CONSUMPTION VISIONS AS A MEANS OF GOAL ATTAINMENT IN THE IT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the salesperson and the customer has always been an uncomfortable one, with both parties fixated on achieving their own selfish ends. When a customer enters in to a store, he or she has a mentally stipulated reason for being there (an un-pressured purchase of their choosing). The same goes for the sales representative, who under idyllic circumstances will have a clear cognitive understanding of his or her ideal customer (and the resulting commission from the sale).

For the purposes of this thesis, these mental images related to future “consumer” preferences will be called consumption visions. The term can be further defined as “self-referent images or mental simulations of the self-relevant consequences of product consumption that occur within an imagined environmental context and the resulting phenomenological experience (thoughts and emotions) associated with those anticipated consequences.” (Christensen 2002)

Typically viewed in the context of products and services, this thesis is the first time the consumption vision concept has been applied to the relationship between the job seeker (the customer) and his or her success in the job search (the product). Just as the customer in the previous example has a particular product that will suit his or her needs, a job seeker has a preconceived notion of his or her perfect work environment and future end-state. Through a “triangulation of qualitative methods” (Christensen 2002), this thesis compares the detailed consumption visions of fifteen college undergraduates, in their senior year, to the real-time characteristics of their acquired professions.
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“The act is unjustifiable that either begs for a blessing, or, having succeeded gives no thanksgiving.”
-Francis Quarles

I first want to thank my parents. Thank you for all of the trust and encouragement you have given me throughout the years (even when I gave you every excuse not to!) Dad – There is no question in my mind that your attention towards my life has been pivotal in all of my successes. Thank you for always having the answer and being there when I needed you most. Mom - Your detail-oriented nature and sensemaking advice is the reason I made it through childhood in one piece. I can never come back to you and say “Why didn’t you tell me…” Both - I couldn’t appreciate two people more.

I would like to thank Dr. Clark. This was an extremely pleasant experience as a result of your understanding and consulting-oriented mindset. Without you I could not have done what I truly wanted to with this thesis. We are more alike than I realized, and I hope to prove the worth of that similarity in coming years with IBM.

I would like to thank my Jessica. Your honesty, pure heart, and driven nature serve as a beacon for what I wish I could be. We have experienced more in our years together than any of our peers could dream of. Real life, here we come.

I would like to thank my best friend Buddy. Your ability to chase all of my worries away with no regard for your own is a covetous attribute. I can’t imagine an existence without such an unyielding force of love. I do so enjoy our care-free strolls, and I swear to you I will be there till the end.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of my fraternity brothers in Sigma Phi Epsilon. Without your continuous distractions and flawlessly unscholarly practices I would never have graduated with such a balanced personality. 178.
Introduction

TNS, a world leader in market research, global market information and business analysis, recently turned out a public interest survey indicating that less than half of Americans are satisfied with their current jobs (USA Today, 2010). This statistic is troubling, and it makes one wonder what exactly leads to the misalignment between a person and the job. Why do people choose occupations that do not necessarily fit their ideals?

According to Professional Career Search, success is simply a result of a “future vision—a vivid picture in your head of where you want to be.” (ProCareerSearch, 2009) With this vision in mind, an individual involved in the job hunt typically understands what they desire in a future career; this includes mental models concerning salary range, job location, corporate culture, and even the type of people they wish to work with. Without such a mental image in their consciousness, however, it can be assumed that the person in question has a nebulous plan, or no plan at all, for what they want. Without plans there are no tangible goals. Without goals there is no motivation to succeed. It is this lack of forethought and vision that may lead to a misalignment in career ideals and their eventual outcome.

Where there is potential for failure, however, there is of course a possibility for success in those individuals that choose to develop mental representations of their ideal futures. Not just any mental image will do, however, for it has to be motivational to the point where it becomes all but a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the realm of product consumption, researchers such as Glenn L. Chistensen and Jerry C. Olsen term these mental visualizations of desired end-states “consumption visions.” For initial understanding,
consumption visions are mental simulations of the “possible, self-relevant consequences of product use.” (Christensen 2002) When looking at a particular shoe, a fictitious female customer would envision herself in those shoes walking down the street and being the center of fashion-related attention.

This thesis takes the original context of consumption visions (products) and applies the concept to the alignment between an individual’s ideal career track and their eventual fulfillment. Thus, the product becomes the career, and the postulation in question is whether or not a job seeker will stray from their consumption vision and why.

