

Confessions of a Movie-Fan: Introspection into a Consumer's Experiential Consumption of 'Pride and Prejudice'

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ABSTRACT

As people enjoy movies for various reasons, this paper is taking an existential-phenomenological perspective to discuss the consumption of movies as a holistic personal lived experience. By using subjective personal introspection, the author provides hereby insights into his personal lived consumption experiences with the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice*. Although the introspective data suggest that a complex tapestry of interconnected factors contributes to a consumer's movie enjoyment, this study found a consumer's personal engagement with the movie narrative and its characters to be of particular importance. This personal engagement not only allows for a momentary escape from reality into the imaginative movie world, but is even further enhanced through intertextuality, by which the consumer connects the movie to one's personal life experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Probably like most other people, I have enjoyed watching movies since my early childhood for the hedonic pleasure value that they provide (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). But for me movies are much more than merely another form of entertainment. In fact, my fascination with movies meets Bloch's (1986: 539) definition of *product enthusiasm*, where the product (in this case: *movies*) plays an important role and source of excitement and pleasure along sensory and aesthetic dimensions in a consumer's life. The experiential consumption of movies provides me with an exciting way to escape the everyday reality of a routinised, boring and lonely life. In addition to giving me the chance to live out my hopes, dreams and fantasies in my mind (Green, Brock and Kaufman 2004), movies present me with a source of inspiration for pursuing a *better way of life*. Indeed, an individual's consumption and subsequent enjoyment of movies can therefore vary from mere short-term entertainment to the experience of complete immersion into the movie narrative (Green et al. 2004) and identification with movie characters (Cohen 2001).

Yet, when reviewing the literature on movie consumption, one must inevitably conclude that the subjective contribution the consumption of movies makes to an individual consumer's life is still not fully understood. This scant attention may result from marketing's primary interest in the economic dimensions of movie consumption, where the focus is often limited to box office performances or the sales and rentals of DVDs in specified markets (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh and Bode 2004). In doing so, movie consumption is usually reduced to the mere purchase of individual tangible media formats (the "packaging") rather than investigated as the actual consumption of the movie as an intangible brand in itself (Basil 2001; Krugman and Gopal 1991). Although film studies have always shown a theoretical interest in the effects that movies may have on their audiences, audience-response theory usually involves expert viewers trying to show how an imagined, idealised viewer would respond to movie texts and the cinematic experience by assuming probable expectations, motives and prior knowledge (Hirschman 1999; Mulvey 1999). A synthesis of ideas from linguistics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism has hereby created the image of a passive viewer, who is vulnerable to the manipulative qualities of the cinematic movie experience (Phillips 2003). Furthermore, expert viewers have also often

discussed audience responses as a means to advance their own political-ideological agenda (see Mulvey 1999 as a good example).

Narrative transportation theory (Green et al. 2004; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), however, has presented in recent years an exciting alternative in media studies for understanding media enjoyment. Despite being primarily applied to reading, this theory suggests that *enjoyment can benefit from the experience of being immersed in a narrative world through cognitive, emotional and imagery involvement, as well as from the consequences of that immersion*, which include emotional connections with characters and self-transformations (Green et al. 2004: 311). Transportation is hereby seen as an active process by which the consumer seeks to be taken away from the everyday life into narrative worlds, where one could experience a different self and connect empathetically with media characters like real friends (Green and Brock 2000). However, by following strictly the behaviourist paradigm, the theory was only tested in controlled laboratory experiments (Green and Brock 2000; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), whose artificial designs showed little resemblance to consumers' real life experiences. Thus, the question remains whether there is any evidence for transportation theory in consumers' real movie consumption experiences. My aim is therefore to provide alternative insights into a consumer's holistic movie consumption experience from an existential-phenomenological perspective. By using subjective personal introspection, I will describe and examine my own personal lived experiences in relation to the movie *Pride & Prejudice* (Dir.: Joe Wright, UK 2005) and how I connected the movie to my personal life experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Unfortunately, I have to disappoint all those readers who are now expecting hard, scientific evidence on movie consumption that has been obtained in hypothetical-deductive methods. But in order to understand movie consumption as a holistic phenomenological experience (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989), it requires a research method that allows for an easy, unlimited 24-hour access to an insider's ongoing lived experience with the phenomenon, while not having to wrestle with ethical concerns regarding the informant's privacy (Brown 1998; Holbrook 1995). Therefore, I will provide insights into my own lived consumption experiences with the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice* by using subjective personal introspection (SPI). Holbrook (1995, 1987, 1986) introduced SPI 20 years ago as an approach in consumer research that, as an extreme form of participant observation, *focuses on impressionistic narrative accounts of the writer's own private consumption experiences* (Holbrook 2003: 45). SPI, therefore, lends itself perfectly to the purpose of this paper, as it allows me to obtain first-hand data of one particular consumer's experiential consumption of a movie (in this case *Pride & Prejudice*) from the privileged perspective of a "real" insider. Although SPI has been criticised in the past by neo-positivists and several interpretivists alike in a heated debate about its *scientific justification* (Brown 1998; Gould 1995; Holbrook 1995; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993), I will not add further to the philosophical debate on SPI's virtues and limitations at this point in time. However, I will address some of the concerns voiced by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) that are of particular relevance to the current study.

Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) argued that the reconstructive nature of long-term memory would distort the retrospective recall of events due to knowledge obtained in the intervening time. They also feared that data specificity is compromised by the danger of reporting generalised inferences rather than specific instances and voiced concerns about the extent to which the introspective data are recorded and accessible to others. For this research, I have collected my lived experiences as contemporaneous data while they occurred in real time to ensure high accuracy of the data. Contemporaneous introspective data field the unique advantage of providing a large pool of emotional data, such as personal feelings, thoughts, daydreams, fantasies and creativity, that would be inaccessible to any other research method that is based on retrospective recall or pure observation and, as a result, inevitably be lost forever. To ensure data accessibility for external review, I have recorded the data systematically, unfiltered and on the spot in a specifically assigned diary (Patterson 2005) as part of much larger introspective data collection. The following essay represents a summary from the diary based on a total of approx. 20,000 relevant hand-written words as raw data collected from July 2005 to February 2006. Taking an existential-phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Thompson et al. 1989), the emphasis is placed hereby less on the recollection of factual behaviour during my consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* but much more on my private lived experiences (i.e. feelings, thoughts, fantasies or daydreams) as THE essential elements of my experiential consumption of this movie. My co-author reviewed the diary separately to ensure that my essay and the subsequent interpretations truly reflect the recorded data. But because some of the emotional data were recorded in the "heat of the moment", I took the liberty to rephrase them in order not to cause unnecessary offence.

MY EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*

Over the summer of 2005, I became a fan of the very talented, young actress Jena Malone. While browsing through her film listings on the IMDb website, I learned that she is playing the role of Lydia Bennet in the forthcoming new cinema version of *Pride & Prejudice*. The film was due to be released on 16th September and would present me with the opportunity to see Jena Malone for the first time on the big screen. As she primarily features in high quality independent movies such as *Donnie Darko* or *Saved*, whose releases for commercial reasons are often restricted to arthouse cinemas (especially in Europe), I was so far only able to watch her movies as DVDs on my laptop. However, I must admit that I would probably not have cared about *Pride & Prejudice* at all, if Jena Malone had not played a role in it. In fact, back then I was never even tempted to read Jane Austen's famous novel, because, a long time ago, I had the misfortune to watch the highly praised and critically acclaimed BBC TV version with Colin Firth. While many people still regard it as the *ultimate screen version of Jane Austen's beloved novel* and as the *benchmark for all screen versions yet to come*, my own opinion differs slightly. To be honest, I think it's rubbish! Like most British period dramas (especially those made for TV by the BBC), I found this film to be a completely clichéd glorification of a nostalgic past that for sure has never existed in this form—except maybe in the imagination of a desperately bored housewife. But, who knows, that might be the reason why so many female viewers saw in Colin Firth the ultimate personification of *their* Mr Darcy? The acting standard is on par with that of *Coronation Street* (a popular British TV soap opera), while the characters are so one-dimensional that the only thing missing is a sign on the shoulder stating their name and dominant personality trait—just in case the

viewer hasn't noticed. Personally, I couldn't care less about any of the portrayed characters.

