

# Practices of consuming trotting: How a community of devoted enthusiasts forms around a leisure activity

Markkinointi

Maisterin tutkinnon tutkielma

Atte Aro

2016

# Practices of consuming trotting: How a community of devoted enthusiasts forms around a leisure activity

Marketing

Master's thesis

Atte Aro

2016

Department of Marketing

Aalto University

School of Business

---

**Author** Atte Aro

---

**Title of thesis** Practices of consuming trotting: How a community of devoted enthusiasts forms around a leisure activity

---

**Degree** Master's of Science

---

**Degree programme** Marketing

---

**Thesis advisor(s)** John Schouten, Jack Tillotson

---

**Year of approval** 2016

**Number of pages** 59

**Language** English

---

## **Abstract**

### **Objectives**

The objective of my study was to gain new insight on how practices of leisure subcultures form communities. I conducted ethnographic research on Finnish trotting community to learn what kinds of trotting practices exist, how those practices are organized and what is the inherent logic of those practices. My study takes a practice theoretical approach to point out the dominant practices of trotting. I also wanted to find out how community members make sense of those practices and what kind of meanings are attached to their actions. Finally my aim was to contribute to the research of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and especially to the study of leisure subcultures.

### **Methodology**

The study was qualitative and ethnographic in nature. I familiarized myself to Finnish trotting community by observing the events at horse tracks. I kept detailed field notes, recorded video clips and shot photos of the practices and events. To understand the meaning making process behind the practices I observed I conducted semi-structured interviews with active members of the trotting community. Altogether 8 people were interviewed and the transcribed interviews served as another key source of data for my research.

### **Key findings**

I was able to name four categories for the practices of consuming trotting. Those were watching the races, betting, eating & drinking and socializing. Watching the races and betting are autotelic actions that support each other and in which most members of trotting community engage in. Eating and drinking is an instrumental action that supports and facilitates the more essential practices. Socializing is in central role within the community and can contain autotelic playful features and also support other functions of the community. By organizing the practices based on Holt's (1995) typography of consumption practices I learned that through trotting practices community members sought to interact with elements of nature & countryside, to learn new skills and succeed in the sport and to form social ties and interact with same minded people.

---

**Keywords** Practice theory, consumer culture, subcultures, consumption practices, trotting, betting

---

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Background.....	6
1.2. Research question .....	6
2. Literature review .....	8
2.1. Consumer culture and practice theory .....	8
2.2. Framework.....	11
2.2.1. Typology of consumption practices .....	11
2.2.2. Value of practices .....	11
2.3. Leisure subcultures.....	12
3. Methodology.....	21
3.1. Research approach .....	21
3.2. Data collection method .....	22
3.3. Interviews .....	23
3.4. Data analysis.....	25
4. Findings .....	27
4.1. Observations.....	27
4.1.1. What goes on at the horse track .....	27
4.1.2. Consuming trotting .....	28
4.1.3. Who are the trotting enthusiasts?.....	33
4.2. Metaphors for consuming trotting.....	36
4.2.1. Consuming as experience .....	36
4.2.2. Consuming as integration .....	39
4.2.3. Consuming as classification .....	42
4.2.4. Consuming as play .....	44
4.3. Analysis of trotting practices .....	46
5. Discussion.....	49
5.1. Ideal of experiencing nature.....	49
5.2. Becoming member of the community.....	49
5.3. Building skills and experience to master the sport.....	51
6. Conclusions .....	53
7. Limitations and need for further research.....	54
References .....	55
Appendix 1: Interview guide .....	58

**List of pictures and figures**

Table 1 : Interviewees ..... 25

Picture 1: Overview on Teivo track and stands (3.10.2015, Tampere) ..... 29

Picture 2: Horse warming up for start in Teivo (3.10.2015, Tampere) ..... 31

Picture 3: Verno main stand and the crowd at "Grand Finnish Derby" (5.9.2015, Espoo) ..... 32

Picture 4: Spectators at Kriterium-ravit in Teivo (3.10.2015, Tampere) ..... 35

Figure 1: Trotting consumption practices ..... 36

Figure 2: Hierarchy of trotting practices ..... 48

# Practices of consuming trotting: How a community of devoted enthusiasts forms around a leisure activity

## 1. Introduction

*“As I’ve been coming to horse races since 1971, I can only make a wild guess of how much money I’ve lost... ..Everything’s relative. I don’t own a Harley Davidson or a 20 foot sailboat, whatever anyone might desire. Trotting has been a close and beloved sport for me.”* - Osmo, one of my interviewees

Trotting is a form of horse racing which is particularly popular in France, Sweden and Finland. In Finland over 700 000 spectators attend the races annually and probably even more follow the sport through internet and TV. My research focuses on the consumer culture of Finnish trotting enthusiasts. Through a practice theoretical approach I was able to reveal what makes this form of horse racing so popular. Trotting seems to have taken a really strong position as one of Finland’s most popular leisure activities. We even have a term “Trotting citizens” (“ravikansa” in Finnish) to describe these loyal trotting enthusiasts. I familiarized myself in order to understand what kind of practices construct this subculture, what kind of meanings are related and what are the motivators to keep the community together.

Consumer identity and consumer collectives have been studied quite comprehensively. There is good amount of knowledge about how subcultures can form around different brands or leisure activities. Trotting is a new and interesting research topic as there are several different aspects that one might imagine being in central role for members of the community. Of course gambling and betting on horses is one side of the phenomenon and it is known that the excitement of gambling can have even addicting effects. However when it comes to trotting there clearly is more social and interactive part of this culture compared to other forms of betting. Also most trotting enthusiast must be at least on some level interested in horses and the excitement of fast paced race creates an attraction itself. My most important contribution

is the analysis of most important trotting practices and the role those play in community members' life. To be added there are not that many Finnish consumer cultures studied before so one interesting contribution are the culture specific findings of Finnish consumers.

An appropriate setting to study trotting community is the horse races. I went to the races 9 times and interacted with different elements of trotting. I also conducted my interviews at horse tracks which was convenient in many ways. Scheduling was easy as people were about to come and see the races anyways and the setup was natural for discussing about trotting. Trotting enthusiasts might also meet up at bars and betting joints but in this research I don't pay that much attention to these other venues. In the interviews members of the community also told about their trotting activities outside the race track which makes the view broader and helps to link with their other areas of life.

### **1.1. Background**

During my master's level studies at Aalto University I became interested in consumer culture and consumer collectives. It is fascinating how people form social ties, spend time and invest money based on interest in certain activity, brand or phenomenon. I have personal background in playing football and myself I am interested in team sports so studying something related to sports felt interesting. I felt that conducting research on horse sports wasn't anything I was too much involved myself but it included many same interesting aspects as team sports do. As trotting community is active all around Finland and around the year it offered great opportunity to study a particular subculture and its activities.

### **1.2. Research question**

The research question is:

*What kinds of trotting practices are there in Finland?*

I will analyze the activities encountered through Holt's (1995) typology of consumption practices. I divide the most important practices under categories that represent most essential activities of trotting community.

The first sub-question is:

*How are these practices organized and how do they hang together?*

Certain experiences can be named that trotting enthusiasts actively seek through their activities. I will explain in more detail how the different practices together form the desired trotting experience.

The second sub-question inquires:

*What is the inherent logic of these practices (Schatzki 1996; Schatzki 2002)?*

As the diversity of investigative contexts in consumer culture theory is rich it is easy to lose sight of the theoretical core of the study (Arnould & Thompson 2012). I have been trying to keep my focus on the most essential trotting practices and rule out things that weren't directly related to my research questions.



## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Consumer culture and practice theory**

The article “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research” by Arnould & Thompson (2012) gives an overview of the consumer research since the 1980’s. Arnould and Thompson suggest that consumer culture theory should fulfill current consumer research with theoretical knowledge about consumption and marketplace behaviors. Individual level meanings should be linked to cultural processes and then be situated in marketplace contexts. Following the ideas of Arnould and Thompson, in my study I search for cultural meanings, sociohistoric influences, and social dynamics that shape consumer experiences and identities. A good observation made by Arnould and Thompson is that many consumers’ lives are constructed around multiple realities. What this means for me is that I will investigate which of my observations and findings are not related to trotting but other activities and factors in community members’ life situations. I spent lot of time myself at the horse tracks and with the trotting enthusiasts to be able to tell subculture specific phenomena from things that are not directly related to trotting.

Theodore Schatzki is one of the most cited authors in the field of practice theory. According to Schatzki practices constitute mind and action in three ways (Schatzki 1996). People acquire abilities for doings and sayings that express conditions of life. Practices also represent the type of context determining which conditions are expressed by certain actions. Finally practices constitute mind and action because the understanding of background conditions is expressed in practices. Doings and sayings form causal chains where succeeding action responds to the previous one (Schatzki 1996).

Practices need to be seen as bundles of activities rather than single actions (Schatzki 2002). Referring to Schatzki (2002, 73) a practice can be defined as “a set of hierarchically organized doings/sayings, tasks, and projects”. Practices are temporally evolving and open-ended sets of doings and sayings. Practices are linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure and general understandings. Teleoaffective structure stands for the linking of ends, means and moods of a practice (Schatzki 2002). Together all the elements named above form the organization of the given practice. Current practice theory literature helps to understand what consumers’ doings and saying can tell about their understandings, (sometimes hidden)

rules and norms and targets there are related to different practices.

As it is described by Reckwitz (2002) practice theory shifts bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routine to the centre. Meanwhile mind, texts and conversations are left with less attention. Practices are related through the meanings, competences and objects that are shared across practices (Røpke 2009). Practice theory stresses that language exists only in its use and it is most importantly used to do something (Reckwitz 2002). As Arsel & Bean (2012) sum it up “A practice theoretical approach thus aims to theorize consumers as neither purely instrumentalist and rational (*homo economicus*) nor purely structure dependent and unconscious (*homo sociologicus*) but rather as agents bounded by socioculturally constituted nexuses.” Warde (2005) adds that practices consist of both doings and sayings so analysis must be concerned with both practical activity and its representations. The means through which doings and sayings are coordinated are understandings, procedures and engagements (Warde 2005). These descriptions of practice theory suggest that it suits well to investigate consumer cultures.

Arnould & Thompson (2012) described how organized practices constitute consumer culture “... consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets” (Arnould & Thompson, 2012, 869). People are engaged in practices in their everyday life and when they are asked about their lives they will most likely describe the practices they take part in (Røpke 2009). For example freezer users routinely reproduce distinctions between freshness, convenience and emergency or occasional necessity, which can be spotted by observing how refrigerators and freezers are actually used (Hand & Shove 2007). As Eric Laurier puts it, investigating the ordinary un-noticed natural features of everyday life enables us to understand abstract problems related to time, space and social worlds (Laurier 2008). Also Arnould, Muniz and Schau highlight that in consumer collectives value is created through emergent participatory actions (Arnould, Schau, & Muniz, 2009).

Arnould et al. (2009) also suggests that common anatomy of practices consists of understandings, procedures and engagements. Similarly each practice demonstrates a physiology in which these anatomical parts function together. People are almost constantly engaged in the practical challenge of negotiating symbolic and material systems and in the process constructing and reproducing what is for them a coherent way of life (Hand & Shove 2007). Practices require continual reproduction (Shove & Pantzar 2005). According to Shove

& Pantzar what a particular practice is depends on who does it and when, where and how it is done. In this sense practices are inherently dynamic. According to Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander ethnographic and practice theory oriented studies have been dominated by relying on the senses of sight and sound. However as they investigated that also taking into account taste, touch and smell could bring valuable new information about consumption practices (Valtonen et al. 2010).

