serving as "experimentation and establishment of identities" (Kjeldgaard, 2009, p. 73). In case of younger tweens, style was represented by the use of accessories with big ostentation capacity, unlike how children from the study of Cardoso (2004) behave themselves when choosing their clothing. In this perspective, in fact, it is possible to understand why ordinary and discrete items may not leave the tweens stylish. Clarifying, for the tween, to be stylish is to be a woman whose accessories are flashy and make her beautiful. Style, in itself, is the ownership of someone accused by the use of a distinctive accessory.

Still, when asked to point out their own personal style, the younger tweens knew what was not from the accessories they would not use Woodward (2009) defines this as principle of exclusion in the definition of an identity – but they could not clearly distinguish the difference between romantic, delicate, bold, etc.

Such vanity or beauty has as focus to provide the tween what themselves called "to draw attention", or make them feel noticed by people. "When we wear a purse, we become more adorned, appearing more, everybody looks at you" (T10). The visibility provided by the accessory is, therefore, important: "The bracelet leaves you more embellished because it shows. Because the earring, the hair hides" (T9).

Regarding the adopting of style as foundation to the communication of one's identity – here extended as labels created from a group of characteristics in the social structure or "the name the individual gives oneself and that currently inform others in one's actions" (Charon, 2000, p.71) – the *tweens* make it with great property and clearness in their purposes.

> Look at me. I like more things like this. The ones that use bows, such things, she wants to transmit that she is a happier, more delicate, more educated girl, more... Only good stuff! The others that use these reamers think that they will win everything using this, that with this they will be popular, will be teenagers, will be adults, will be everything in life. Bows are more sensitive than reamers, which shows that she is tougher, that "I can do everything". (T11)

Considering, therefore, the labels that are assigned to being rocker, delicate, romantic, Gothic, etc., one of the participants considered herself "rocker" due to the taste in accessories with motives of traditional skulls, and mainly, due to the use of a reamer. Although such patient still possessed some more delicate accessories in her outfit, the chosen ones by her in the last times have had the clear purpose of eliminating any remnant of a previous "inner self", even without the certainty that the what kind of "inner self" wanted to be in the current moment. Feelings experienced by such tween are found, once again, in the proposition of Woodward (2009) that, many times, exclusion sustains the difference enabling the subject to be seen as "one other", constructing meanings from oppositions which are established regarding the rest of the social environment perceived as dominant (Kim & Davis, 2017) and it is like this that the several identities are culturally constructed. The rocker style comes, therefore, anchored in the desire of transformation and in the statement of a new identity: "For example, I put a reamer and everybody said 'wow! How crazy'. I want to have my hair dyed purple, blue, I don't know, everything different" (T12).

The *tweens* believe that accessories may sign the social status of a person. Although, as already pointed in this study, the majority of the accessories do not have a brand, the tweens use those that count on this distinctive attribute to state themselves as belonging and, other times, superior to the social environment in which they transit. Purses

and sunglasses and glasses of famous and expensive brands, such as Kippling, Louis Vuitton, Tommy Hilfiger, Ray Ban and Michael Kors are used by the *tweens* to make their likelihood to colleagues and friends legit. Since all girls are derived from the same social class, the common observed speech with the possession of the brand was "I am just like you" instead of "I am better than you". Superiority, on the other hand, seems to comes from how many items of a certain brand the tweens have, then the fact of three teens having more than fifteen purses of famous brands and one of them counting on 47 pieces, including tablets capes, lunch boxes, backpacks and pastes.

The *tweens* also attributed to accessories the capacity of accusing a position – whether concrete or not – or aspiration to a certain age range:

> I thought that if I had a wallet, I would be a teenager. At school they walk with a wallet all the time, you know? Purse, the older girls say that who uses purse at school is a little girl. (T11)

Another expressive meaning attributed to accessories regards the capacity of such items to proclaim the state of humor of their user. Researchers of clothing and their expressive capacity have also identified the capacity of clothing and accessories to show humor. The study of Kwakye-Opong & Adinku (2013), for example, certifies that it is possible to determine the psychological state of a person and one's humor through what one uses on the body with aesthetic function. In fact, for the *tweens*, the use of accessories shows joy and vivacity. "Me, when I use an accessory, I am happy. When I am sad I don't want to put on any accessory, I don't want to put make up on, I don't want to put beautiful clothes on" (T12).