On Sunday, July 31st, I saw that the Sunday Times featured an article about the forthcoming *Pride & Prejudice* movie in its *Culture* supplement. In the hope of also finding something written about Jena Malone I bought the Sunday Times for the first time ever. But to my big disappointment, there wasn't one single word about Jena—just about leading actress Keira Knightley and director Joe Wright! The article itself, though, was actually very well and interestingly written by Joanna Briscoe (2005). First of all, she shared my opinion of the BBC TV version and ensured me that I'm no longer the only one with a strong inherent dislike for it. But more importantly, by placing Jane Austen's novel in the context of her time, Briscoe argued that all previous small and big screen versions have placed the novel in the wrong period for mainly stylistic and glamorous reasons (One that is more in line with a romanticised nostalgic past rather than with the lived reality of Jane Austen's time!) and subsequently altered inevitably the understanding of the narrative and its societal background. In contrast, Briscoe (2005) regarded the coming movie as much more realistic than any of its predecessors, because it *bypasses all the previous traditional Regency-lite conventions of a painterly tableau of empire-line dresses, sotto voce ballroom squeals and high-ceilinged elegance* of the annoying BBC version. In fact, rather than in 1813, when the book was published, director Joe Wright located the new movie in the Georgian time of 1797, when Jane Austen actually wrote the initial draft of the novel, and recreated the rural life of the gentry accordingly. More impressively, in order to ensure realism, Joe Wright prohibited the actresses from wearing any make-up that wasn't available in the 1790s. Surely, this decision must have pissed off Hollywood's MaxFactor make-up artists, who are famous for their stylistic involvement in all glamorous, pseudo-historic Hollywood blockbusters. But I had no doubt in my mind that the actresses would look more beautiful in their natural appearance than any of the MaxFactor-styled glamour girls from the ads!

All in all, the article captured my interest for the movie. In fact, an internal excitement and expectation was mounting up. As a form of release, I went to the local bookstore the next day and bought a newly released copy of Jane Austen's novel, which "by coincidence" already featured the coming movie's poster artwork on the cover. As I read the book over the coming weeks, the story and its many characters grabbed me more and more. However, it must be noted that my personal reading of the novel differed increasingly from the stiff and over-indulged interpretation of the dreadful BBC TV version I saw before. I couldn't wait any longer for the movie's release and started counting the days down to September 16th. In early September, something else happened in my personal life. After several months of struggling, I finally had the courage to ask a certain girl out for a date. Due to a string of bad experiences in the past, I'm very shy and have a low self-esteem when it comes to making the first step and *conversing easily with women* I'm attracted to. Thus, this was a very big step for me. I wanted to make the date as romantic and memorable as possible. And what could be more romantic than sitting next to each other in a dark cinema and watching a romantic movie like *Pride & Prejudice*, whose story has been loved by women for centuries? While I was looking in excitement forward to our date on next Saturday, TV ads were announcing the Irish and UK wide release of the movie for coming Friday. On Sunday, September 11th, I bought the Sunday Times a second time, because the *Culture*-magazine featured this time a detailed article about Jena Malone (see Photo 1). As this is the first "real" article on Jena in an Irish/UK publication I'm aware of, I was totally delighted! On Wednesday, I watched the news enthusiastically

in order to see glimpses from the *Pride & Prejudice* Dublin premiere. Jena Malone even appeared for 30 seconds on a short TV3 news report! Overall, the critics for the movie were surprisingly good. Not that I care much about them, but it's reassuring...

But then followed the major disappointment! The Irish-wide release of *Pride & Prejudice* was for some mysterious reasons restricted to Dublin, Cork and Limerick only. After all the promotional build up, my growing personal expectations and my internal excitement, this no-show was very frustrating! With the initial plan for my first date in shatters, we both went on to see *Cinderella Man* instead. I was so frustrated that I spent half the movie wondering whether there is too much salt in the popcorn or too less popcorn in the salt. After some careful deliberations I came to the conclusion that the latter must have obviously been the case. Unfortunately, the date didn't work out the way I was hoping for either. As I returned to my usual, unexciting daily life as an unwilling, lonely single, I was hoping that *Pride & Prejudice* would be released the next week in my town as well. After all, it was just topping the box office. And indeed, the movie was finally released in all other areas in Ireland with only one exception—the area where I lived in. As I tried phoning the cinema to enquire their plans for showing *Pride & Prejudice*, I was only connected to a tape that gave me the current programme I already knew and allowed for automated bookings, but not for human enquiries. The website provided exactly the same information. Have they never heard of customer service? Thus, I tried to enquire directly at the cinema and experienced real-life relationship marketing in practice. Instead of being treated as a valued customer, I was just unfriendly repudiated by a bored, disinterested employee behind safety glass who told me that “they don't know because all decisions are made by the Dublin headquarters” and that “there is no way of finding out”. In fact, he claimed that they don't even have a contact number to call their headquarters! Obviously, I was already extremely disappointed that I couldn't watch the movie. But this openly expressed disregard for their customers frustrated me even more. I felt so angry and helpless that I couldn't concentrate on anything for the rest of the day!