Woermann and Rokka (2015) build on this same basis that social practices are the building blocks of social life. They studied the practices of freestyle skiers and paintball players to learn how consumers' temporal experiences come about. In addition they investigated how the relationship between consumption practices and timeflow is constructed. Woermann and Rokka divided practices into five elements that shape timeflow: material set-up, bodily routines and skills, rules, teleo-affective structure and cultural understandings. Usually elements of practice have certain specific relationship and order. Misalignment of these practice elements resulted depending on the case in stress, fear and frustration or boredom, lack of interest and impatience. Arsel and Bean (2012) in contrast used practice theoretical approach to explain how taste is performed as a practice with effects on the material. They put lot of attention to the problematization, ritualization and instrumentalization of practices to understand the relationships and roles of objects, doings and meanings related to how taste regimes enter into daily practice. Wooden boating enthusiasts are a good example. They are dedicated individuals seeking alternative ways of being and they have a social pattern of action and a shared practice of boating which are described in the article by Mikko Jalas (Jalas 2006). This practice of boating regulated the ways of thinking, speaking and acting around boats.

My study adds to the existing information of what kinds of meanings are related to consumption activities and what kind of experiences consumers are looking for. Arsel & Bean (2012) have illustrated as simple thing as the home landing strip and they managed to find ritualizations and instrumentalizations related to it. Similarly I have observed meanings of the very simplest practices of trotting subculture to find the practices that form the community and to learn how those practices are connected. Practices can also have indirect ways to support and enable belonging to a subculture. Canniford & Shankar (2013) investigated what kind of processes surfers used to overcome contradictions within romantic experiences of nature. They were able to find three kinds of practices that surfers used to overcome the conflict between ideal of external nature and the aspects of surfing culture that are not in line

with that ideal. These activities called purifying practices were divided into three categories: masking, purging and redressing.

## **2.2. Framework**

### **2.2.1. Typology of consumption practices**

As a basic framework for my study I am using the typology of consumption practices by Douglas B. Holt (Holt 1995). For his typology Holt analyzed the practices of baseball spectators at Chicago's Wrigley Field. The setting of Holt's study is rather similar to my mine which is a special advantage. Holt used two basic conceptual distinctions – the structure of consumption and the purpose of consumption to organize different levels of consumption. Structure of consumption might consist of actions in which consumers directly engage consumption objects (object actions) or of actions in which consumption objects serve as focal resources for interactions with other people (interpersonal actions) (Holt 1995). In terms of purpose consumers' actions can serve as ends in themselves (autotelic actions) or as means to further ends (instrumental actions). The two dimensions are crossed to create a 2 x 2 matrix that locates four metaphors for consuming – consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as classification and consuming as play.

Holt describes that consuming-as-experience includes consumers' subjective emotional reactions to consumption objects. The methods baseball spectators used to make sense of and respond to professional baseball fell into the consuming-as-experience metaphor. Consuming-as-integration metaphor includes actions through which spectators acquire and manipulate object meanings. For example through self-extension and personalizing baseball fans integrated themselves with the game and team. The consuming-as-classification metaphor refers to the process in which objects that can be viewed as vessels of cultural and personal meaning act to classify consumers. Fourth metaphor consuming as play includes consumer-object-consumer interactions that have no specific end or target, but can be described as interactions for interactions' sake (Holt 1995).

### **2.2.2. Value of practices**

Parmentier & Fischer (2015) learned that fans of a brand assemble the brand's components, which means that the company producing the brand can control this assemblage only to some extent. If the components change, new material and expressive capacities will be introduced and the way in which a fan interacts with them can affect brand's popularity among larger audiences (Parmentier & Fischer 2015). Magaudda (2011) simplified the complexity of social practices into three main dimensions. The three dimensions contributing to shape practices as socially shared patterns of activities are: "(1) that of meanings and representations; (2) that consisting of objects, technologies and material culture in general; and (3) that represented by embodied competences, activities and doing" (Magaudda, 2011, 20). Products alone have no value but they need to be integrated into practice and allied to requisite forms of competence and meaning (Shove & Pantzar 2005). How the constitutive elements of images materials and competences come together create the value of a practice. Practices can also be divided into complementary practices like cooking and shopping for food, practices that replace each other and practices that are related to each other in clusters (like all the activities to maintain a car) (Røpke 2009).

At stock shows majority of consumers gather to see the show as entertainment (Peñaloza 2001). Spectating can be as important part of the show as the actual trade and consumers find the excitement in the mix of different actions such as rodeo, business activities and booth exhibition. Peñaloza (2001, 389) adds that "in consuming this market performance, consumers actively make cultural meanings in blending fantasy with reality as they stroll and spectate at the various elements of this cattle trade show". Beside entertainment the consumer behavior at trade shows is also educational. People want to experience themselves, but also teach their children about origins of the food and traditional way of making living at ranches. Thirdly there is also the commercial part of the stock show as millions of dollars are exchanged annually at these shows.

### **2.3. Leisure subcultures**

Studying leisure activities offers a great possibility to investigate how different human, material and social resources are organized to create specific meanings and value to community members. Taking part in a specific activity or event can temporarily alternate participants' consumption meanings and practices through discourse, rules and practice (Kozinets 2002). People share essential resources that may be cognitive, emotional or material

by nature through communities (McAlexander et al. 2002). For example Valtonen et al. (2010, 377) described sport fishing as “a coherent pattern of activity that is organized around an inherent logic and a shared background understanding of what is appropriate, understandable and desired”. Likewise trotting enthusiasts often describe trotting as a way of life and the logic of activities has its special meaning to members of trotting community. The creation and negotiation of meaning happens among community members (McAlexander et al. 2002). Another great example is the rendezvous community which defines itself through a fantasy experience, the objects they use to create and maintain a fantastic facade and the actions they use to invoke a mythic past (Belk & Costa 1998).

Consciousness of kind, rituals & traditions and moral responsibility are three essential markers of community (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001). Arnould et al. (2009) names three kinds of social networking practices that formed and maintained the ties between members of brand communities. These practices which are used in other communities as well include welcoming, empathizing and governing. Authors described that “This trio of practices highlights the homogeneity of the brand community, or the similarities across brand community members and their normative behavioral expectations of themselves and one another.” (Arnould et al. 2009, 34) These practices mainly operate on emotional level reinforcing social and moral bonds. I intended to search for similar social and moral bonds that keep the trotting community together. Planned social interactions that consolidate various cultural artifacts can also be called “rites of interaction” (Arnould & Price, 1993). Rites of interaction are supposed to create sense of closeness among potentially heterogeneous group of people who don’t know each other yet. Arsel & Thompson (2011) found out that entering the indie field often happens through one node in the field like club or a music store or through a social acquaintance. From the initial contact point a member starts building cultural knowledge and social connections which leads into other nodes in the field.

Kates (2002) described rearticulation of gay subcultural meanings as a structured oppositionality. Community like trotting enthusiasts doesn’t differentiate from the mainstream quite as strongly but there are actions that separate also leisure subculture members from other consumers. Also other studies support the idea that strong out-group sentiments help to form close-knit, caring communities. At the Burning Man festival the authentic participation was often described as “not behaving like a consumer” (Kozinets 2002). For Macintosh brand community the opposition to Microsoft was a key source of unity (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001). Kates found these hidden meanings of gay subculture through long period of observing the

community and the signs are often subtle and certain meanings are only shared among the community members.

Likewise to Kates' findings Arnould et al. (2009) pointed out that practices seem to provide community members with vast source of shared insider jargon and modes of representation. This insider jargon provides a creative repertoire for insider sharing which strengthens the brand community. Canniford & Shankar (2013) found out that surfers used their own codes to separate surfing communities from one another. There were distinct skills, styles, interaction rituals and coastal knowledge only the surfers at a certain location knew which helped them to preserve certain waves to themselves. Storytelling is another important way of creating and maintaining community (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). In many communities and practices the discourse that takes place creates an important part of the atmosphere. The special discourse of the community can also be in a key role in creating sense of a place different from everyday society (Kozinets 2002). Trotting enthusiasts are known for having a repertoire of insider terminology and being fond of storytelling so from the very beginning I was interested to learn more about their use of language.

Peñaloza (2001) categorized the consumers' negotiation of cultural meaning and memory into four levels. First level dealt with the nature of consumer behavior in terms of key motivators to take part (spectating, shopping or other). At the stock show the key motivator was entertainment, education or business. Second is the level of situational positioning which could be personal, experiential or historical. Thirdly there was the level of cultural interactions. At stock show there are "in and out groups" such as ranchers vs. visitors, west vs. non-west and men vs. women. Final and fourth level was whether a visitor took part in market interactions. The roles in market interaction were marketer, producer and industry member. Also in trotting community members take varying roles and pay attention to different aspects of the sport depending on their interests, qualities and experience.

In the biker subculture an individual member has to start from the bottom of the hierarchy and undergo a process of socialization to become a recognized member of the community (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). Goulding et al. (2009) noted that clear hierarchies exist also in clubbing culture but in that scene the hierarchy is based on the formal statuses of organizers and promoters as well as on the star status of the DJs. Certain similarities can be seen between bikers and trotting enthusiasts in terms of most devoted and active members gaining a status within the community. In different practices the ways people identify against others varies greatly. For example (Laurier 2008) made the notion that the regular first

customers of a café tend to become one of the “known customers” of the location. For my study an interesting viewpoint was not only to learn if hierarchies exist in the trotting community, but also to find out if community members actively sought achievements that would support their status in the hierarchy.

In some subcultures there are competitions between members where status can be gained. For example the mountain men compete in costumes and camping skills. In these competitions other community members can evaluate how well the objects and skills acquired by others are closest to the community ideal (Belk & Costa 1998). Attention, status and prestige can be powerful motivators for a community member who invests time and money for community activities (Kozinets 2002). However for example at the Burning Man festival community members could also earn direct compensations like better location at next event for their contributions. At stock shows competitors were categorized based on formal status, age and sex of the handler (Peñaloza 2001). Both animal and handler are judged at stock shows and there are also other honors given such as Miss Polled Hereford title.

Sometimes there are certain objects that clearly indicate members’ belonging and status in a community. In the mountain men community acquiring the right stuff to create an object base is key to be acknowledged as fellow believer and part of the community (Belk & Costa 1998). Members invest significant amount of time and money to buy or make objects in order to be taken serious as a buckskinner. There are less flattering names like masquerader, dabbler or pretender for the ones that don’t possess the expected mountain man gear. Also the time spent and devoted to an activity can determine how a community member is evaluated by others. At the burning man festival the ones who came to weeklong event for only day or two were criticized and named disrespectfully as “weekenders” or “lookie-loos” (Kozinets 2002). Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) made the notion that in brand communities there is a distinction between the community members “really knowing” the brand and the ones that use the brand for “wrong reasons”. Wrong reasons could include failing to fully appreciate the culture, history, rituals, traditions or symbols of the community. Also in trotting community there are objects that can be used as status symbols. However I didn’t find signs that missing some objects would lead to disrespectful attitude from other enthusiasts which can be seen as a sign of openness and playfulness of the community. I describe my findings about the community in greater detail in the findings section.