Consumption visions have never been investigated from this perspective, but considering their detail-oriented and mentally visual nature, they provide a framework for future-planning that simple goals and motivational thought processes do not. Research applied to the career domain is extremely important because it takes the focus away from something menial like “how a person imagines themselves in pair of shoes,” and hones in on a more personal, strategic decision that has a significantly broader and long-lasting influence in a person’s life. In the ideal case, an individual would envision as well as acquire work that is satisfying and capable of providing the financial security they desire. Unfortunately, with over 50% of the nation choosing jobs that lead to dissatisfaction, there is an increased need to understand how these alignments between ideals and eventualities arise (USA Today, 2010). This gap in our understanding leads to the following research question.

Research question: To what extent, and how, do consumption visions, especially among first-time job seekers, influence career outcomes?
Literature Review

As a result of their visual nature, consumption visions are broadly understood to involve mental imaging (Christensen, 2002). As a result, it is important to comprehend the constructs of mental imaging so as to understand the sub-domain of consumption visions.

Mental Imagery

Mental imagery, colloquially referred to as “visualizing” or “imagining,” is “quasi-perceptual experience; it resembles perceptual experience, but occurs in the absence of the appropriate external stimuli.” (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010) While mental images may develop in separation from external stimuli, there is little debate that “visions” of the brain take into account all bodily inputs. Termed “sensory modalities,” this is to say that the cognitive representation made by an individual is an organized collaboration of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.

Mental images also have a few other important characteristics. First and foremost, mental images can be bewilderingly creative and unrelated to the physical boundaries of real life. As a result of this, they can (and will) manifest a certain degree of impossibility and personal bias (Sommer, 1978). As one would expect, this ability of an individual to develop a mental image that is misaligned with reality means the person in question is either (1) unrealistic, or (2) not in complete control of their mental processes. More often than not the latter is true. This can be seen in Robert Sommer’s 1978 novel “The Mind’s Eye”, where he describes mental images as “sometimes under complete control” while at other times “altogether autonomous.”
The last relevant characteristic of mental images (to this thesis) is the fact that intelligence plays a large role in their development. This is most typically seen in the clarity and timeframe of the visual representation, as well as the extent to which the individual is “attached” to his or her creation. According to Christensen, “mental images can be very concrete, functional representations of objects and stimuli from the real world.” (2002) The clarity or girth of the simulation can be directly tied to an individual’s cognitive ability, with those of advanced intelligence having the capacity to fill their visualization with meaning and precise reasoning. As imagery relates to personal attachment, psychologist Eva T. H. Brann describes the affection of an individual to his or her mental visualization as ranging from “emotionally neutral to rather affectively charged.” (Brann 1991) This follows the understanding that spontaneous mental images could very well have been conjured without the individual having any need for them.

As mentioned above, intelligence in mental imagery has a large influence on the capacity of an individual to generate feasible goals from their mental representations. “Very often, imagery experiences are understood by their subjects as echoes, copies, or reconstructions of actual perceptual experiences from their past; at other times they may seem to anticipate possible, often desired or feared, future experiences.” (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010) As a result of this, imagery has typically been seen as playing a “very large, even pivotal, role in both memory and motivation.” (Yates, 1966; Paivio, 1986) It is at this point that the reader can see how mental images play a large part in motivational goals.
Goals can be defined as “internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly construed as outcomes, events, or processes.” (Austin and Vancouver 1996) The reader might notice how, to qualify as a goal, a mental simulation need not be entirely rational. Intelligent beings such as humans have the ability to gather facts, organize them according to relevancy, and then manipulate an environment based on that knowledge. It is not the case, however, that the human in question will accurately absorb the environment’s outputted information. Furthermore, it is biologically impossible to conceive of two people developing identical mental representations of their desired end-state (goal). This finality can be validated through the understanding that goals are mental images -- organized or fabricated to reflect an individual’s uniquely contrived future-state (Christensen, 2002).

According to Stephen M Kosslyn (1990), as much as two-thirds of all mental input that reaches the brain is sourced from an individual’s visual sense (as opposed to auditory, haptic, etc.). As a result of this imbalanced experience of the environment, the primary “format” for memory organization is visual. Thus, re-representations of non-ideal experiences in the context of the ideal (goals) are also understood as mental images. Therein lies the reason than mental imagery is so critical to the career decision-making framework: goals are represented as mental images, and it is the motivation derived from these goals that leads to potential career success.

Consumption visions

“Consumption visions are a subset of consumption mental imaging, which is in turn a subset of all mental imaging processes.” (Christensen, 2002: 13) The concept of
consumption visions reflects the notion that all people have a cognitive representation of their future wants and goals. These mental models are instinctual; fabricated over an unspecified time period to make the individual more comfortable with his or her life direction.