One week later, *Pride & Prejudice* was finally released in Waterford as well. An exciting kind of happiness mixed with anticipation or even joy to finally see Jena Malone on the big screen went through my entire body and filled it with a kind of warmth. I couldn't wait any longer and needed to see the film! Thus, I packed up all my things and went off to the cinema. It was worth the wait, because *Pride & Prejudice* is simply a magnificent movie that you can watch over and over again. And for the record this movie is by far superior to all its predecessors and in particular to the dull but popular BBC TV version. The movie never gets boring and is just a joy to watch—beautiful landscape pictures a la *Lord of the Rings* combined with nice camera frames that outline the England of the 1790s. All actors did a great job in making every single character appear to be real and believable. Deep in my heart I can feel the way they feel and know why they do what they do. It doesn't even matter whether you sympathise with them or dislike them. In fact, *Pride & Prejudice* as a story really plays with judgement errors made by first impressions (the original title of the novel). At the end, there aren't really any good or bad guys—only humans.

The only exception is Mr Wickham who represents the typical handsome, smooth talking guy girls are always falling for. Men like him know how to be the centre of attention and how to attract women. But behind their pretty masks and smooth words, those “mercenaries” (Ironically, Wickham is a lieutenant with a travelling regiment.) are often shallow, arrogant and selfish cowards, who don't care for anyone else but themselves. Yet, while decent, honest

men (like me) can easily look through their fog of deception, women still always seem to fall for them and simply turn a blind eye to the falseness in their cheap words. Obviously, I'm a bit jealous of their permanent, undeserved success with the ladies. Every time when a girl that I fancy ignores me and instead falls for the false charm of another *Wickham*, I have this painful feeling of heartache and powerlessness simultaneously running through my entire body. But it just hurts even more, when the same girls, once *their Wickham* leaves them in misery, are then quick to blame ALL men instead of their own self-imposed ignorance. Poor Lydia will soon learn this lesson as well! Maybe this is also why I sympathised rather than laughed at Mr Collins? Because Tom Hollander did an excellent job in portraying Mr Collins exactly as I have imagined him while reading the novel, seeing him on screen made me feel much better about myself. I know that I'm not very handsome and women usually don't notice me, but I'm pretty sure that I can never be THAT dull and boring for anyone! I got a confidence boost just by realising that! Nevertheless, I also felt empathy for him, as I have experienced many times how it feels like to find yourself being ignored or even laughed at by the females you fancy—just because you are unable to make interesting conversation.

I empathised even more with Mr Darcy, the central male character, because like me he is uncomfortable in interacting with people he doesn't know—especially with women. And similar to my personal experiences, his introvert behaviour and insecurity is interpreted by the ladies (and other people) as arrogance, pride and incivility, which leads to their prejudices and dislike of him. In his excellent portrayal, Matthew Macfadyen lets his Mr Darcy look dislikeable in an involuntary and passive fashion, whose real character must be discovered by the audience in the same way as Elisabeth does by looking behind the prejudices that resulted from first impressions. His interpretation differed significantly from Colin Firth's rather theatrical performance. I could especially identify myself with Darcy's internal struggle in trying to talk to Elisabeth and to show his affections to her, which always results in forced mimics and in saying the wrong words at the wrong time. Of course, this only supports her prejudices against him. It happens to me all the time and only reinforces my personal insecurities. Thus, I share Mr Darcy's loneliness, his inner struggle and disappointments, but also his hopes and dreams to be seen as the person he really is—at least by the woman he loves. However, Mr Darcy has two advantages that at least attract some female interest: he is rich and handsome and I'm neither! But otherwise the internal similarities in character are striking. I just hope that at one point in time I will be rewarded like he was at the end.