Important way to build ones status in a hierarchy is to gain knowledge and experiences that are important for the community. Arnould et al. (2009) named four community engagement



practices including staking, milestone, badging and documenting. All of these actions emphasize on the distinctions among community members. Community engagement practices are competitive by nature and performing those will provide the community member with higher social capital. Overall Arnould et al. (2009) suggest that brand communities with more diverse and more complex practices seemed to be the strongest. Also if the practices took place in both online and real-life spaces the communities seemed to be stronger. Findings are well in line with Holt's categorization of consuming as experience and consuming as integration (Holt 1995). Baseball spectators used practices like accounting to experience the game more deeply. Practices like assimilating with the game are a way for baseball fans to integrate themselves to the world of baseball. Holt sees this process of learning and status building as a way to impress, connect with fellow community members or simply play. Becoming a skilled and respected practitioner requires learning of different skills.

Truninger (2011) states that learning happens through experience and these experiences can be either bad or positive. Sometimes bad experiences can even make people quit a career of practice but neutral or positive experiences increase person's confidence and builds up the status as a respected practitioner. Truninger continues that in her study of cooking with Bimby kitchen appliance the necessary competences were distributed between a range of entities, human and non-human. Sources of information included other tools, after sales support, the demonstrator, online forums, manuals of instructions and recipe books (Truninger 2011). Trotting enthusiasts use their experience from previous events to support their betting decisions. The knowledge they gain can be seen as an investment which in the case of trotting can turn into actual profit. Trotting community members also clearly engage in staking, milestone, badging and documenting that were listed by Arnould et al. (2009). In findings section I explain more about what I learned by comparing trotting enthusiasts' practices with Holt's (1995) consuming as integration metaphor.

Some of the distinguishing practices and features of certain community might also become parts of a cultural caricature. In my study I also tried to find out if trotting enthusiasts felt some practices stigmatizing or if they avoided certain behaviors. Arsel and Thompson investigated how consumers in the field of indie consumption protected themselves from these devaluing marketplace myths (Arsel & Thompson 2011). They found out that indie consumers had developed strategies for creating symbolic boundaries between their identity-defining consumption practices and the hipster myth they found undesirable. More experienced participants with higher status are in many subcultures using aesthetic

discrimination. Practice of aesthetic discrimination was used to parse out points of distinction between the indie-oriented consumption practices and the constellations that have been subsumed within the hipster myth (Arsel & Thompson 2011). Those indie consumers with lower status often used another way – symbolic demarcation. Through demarcation consumers can insulate their identities from potentially discrediting similarities to hipster myth. The third strategy named by Arsel & Thompson (2011) was proclaiming consumer sovereignty. By proclaiming consumer sovereignty participants culturally reframe their interests by invoking an alternative system of mythic meaning.

It is rather normal that actors of a single community have varying ways to orient toward the community. Chalmers Thomas, Price and Schau investigated the nature of heterogeneous consumption communities by studying the running community in the US (Chalmers Thomas et al. 2012). They describe consumption communities as “an interconnected network of heterogeneous actors whose experiences are shaped by the interplay between actors and informed by marketplace dynamics” (Chalmers Thomas et al., 2012, 1011). Despite the fact that heterogeneity can be a destabilizing factor the authors found out that it can also contribute to community continuity when the emergence of heterogeneous actors co-occurs with resource dependence. There is an interesting similarity with the trotting community taken the differences between different trotting enthusiasts. There are different groups like horse trainers, riders and sports betting enthusiasts that take part in significantly different ways but are still dependant of one another.

Chalmers Thomas et al. (2012) call the processes that facilitate the accommodation of differences and legitimize heterogeneity as frame alignment practices. Frame alignment practices included three types: language, structural and role. Community members are motivated to preserve the benefits that heterogeneity provides so by using frame alignment practices they are able to stabilize the community, resolve heterogeneity-related tensions and ensure community continuity. The more and less experienced community members benefit from each other also in brand communities (McAlexander et al. 2002). In the study of Jeep owners it was found out that new owners benefit from the expertise and approval of veterans. At the same time veterans find the status gained by assumed leadership roles useful and rewarding. Helping other community members in their consumption can also be seen as a moral responsibility (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001). I will explain accommodation of differences within trotting community in the findings section.

An important part of subcultures is naturally the venue or environment where the important

actions take place. Mary Jo Bitner investigated the impact that physical surroundings have on customers and employees (Bitner 1992). Bitner's article focused on service organizations but there are a lot of similarities to a trotting event where customer spends certain amount of time in an environment where the activities take place and number of additional products and services are offered. The physical environment can have an effect on the number and quality of interactions between the service provider and the customer and also on the interactions between and among customers. When investigating culture like trotting enthusiasts the interactions between enthusiasts and how those are facilitated is especially interesting. In Bitner's framework for understanding environment-user relationships in service organizations several environmental dimensions are listed that effect customers' cognitive (beliefs, categorization and symbolic meaning), emotional (mood and attitude) and physiological responses (pain, comfort, movement and physical fit). When the environment succeeds to have a positive impact on these responses it will have positive impacts on customers' behavior like attraction, longer stay, more money spent and return.

For many leisure communities the venue offers a possibility for all members to act as equals regardless of their profession and social status outside the community. A member of the mountain men community described a rendezvouser might be dead broke or in a well paid profession and in either case it wouldn't affect the status within the community (Belk & Costa 1998). Such leveling is an element that creates a strong sense of time and space separated from everyday reality. Similarly a horse track provides a place where everyone sharing the interest in trotting can meet and spend time as equals. The sense of equality turned out to be an important factor for trotting enthusiasts and my findings regarding to that are explained in findings and discussion sections.

In the study of clubbing culture the clubs proved to provide ideal environment for the members to "lose it", or in other words focus entirely on the clubbing experience and close other life issues out (Goulding et al. 2009). Clubbing is described as a "highly sought-after shared experience and a temporary suspension of the rules and norms of everyday life" (Goulding et al., 2009, 767). The club formed a social space where the social categories like class, gender, age and occupation do not define you anymore. Also for the trotting enthusiasts the horse track seems to be a place to take distance from everyday trouble and it can be seen how the event and facilities are built to support the experience. Goulding et al. listed promotional material, queuing for entry, architecture and layout of the venue, DJs and other clubbers as the construction blocks for clubbing scene. The environment's role is also huge

for the mountain men as the rendezvous participants socially construct and jointly fabricate a consumption enclave for a fantasy time and place to be experienced (Belk & Costa 1998). There is evidence that events and get-togethers can play important role in strengthening communities. In Jeep community, even the less experienced owners who came to events insecure about how they would fit in, left after couple of days feeling that they belonged to a broader community (McAlexander et al. 2002). In the Jeep community members also felt that networking with people at the events would support them to realize their own consumption goals.

According to Goulding et al. for the clubbing culture the consumption of pleasure is in central role and although you might not find as direct search for pleasure in trotting culture, at least it can be seen as experiential consumption. At least it should be taken into account if the chance of winning money combined with the rush of the racing event creates similar experiences of pleasure as clubbers got. Escaping the everyday life was important for surfers as well (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Interviewees of the study describe how the challenge of and physical isolation from human world give them desired detachment from routines and stress. Practices that surfers did to achieve feeling of leaving everyday troubles behind included many other things than surfing itself including things like travelling, changing the schedule, eating differently and observing the environment. Similarly the mountain men do the trip from contemporary cities to the wilderness and dress themselves for the rendezvous to create the opposition for everyday world (Belk & Costa 1998). According to Belk & Costa (1998, 234) “one set of values sought in the rendezvous setting is escape from the rules, contraptions and stresses of daily life in the city” and the river rafters had the desire to “get away from it all” (Arnould & Price, 1993, 24).

Similarities can be found between the findings made by Canniford & Shankar and the findings that Woermann & Rokka made about experiences of freeskiers and paintball players. Woermann & Rokka (2015) suggest that all consumption practices have timeflows which shape the temporal dimension of the field. For paintball players the fast pace of the game, the adrenaline rush and the thrill of the sport were key elements to create the temporal flow (Woermann & Rokka 2015). This kind of stressfulness was not considered negative, but a positive and desired feeling that was part of the experience. Freeskiers described that performing a challenging trick involved similar focus to own body and skills combined with the natural elements and conditions as surfers experienced (Woermann & Rokka 2015; Canniford & Shankar 2013). The mountain men had the expression of “mountain men time”

to describe the slower and less punctual pace of time at the rendezvous (Belk & Costa 1998). For river rafters “river time” meant that you would get up when the sun gets up and go to bed when the sun went down (Arnould & Price 1993). There was no need for more detailed time keeping in the world of river rafters. Jalas’ study on wooden boaters also proved that boaters enacted temporal orientations within the activity (Jalas 2006). Jalas explains that in such practice also the material objects can gain agency as parts of the network.

Waiting and preparing for a leisure event is naturally also part of the experience. The interviews Goulding et al. (2009) conducted revealed that pleasure was not only found in the club but also in anticipating, planning, sharing, and fantasizing about what is to come on the basis of memories of past experiences. They describe this as “a cycle of pleasure”. Planning and preparing for their next trip was also important for surfers who for example use online tools to get information about weather and other conditions to make the desired experience optimal (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Acquiring information about the horses and travelling to the track are the most important ways of preparing for the event in the world of trotting. In my study I also investigated what kind of role those play for the overall experience. In trotting the focus is not as clearly in specific moments of rush as it is in for example in freestyle skiing or paintball (Woermann & Rokka 2015), but trotting enthusiasts seem to value the contrast in place and time to the one of their everyday routines greatly. Learning about the role of this time and space created at the horse track was important for my study.

Betting on horses is in a large role in trotting and there are quite obviously some moral questions related to all kinds of gambling. Humphreys (2010) described how casino gambling became legitimate through the discourse in media. Humphreys also makes a point that when over the time certain structures are built around these kinds of questionable marketplaces they get more official status and therefore wider acceptance. In Finland there’s been organized sports betting since 1940’s. It has always been run by state owned- and controlled monopolies so taking part in betting through these official channels hasn’t been seen questionable. Betting hasn’t been stigmatizing in Finland unless it leads to financial troubles. However as trotting is most popular among middle-aged or older men from the countryside, it might have some “hillbilly” or “redneck” stigma attached to it. A rational consumer wouldn’t be involved in sports betting to earn money because the odds of winning are practically always negative. Most people gamble for the sake of excitement and for example Snyder (1978) learned that betting public actually prefer longer-odd bets which makes their chance of profiting even lower.

### **3. Methodology**

In this section I explain the approach of my research and data collection method used. I also describe how the analysis of data was conducted.

#### **3.1. Research approach**

I have conducted an ethnographic research on the trotting community in Finland. Choosing the ethnographic approach gave me the chance to observe how trotting enthusiasts interact with each other and how they understand the marketplace where the activities take place (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Ethnography is not just a form of data collection, but it aims to clarify the ways culture simultaneously constructs and is formulated by people's behaviors and experiences (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994). Observations should shed light on the meaning-making that guides their behavior and separates community members from the mainstream. Since I chose the ethnographic method I was able to learn from the emic perspectives of trotting community members and thus to look at things from consumer's point of view (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008; Arnould & Wallendorf 1994). This helped me to get answers about the motivators of trotting enthusiasts. Familiarizing myself with the marketplace and the trotting event provided me with firsthand experience to the phenomenon. I also learned about the possibilities and limitations that horse race events offer for this subculture to interact.

Ethnography helps to avoid the challenge of consumers not telling the whole story or full truth when answering interviews or questionnaires (Fellman 1999; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott 2003). Consumers often answer what they want to believe or what they actually believe is the case, but when observing the action taking place the truth might be different. This makes ethnography an efficient way to investigate matters that consumers might feel uncomfortable to speak about. People also ignore many everyday routines and thus might not be able to explain their behavior in detail (Fellman 1999). Also Moisander, Valtonen & Hirsto note that for cultural analysis where the aim is to analyze cultural contingency of marketplace phenomena for example phenomenological interviews would not be the preferred option (Moisander et al. 2009). This is because first-person descriptions of experience tend to leave questions about the culturally constituted nature of experience and social reality aside.