Whether on grown individuals items of personal adornment are capable of improving the self-esteem and humor (Bloch & Richins, 1992), the same does not happen with the *tweens*. For them, the same

way that accessories have the capacity of only leaving something already beautiful more beautiful, in case of humor such objects show themselves equally unable to alter it: "My mom puts a necklace on, a ring, she gets more beautiful, more vain, more cheerful. Now, she's sad, the joy is not on the necklace, nor will it change what my brother did" (T 9).

Playful meanings

Unlike expressive meanings, playful meanings are enjoyed internally, which means, they do not need the other to be effective. They are meanings that come and go to the tweens through a subjective process of actions with the objects together with reflexion, contemplation, analysis and pleasure. It is a moment of the tweens with the objects, only, and the feelings that arise from such interaction. One may collect, organize, combine, alter and give them new use and still offer the tween a certain degree of entertainment. This type of meaning is close to what Fournier (1991), Richins (1994) and Tharp & Scott (1990), consider, respectively, as sources of pleasure, appreciation and entertainment. The sense here does not appear from the use of the object itself, but from the experiences and sensations they provoke when appreciated in their totality.

The pleasure of using the accessories by the tweens does not focus only on carry them on the body as artifacts of embellishment, as happen for the women, in general. It was possible to observe for them, to handle such items also provide good sensations. With such behavior, the tween validated the idea that the emotions are on the center of hedonism and of the consumer's motivation (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) and the own disposition and joy during the speech and in the gestures of the tween when flashing their accessories was one of the strongest evidences of this.

All these characteristics conjugate with toys, games, television shows appealing for children and, due to this, provoked on the tweens pleasure sensations when interacting with them. Fournier (1991) points out that such meanings are characteristic of appreciation objects, referring to objects capable of arising in their users emotional experiences based, primarily, on the content and pleasure that they offer when are not under their main utility.

Affective meanings

Despite the fact that the families are upper high class, the tween from the present study were instructed regarding the value of money and their sources. They were able to distinguish, for example, that assets such as clothing, shoes, medication, schools are different from others such as clubs, movies, ice cream, toys, trips, understanding the hedonistic nature of the latter and comprehending that such factors from the latter favor their acquisition compared to the former. Due to this, accessories end up with a parcel of benevolence which is noticed by the tweens considering the issue of functional division of the assets.

Several times, during the period of the research, that the tweens received accessories from friends, mothers, parents, aunts and acquaintances with whom they went for a field trip or simple by being remembered in some occasion or by manifesting their desire for a certain item. When telling about the new accessory, it was possible to deduce from the relates and from the speech from the tweens the idea that the accessories, under such circumstances, represented a displaced tenderness from those whose core reside in the provision of basic items or linked to festive dates and, therefore, give the tweens an extra affection through a gesture deprived of any social or parental obligation.

Such part of the research leads us intensely to the reflections of Miller (2002) on the purchase of acts of love, mainly what the author states of being the exceptional character – not provider of the basic needs – from the items that most reflect such characteristic:

> My mom hadn't even gone to the mall; she went to Extra, really, but she thought of what I would like and brought it to me. And I don't take it off because it is really purple and I like it. (T9)

> It was from Belo Horizonte. My father had been working there and he said he saw it at the airport and he had the urge to buy it for me. He didn't even know whether I would like the purse, but brought these two and another belt to match. (T9)

It was possible to verify that it is common for the tween to posses some accessory which belonged to their mother and which they are very fond of it. The narrative from the participants on such objects rendered highlights and was full of certain pride and honor for being worthy of inheriting the object. Even the more worn objects or inappropriate to the age of the tweens for social use was kept under the same care, and sometimes even bigger care, than the other accessories.