As a male consumer I'm obviously much more interested in the female characters and the actresses who personify them. The main female characters are Elisabeth (Keira Knightley) and Jane Bennet (Rosamund Pike). Jane is the good-hearted oldest daughter who always sees the best in anyone and is said to be the most attractive girl in the county. Although she surely is beautiful, she isn't really my type. Elisabeth would be more interesting to me due to her wit and free spirit. Keira Knightley delivers probably her best performance to-date in bringing this character to life. I was particularly stunned by how closely Elisabeth resembles many women I have met so far in the way she responded to the different types of men represented by Mr Darcy, Mr Collins and Mr Wickham. To each of them she responded with prejudice that was based on her first impression of their physical and social appearances rather than on their actual personalities. I find it quite ironic that women, in my personal experience, always criticise men for judging them on their physical beauty (Which is true!), while they do exactly the same thing (Which is only fair!). Yet, they still claim to look only for the

inner values in men. However, Elisabeth at least tries to change her prior judgements.

As a Jena Malone fan, I obviously paid particular attention to her character of Lydia Bennet, the youngest daughter. Although I must admit that I'm biased, Jena did an outstanding job in portraying Lydia as a rather wild, over-romantic 15-year old girl with an obsession for fashion, dancing and officers—in short as the typical spoiled teenager of today and back then. Lydia is young, naïve and just romantically in love with love itself rather than any particular man, which ultimately leads her into trouble, when Wickham tempts her into having underage sex outside marriage. Though Wickham is forced to marry her, she is too naïve to see that he only wanted to exploit her youthful beauty and innocence for little more than a one-night stand. I feel really sorry for Lydia when she finds out that Wickham never cared for her. He will soon treat her badly and betray her with other women. However, Jena Malone looks incredible beautiful and sexy in her Georgian-style dresses. She is a real natural beauty to fall in love with and doesn't need any MaxFactor styling. But then again, I'm biased!

Still, Mary Bennet (Talulah Riley) is the female character I most emphasised with, as she is very shy, introvert and lonely—just like me. She is also said to be only ordinary looking and less beautiful than Jane and Elisabeth. Yet, I find her to be much more attractive than her sisters. In order to find her place, Mary consistently tries to be the perfect daughter to her parents by wanting to fulfil all the cultural expectations that society has held for women in that time. But no matter how hard she tries, all her efforts go unnoticed by her parents, sisters, relatives and men alike. Thus, Mary seeks her happiness in playing the pianoforte and singing. While in one particular scene the whole Bennet family is gathered for breakfast at the table, Mary takes hers at the pianoforte. Subsequently, she is very enthusiastic about grasping her chance to shine by singing and playing at Mr Bingley's ball. Unfortunately, while she is a relatively good player on the pianoforte, Mary's voice can't hold a note and her performance ends in a total disaster. Everybody's laughing at her until her father finally stops her. I could really feel how hurt and heartbroken she is. So much that I would have liked to comfort her! But instead I've to sit lonely in the cinema and watch her left on her own crying and feeling sadly alone again. On the next day it got even worse for Mary, because she was probably the only person in the family who would have settled for marrying Mr Collins. As Jane was "unavailable" and Elisabeth rejected him, Mary was sure that, as the third daughter, it would now be her turn. Although anything wasn't said either in the film or in the novel, I could read it in her face (Excellent acting by Talulah Riley!). Instead, Mr Collins ignores her by marrying Elisabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas.

All in all, watching *Pride & Prejudice* was a really great experience, which exceeded my expectations and was worth the wait and excitement. The only bad thing was that I had to change my perfect seat in the cinema because two middle-aged ladies couldn't keep their mouths shut for just one single minute and stop commenting every single scene. Why is each time I go to the cinema at least one ignorant person somehow determined to ruin my movie experience? Nevertheless, I simply knew that I would watch the film soon again, which was already the case during the following week. As I'm an involuntary single for years and don't have any hope of being in a loving relationship in the nearer future, I felt lonely, sad and depressed and were simply unable to concentrate on my work. Thus, I left my desk early and drifted towards the cinema. My choice fell on *Pride & Prejudice* once again, because I knew that it would be good for rescuing my emotional well-being. This time there wasn't anybody around trying to spoil it for me, which was really great! Although my impressions from the first viewing

were all confirmed, this time I paid even more attention to Jena Malone, who really owns the screen with her charm, even when she is only in the background of the frame. Despite her young age, she has already shown that she is an excellent actress with a great future. It just required her smile, her eyes and her presence to raise my spirits and to make me feel warm and happy. The film itself also made me feel much better about myself and relaxed again. I think I was even smiling for the first time that day...