My study is based on practice theory which is a specific form of cultural theories (Reckwitz 2002). According to Reckwitz cultural theories, including practice theory, enable researchers to explain and understand action. In practice theory the social is not placed in mental qualities, discourse or interaction but practices (Reckwitz 2002). Reckwitz (2002) describes practice as a routinized type of behavior which consists of bodily activities, mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. These elements are interconnected to one another in a way that is known and recognizable for the practitioners. A need to shift analytical focus from personal structures of meaning to culture and cultural practice has been identified (Moisander et al. 2009).

As most practices require and entail consumption (Warde 2005), understanding practices helps to understand behavior of consumer collectives. According to Warde (2005) the effect that practices has upon consumption is great because practices create wants and people perform acts of consumption to successfully perform practices. Practices have their own distinct, institutionalized and collectively regulated conventions, which partly insulate people and make them harder to be converted by marketers (Warde 2005). Arnould & Wallendorf (1994) add that participant observation can provide insight concerning for example group decision making heuristics and disagreements, financial negotiations, patterns of products use and substitution, consumers' spontaneously expressed evaluative judgments, active socialization and indirect learning, and enactments of culturally patterned consumption norms and values.

### **3.2. Data collection method**

Consumer culture studies are not about studying consumption contexts, but about studying in consumption contexts to generate new constructs and theoretical insights (Arnould & Thompson 2012). Observing the trotting community allowed me to learn how consumers' consumption practices are formed around a particular activity. Trotting community is really active so the trotting related activities actually take a big part in community members' lives. Trotting community offers an opportunity to study how people from fairly different backgrounds gather together because of shared interest into certain activity. The best setting to study how trotting community works is quite obviously the track races. Between August and November 2015 I participated in the races nine times to interact with different elements of trotting. Conducting an ethnography provides a chance to learn how value is attributed to

the activity and what are the flows of consumption resources that reproduce the subculture (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

I began my research by observing the site and actions that took place at the horse track and recorded my first experiences and observations as an outsider. Before I started conducting this research I had no previous experience of going to horse races. Having as little initial perceptions as possible allowed me to begin as a naïve observer. Later as I became familiar with trotting related activities I began to understand the nuances of horse racing and trotting (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). It is important to gather rich information about the place, arrangements, elements of the event and naturally the people who attend these events. I also conducted participant observation because extended experiential participation enables one to encounter important moments in ordinary events (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994). Most races I visited were held at Vermo horse track in Espoo which is the closest one from where I live. I also travelled to Teivo track in Tampere once to have a broader perspective on Finnish horse tracks.

As part of my field work I kept detailed field notes of the action, took photos and recorded video clips of the events (Kozinets 2002). I came to the horse track early, even an hour before the first start to see how people arrive and prepare for the races. During the races I observed what people actually did, what they were most focused on and how they reacted to different events at the horse track. I moved around the track and watched the events from different locations on different days to see if the patterns of people were different for example in the restaurant stand compared to the side of the track. Altogether there are 9 pages of field notes written, 26 photos taken and 10 video clips recorded. Attending the races is not the only way to take part in trotting anymore, but despite television, internet and other options to follow the races people still travel hundreds of miles to be on site. I believe that this is why I can justify this spatio-temporally bounded setting as my primary research context.

### **3.3. Interviews**

To achieve deeper understanding of lived experience and shared meanings of trotting community, I conducted semi-structured interviews with community members (Goulding et al. 2009; Canniford & Shankar 2013; Magaudda 2011). By isolating groups I was able to get more information about how people get in touch with the community in the first place, define



the boundaries themselves and what kind of connections they can find between the community and other members. Also Elliott & Jankel-Elliott (2003) remind that interviews are the most notable method to combine with observation because it gives vital information about participants' situated behavior. I started my interviews with open-ended questions to have a good idea of how they felt thought about trotting. I aimed to produce cultural talk which made the cultural conditions that facilitate the practices visible and available for critical examination (Moisander et al. 2009). Later on I moved on to more specific questions to get more detailed information which could provide answers to my research question.

In the beginning of my research project I was in touch with Fintoto, the company that organizes all horse betting activities in Finland. Through Fintoto I got contact information of 8 active members of the trotting community. People who were selected for interviews didn't have a profession related to trotting to keep the focus on leisure activity. Interviewees were not chosen based on any demographic qualities. Eventually narrow majority of interviewees were men and the age of them ranged from 15 to 64 old. The facts that most interviewees were men and that I had many interviewees who were over 50 years old are both reflecting the Finnish trotting enthusiasts pretty well. I scheduled in-depth interviews with these contacts which resulted in 35 pages of interview transcripts.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home town</b>
Maija	F	24	Riihimäki
Markus	M	39	Tampere
Matti	M	57	Helsinki
Nina	F	61	Vantaa
Olli	M	62	Vantaa
Osmo	M	64	Lahti
Riitta	F	56	Helsinki

Toni	M	15	Vantaa
------	---	----	--------

Table 1 : Interviewees

Ethnographic interpretation enabled me to critically analyze my findings to find the practices and events that are in key role for trotting community. As Arnould & Wallendorf (1994, 486) explain “ethnographic interpretation is constructed from two major data sources: observation of behavior and verbal reports”. Combining observation and interviews is important to get all round understanding on this research topic. I aimed to evaluate central themes or cultural principles across participants and events (Peñaloza 2001). Plain nonparticipant observation without personal views by community members would most likely raise many unanswered questions about people’s behavior. This is because observational data alone fails to provide access to perceptions, values and beliefs of community members (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994). Interviewing members without observing the horse racing event would have in contrast left me without enough understanding about the context that community members’ shared experiences are related to. Altogether the data archive for my study consists of participant observation, photo, video, and interviews (Woermann & Rokka 2015; Arnould & Wallendorf 1994; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott 2003). A combination of observations, interviews and visual materials was also used by Valtonen et al. (2010) to conduct their study of sport fishing practices.

### 3.4. Data analysis

I kept to empirical approach with my data analysis as well. I analyzed my interviewees’ comments relying on that those reflect the truth as they saw it. As it is done in existential-phenomenology, I treated my data as a documentation of interviewees’ experiences as those were lived (Thompson et al. 1989). In my interpretation of the transcribed interviews I followed the emic approach and relied on respondents’ own terms and categorizations (Thompson et al. 1989). Following Thompson (1989, 140) I treated the texts as “an autonomous body of data comprised of respondent reflections on lived experiences”. Arnold & Fischer (1994) support the idea that once a text is authored or recorded it has a life of its own.

As I analyzed my data I started by going through each text in its entirety. Then I moved on to the intertextual phase where I searched for patterns and connections across different interviews. This kind of part-to-whole iteration method was also introduced by Thompson (1997). Following Thompson's process of interpreting textual data also supported me to interpret interviewees' comments in relation to their identity narratives. After the first time of reading through each piece of my data I listed few main themes that were repeated in different interviews. In intertextual phase I categorized most important practices based on the emerged themes.

## **4. Findings**

In this section I present the findings of my study. Findings section is divided into three parts. First I present some of my most important observations on trotting activities and members of trotting community. The second part I categorize the practices of consuming trotting following Holt's (1995) metaphors for consuming. Thirdly I present my analysis of trotting practices following Warde's (2005) paper on theories of practice.

### **4.1. Observations**

#### **4.1.1. What goes on at the horse track**

Trotting has taken a stable position as one of Finland's most popular leisure activities. The main findings of my study are related to the reasons why this particular subculture has remained so strong and has been able to avoid notable decline. The central actions for trotting community at the race tracks might include watching the race itself, betting on horses and social interaction with other community members. I have found differences in the importance of different aspects of the event for the community and learned about the relationship between the marketplace and the community members.

The interviews provided information about how members get in touch with the community in the first place and how the relationship evolves. It can be seen that the link to the community is formed usually through family members or friends and quite often the enthusiasm is transferred from generation to another. It seems that only few members have been introduced to the sport for example through marketing communication or active sales work. It has been fascinating to learn how trotting enthusiasts define themselves as community members and what they find key differentiating aspects that separate them from the mainstream. I would say that trotting community finds itself down-to-earth, traditional but still easy going and open people that share an interest in horse racing, outdoor activities (at least in horse track environment) and betting. Many of them see the urban younger generation living in bigger towns and especially in Helsinki region as an opposition that uses their leisure time rather differently and bear different values than the trotting people.

Eventually I was able to name the most important aspects of trotting that keep the trotting

subculture together. I was also able to describe the process that a community member goes through beginning from being introduced to the subculture all the way to being an active and loyal community member. I also learned to understand the marketplace logic and the environment where trotting takes place, how trotting it is formed, maintained and regulated. Based on the former research on consumer subcultures I found similarities with other leisure subcultures but also things that differentiate Finnish trotting community and Finnish consumption cultures from the international subcultures studied before.

#### **4.1.2. Consuming trotting**

I familiarized myself with the practices of trotting community through an ethnographic fieldwork. I use Holt's typology of consumption practices to categorize my findings and make sense of the actions that take place on the horse track (Holt 1995). Horse track is the central arena and gathering spot for trotting enthusiasts and the most concrete interactions between organizers, horse sport professionals and other spectators take place there. Even on the biggest Finnish cities the tracks can be pretty isolated and provide a place for the enthusiasts to devote themselves to the sport.

*Field notes 5.8.2015: Walking from bus stop to the race track feels like I'm entering the Finnish countryside. Although the busy center of Leppävaara suburb is right nearby, Vermo (the biggest horse track in Finland located in Espoo) is surrounded by parks and small strips of forest. It is almost like hidden in this quiet corner and I don't see any signs guiding people to the track. I assume that most people who attend the races have come here for years so the organizers haven't seen a need for excessive guidance.*



Picture 1: Overview on Teivo track and stands (3.10.2015, Tampere)

At the race track there are clearly four main types of activities people attend in – betting, watching the races, eating & drinking and socializing with other people. Most people attending seem to take part in all of these but leaving some out wouldn't be exceptional either. Coming to a horse track without watching the races would obviously be little weird but on my first visit I also learn about the importance of betting in the experience.

*Field notes 5.8.2015: I played a game with six starts and the first start in my game is the third of the evening (TOTO65 is a game where you pick the winning horse for six starts, if you get 6/6 or 5/6 right you win money). During the first two starts I realize that the racing is not that exciting if you don't have any bets on it. "My horse" wins the third start and I feel watching the race pretty exciting. Also other people at the stand start to get more excited as the race for the 1<sup>st</sup> place is really close.*

When I discuss with staff of Fintoto (the company that organizes horse betting in Finland), I find out that they have three basic consumer categories of their customers. First group are the people mainly interested in the sport itself: horses, drivers, tactics and such. These people are often also involved with raising or training horses at some level. Second group are the customers who get most of the thrill out from betting. They focus on the statistics and gather

information about horses and starts to increase their chances of winning. Third group are the people who come for the event including snacks & beverages, music, other entertainment and so on. Especially the biggest annual competitions are institutional events in Finland and gather huge crowds of people of whom not all are that deeply into the sport.