The term consumption vision is most often referred to in association with physical products, such as clothing or a brand new automobile. As an example, a fictional individual David has plans to go to the new Ferrari dealer in town. In his mind, David is developing a mental image of why he wants the car, how he will look in it, and what improvement to his daily routine it will bring. Given more time, this cognitive scenario of driving down Main Street in a brand new red Ferrari becomes so vivid to David that its upcoming purchase becomes inevitable. The cornucopia of positive mental imagery that he associates with his dream car has now developed into a self-generating mental fixation that, left unhindered, will covertly motivate David to purchase the over-priced and flashy piece of moving fiberglass without regard to his finances.

Using David’s experience with consumption visions as they relate to a physical product (Ferrari), I ask the reader to imagine a scenario in which David himself is the “product for sale.” Because he cannot afford his sparkly Ferrari, David realizes that he needs to become a successful businessman in order to accrue the finances necessary to purchase the car. In his mind he begins to envision his future end-state: a wealthy, confident, IT consultant who will have no problem gaining the experience necessary to build a successful life. Just as he did in the previous example, David’s mental image of a more successful version of himself begins to motivate him to become more responsible and
professionally driven. Thus, through his originally inconsequential consumption vision of his future end-state, David has literally deluded himself into realizing his mental desires and goals. It is this perspective, where the individual himself/herself is the “product” and the consumption vision is the motivational catalyst, which this thesis focuses on.

Now that the reader understands the context in which the term consumption vision should be taken for this particular thesis, it is important to establish a concrete definition of the term so as to lay a foundation to support future theoretical assertions. Thus, consumption visions are:

“self-referent images or mental simulations of the self-relevant consequences of product consumption that occur within an imagined environmental context and the resulting phenomenological experience (thoughts and emotions) associated with those anticipated consequences.”

(Christensen, 2002)

Considering the previous definition, consumption visions are simple mental representations of the product’s (individual’s) desired or perceived outcome. The physical manifestation of these cognitive ideals is found in the “resulting phenomenological experience” of the mental imagery; that is to say that consumption visions are important because of what they make “you” do rather than what “your” self-referent image looks like.
“As a personalized representation—the visualization of a goal—consumptions by their very nature are motivating and motivational.” (Christensen, 2002: 288)

Building upon the understanding that consumption visions are mental images of a desired end-state (goal), it stands to reason that these self-inspired visuals serve as an inspiration to their host. The desired and anticipated consumption evokes strong emotions in the individual to “go there, feel that, do this, have that.” (Christensen, 2002: 288) Not only are consumption visions motivational in their ability to stir the individual towards action, however, but they also help him/her work through and visualize the arduous steps needed to achieve their goal.

Consider our previously-mentioned fictitious friend David, the individual who realized he would need to change his lifestyle considerably to afford his dream car, the Ferrari. When David imagines himself in his new and fuel-irresponsible vehicle, he begins to realize differences between his current lifestyle and his consumption vision. This causes him to ask the question “Why?” For one, he does not have the money he needs to purchase the car. Why? Because he did not enter in to an occupation that is lucrative enough to support such wants. Why? Because he did not graduate college and search the job market arduously enough. Why? Because he was preoccupied paying attention to his social life rather than the life-long pursuit of knowledge and advancement. These instinctual thought processes to ask “why” provide the owner of the consumption vision with a myriad of new concepts that they did not consider before. For David, he has all but physically outlined the reasons he does not have his Ferrari. These reasons, through further querying of the word “why”, result in new consumption visions for David. Now
he imagines himself getting a college degree, or speaking to his recently graduated friends for references within their companies.

Through David’s example, it becomes clear that the vision itself was a catalyst for the development of a much more important agenda: the direction David needs to go in to achieve his fantasy. Without his initial fixation on the Ferrari through the use of his consumption vision, David would never have figured out what was wrong with his life that led to his inability to purchase the car of his dreams. Thus we see the capacity of a consumption vision to motivate an individual not necessarily toward imminent success, but at the very least in that direction through further cognitive reasoning.