But my experiential consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* didn't stop with the two visits to the cinema. In fact, they were just the beginning. Over the next months, I started to acquire a number of collectibles on eBay (see Photo 2). However, as a devoted Jena Malone fan, I have focused my financial resources on purchasing autographed movie photos of her as Lydia, which she has personally signed while performing in the Broadway play *Doubt*. Although my whole Jena Malone collection is very dear to me, her original autographed photos are my most valued treasures. The only thing missing for most of the time was the opportunity to add *Pride & Prejudice* to my movie (and my Jena Malone) collection. I waited impatiently and nervously for the official DVD release, which finally came on February 6th 2006. The advantage of DVDs lies not only in the picture and sound quality, but also in the extra bonus features. On the *Pride & Prejudice* DVD, the bonus features range from the alternative US ending to galleries of the 19th century to a number of short behind-the-scenes documentaries. Of course, my prime interest was in those documentaries that featured Jena Malone in front of and behind the camera. Thus, I love to watch *The Bennets* and *The Politics of Dating in 18th Century England*, which include movie scenes with Jena Malone as Lydia Bennet, show her in her private clothes during the rehearsals and feature a short interview with her. But I enjoy in particular watching the *On Set Diaries*, in which Jena Malone, Talulah Riley and the rest of the cast talk in private about their personal experiences while filming the movie and the close bonds they have developed before and behind the camera. It's heart-warming to see how they have become the "Bennet family" even off the screen, leaving me with the desire to be part of this perfect family bond. Another beauty of the documentary is that the actors and actresses are shown in private as natural, lovely people like you and me. The documentary has increased my admiration for Jena Malone even more. But more importantly, I love to watch this movie as one of my favourites!

DISCUSSION

The introspective data obtained from my private holistic lived experience of consuming *Pride & Prejudice* reveals some very interesting findings for further discussion. First of all, while previous marketing studies on movie consumption (Basil 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Krugman and Gopal 1991) focused primarily on the attractiveness and commercial success of individual media formats, the data clearly shows that my interest was purely in the movie *Pride & Prejudice* itself and not its respective "packaging" and that I consumed the movie in absence of any rational trade-off decisions. The acquisitions of movie-related collectibles followed similar patterns. In relation to the social consumption context, past studies have argued that blockbuster movies would owe their popular appeal to the fact that they can be watched in the company of friends or family as collective entertainment (Basil 2001), while connoisseurs would enjoy movies as an individual experience for its artistic merits (Holbrook 1999). Although I intended to use *Pride & Prejudice* as background scenery for a first date, the data clearly indicates that I rather enjoy the hedonic experience of watching the movie alone for my own pleasure (Phillips 2003). This leads to the personal consumption context, which has been an area of interest in

PHOTO 1
Articles in *Culture*
Supplements



PHOTO 2
My *P & P* Collectibles
(i.e. Book, DVD, CD-Rom Press-Kit, Original Autographs, etc.)



film studies and refers to the viewer's emotional state and motives for enjoying the possible effects the movie experience may have (Mulvey 1999).

Although the heated debate about movie effects on the audience is still ongoing (Oatley 1999; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), there is agreement that movies can act as means to compensate for perceived emotional deficits (Cohen 2001). The data confirms that *Pride & Prejudice* has served for me as a means to cheer myself up when I feel lonely, unloved and sad. However, another strong motivator for

me to see the movie was also the fact that my favourite actress Jena Malone is starring in it. Thus, being the fan of an actor, actress or even director significantly enhances a consumer's viewing pleasure. Both the social and the personal consumption context hereby influence AND are influenced by the perceived atmosphere during the consumption of the movie. Because movie-fans aim to *lose themselves into the movie world* (Green et al. 2004), disruptions caused by noisy audience members or poor picture/sound quality have a serious impact on a consumer's movie enjoyment, which is

evidenced by my response to the two “talkative” ladies. The data further suggests that another important factor for a consumer's movie experience is the excitement of anticipation and expectations long before actually watching the movie, which unfortunately received so far little attention in the literature. Indeed, it is such a powerful factor that the disappointment of unfulfilled expectations can have a strong negative impact on the consumer's emotional state.