Several consumer culture studies name gaining experience and knowledge as an important way to build status within the community (e.g. Arnould et al. 2009; Holt 1995; McAlexander et al. 2002). Many members of the trotting community have decades of experience behind them. Conversations at the horse track go deep in detail and range from the horses' qualities to race tactics and choices made by drivers. The relationship these lifelong members of the community have with horses and the sport seems to be warm and respectful in many ways. Competition is taken seriously but you rarely hear an actually bad word about competitors, which would be the normal case in most other sports.

*Field notes 26.8.2015: After the first start group of men in their 50s have already started speculations for the second start. Their comments humanize the horses and they talk about them as people talk about normal athletes "he wasn't he's usual self last time I saw him race...". I'm surprised that they can tell the names of horses warming up by the looks. For me all the horses look the same unless I can see the number.*

Gathering information about horses and drivers is an important way to increase chances of winning in betting but also to build members' status within the community. During the starts some spectators keep book intensively of what goes around the track. There are tons of information and statistics provided and trotting enthusiasts really take the best out of it. I hear a more experienced man behind me in Vermo instructing some less experienced spectators to use Fintoto's mobile handbook to check the statistics for upcoming starts. The system and stats sound complicated to me but the senior man finishes he's mentoring with the old phrase "It's not rocket science, you know".

Betting is also the key source of income for the organizers and it has been facilitated well. There are betting stands everywhere – outside the stand, inside the stand, by the beer terrace, in the restaurant and so on. In my opinion you would have to be a devoted horse raising and training enthusiast to get a thrill out of just watching the horses race.



Picture 2: Horse warming up for start in Teivo (3.10.2015, Tampere)

Socializing can happen any time during the races or also before and after the actual event. Most spectators come to the horse track with their family, with a friend or in a small group. Nevertheless it is not unusual that some people seem to have come all by themselves. As one might guess the most popular topic of discussion is trotting. People have debates about the horses and their own trotting experiences as the following quotes from my field notes demonstrate.

Field notes 5.8.2015: *Some comments by the spectators indicate their vast knowledge about horses and racers. “A double victory for west coast! I only had a doubt about that poor start position but once it started to climb up I knew it would win it” – is a comment that demonstrates his knowledge about background of the horses and also his ability to analyze race events.*

Field notes 5.8.2015: *In between the starts there are two men catching up. Another of them had travelled to Joensuu to see “Kuninkuusravit”, one of the biggest annual trotting events. He told that the trip was really nice and there were a huge amount of people. Though he regretted missing a chance to sing karaoke at the after party.*



Horse track provides a suitable environment for socializing as the pace of the event is pretty slow. One start takes few minutes and there are about 15 minutes between starts so there's a lot of time for discussion and debate. Trotting also provides Finns who are often uneasy with small talk endless source of conversation topic. Two community members can talk about the forms of horses, betting odds, previous success or losses with bets and other related topics.



Picture 3: Vermo main stand and the crowd at "Grand Finnish Derby" (5.9.2015, Espoo)

Holt introduced the concept of consumption as play and described how socializing between baseball fans can be viewed as “autotelic interaction rather than communication of specific information” (Holt 1995). This kind of playful debates and dialogues are also typical for trotting community. Betting wins and losses are a common topic of discussion and when talking about betting success among friends trotting people tend to exaggerate wins and keep silent about losses. These conversations are not serious by any means and the entertaining part is to get your pal caught of a white lie or top his story with even better story of your own.

Eating and drinking is a secondary activity for most people at the horse track. As the races can take three to four hours naturally people feel the need for snacks and refreshments. Selection for food is focused on fast food and cafeteria products which serves the basic needs of all age groups. Snacks are especially important for kids for whom the slow pace of horse races gets easily boring. It is not uncommon to see that parents send their kids to buy ice cream or candies

to keep them happy while parents are seeing the races.

The exact number of spectators is not published anywhere but when I visited the basic Wednesday races in Vermo for the first time I estimated that around 500 people were present. Even that is a decent number for Finnish sporting event especially taken that it's a weekday. The importance of the competition has direct affect on the number of spectators. The second time I visit Vermo it is the qualifier for "the Grand Finnish Derby" and the track is considerably busier than the first time. There might be even 1000 people excited to see which horses make it to the biggest competition of the fall. I visited two major events; Derby in Vermo 5.9.2015 and Kriterium in Teivo 3.10.2015 and both of those events attracted several thousand spectators. Beside the people at the track enthusiasts all over Finland can see the races on cable-TV and as an online broadcast. Some bars and restaurants also view the races on their screens.

#### **4.1.3. Who are the trotting enthusiasts?**

At the horse track even a random visitor can get a cozy feeling of a family like community. The first time I went to the races I was welcomed with cake and coffee served for free to celebrate local horse and trainer who had won a major competition the week before. Horse races are all family events and you can spot three generations of family members and even dogs enjoying the event together.

There are few common stereotypes most Finns connect with people who attend horse races. Firstly trotting is seen as activity of the countryside. This is quite natural as raising and training horses takes place outside town centers and one might imagine that people who are in touch with agriculture have a bigger interest in horses than other people. From the point of view of someone living in bigger Finnish towns trotting is not fashionable or trendy and people assume it's reflected in the appearance of trotting community members as well. A really common stereotype is that lot of Romanis attend horse races. An acquaintance asked me when is told about my study "Aren't they all Romanis?" In Finland "hevosmies" (horseman) is even a common nickname for Romanis. Visiting race track gives some support to the stereotype but also reveals that when it comes to the appearance there's a larger variety in the crowd than most would expect.

*Field notes 5.8.2015: When I look at the people getting to the tracks I find some stereotypic trotting people right away. There are two Romani men and lot of middle aged men dressed up as the middle class in Finnish countryside tends to. However I also quickly realize that there's quite a variety of people around. The middle-aged men either alone or in small groups is a large portion of spectators but there are also families with small children, some fashionable young men and also women around. The share of women might be around 30%, so they are clearly a minority but not rare either. I see a shirtless man in his 50s with a huge belly, but luckily I figure out it's not a common trend.*

The countryside look and feel of the spectators becomes even more evident when I visit the track again. As an example the most common footwear at the track seems to be running shoes (worn by men who seem like they haven't run in ages) or supermarket sandals. Practical and comfortable for you backyard or summer cottage but something you wouldn't see at the trendy spots of Helsinki. Despite the exceptions with more trendy and outgoing looks the atmosphere could be similar in some agricultural fair or farmers' market.

Even though most community members don't take trotting too seriously and the playful side of the betting stories is there the people who follow trotting are considered traditional and even conservative. For instance the chairman of the Finns Party (previously True Finns) Timo Soini who's known for his conservative and nationalistic views is an enthusiastic trotting follower and it seems to suit his public picture well. The services offered at the horse tracks seem to serve the needs of a traditional Finnish consumer. In the bar at Vermo beside the basic beer, cider and long drink also the iconic Finnish liquors "Jallu" and "Kossu" are available. Café won't be serving fancy espressos or lattes but majority of trotting folks are happy with filtered coffee. Music played at the track is mostly the kind played in Finnish mainstream radio stations but occasionally I notice that country music is also played. I also find some old fashioned arrangements surprising for me:

*Field notes 5.8.2015: I'm surprised to realize that people are smoking right outside the main stand. Smoking is forbidden almost everywhere in Finland and in most places the areas where smoking is allowed are in some distant corner.*

*However in Vermo you can watch the race from a nice spot and have a smoke at the same time. Another old fashioned feature of the event.*

At the horse track most spectators keep relatively calm and people are not showing that much emotion. This would be the case in most Finnish sports events though. In exciting starts during the races the atmosphere rises and there is some cheering and applause to the competitors. The individuals who loudly celebrate are little bit exceptional in regular races. In regular races you won't usually see people wearing or carrying fan items such as in team sports. In bigger events like Derby and Kriterium however, there are fan groups with clothing, flags and banners indicating their support for particular stables or horse.



Picture 4: Spectators at Kriterium-ravit in Teivo (3.10.2015, Tampere)

The usual profile of spectators is also reflected in the sponsors and partners at the horse track. There are many banner ads of construction companies, pension funds and other companies representing traditional industries. As one might expect many sponsors are also related to agriculture and horse keeping. A popular way of cooperation is be a sponsor for named start of the races. Some starts in the races I saw were for example sponsored by a karaoke bar or a bar that viewed horse races on screen.

## 4.2. Metaphors for consuming trotting

I am using Holt's (1995) metaphors for consuming to categorize the most important trotting practices revealed in the interviews. Based on the practices' nature in terms of structure and purpose those are divided under the categories of consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as classification and consuming as play.

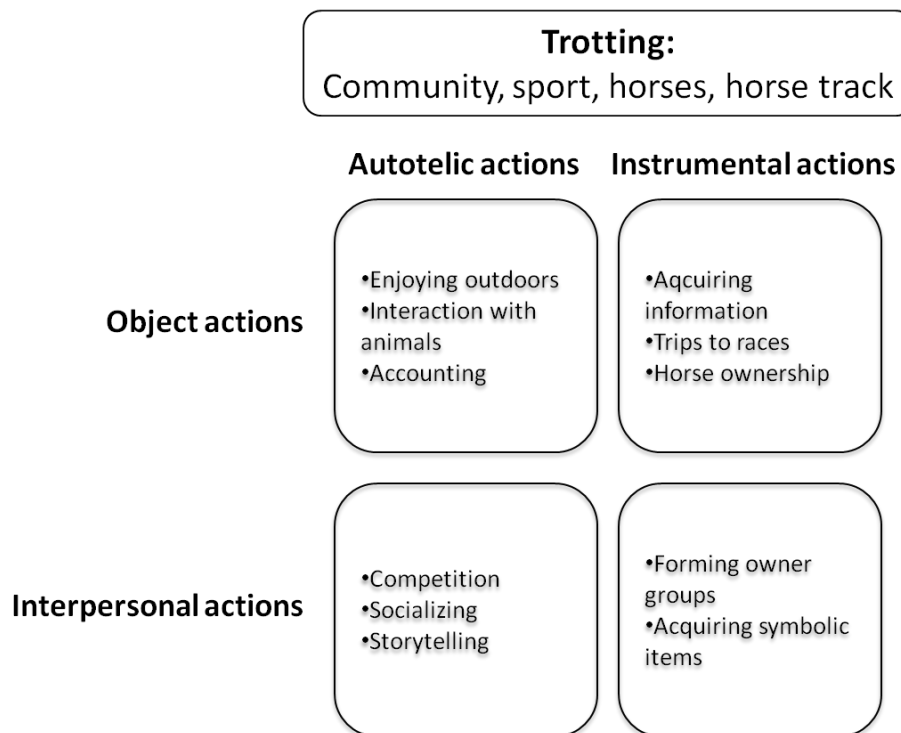


Figure 1: Trotting consumption practices

### 4.2.1. Consuming as experience

#### 4.2.1.1. *Enjoying outdoors*

All of my interviewees stated that being in touch with nature was part of why trotting had become important activity for them. For many of them spending time outdoors and with animals was even a central part of the whole thing. These comments were even a bit

surprising as horse track and trotting are man-made things which only include some elements of nature. “Nature” in this case and used by Finns is likely to describe something that interviewees felt being an opposite of urban life in cities. So nature doesn’t only refer to pure and untouched nature but also to their ideal of life in the countryside. I came across the comment that horse races can be “seen, heard and smelled several times”. As my interviewees Olli and Osmo put it:

Olli: *“And you see... Surely it can be nice watching it (the horse race) sitting in a restaurant and eating inside the stands... but you won’t hear the sounds and you won’t get the smell. By the track, there you have it all right!”*

Osmo: *“This is little bit like the motor races. This has to be seen heard and smelled.”*

Sensory experiences that people get at the horse track seem to bring them back positive memories from their youth and childhood. Many of the people I spoke to had lived nearby a horse track or spent time at farms when they grew up. From many comments you get a sense that they have an ideal of how outdoors should feel like and horse track as an environment provides many elements of that. The objects, sounds and smells at the horse track were also different to those at the workplace or home which helped people to relax and forget their troubles for a while. Evaluating is one part of consuming-as-experience Holt (1995) mentioned and one part of evaluating is to compare the actions seen to conventions of the culture. I can see that trotting enthusiasts reflect their experience at the horse track to their ideal of horse sports as an outdoor activity. Appreciating was another part of consuming-as-experience that Holt (1995) named and also for people at the horse track making sense of the environment is part of their emotional response to the activity.