*Consumption Visions and Intelligence*

Just as mental images have an influential “intelligence component,” so do consumption visions. Human beings, called homo sapiens (meaning “knowing man” in Latin), find themselves superior to the rest of the animal kingdom as a result of their “mind.” More specifically, they are able to use the tools of their mind in a fashion that grants them access to detailed and stored experiences. This ability, properly labeled intelligence, grants people the power to rationalize, test hypothesis, and plan for the future. Without it, humanity as we understand it would not exist. Without it, consumption visions would not exist.
The capacity of humans to create a detailed consumption vision relies on intelligence for a number of reasons (based on Christensen, 2002; Yates, 1966; Paivio, 1986):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intelligence includes…</th>
<th>Consumption visions require this because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The capacity to acquire knowledge</td>
<td>Consumption visions are, in their most natural form, an understanding of life’s variables and the organization of those parcels of knowledge in a feasible mental scenario. Without the ability to obtain facts/knowledge regarding the environment, a consumption vision cannot form because it would have no substance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The capacity to evaluate and judge available inputs</td>
<td>As a result of consumption visions being an organization of knowledge, it is necessary to have the ability to prioritize one’s “internal database.” This prioritization process requires judgment of data relevancy, and as a result, the capacity to evaluate and choose between offered alternatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The capacity to reason and adapt to a changing environment</td>
<td>Considering the ever-changing nature of a human life, it is rational to assume that mental models and consumption visions (a product of life experiences) will change in parallel. As facts are altered, a rational mind must evaluate the degree of change and its effect on the whole. The ability to take known facts and produce justification of their rationality is called reason, and this is necessary to keep up with a fluctuating environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum, intelligence grants humans the capacity to “learn and apply knowledge to manipulate [your] environment, as well as the ability to reason and have abstract thought.” (AboutIntelligence) Key to this definition is the capacity to “manipulate.” If one wishes to manipulate an environment, he or she does so because the current state of that environment is misaligned with some preferred version of that setting. This preferred version illustrates the capacity of the individual to develop goals, and given the motivational affect of goals, potentially achieve some measure of success.
Research Method

In this section I will explain the design of my study, including the participants, data collection, and analysis for investigating the role and outcome of consumption visions in career-based decision making.

Participants

The group of individuals that I chose to study is a class in the consulting track at Penn State’s College of Information Sciences and Technology. The class explores IT services topics and the unique application of consulting methods in various industry sectors. These students were chosen for three reasons. The primary (and most influential) motive was to standardize the domain that my study evaluated. Those individuals in the consulting track would have the highest chance of being like-minded as a result of their choice of professional direction and course scheduling; consulting as a career is different from every other occupation as a result of its high level of travel, results oriented mindset, high pressure work environment, and increased level of employee burn-out. The secondary reason for choosing this sample was to normalize the data to one industry. All of the students queried are completing the IST degree, avoiding bias associated with degrees like business and engineering that have a low level of consultant turnout. The tertiary reason for choosing this particular class was because they are all first time job-seekers. This leads me to believe that they are all impressionable, inexperienced with the job search process, and unaffected by previous occupation biases.

Twenty one students in the class were chosen as candidates to complete the first interview. The individuals ranged in age from 19 to 22, 4 were female with 17 being
male, and all were seniors living in and around Pennsylvania. From that original sample of 21 students, fifteen fit the qualification (having a job offer) to take all of my surveys. As a result, six of the 21 candidates’ survey questions were discarded. I have no personal knowledge or relationships with the students in the class, making the surveying process and analysis as objective as possible. Their majors are all IST oriented (with one double majoring in Business) with options in Integration and Application, Design and Development, and People Organizations and Society.

**Interview Approach**

After speaking with faculty advisors, it was decided that the most opportune participants for the study were a group of 21 students in the consulting track. The advantages of interviewing such a group (career driven, very specific intended futures) were discussed and the decision was finalized. Interview questions were derived from a literature review involving key aspects of job satisfaction in the consulting industry. In order to sort through the myriad of factors involved in the consulting profession, additional literature, articles, websites, and consultants in the field were referenced to determine the most relevant factors. The final questions themselves were reformatted to elicit both quantitative and qualitative answers from the queried sample.

Each participant was given the first two qualitative questions with a brief explanation as to what consumption visions are (Refer to Appendix 2). Talking with anyone but the proctors was prohibited, and there was no response time limit. Following the completion of the first two questions, all participants were given a more quantitative and biographical survey. The goal of the second survey was to understand the status of all those with job
offers. Those students that did not have a job took the survey as they interpreted it, with the results meaning little in relation to my thesis. This was done as a means of validating the success of the individuals with jobs (i.e., the acquisition of a job was taken as proof that the student was accomplished). Thus my eventual sample size was 15.

