Understanding the tensions in liquid cultural consumption

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Liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000)

Liquidity is a **metaphor** (Bauman & Haugaard, 2008) to think of and understand society and its characteristics:

- An emancipation from the social norms.

- The exacerbation of consumer's individuality.

- The changing relationship between time and space.

- A shift in the perception, stability and purpose of work.

- An implosion of communities.

Liquefaction of gender norms

The phenomenon of digital nomads

The implosion of states and their instability

Liquid consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017)

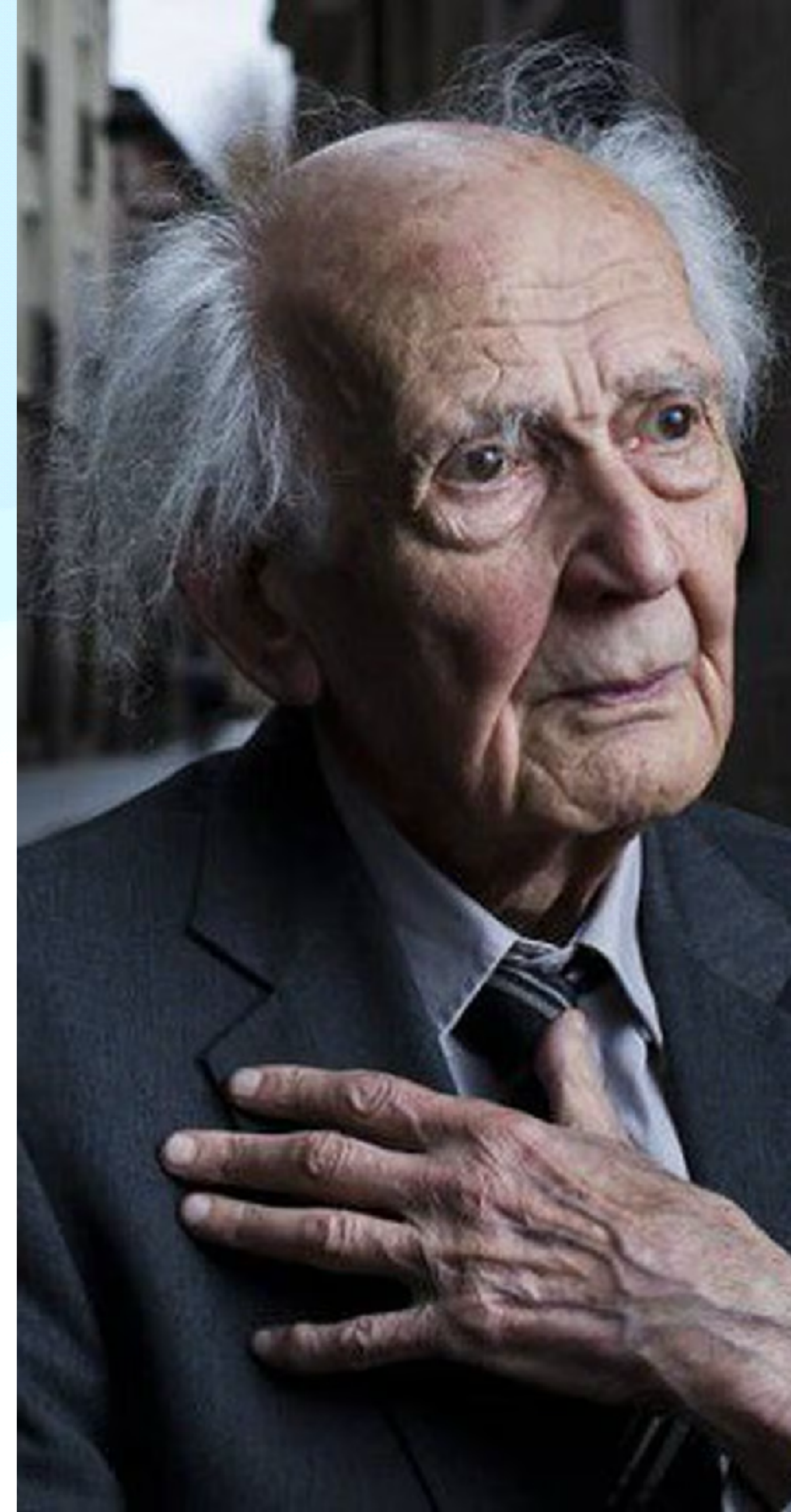| Liquid consumption	Solid consumption
Access-based	Possession
Immaterial	Material
Ephemeral	Perennial
Low relevance to identity	Identity defining

⟵————————————————————⟶

Liquid an solid consumption co-constitute one another

Culture in a liquid modern world (Bauman, 2011)

Waning of social norms ➤ The pressure to choose relies on the individual

Commodification of culture ➤ *"Culture today consists of offers, not prohibitions; propositions, not norms"* (Bauman, 2011, p. 13) that are *"now able to focus on fulfilling individual needs"*(Bauman, 2011, p. 12).