Nina: *“...that is so unbelievably relaxing and like you could leave all your troubles behind. A moment of happiness actually. Good weather, autumn evening or summer evening. There can’t be anything better.”*

#### **4.2.1.2. Interaction with animals**

All of my interviewees had huge respect for horses and several of them told that being in contact with animals has value of its own. Some interviewees felt that people have a basic need to get in touch with nature and that being involved with horses served that need. Some of them explained that because horses are grateful and happy regardless of what happens outside the stables they are able to forget about any other potential troubles. I feel that natural creatures such as horses represent something similar as what was described by Belk & Costa (1998, 236) as “solid and continuous”. It is something that can work as a stabilizing force in the hectic modern life. The idea of experiencing nature through racing horses that live in stables can obviously be questioned. I guess the satisfaction is quite similar with having a pet but my interviewees still felt that horses are more like “wild” creatures. The ones who were involved in breeding or training horses described that seeing them develop is extremely rewarding. One of my interviewees even described her dream of getting old with her beloved horses.

*Maija: “I have had music as a hobby as well and been involved with that for many years, but not anymore. At least one reason (why trotting is my main thing) is that horse is such a great animal and I’ve always been a horse girl. It looks so impressive and you can really communicate with it, compete and so on...”*

*Nina: “And there is the thing that we who are into horses stick to that all our lives. We’ll keep on riding as long as we can and when we can’t any more we’ll be lifted there or use the stairs. That’s just how it goes. And especially on the saddle you can get to the forest tracks... If we don’t have the strength to run anymore the horse will run take us forward from place to another. How happy that would be... that if I some beautiful day would fell of the saddle head first and that would be it. That would be a happy way to die.”*

#### **4.2.1.3. Accounting**

My findings on trotting are really similar with Holt's (1995) findings on baseball spectators when it comes to the practice of accounting. Trotting enthusiasts follow the action at the horse track closely and interpret it following the conventions and rules of the trotting event. Some do it more casually but others have more formal ways to engage to accounting like filling statistics sheets and making notes to the hand books. In trotting the actions are typified pretty specifically and even though the statistics might appear complex book keeping alone is hardly that rewarding to anyone. The rewarding part of accounting is when the individual can use accounting skills to combine that information with other knowledge and thus to predict the outcome of following start. This could result in winning money with bets or just in gaining respect from peer trotting enthusiasts.

#### **4.2.2. Consuming as integration**

##### **4.2.2.1. Acquiring information**

For an outsider following trotting and betting on horses might appear really simple. For the people who are devoted to the sport it offers lot of challenge and learning about the horses and racing is extremely rewarding for the enthusiasts. Betting is the easiest way to get started as you can play with bets as low as less than one Euro. However serious players put lot of effort in learning every detail about the starts they bet on to have best possible chance of winning. It is rare that anyone would actually earn money by betting on trotting. Osmo who had been actively involved in trotting for over 40 years explained that one needs to have "4 in mathematics and 10 in religion" (4 being the worst and 10 the best grade in traditional Finnish school system) to take part. The main thrill for most is trying to predict the outcome as well as possible and the satisfaction is great when you get it right. Another aspect is to compare your success with the one of your fellow community members and compete with them more or less seriously. Holt (1995) calls the ways people integrate themselves to an activity assimilating practices. Acquiring information from internet, newspapers and magazines is a common way to gain information about a sport and interact with different elements of it. A person who knows horses, trainers and drivers by hearth is not only more likely to do well in betting but also more appreciated as a community member.



Toni: *“It requires paying lot of attention, when you after the starts watch the starts again and notice that for example number 5 was blocked in start number 3. That this horse I should bet on next time and I have insane files on my computer. You have to know all the horses and what the opponent there... If I bet on number 2 in start 6 I have to know each opponent and... It requires lot of time. I mean it is not just going to the races and thinking that number 5 wins and take the bet in, but it requires much more work from the player.”*

Different motives for taking part in gambling activities have been studied for example by Fang & Mowen (2009). They named money, social interaction, excitement, self-esteem and escape as the situational traits that motivate people to do betting. Trotting enthusiasts seem to feel as they are active participants of the sport as they engage in betting. Holt (1995) called the practices which involve participants in the production of a given activity as producing practices. For example doing shared bets helped to fulfill the need for social interaction but at the same time the person is co-creating the experience for other enthusiasts as well. Succeeding in betting raises the self-esteem of the players and the success stories as such are a big part of trotting experience as.

The motives listed by Fang & Mowen (2009) partly support my findings and at the same time raise a question of whether some motives are considered more acceptable than others. Social side, excitement and rewarding part of betting were mentioned by most people as what they found important in betting. At the same time basically no one told that money or escape would be an important motivator to engage in gambling. There might be an established way to talk about betting as part of trotting that supports the positive motives and pushes the more questionable motives aside. Clearly the practices that support the social, exciting and rewarding image of betting were favored and taking part in those helped members to integrate to trotting.

Markus: *“I can remember when I was a young boy, when we played a game called Troikka with 2 Finnish markkas. The bet was only 2mk and then I won 780mk (~130€) which was at that time for a small boy like I had won a house.*

*And I bought a rubber boat which cost 400mk and I still have that boat. That is something memorable for me about trotting. I was left with the feeling that I beat everyone.“*

#### **4.2.2.2. Trips to races**

Attending the event on sight provides a special opportunity for assimilating with the chance to interact directly with the sport, drivers, horses, the track and other participants (Holt 1995). In the trotting community certain competitions and travelling to distant or rare events hold even greater status. Especially for long time members of the community it is assumed that they have attended important Finnish events such as Kuninkuusravit or Kriterium-ravit. Most devoted enthusiasts have done trips to see races in other major trotting countries like France and Sweden. Also knowing the trotting scene especially in Sweden was held in high regard as Finns tend to think that Swedes are one step ahead of us in trotting.

*Matti: “Well... back in the days my first foreign trip was to Stockholm, Sweden. They have this weekend called ”Elitloppet” and it’s always the last weekend of May. There are always lot of Finns because it’s easy to get there on many ways. That’s one of the spots... Then I won a trip in a lottery to Prix d’Amérique, which is held in Paris in the last weekend of January. That is a huge event. 35 000 people in the cold January Paris. I feel sorry for those watching the race outside. There I have been and I have been travelling to races as a trip organizer to Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Italy.”*

*Toni: “I often travel to Sweden to watch trotting. On Wednesdays for example there’s always a big race in Solvalla, Sweden and those are held every week... ..I follow Swedish trotting a lot and actually that is my main interest. They are so much ahead of us in Swedish trotting and the exchanges are better and... Exchanges meaning in betting, how much people play in total. In Sweden they play more than they do in Finland.”*

#### **4.2.2.3. Horse ownership**

Many enthusiastic trotting fans also become owners of racing horses. Owning a racing horse all by yourself is expensive as the initial cost to buy a promising horse might be over 20 000€ plus monthly expenses of 1000-2000€. Thus co-owning a horse has become popular either with a group of friends or through “Trotting leagues”. The owners of raising horses are tempted with the challenge of finding a talented young horse and training it to become a trophy winning trotting horse. They search for information about horses’ family trees and analyze horses’ strengths and weaknesses in great detail. For some the rewarding part is just to see the horse develop and the team spirit of the owner group. To own a horse can work as a producing or personalizing practice. Naturally it offers a way to become part of the trotting industry but at the same time the owner becomes recognized through the horse that he or she owns. There might be many personalized objects related to horses like websites and fan gear which provide enthusiasts additional ways to differentiate themselves from regular community members.

*Osmo: “I have been very enthusiastic. Mainly I’ve been interested in the American families for the last 11 or 10 years, meaning that it’s quite a lot of links and literature I’ve been trying to acquire. I don’t know about the French families but I’ve done research on the American families and around 5 years ago I spent 4-5 hours a day doing that research. And I’ve been a subscriber to Travronden (Swedish trotting magazine) Christmas issue for 10 years and been reading that as well.”*

*Riitta: “When your own horse does well! That is just wonderful. When you are here in Vermo and Grainfield Fanny (my co-owned horse) runs that makes my heart beat like crazy. Even though there are 700 co-owners it feels like own to me. And... that is how we all feel about it.”*

#### **4.2.3. Consuming as classification**

#### **4.2.3.1. Forming owner groups**

Co-ownership and owner groups are a popular way to get more engaged into trotting for people who want to be more involved than regular spectators but don't have the money or time to own a horse alone. Being part of an owner group is pretty quite different than just owning a horse mainly because of the social aspect of co-ownership. Co-ownership has features of both classifying through objects and classifying through actions as those are presented by Holt (1995). The racing horse itself is a classifying object that tells its owners from owners of other horses and regular spectators. At the same time forming an owner group or joining one is an action that shows one's devotion to the sport. Many of my interviewees felt that becoming a co-owner is a great chance for anyone who likes to get deeper in the world of trotting.

*Markus: "It makes lot more sense for a regular person to be part of a (owner)group because the thrill of following the race is just the same (than if the horse was own alone). You won't be thinking if you own 20% of the horse or if it's owned by you alone. And then you have your friends there so the joy is even greater so I even see co-owning as a savior for trotting. Also today in the Kriterium final many (horses) have an owner group behind them. I definitely support this co-ownership and we'll probably have at least one horse with this group also in the future."*

#### **4.2.3.2. Acquiring symbolic items**

In spectator sports it is typical that people classify themselves with objects that are related to a team, athlete or an event. Trotting enthusiasts don't usually carry on as many fan items such as clothing, flags or banners as fans of team sports do but there still are objects that can tell about community member's status and background. For example souvenirs from foreign races are respected by other enthusiasts and worn with pride at horse tracks. An item might also tell that a person was present when some well-known horse or driver achieved something remarkable. Also Holt (1995) described that items relating to stories like that hold a special value. For horse owners different trophies and rewards are naturally important classifying objects that support their status in trotting community.

#### **4.2.4. Consuming as play**

##### **4.2.4.1. Competition**

The way members of trotting community compete in betting success or skills in horse raising or driving tends to have a playful manner. People enjoy trying to beat their peers but the competition rarely gets serious and the social interaction itself is more important than winning. As Holt (1995, 9) described spectators are communing when “they are experiencing the consumption object with each other such that their interaction with the game becomes a mutual experience”. In trotting communing is clearly an important part of the experience. Insiders have the shared idea of the activities and they also respond to successes and disappointments of their fellow community members.

*Maija: “Well probably if I think about trotting, the most rewarding thing is when I succeed really well. I mean, not necessarily just winning but every time I make an effort to prepare well and learn about opponents. Beforehand and afterwards I always study the program by heart and try to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of each (horse). You know... which horses are strong starters and which ones might push hard in the end... “*

##### **4.2.4.2. Socializing**

My interviewees found sharing the experience with other trotting enthusiasts very important. It seems to be common that people are introduced to trotting through family ties. There were people whose parents were raising horses and someone was taken to the track with his dad already as a toddler. The first link to trotting could also have been through a childhood friend.