**Interview Content**

The first two interview questions were intended to elicit qualitative responses concerning the participants’ consumption visions. The “product” that they were to envision and describe was their ideal job scenario. This was to be viewed from the perspective of fiction, or in other words relating in no way to their actual job offers (if they had them). The participants were first asked to describe their ideal job scenario as it related to the following categories: industry, salary range, location, type of work day, work environment, and job performance. This open-ended structure was chosen because of the need to produce information unbiased by detail or direction. The participant was able to write about what they truly envisioned, while at the same time staying within the confines of the six topic areas (so as to have some uniformity between participants’ responses for analysis). Following this question, the interviewees were given an entirely open response question concerning the factors, people, or experiences that influenced the creation of their previously described career ideal. The purpose of this query was to understand the difference in sourcing between individuals’ consumption visions. Knowing how these imagined ideals came about would allow me to accurately differentiate between the clarity and sincerity of responses.
The second inquiry was given to all students as a means of understanding their various “success rates” in the job search. The important responses to my thesis were from those candidates who had a job, thus giving me a benchmark to quantify “success.” Questions asked about the individuals’ pending job offers, salary range, submitted applications, work location, assigned workload, type of work, and type of colleagues. Using these brief questions (mixed multiple choice and short answer), I could build a factual understanding of each individual. When comparing these results with those of the qualitative interview, a triangulation is possible that would yield a ratio between consumption vision clarity and measured success.

Analysis

After the participants were interviewed and surveyed (qualitative and quantitative), the results were taken and compared using two different methods: reasonable quantitative-qualitative comparison and the constant comparison method.

*Reasonable quantitative-qualitative method (RQQC)*

The first technique, devised by me with reference to Glenn L. Christensen’s ZMET study in his 2002 consumer research piece titled “Using ZMET to Map Customer’s Mental Models,” is called reasonable quantitative-qualitative comparison (RQQC). It is a simplistic interpretive method to normalize a qualitative answer with a quantitative figure. Take for example the following fictitious example of six different people’s work hours:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants A, B, and C (Quantitative)</th>
<th>Participants X, Y, and Z (Qualitative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Normal work week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Average with sporadic points of intensity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Above average. Travel adds payable hours as well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above is a list of 6 fictitious participants in a study. Three have provided quantitative answers (participants A, B, and C on the left) and three have provided quantitative answer (participants X, Y, and Z on the right). For the purposes of explanation, the RQQC method will be used to show the equivalence between participant A and X, B and Y, and C and Z.

This process rests on the premise that qualitative assumptions can be made to compare quantitative and qualitative data. To begin, it is a reasonable assumption that an average full-time position work week is around 40 hours. Using this common knowledge as a benchmark, it can be said that participant X’s response could be equated with participant A’s answer. In the same sense, Y’s response of “average with spots of intensity” insinuates that he/she has a 40 hour work week “plus” additional hours of intensity (hence the + sign). Continuing, C’s response of 50-60 falls directly in line with “above average” (reasonably between 45 and 50) in addition to travel (reasonably another 5 to 10).

As illustrated above, this RQQC method is reliant upon unquestionable norms of society being applied to quantitative data for the sake of normalization. As it relates to this particular these, the method was used to compare the qualitative data of participants’ fictitious consumption visions with the quantitative data of their real life job offers.
*Constant comparison analysis*

The second technique, constant comparison analysis, is a more intense evaluation method of quantitative data that seeks to categorize similarities between participant’s responses into common themes. According to Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin (1972), "To categorize is to render discriminably different things equivalent; to group the objects and events and people around us into classes, and to respond to them in terms of their class membership rather than their uniqueness." (p. 16) To put this plainly, the terminology used in a list of responses is grouped into codified themes based on their linguistic similarities.

Constant comparison analysis, as it relates to this thesis, can be broken into three different steps: qualitative simplicity coding, categorizing data bits, and theme establishment.

The first step, qualitative simplicity coding, can be loosely described as the act of reducing the number of terms in the responses without losing any meaning. This provides a more concise library of terms to qualitatively compare in the later step. This mentality is reflected in Dey’s 1993 book “Creating categories: Qualitative data analysis” where he says “in order to compare observations, we must be able to identify bits of data which can be related for the purposes of comparison.” These “bits of data” are referred to as first-order coding, because they are literally the “first” coding effort of the analyzed data. As a means of understanding this concept, the following is an example of three different responses to the query “What is important to you in life”:
My mother has always been a large influence on my life. She was always there to help me make decisions that would work to the benefit of my children. Financial security is also very important because it allows me to utilize my work experience in an enjoyable way whilst still providing for my family.

My family is the most important thing to me. The only sacrifice I ever asked them to make was to live outside of a large metropolitan area. This proximity to the city facilitates my ability to achieve what I know I can through hard work.

My primary focus has always been on money. I have never been a very social person, so the ability to travel where I want to and still provide for my three Labradors is my primary concern. Financial freedom has also helped me cater to my love of knowledge.