However, the major finding of this study is that the emotional engagement with the characters and their stories (Green et al. 2004) seems to be the most crucial element in a consumer's movie experience. As my enjoyment of *Pride & Prejudice* derived from my ability to lose myself completely in the movie's audiovisual imagination, the introspective data provides indeed strong support for the extension of Green and Brock's (2000) transportation theory to movie narratives. According to Oatley (1999), personal engagement with literary characters and their stories can take with increasing level of transportation broadly three different forms. On the weakest level, a consumer merely sympathises with the characters (= feels *with* them) as a side-participant who *likes* them. On the next level, the consumer feels empathy for the character (= *shares* the character's emotions) because of perceived *similarities* to one's own private experiences. Finally, the consumer identifies and *merges* with the character (= *feels the character's emotions* as one's own) similar to an actor playing a role. Cohen (2001) made hereby a strong distinction between *identification* and *imitation*. While imitation means that a person extends one's self-identity by copying a character's behaviour and appearance, Cohen interpreted identification as a momentary mental role-play where the consumer (like an actor) imagines being the character in the story. Once the story ends, s/he moves on to experience the next character role. Despite viewing identification as the ultimate goal of losing oneself in a book, Oatley (1999) denied this level to the movie experience by arguing that the person would always be aware that another actor already plays the role and hence could only sympathise with the character/actor as a side-participant (Rapp and Gerrig 2006).

Although I admit that it is difficult to *become* the movie character, my introspective data still suggests that I strongly empathised and at some occasions even identified myself with several characters. In fact, it seems not only to be possible for a consumer to identify under certain circumstances with a movie character, but I was also able to sympathise, empathise and even identify with more than one character during my *Pride & Prejudice* experience. Furthermore, while previous literature in media studies (Cohen 2001; Green and Brock 2000; Rapp and Gerrig 2006) focused mainly on consumer engagement with lead characters, the data shows that, apart from Mr Darcy, I actually empathised and even identified with several support characters (i.e. Mary, Mr Collins and Lydia). My personal engagement was further enhanced when I was able to make an intertextual connection between the experiences of the movie characters and my own private life experiences. Hirschman (2000) hereby distinguished between three types of intertextuality. *Cross-text intertextuality* describes consumers' mental linkages across similar narratives/texts they have encountered. Apart from the obvious comparisons of this movie version with the previous BBC version and the original Jane Austen novel, I also likened the landscape pictures to those of the *Lord of the Rings* movies or use certain words from the movie in other situations. *Nostalgic intertextuality* refers to consumers' mental linkages between a narrative/text and their ideas of a nostalgic past. While it might explain the popularity of the BBC version, there isn't any evidence in my introspective data. Instead,

the final important finding of this study is that out-of-text intertextuality enhanced my personal engagement with the movie and its characters.

Out-of-text intertextuality refers to consumers' mental linkages between characters/narratives in a fictional text and actual people or life events in the real world, which could not only result in empathy but also identification with the fictional character. For example, I identified myself with Mr. Darcy because we both feel insecure in *conversing easily* with people we don't know (especially females) and subsequently suffer from rejections and prejudices, while we deeply hope that the women we fancy finally see us as the persons we are. For similar reasons, I felt also partially empathetic to Mr Collins, while I experienced hate and anger towards Mr Wickham as my perceived personification of all those men I have envied in the past for their success with women. Similarly, I saw Elisabeth as a personification of the females who rejected me in the past purely by judging my physical appearance. Interestingly, the data also provided evidence that contrary to previous scientific studies (Green and Brock 2000) not only female but also male consumers may experience empathy or even identify with characters across genders. As a result of the experienced intertextuality between Mary's *fictional* emotions of feeling lonely, ignored and rejected and my personal *real* feelings of loneliness and rejection, I could feel Mary's emotions as if they were my own ones. This may also be the reason why I felt more attracted to Mary than to the other female characters.

To conclude, movie consumption as a holistic consumption experience depends on a complex tapestry of interconnected factors through which the consumer can restore his/her emotional well-being by being momentarily immersed into an imaginative world. Of course, I don't suggest that the presented introspective data and proposed findings could be generalised. But I believe that the subjective personal introspection of my experiential consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* offers a certain degree of transferability by actively involving the reader. Each time, you as the reader thought *I know this feeling* or *I have had a similar experience*, you actively engaged in what Hirschman (2000) called an *Out-of-Text Intertextuality*, by which you, the reader, connected my essay with your own personal life experiences, and thereby confirmed the transferability of the described phenomenon. But if it hasn't happen for you, then I hope my idiosyncratic and narcissistic paper has at least made for some fun reading.

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