*Toni: “It (first touch to trotting) came just through my parents. My dad had been following trotting and actually since his birth... Also my grandfather was racing horses so it all actually starts from my grandfather.”*

Matti: *“Back then in my home town my neighbor’s dad went to see trotting. Me and my friend who was of my age went along. It was as simple as that.”*

The community and socializing with same minded people also seems to be a key thing that keeps people hooked to trotting for decades. Many enthusiasts have a group of people they meet each week at the track. There’s a playful way in many conversations at the horse track similar to Holt’s (1995) description of baseball spectators’ exchange of comments. Some have the tradition to travel to a major event like Kuninkuusravit each year with their friends. Betting is also a social event for many and these shared bets (Porukkapeli in Finnish) are popular in Finland. Some people tend to arrive to the track early to plan their bets together or they might meet and leave the bets at any box office or bar that cooperates with Fintoto.

Matti: *”...It is the interest in horse sports and betting that connects people and gathers them here. We have these cases that have been coming here at the track for decades but they are getting fewer. There is a group of 5 or 6 guys and unfortunately one gentleman passed away almost without any warning. There shouldn’t have been any special health issues...”*

A theme that kept coming up in conversations with trotting enthusiasts was equality within the community. They thought it was valuable that anyone regardless of their background could enjoy the sport and take part. People felt it was relaxing to leave their professional role behind and discuss about trotting with people from different areas of life who shared the interest in horse sports. For example Olli who works as a doctor described this as follows:

Olli: *“There is the thing that we really have people from different backgrounds, but the object they observe and talk about is like... It is one of its own and how should I put this... You can regardless of what your background is neutrally enjoy it and come here. It (personal background) doesn’t matter and you can start conversation with anyone.”*

#### **4.2.4.3. Storytelling**

Finns have a general idea of trotting enthusiasts being eager to tell stories and that everything that is said by trotting enthusiasts is not meant to be taken that seriously. As we observe the interactions within trotting community I feel that storytelling should be separated from other socializing as stories in the context of trotting have a special value. Holt (1995) mentioned that stories can be seen as part of consuming as classification but I would rather in the case of trotting put storytelling under consuming as play category. This is because the members of trotting community I spoke with seemed to enjoy the storytelling for its own sake and anyone could take part in it regardless of experience or status. Stories can be about major events or surprising occasions but often those involved just minor funny things that occurred around trotting.

*Osmo: "...and I remember back then in the early 70's when Erik Skuttan had stables in Käpylä, Helsinki. One Saturday morning when I was about to go to see my friends' 4<sup>th</sup> division football match around 10 o'clock, Erik was there digging a dike with a shovel to the side of the trotting track in order to direct water out of the track. He was wearing clogs and a black t-shirt. I remember that because clogs were fashionable in Sweden back then and those came to Finland bit later. I asked him maybe 8 or 9 years ago that "can you remember... I bet you can't remember a weekend back in -72 or -73 when you were digging a dike with a shovel on a Saturday morning 10 o'clock to direct water from inner turn to the dike". At the same time our friends were playing football at the Velodrom's pitch."*

#### **4.3. Analysis of trotting practices**

Warde (2005) suggested finding out what types of practices are prevalent, what range of practices people engage in and what are the typical combinations of practices. The prevalent trotting practices are betting, watching the races, eating & drinking and socializing. As I found out during my observation period, it is not necessary to participate in all of these but most trotting enthusiasts do take part in each four at some level. Eating and drinking are not considered being an important part of trotting but it is part of the event and facilitates

socializing which is considered important as itself. The ones who bet also watch the races for the thrill and because analyzing the races helped to improve in betting. The ones who are more into the sport and for example training and raising horses are often extremely interested in watching and analyzing the races but won't necessarily be involved with betting.

Another important question to ask is: how are individuals positioned in the practices in which they are engaged? (Warde 2005) The way individuals position themselves in the practices is determined by several factors. For example the level of commitment put into betting is typically measured by the time and money invested into the activity. Heavy betters use lot of time to study the starts and bet with higher stakes of money. Other enthusiasts often approach these people for tips and tell stories about successful gamblers. Horse owners and trainers have their own position in the community. People might think that the ones who are actually involved in the sport are more devoted to trotting community than for example the leisure gamblers. Being known as a devoted gambler or horse owner can also support ones role in socializing but not necessarily. Anyone with good stories to tell or just being considered as genuinely good guy is appreciated in the social interaction.

Warde (2005) also advises to investigate the level of commitment put to different practices. In terms of level of commitment the ones who are own racing horses are most involved. They need to invest lot of money and time and take a big financial risk as they try to raise a trophy winning horse. As said some betting enthusiasts are really committed but there are also leisure betters who put in small bets without giving much thought to the activity. There are also people who occasionally attend the races to enjoy the event and atmosphere and might attend all practices little bit without showing more commitment to any aspect. The level of commitment put to socializing is harder to evaluate but it is clear that people also put effort on that. Like Holt (1995) explain about the assimilating practices, it is important to interact with different elements of the sport to act as part of the community. Gaining the experience and trotting related knowledge alone requires lot of commitment.

The social world of trotting community is the nexus of its social practices. I base my analysis on Schatzki's (2002) idea of social orders. Social orders are established in the relations of their components to certain organized bundles of human activity (Schatzki 2002). According to Schatzki (2002) context can determine the practices that take place in it. In the context of trotting the practices of betting, watching the races, eating & drinking and socializing are organized in a unique way. Watching the race is most clearly an independent practice that is unique to trotting and could stand alone even without the other ones. Betting is also in key



position but it is not a unique feature to trotting. Betting and following the sport have a symbiotic relationship as betting makes watching the races more exciting and following the races helps to do well in betting. Eating and drinking is clearly a supporting or instrumental practice but still important part of the experience at the track. Socializing is involved everywhere in trotting context and all the features of trotting support interaction with other community members.

### Context: Trotting

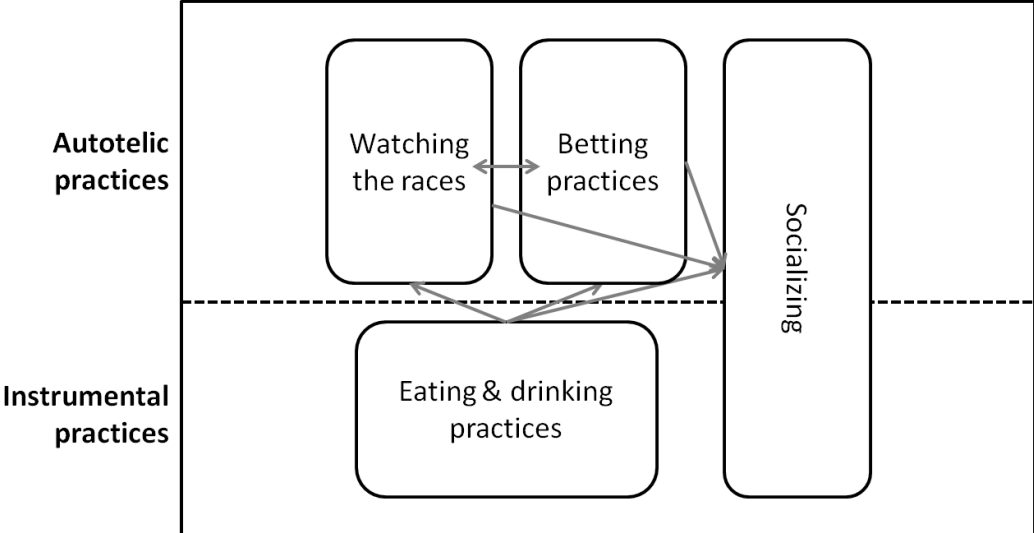


Figure 2: Hierarchy of trotting practices

## **5. Discussion**

This section introduces how my findings relate to previous studies in the fields of practice theory and consumer culture. One key point of discussion is how trotting enthusiasts form their relationship to the subculture and is the process similar as members it is with other leisure subcultures that have been studied. My findings suggest that most important actions for trotting enthusiasts are formed around experiencing nature, socializing and enjoying the sport. Many core activities have similarities to what other authors have found out but I have also found some interesting community specific qualities that reveal fascinating things about trotting enthusiasts.

### **5.1. Ideal of experiencing nature**

As described in findings section most people I interviewed named getting closer to nature and outdoors as an important part of trotting. It is easy to find similarities with almost any outdoor activity in this sense. River rafters stated that a sense of communion with nature caused an emergent feeling of rejuvenation (Arnould & Price 1993). For mountain men interaction with nature was part of creating periodic paradisaical enclave that celebrated the oppositional values from everyday life (Belk & Costa 1998). However trotting or horse track don't represent untouched or pure nature but rather the countryside. When trotting enthusiasts talk about nature they seem to have an idea of ideal meet-up of natural creatures, Finnish countryside and people. It resembles something they remember from their youth and altogether creates an environment which they find pleasant and desirable. Also the surfers in the study by Canniford & Shankar (2013) had to face the controversy between pure nature and their activities. Canniford and Shankar named the moments when incompatible resources problematized the ideal of external nature as "betrayals in assemblages of nature" (Canniford & Shankar 2013, 1059).

### **5.2. Becoming member of the community**

As I described in findings section it is typical that trotting enthusiasts are introduced to the

sport through family members or close friends. There are unwritten social networking practices (Arnould et al. 2009) that are usually learned through more experienced community members. The social networking practices have been important to build the community but at the same time those might build a boundary for people who don't have personal connection to trotting. The need for welcoming practiced such as Arnould et al. (2009) described has been addressed and there are activities like company days and guided tours to the horse tracks to introduce the sport to new people. For the biker community an essential part of belonging to the subculture was to build the biker persona by investing in powerful and customized bikes and creating appearance that was respectable among other members (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). In trotting community similar ways to build status within community is to gain knowledge about horses, past races and sport in general, to invest in own horses and to be successful in betting. At the same time many trotting enthusiasts seem to be concerned not to fall into the cultural caricature (Arsel & Thompson 2011). They emphasize that they take part in many activities and that the social side of trotting is important for them.

The marketplace, in this case horse track creates an important scene for community members to socialize, share opinions & experiences and express themselves freely. Horse track can be seen for many people as the "third place" (Karababa & Ger 2011) beside work and home where trotting enthusiasts can meet and relax. There are certain similarities even with Kates' (2002) findings about the gay subculture. The subculture of gay ghetto was formed around the environment that offered community members activities, goods and social connections to enjoy the lifestyle they desired in a safe and enjoyable way. Trotting community is in some aspects more like the gay subculture than for instance some brand- or leisure subcultures because it is not formed around single brand or hobby but it provides many ways to take part. Trotting community members seem to share certain sense of style and prefer the traditional Finnish way of life. The connections between community members can reach beyond the actual marketplace.

The sense of equality within the community I wrote about in the findings section was also part of creating the opposition to everyday lives of trotting enthusiasts. It would be against the unwritten code of conduct to bring up your social status at the horse track. Likewise to what Belk & Costa (1998) found out it is important for people that the community, time and space create a world aside from everyday routines. The informality and equality among people is typical for Finns and doesn't need to be protected by rules or guidelines as in mountain man rites (Belk & Costa 1998) or the burning man festival (Kozinets 2002) for example.