As one could imagine, these responses are a bit verbose to qualitatively compare. As a result, the first step of constant comparison analysis is carried out: qualitative simplicity coding. The following first-order coding is the result:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mother, my children, financial security, and my work experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family, my location in the big city, and the fact that I can achieve what I want to through hard work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money, travel, my dogs, and my love of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above, elongated sentences have been simplified into an equivalent set of terms. The meaning and content is still observable, but the data set as a whole is more manageable. Now the first-order coding is organized into overarching themes in constant comparison analysis’ second step, categorizing data bits.

The second step, categorizing data bits, is when categories are created by grouping or clustering data such that those partitions become the basis for organization and conceptualization of that data (Dey, 1993). As it related to our previous example, individual responses no longer hold significance when compared to the overall categories that apply to all responses. The following categories are a synthesis of all three responses:
In this step, we can see that all factors of importance from the original responses are blended together without losing meaning. As a result of categorizing the data bits, all of the above life-attributes are important to one or more of the surveyed respondents.

The last step, theme establishment, seeks to combine any related categories into overarching topics that still embody all of the information available. Theme analysis carries out the essential task of “bringing together into temporary categories those data bits that apparently relate to the same content.” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) The following table is a re-representation of the data using our simplified version of theme analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hobby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simplicity aside, the above table lists all of the overarching themes that are important to the three respondents. Family encompasses mothers, children, and potentially even the three Labradors. Finance combines financial security, a love of money, and financial freedom. Location includes proximity to major cities. Work includes work experience,
love of a particular career, and perhaps hard work. Personal hobby encompasses travel, a love of knowledge, and potentially a love of Labradors.

Notice that all of the above categories encompass the total information provided in the verbose responses. Overlap between overall themes is considered inconsequential as a result of the capacity of the whole to represent all information. No longer are individual response characteristics important because the intent of the constant comparison method is to qualitatively find those topics that are relevant to any of the respondents. This mentality is seen in Patton’s 1990 novel titled “Qualitative evaluation and research methods” where he describes constant comparison analysis as “concerned not with individual data bits,” but instead “the primary patterns in the data.” (67)
**Expectations/Hypothesis**

“Hypothesis generation begins with the analysis of initial observations. This process undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process.”

(Goetz & LeCompte, 1981: 58)

My general hypothesis is that the broad majority of participants queried will find agreement between their consumption vision of an ideal career and their finalized career decision. As a result of this, the major partition of interest in this study will not be those whose ideals and eventualities agreed, but instead those whose did not. The five areas of primary analysis are work intensity, location, salary, industry, and entirely qualitative topic of influence.

The topic of work intensity will generate a large amount of data as a result of the importance of lifestyle. Work-life imbalances are the #1 reason for dissatisfaction with an occupation, so it would stand to reason that individuals entering the job market would do everything in their control to ensure that their eventual profession is one that they can tolerate whilst still making a living.

The topic of location will not be a category that participants compromise on. This is partly as a result of the inherent structure of the consulting industry. Constant with the trend of the profession, most consults are based out of their “home” city and travel to the site of the client on a weekly basis. As a result, in order to compromise on location, an individual would have to move from their primary location before choosing a base city. More often than not, consultants going in to the field immediately after graduation only have one “home city” (their hometown). As a result of the lack of different options, it would not be a surprise if this default city frequently became their base city. In addition
to this, and just as influential, is the concept that humans as a species are relationship oriented. This would lead me to believe that adolescents with no experience would have a higher comfort factor with a situation that placed them near to their loved ones.

The topic of salary is not an issue I see generating a lot of matches between consumption visions and real-time career attributes. I have two reasons for this belief: new graduates have no concrete concept of their monetary worth, and the importance of other immobile factors (such as location) would take priority over salary. Going in to college, students are told again and again that they are going to be millionaires by the time they are 30. Unfortunately for them, this is not only an absurd exaggeration, but one that has the potential to heavily cloud rational estimation of an appropriate starting salary.

The topic of industry is an issue that I could see matching as well as not matching with original consumption visions. Individuals would have every reason to compromise on their chosen industry in favor of more important factors such as location or salary. On the other hand, given the type of student I will be interviewing (all IST students in the consulting track), I would understand how the broad majority of them would be most comfortable working in the IT or consulting industries. The amount of factors involved with this category is not optimal for making a precise prediction.