Never ending will ton consume ➤ The will to conform to the norm perpetually fuel the will to escape from it, and conversely

Aims of the research

1. Assemble a **multidisciplinary literature review** of the current issues in cultural consumption
2. Draw upon the metaphor of liquidity (and solidity) to unveil **tensions framing cultural consumption**
3. Paving **ways for future research** on cultural consumption

[De|Re]materialisation

Liquid consumption is characterised by **immateriality/digital materiality** (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017).

Materiality has to do with consumers' identities: they invest their **identities into material objects** (Scaraboto et *al.*, 2016).

The object through which we consume culture have been **rematerialised** (Belk, 2013) and cultural goods are now **digitally material** (Mardon & Belk, 2018).

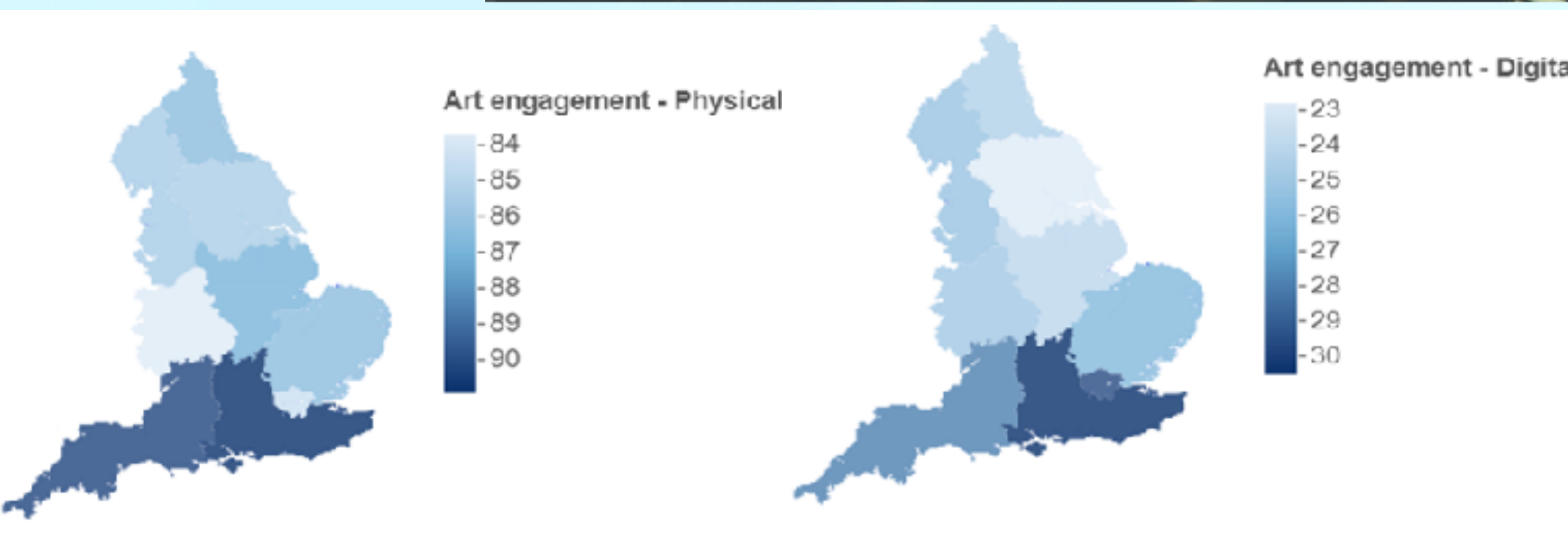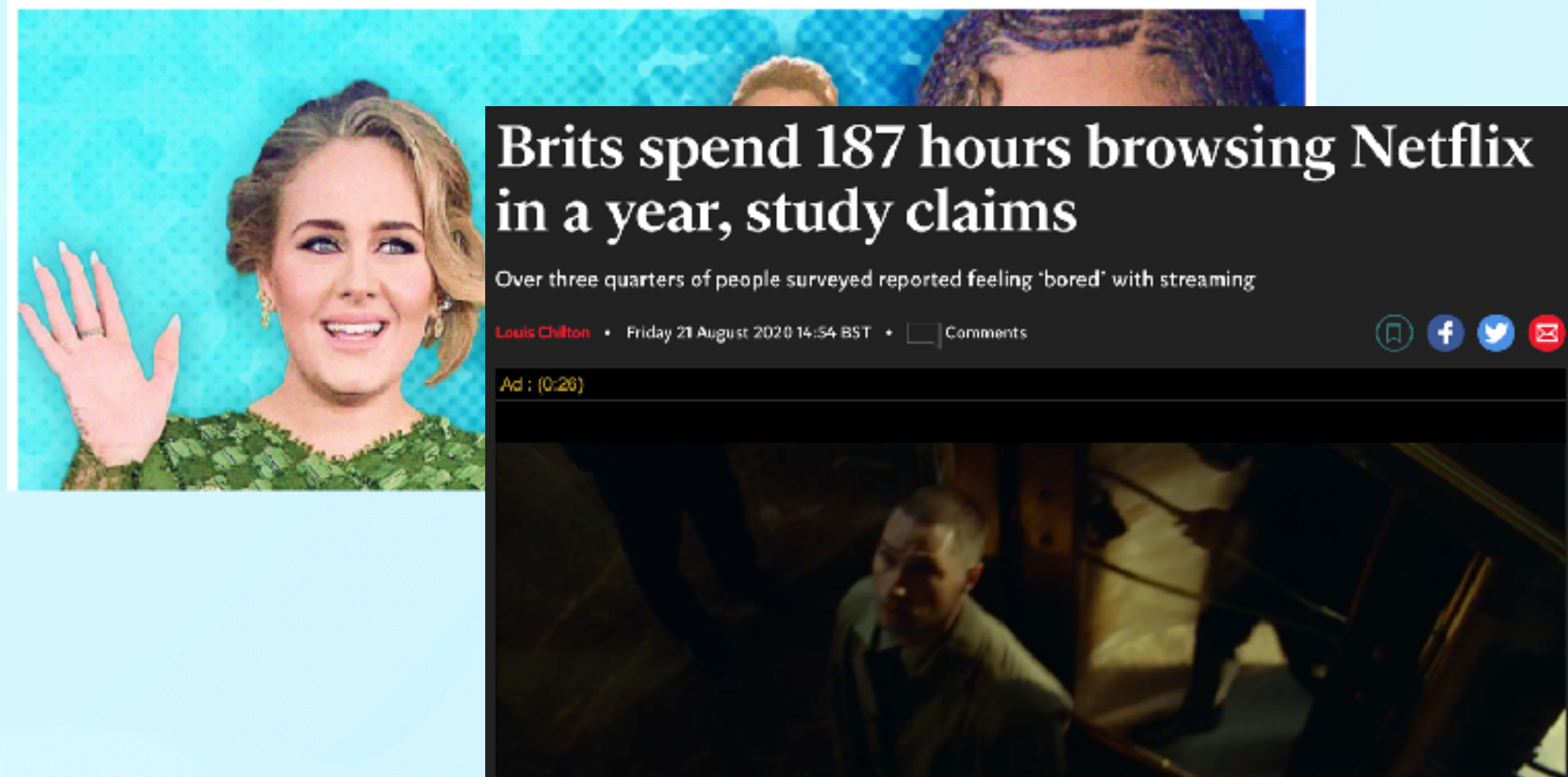**How do consumers cope with that new materiality?**