Trotting enthusiasts I spoke with used to at first claim that there are all sorts of people taking part. This is partly related to avoiding the cultural caricature (Arsel & Thompson 2011). I can't deny this claim in the sense that there are people of different professions, age groups and so on present. Although an outsider can easily tell that trotting community is not that heterogeneous either. Most people at the horse track represent Finnish mainstream. They seem to value traditional things like their relationship with nature, family ties and health. After a short discussion also the enthusiasts tended to admit that you can spot certain typical groups like older men being largely represented within the community.

### **5.3. Building skills and experience to master the sport**

Horse races are an entertaining event as such and as Peñaloza (2001) described entertainment alone can be one key motivator for consumer behavior. Following horse races can be by Holt's (1995) metaphors categorized as consuming as experience. However building skills and adding certain level of play and competition makes the activity lot more interesting and rewarding and thus most trotting enthusiasts seek to build their knowledge and skills to master the sport. Holt (1995, 15) stated that including all four metaphors of consumption is typical for consuming that "occurs in groups—families, peer groups, subcultures, organizations, and the like". Consumer actions are often directed to draw us closer to objects and recourses that are used to engage with others (Holt 1995). The goal might be to impress others, to make new friends or simply to play. These are also the reasons why trotting enthusiasts invest lot of time and money to learn every detail about horses in particular start, to acquire a racing horse of their own or to travel abroad to see a major trotting event.

Findings I made about trotting community's relationship with betting were interesting. I didn't find betting being a sensitive subject on any means. Both heavy betters and those who only occasionally put in small bets told openly about that and didn't seem to feel that there are negative things related to betting within trotting community. Betting in Finland is strictly regulated so it is also otherwise considered pretty harmless. This supports Humphreys' (2010) findings that regulation of gambling turned the discourse more positive and made it more legitimate. Trotting enthusiasts also tended to remind about the fact that the profit Fintoto makes with horse betting is directed to horse raising. This arrangement makes many of them feel that by betting they support the industry and community. Certainly the excitement of

betting has strong influence in keeping community members attached to the sport and the pleasure of succeeding is a central thing community members seek from the activity. For clubbers the marketplace provided a chance to close the everyday life outside and to focus on the pleasurable experience of clubbing (Goulding et al. 2009). The rush of the chance of winning or losing money can also direct the focus from outside world to the excitement of betting. This is another aspect of trotting that support creating the opposition to everyday life.

## 6. Conclusions

To tackle my research problem I created a model that describes what kinds of practices build and shape the trotting community. I entered the marketplace and experience the actions and meanings that are defining for this subculture. I learned that most important practices connecting members to the community are the ones that separate themselves from everyday routines and create a comfortable atmosphere to socialize with same minded people. Through these actions community members separate themselves from the mainstream and create a unique culture of trotting. Basically trotting community is open and welcoming to new members but in practice most people have some direct connection to the community through which they are introduced to trotting.

For many members of trotting community trotting is a large part of their daily activities including acquiring information, travelling to horse tracks and spending time at the events. Many have certain group of close friends they meet regularly as part of their trotting activities but enthusiasts also found important that you can always start a conversation with any other community member. People can take part in trotting in several ways including for example betting and different forms of horse ownership. These different approaches get along well and support each other as I explained in findings section. Altogether trotting practices form a way to spend leisure time that provides social interaction, excitement and feel of achievement.

Internet and TV are now shaping the way people follow trotting and some community members see that as a threat. They feel that people don't meet and connect at the horse track anymore if they stay at home doing the betting and seeing the races from computer screen. Similar discussion is going on around other spectator sports as well and the new ways to engage in trotting might also open new possibilities for the community to grow and evolve.

## **7. Limitations and need for further research**

Many important existing studies of consumer subcultures have taken several years to be done. One limitation of my study is that the observation period of 4 months was relatively short. I need to remember that my findings will reflect the situation at a certain period of time, but it won't necessarily provide information about the evolution of trotting subculture. Another potential limitation is the sampling of interviewees. There's always a risk that the sample is somewhat polarized and now all of my interviewees came from southern Finland. There is an opportunity that people in more distant parts of Finland see some aspects differently.

A study that focuses around one particular subculture leaves lot of room for further research. The relationship between my findings and existing theory will back up some findings but also challenge some assumptions about practices of consumer cultures. Further studies with other subcultures will provide information about if my findings can be generalized or if those are subculture specific. Interesting additions to my study would be studies around other sports communities or any subcultures related to keeping animals.

## References

- Arnold, S.J. & Fischer, E., 1994. Hermeneutics and Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21.
- Arnould, E., Schau, J. & Muniz, a M., 2009. How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(September), pp.30–51. Available at: <http://opus.bath.ac.uk/29221/>.
- Arnould, E.J. & Price, L.L., 1993. River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), pp.24–45.
- Arnould, E.J. & Thompson, C.J., 2012. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), pp.868–882.
- Arnould, E.J. & Wallendorf, M., 1994. Market-Oriented Ethnography: Interpretation Building and Marketing Strategy Formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(4), pp.484–504.
- Arsel, Z. & Bean, J., 2012. Taste Regimes and Market-Mediated Practice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp.000–000.
- Arsel, Z. & Thompson, C.J., 2011. Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect Their Field-Dependent Identity Investments from Devaluing Marketplace Myths. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(5), pp.791–806.
- Belk, R.W. & Costa, J.A., 1998. The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(3), pp.218–240.
- Bitner, M.J., 1992. Servicescapes: the impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), pp.57–71.
- Canniford, R. & Shankar, A., 2013. Purifying practices: How consumers assemble romantic experiences of nature. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39, pp.1051–1069. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/667202>.
- Chalmers Thomas, T., Price, L.L. & Schau, H.J., 2012. When Differences Unite: Resource Dependence in Heterogeneous Consumption Communities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), pp.000–000.
- Elliott, R. & Jankel-Elliott, N., 2003. Using ethnography in strategic consumer research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 6(4), pp.215–223.
- Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A., 2008. *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Fang, X. & Mowen, J., 2009. Examining the trait and functional motive antecedents of four gambling activities : slot machines , skilled card games , sports betting , and promotional games. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(2), pp.121–131.
- Fellman, M.W., 1999. Breaking tradition. *Marketing Research*, 11(3), pp.20–24.
- Goulding, C. et al., 2009. The Marketplace Management of Illicit Pleasure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(5), pp.759–771. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/592946>.
- Hand, M. & Shove, E., 2007. Condensing Practices: Ways of living with a freezer. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7(1), pp.79–104.
- Holt, D.B., 1995. How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices. *Journal*



- of Consumer Research*, 22(1), p.1.
- Humphreys, A., 2010. Semiotic Structure and the Legitimation of Consumption Practices: The Case of Casino Gambling. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(3), pp.490–510.
- Jalas, M., 2006. Making Time: The art of loving wooden boats. *Time & Society*, 15(2-3), pp.343–363.
- Karababa, E. & Ger, G., 2011. Early Modern Ottoman Coffeehouse Culture and the Formation of the Consumer Subject. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(5), pp.737–760.
- Kates, S.M., 2002. The Protean Quality of Subcultural Consumption: An Ethnographic Account of Gay Consumers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(3), pp.383–399.
- Kozinets, R. V., 2002. Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), pp.20–38.
- Laurier, E., 2008. How breakfast happens in the café. *Time and Society*, pp.1–20. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1842/2298>.
- Magaudda, P., 2011. When materiality “bites back”: Digital music consumption practices in the age of dematerialization. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(1), pp.15–36.
- McAlexander, J.H., Schouten, J.W. & Koenig, H.F., 2002. Building Brand Community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), pp.38–54.
- Moisander, J., Valtonen, A. & Hirsto, H., 2009. Personal interviews in cultural consumer research – post- structuralist challenges. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 12(4), pp.329–348.
- Muniz, A.M. & O’Guinn, T.C., 2001. Brand Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), pp.412–432.
- Parmentier, S. & Fischer, E., 2015. Things Fall Apart : The Dynamics of Brand Audience Dissipation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(February).
- Peñaloza, L., 2001. Consuming the American West: Animating Cultural Meaning and Memory at a Stock Show and Rodeo. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), pp.369–398.
- Reckwitz, A., 2002. Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), pp.243–263.
- Røpke, I., 2009. Theories of practice - New inspiration for ecological economic studies on consumption. *Ecological Economics*, 68(10), pp.2490–2497. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2009.05.015>.
- Schatzki, T.R., 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T.R., 2002. *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Schouten, J.W. & McAlexander, J.H., 1995. Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), p.43.
- Shove, E.A. & Pantzar, M., 2005. Consumers, Producers and Practices Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), pp.43–64. Available at: <http://joc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/5/1/43>.
- Snyder, W., 1978. Horse Racing: Testing the Efficient Market Model. *The Journal of*

*Finance*, 33(4), pp.1109–1118.

- Thompson, C.J., 1997. Interpreting Consumers : A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers ' Consumption Stories. *Journal of Marketing Research*, XXXIV(November), pp.438–455.
- Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B. & Pollio, H.R., 1989. Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research : The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16, pp.133–146.
- Truninger, M., 2011. Cooking with Bimby in a moment of recruitment: Exploring conventions and practice perspectives. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(1), pp.37–59.
- Valtonen, A., Markuksela, V. & Moisander, J., 2010. Doing sensory ethnography in consumer research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34(4), pp.375–380. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.nukweb.nuk.uni-lj.si/doi/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00876.x/abstract> \n[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.nukweb.nuk.uni-lj.si/store/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00876.x/asset/j.1470-6431.2010.00876.x/pdf?v=1&t=h3kfd1g&s=7e63d](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.nukweb.nuk.uni-lj.si/store/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00876.x/asset/j.1470-6431.2010.00876.x.pdf?v=1&t=h3kfd1g&s=7e63d).
- Warde, A., 2005. Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), pp.131–153.
- Woermann, N. & Rokka, J., 2015. Timeflow: How Consumption Practices Shape Consumers' Temporal Experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp.000–000. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/info/10.1086/680668>.

## **Appendix 1: Interview guide**

In the beginning of the interview a brief description of the study is given to the interviewee. I explain that the interview is supposed to be open and answers don't need to be that precise but that interviewees can rather tell everything that comes to their mind about the subject.

Questions listed below were not asked directly and all the questions were not necessarily asked from all interviewees. Questions worked more as conversations topics and the actual discussion flowed freely and short additional questions were asked based on interviewees' answers and opinions.

### **Questions:**

#### **Trotting activities**

What was your first encounter with trotting like?

Who were involved?

What was the experience like? (unforgettable, enjoyable, addicting...?)

What is special about trotting compared to other hobbies or leisure activities?

What is included in your trotting activities?

How would you describe a regular week for example? What kind of trotting activities are included?

#### **The experience**

What is the most rewarding part in trotting?

Can you name the most memorable moment you have encountered in trotting?

Do you experience the sport differently now compared to when you were a beginner? How?

#### **The community**

How would you describe a typical member of trotting community?

Are your family members or close friends also into trotting?

Who?

If not, is there a particular reason?

How do you feel about trotting enthusiasts as a community?

Is it a community?

Can anyone become a member of the community?

### **Horse track**

What meanings horse track as a place has for you?

Is it more than just the place where races take place?

Do you regularly visit other tracks than the closest one to you?

Is the atmosphere different at different tracks?

Is the community alike at all tracks or do the practices differ?

### **Future plans**

Do you think that your relationship with trotting will change in the future?

How?

Is the change positive or negative?

What causes the change?

Is trotting as a sport going to change?

How?

Is the change positive or negative?

What causes the change?