The entirely qualitative topic of influences (on consumption visions) will come up with a specific set of important characteristics. This is the question that queries what people, events, or circumstances influenced the development of the participant’s consumption vision. Based on the categories that I find important in my mental generation of a future, I would say that the influential characteristics will include family, friends, education, and
internship experience. I say this because these are the four largest (and as a result presumably most influential) influences in a college student’s life. They are surrounded by education and friends until the time where they work 9AM-5PM or visit their family on break.
Results

Reasonable quantitative-qualitative comparison (RQQC)

As explained in the methods section, the following four categories (industry, location, salary, and work intensity) were analyzed according to the RQQC method. This method, in summary, takes the qualitative answer of the participant and normalizes it with the quantitative answer through commonly accepted benchmarks. In the following cases, the “wanted” categories relate to the consumption visions of the participants. The “actual” category makes reference to the concrete attributes of their accepted job offer.

For the purposes of understanding this section, the following color schemes and their related meanings are as follows:

- **Match** – there is little doubt that the two answers are equivalent
- **Mismatch** – there is little doubt that the two answers are at odds
- **Provisional** – using the RQQC method, the two answers are near equivalents
- **Uncertain/Unspecified** – there is not information or detail to prove or disprove their two answers’ relation
In the industry category, nine of the fifteen respondents had a match between their preferred industry and their real-time job offer. As an example, informant number 1 stated that his/her ideal industry in his/her consumption vision was IT consulting. In his/her actual chosen job offer, it can be seen that the informant will be doing IT consulting for the government.

Contrary to the matches, six of the fifteen respondents failed to enter into industries that were similar to the ideal they expressed in their consumption vision. For example, both informant number 12 and 13 expressed that they wished to work in the computer gaming industry. After accepting their respective jobs, however, one went into the security auditing industry whilst the other became an IT consultant.
Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Number</th>
<th>Actual Location</th>
<th>Wanted Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>State College</td>
<td>State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>South/Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Not in hometown, big city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>TBD (Rotational)</td>
<td>NY, or major metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Coastal major city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 12</td>
<td>DC (travel)</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Scranton, PA</td>
<td>No preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Philadelphia (travel)</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Raritan, NJ</td>
<td>East coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>US/Europe (doesn't matter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the location category, twelve of the fifteen respondents’ real-time work locations matched their ideal locations expressed in their consumption visions. Of these twelve, five were exact matched, meaning that if their ideal city was Philadelphia their actual work location was Philadelphia as well. The remaining seven were qualitatively considered matches using the RQQC method. As an example, informant number 1’s consumption vision said that he/she wished to be located somewhere in the Northeast. Despite this unspecific preference, the fact that his/her job placed them in Washington DC (a city in the Northeast) the two instances are a match.

The only case of provisional matching is informant number 7, an IT employee who will be working on a rotational basis and is not yet aware of his/her work location. His/Her consumption vision ideal was to be located in either New York or another major city. This entry was considered a match because of the rotational basis. Rotational programs for IT employees revolve around 4-8 major cities for a duration of 6-10 months each. In
this particular case, the subject was contacted and clarified that 3 of his 4 rotational cities could be considered “major.”

Of the fifteen participants, two of them failed to achieve a match between their actual job location and their consumption vision location. In one of the cases, informant number 12, the individual missed his or her location by a margin of 2700 miles.

**Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Number</th>
<th>Actual Salary</th>
<th>Wanted Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>55k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>100k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10-40k</td>
<td>45-50k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>61-70k</td>
<td>65k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>71-80k</td>
<td>50k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>55k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>85-150k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>61-70k</td>
<td>50-70k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>30-300k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>50k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>six figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>41-50k</td>
<td>50-60k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>51-70k</td>
<td>55-75k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>80k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>51-60k</td>
<td>75-100k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the salary category, nine of the fifteen respondents’ actual salary ranges matched or exceeded those ideals they specified in their consumption vision. As an example, informant number 7, the IT employee, saw him/herself making 55 thousand dollars ($55,000) directly out of college. This number falls squarely in the middle of the salary range they indicted their real-time job paid. A more intriguing case, informant number 6,
found him/herself making over 20 thousand dollars ($20,000) than the ideal he/she specified in her consumption vision.

Contrary to the matches, six of the fifteen failed to match their actual job salaries with the ideals mentioned in their consumption visions. It is worth noting here that the majority of the mismatches occurred by a substantial margin ($25,000-$240,000), although a more realistic failure range would be $25,000-$40,000 as a result of the high possibility of informants revealing their consumption vision salary in the far future.