What's the value of digital goods as identity defining objects?

[Over]Abundance

Data Shows 90 Percent of Streams Go to the Top 1 Percent of Artists

Streaming hasn't just upheld the gap between music's haves and have-nots; it's widened it.

BY EMILY BLAKE

SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

Brits spend 187 hours browsing Netflix in a year, study claims

Over three quarters of people surveyed reported feeling 'bored' with streaming

Louis Chilton • Friday 21 August 2020 14:54 BST • Comments

Ad : (0:28)

Art engagement - Physical
- 84
- 85
- 86
- 87
- 88
- 89
- 90

Art engagement - Digital
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30

We live in an era of cultural abundance (Glévarec, 2021). The cultural marketplace currently holds unprecedented *liquidities* of cultural offers.

There are still social inequalities in cultural consumption (DCMS, 2021; Lombardo & Wolff, 2020)

Abundance could lead to choice overload situations (Bollen et al., 2010; Ferwerda et al., 2019; Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2016).

Are social norms really waning or operating at an individual level?
How do consumers choose cultural goods within the abundance?

[Auto|Hetero]nomy

Autonomy is a "crucial aspect of consumer's choice" (Wertenbroch, 2020)

The market, physical as well as *phygital*, is experiencing **platformisation** (Nieborg & Powell, 2018).