According to the relates from the tweens, it was possible to notice that, when given the object to the daughter, the mother impressed on the object a history as to try to value it as a form of compensation for being a used article. It occurs that the tween "proved" such history and the artifact became an object with almost a meaning of a totem (Tharp & Scott, 1990) since fragments of histories were being offered to them. In the classification of Fournier (1991), accessories correspond to the assets of personality and their meaning is of high emotional response since it is personal. In addition to expressing big love, given the magnitude of sharing understood by the tweens when obtaining a personal object form their mother,

symbolize, by extension, complicity when winning an accessory which belonged to their mother, feeling trusted to be the faithful custodian of a part of a life from whom is greatly admired, as a proof of intimacy only possible between them.

When weighting the fact that some meanings here presented may be found in other objects such as decoration items, clothing, food and even in daily gestures, it is important to make clear that the importance of accessories is predominant in the cases of complicity, since they are the only objects user in their bodies – present a more intimate dimension, since, in a certain degree – and more susceptible to being transferred and immediately used by the daughters. Clothing and shoes offer more restrictions regarding size and being inappropriate when referred to the age than accessories and, even on the contrary, engender more utilitarian than symbolic feelings once they lead to basic care and are inherent to the already mentioned parental obligations. In addition, small and more delicate artifacts seem to have much value for the tweens; among them and their friends it was common to observe the exchange of objects such as rocks, pieces of adornment ribbons of cloth, cards, small boxes and even coins as signs of friendship. They were offered as a proof of a bond of special affection and complicity among them.

Self-qualifying meanings

The last block of meanings attributed to accessories by the tweens regards the competence or level of ability that such objects may assign to them in addition to those related to their direct and specific use once that the actions involved in the consumption of an asset also carry meanings (Rook & Levy, 1983).

Accessories are instruments through which the tweens rehearse and evaluate their body aesthetic skills. According to the narratives of the participants, and through the observation of their embellishment

ritual (McCracken, 1986) by the tweens, it was possible to comprehend that the girls tested their competence in choosing and using the accessories in a correct way since such capacity gives them a sense of knowledge and autonomy. When getting ready using accessories, the tweens did not argue with other people on their intention of use; they themselves chose the items, scattered through the body and only then asked someone's opinion from the house, specially their mothers. When returning to the bedroom, depending on the evaluation which they received, their facial expression and words were of either pride or irritation.

The second type of meaning linked to the issue of qualification comes from the fact that all tweens related that had already lost or ruined one or more accessories and that they felt really sad and, sometimes, got asked about it, mainly when it were jewelry or more expensive accessories, such as brand purses.

> This (ring) here I don't take to school anymore. I took it off to wash my hands in the bathroom and left it on the sink and someone got it and put in the lost and found, and I took half an hour to find it and then my dad arrived and I had to leave, then I realized I had left it and I started crying inside the car and my dad and I had a fight and we returned to the school and we did not find it. Then, the other day, AB gave it back to me. She stayed there, looking for me. (T9)

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research undertaken to answer the issues of this present work leads to some relevant considerations regarding the attribution of meanings by the *tweens*. Firstly, it seems that they attribute symbolic meanings to the assets more due to their social interactions and of a more refined conscience of the cultural environment which they are part of rather than, befittingly, their cognitive development.

Both eight-year old and twelve-year old tweens noticed and used from the non-utilitarian characteristics of the accessories. However, the inference of such meanings from the use by third parties was not equally perceived. In such cases, the ten, eleven and twelve-year old tweens were capable of elaborating more coherent assumptions on the others from the use of the accessories rather than the younger participants. Such different does not seem to be consequence, also, from the cognitive ability, but from the capacity of judgment and noticing the intentions from others regarding the use of accessories, due to more intense relations and distinct nature rather than the younger tweens. For example, among the eleven and twelve-year old tweens, the games during the break frequently were substituted by long conversations on blogs, birthdays, fashion and dating.

Finally, from our encounters, it didn't seem like the tweens presented the characteristic of not-belonging to one phase (childhood) *or* another (teenage years), but the belonging to one phase *and* another, depending even on the day and on the moment, in an attitude of ambivalence – which is in duality – and not of ambiguity, as determined by Cody et al. (2010). Such point of view lead us, still, to reflect on the statement of Douglas & Isherwood (2009) that assets may be bridges or wall, in case of the tweens and accessories, they present themselves much more as portals through which they may come and go whenever they please.