Platforms have **huge catalogues** and rely on **datafication and algorithms** to help consumers choose (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022; Beuscart et al., 2019; Shapiro, 2020; Varela & Kaun, 2019; Weingartner, 2020; Wilson-Barnao, 2017).

Consumers have **individualised experiences** of them.

Netflix says 80 percent of watched content is based on algorithmic recommendations

It's not just about subscribing to Netflix, it's about trusting it too

Sameer Chhabra @SameerChhabra94

AUG 22, 2017 | 8:00 AM EDT | 100 COMMENTS

Sick of Irrelevant YouTube Recommendations? Here's What You Need to Do

Here's how to reset, improve, or even remove YouTube's recommendations, so you see videos that are more relevant to your interests across the service.

BY BEN STEGNER   UPDATED AUG 17, 2023

Are consumers feeling autonomous in choosing?

What is the impact of their level of autonomy on their cultural consumption?

[Con|Pro]sumption

Postmodernists informed us on the **blurred lines between consumption and production** (Firat et al., 1995; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993).

Increasingly, with the help of **new media and decreasing production costs**, consumers are put to contribution by firms and become *prosumers* (Ritzer, 2014; Ritzer et al., 2012; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

Prosumption can be **passive** or **active** (Derbaix et al., 2023; Duncum, 2011; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2023; Tse & Tsang, 2021; Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023).

**How is that tension articulated in the consumer's mind when consuming passively *vs* actively?**

Access|Possession

"We are what we can access" (Belk, 2014).

We must distinguish legal ownership from **psychological ownership**, *"the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is 'theirs' (i.e., 'It is mine!')"* (Pierce et al., 2003, p. 86).

The datafication of cultural platforms (Caliandro et al., 2024) leads to **personalised individual experiences**, that could potentially lead to feelings of ownership.

How do consumer experience these new forms of possession in their identity-seeking endeavours?
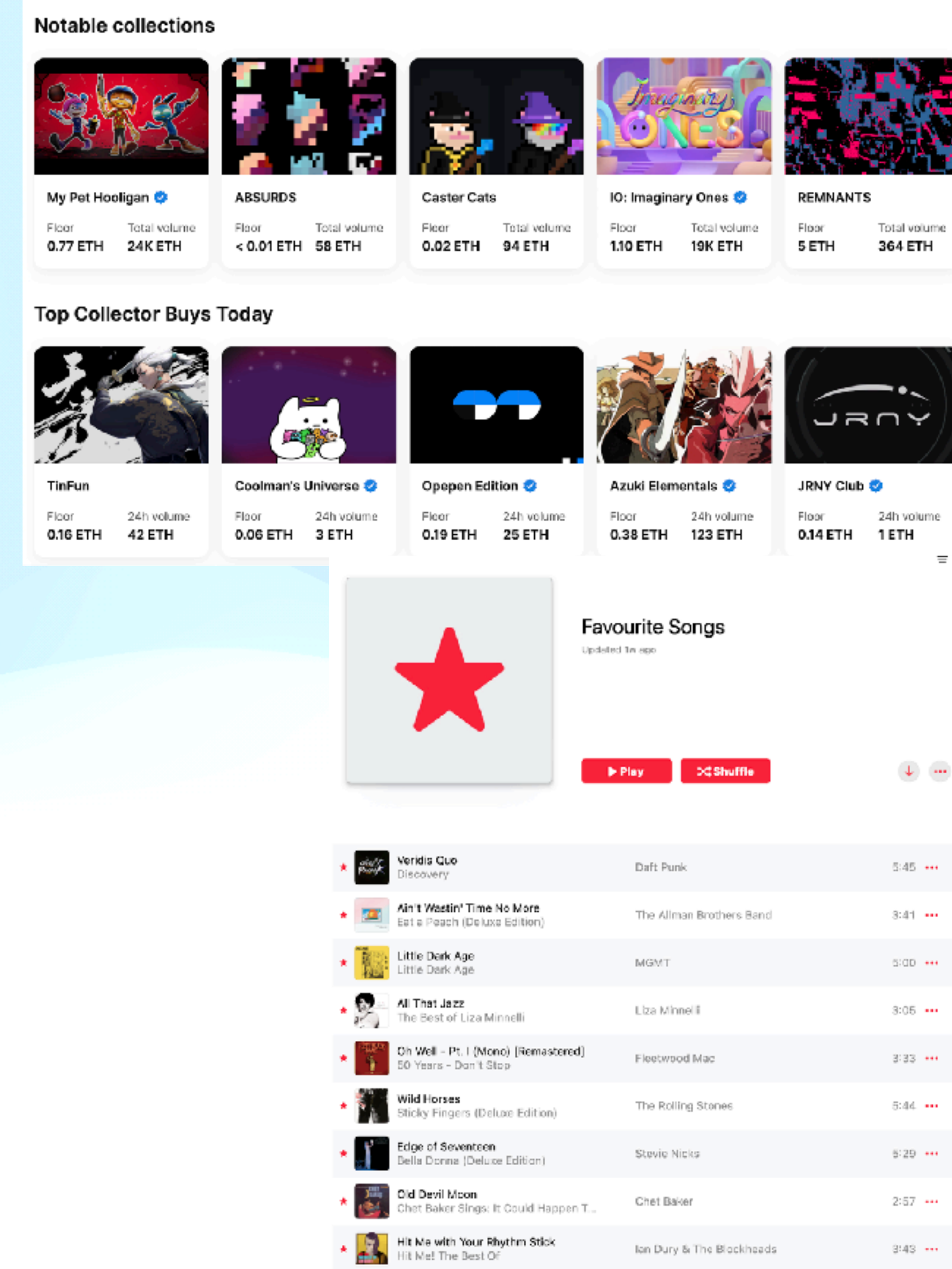
Commodification|Sacralisation