To try to subsidize all body of knowledge from several views, thus, having solid scientific nature, is the path for the dialogue between science and practice, mainly in the embody of Social Sciences, in which subjectivity and idiosyncrasies arise, flowing through the investigations. The same broad of horizons, therefore, which opens on the account of so many aspects of research in this arena, it is the same that ends up being expressing in the studies the sensation that much

more could have been explained whether one or other variable would have been contemplated.

In the case of the present study, the main limitation to be pointed out was the brief relative field research; five months could have been enough time for ethnography with adults, but with children it is not capable of providing the same results given the necessary time for the establishment of a trust relation between researcher and subjects, the difficulties of expression from the participants, the lack of objectivity and, still, the constant drift of attention characteristic of such public. Since the focus was the use of accessories, this also implied specific moments of observation – how to keep up with the participant as she gets ready – which were not fully filled and limited the time of useful observation. Perhaps a more daily living with the children could have elucidated other so many meanings and their derivations for the object of study.

Another possible impediment for a higher acuity in the interpretation of the meanings was the amplitude of the age range taken for the study, based on the recommendations of authors who had already studied tweens. There were moments of great disparity of behavior and attitude among the participants of eight, nine and ten years old and of the eleven and twelve-year old participants. If these two age ranges had been approached separately, certainly the study would have more depth. Specially the twelve-year old tweens, for being at the edge of what is culturally considered the beginning of the teenage years, deserve a separate study, which becomes registered as upcoming studies in addition to others, presented as follows.

Given the more extent contact provided by the methods of ethnographic basis, several adjacent observations end up happening in this study. They were mentioned many times throughout this study, impressing a deviating text, but the intention was only to disclosure a little more of the knowledge which was gathered from the

contemplated field. Such extra information point out, therefore, to the investigation amplitude which still remains under the own tween segment and its consumption behavior. For example, it would be very useful to investigate the use of accessories and their meanings for male tweens in a way that new knowledge would be deduced on the consumption behavior of such public by part of the culture which is preponderant of female domain – fashion. To understand how social-economical factors influence the construction and use of meanings may also be useful for the formation of a more solid body of knowledge on such theme. For this, studies with tweens belonging to a lower income class would clear how the consumption and meanings of accessories are handled among them. In more limited income situations, do accessories assume a bigger importance due to the restriction of purchase of expensive clothing or brands? Given the limitation of resources, if the prioritizing of certain accessories happen, which are them and why are them elected? Is the school is, also for such tweens, a center of consumption socialization? Being the accessories in majority used in public scope, it would be interesting to evaluate if tweens who are less involved in social activities attribute different importance to such items. When considering that childhood presents different characteristics according to the societies surrounding them (Cohn, 2005), intercultural researches which approach the forms of consumption socialization in children from different countries may also contribute to explore the dynamic aspects of behavior of such public in face of objects which are consumed for the understanding of the action by different socializing agents (media, school, peers, family) in each culture. It was possible to observe that some electronic devices, such as *smartphones* and *tablets*, have been frequently used by the tweens Perhaps it would be interesting to verify whether in what degree and circumstances, such assets may be competing with the fashion accessories in the function of including the tweens socially and

giving them visibility and status. In some conversations with the tweens it was clear the idea that it was important to them – and gave them status – to attend certain places. To go to McDonald´s does not seem like an activity to differ them apart. Therefore, many times, the participants related going to coffee places and specific restaurants as a sign of being "tuned" with what fashion (or cool) is also in certain places. This way, maybe researches on the behavior of tweens of consuming places and the meanings attributed to this would be useful.

In management scope, the meanings of accessories point out to the need of the tweens of finding products and brands which attend their desire for independence, autonomy and, still, with the license of being themselves, according to the feeling they take on themselves and to the world around them. Indispensable to consider, in the relationship with the tweens, that the internet is the way through which they inform themselves on issues of fashion and personal look. Therefore, a form of attracting them would be to turn such experience the most playful and exciting as possible (together with the own playful character from the use of the accessory itself) when allowing the tweens, for example, to participate in the co-creating process or customization of the products.

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