Recent works on categories of cultural goods show that **cultural consumption is utilitarian** (Haddad-Bacry, 2022; Haddad-Bacry & Michel, 2023).

If the individual products' aura is waning (Benjamin, 1936), **stardom** (Driessens, 2013) and **genres** can lead to the formation of **tribes of consumers** (Cova et al., 2011) and acts of **worship**.
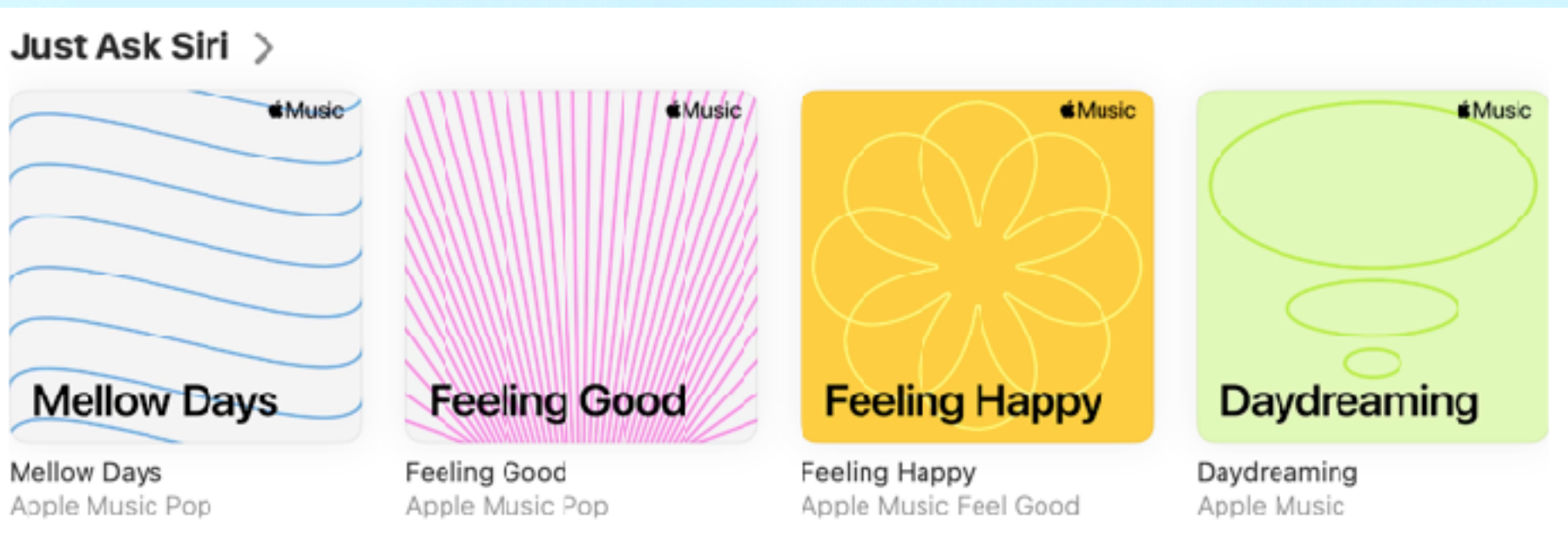
What is the status of cultural goods today?

To what extent are artists seen as the product *vs* producers ?

My questions to you

1. Anything unclear/lacking precision/understandability?
2. Anything seeming irrelevant/weak?
3. Any shortcoming? Missed tensions?
4. How to structure the article?