**Work Intensity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Number</th>
<th>Actual hours</th>
<th>Wanted work intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Depends, Intense, Normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>40 hour work week. Coming early means can leave early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8-5. Steady work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>65 max</td>
<td>Depends. Typical 8 hour day for living time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>8 hour day. Packed with assignments. Fast paced. Comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Short but busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>8 hour office setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8 hour work day. On the move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Design, development, marketing for a top name video game company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Above average intensity. A challenge. Project 2mo-1yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>Full week. Travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Intense. 8-6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Project based. Vary by project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the work intensity category, seven out of the fifteen respondents matched their actual working hour/intensity with the ideals they stipulated in their consumption visions. In a majority of the cases, the respondent stated quantitatively (for a qualitative question) the amount of hours they wished to work during the week. This can be seen in informant number 3’s case, where he/she hoped to work an 8AM-5PM full-time position. This, of course, measures up to the 40 hour work week he/she will really be working.
This category held the largest amount of provisional matches, with four of the fifteen participants quantitatively matching as a result of the applied RQQC method. As an example, informant number 1 detailed his consumption vision of work intensity as “depending,” varying between “normal” and “intense.” As a result of the terminology “normal,” this was considered a match due to intense periods of work resulting in more (+) than the benchmark average 40 hour week. Informant 14 is in a similar situation, whereby his/her usage of the phrase “above average” reasonably places him/her in the actual hour range of the real job (40-50 hours).

Note that there were no failures in this category.

**Constant comparison analysis**

As explained in the methods section, the following category (inspiration for the provided consumption vision) was handled in an entirely qualitative manner. Using the constant comparison analysis, paragraph responses were reduced to a list of key points using qualitative simplicity coding (First-order coding). Following this step, the coded responses were reduced to thirteen categories using data bits categorization (Contextual themes). Lastly, the categories were arranged into four all-encompassing themes (Major Dimensions).
**Inspiration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-order coding</th>
<th>First-order themes</th>
<th>Major Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concepts (code)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contextual Themes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school.</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at using technology.</td>
<td>Penn State class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on own research.</td>
<td>Penn State professor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flair for business through family.</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Loved ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three internships.</td>
<td>Significant other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader in classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family works at Penn State.</td>
<td>Love of the subject</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to be manager of IT department.</td>
<td>Avoiding boredom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. ---'s class.</td>
<td>Personal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling to different places.</td>
<td>Personal gratification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desks jobs are boring.</td>
<td>Personal drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two prior internships.</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Prior experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job location is near.</td>
<td>Prior work experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father was primary influence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn state opening day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadowing experience in high school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and relatives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous work experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current home in desired work location.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend is at PSU.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. ---'s class helped narrow down jobs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love playing video games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have vacationed in California.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up with videogames.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up with technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to make something to call my own.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents in the technology field.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up around sociable family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't want to be stuck behind a desk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major's key classes helped narrow down.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors with career experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family supported.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and his work/life balance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took programming course in high school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships helped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is number one influence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial media and newspapers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong sense of purpose and success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class that taught social entrepreneurship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes that discussed ethical technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of results

After gathering the results from the qualitative interviews and the quantitative surveys, a significant number of correlations were revealed. These correlations fall in to the four following categories:

1. Industry, Location, Salary, and Work intensity interrelationships
2. Overall failure and success analysis
3. Additional correlations
4. Consumption vision influence dimensions

Industry, Location, Salary, and Work intensity inter-relationships

This section of the summary analyses the overall meaning behind the four main categories of quantitative analysis. Of the fifteen participants surveyed, 66% of them had a mismatch between their consumption vision of the future and their realistic end-state (job attributes). By looking at these mismatches, it is possible to understand which of the four categories was the least important to the participants and which categories were the focus. The following table lists the mismatches of all the participants by category:
From looking above, it is apparent to see that the most mismatches in the data occurred in the salary and industry categories. In contrast, only 14% of the individuals sacrificed location, and a flawless 0% were willing to compromise on their ideal work intensity. This indicates that of the four categories, the most important aspects of job placement are location and work intensity. In order to achieve their ideal circumstances in these categories, our participants were willing to sacrifice salary and industry ideals 86% of the time. As an example, informant number 14 was willing to sacrifice their ideal salary (six figures) as well as their ideal industry (Computer Gaming) in order to work a 40 hour work week in the city of Philadelphia. This evidence is further substantiated by the fact that he/she had three job offers, indicating that both salary and industry ideals could potentially have been achieved if location and work intensity were not the prime focus.

These results also indicate that 100% of the time participants were willing to give up any other career aspect (industry, location, salary) in order to achieve their preferred work intensity. This category includes work environment, work hours, and travel stipulations. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that one of the main focuses of graduating seniors in the IT field is lifestyle and the happiness of their personality in the workplace (rather than financial yield or even their industry of choice).

In addition to work intensity, location was only sacrificed two out of the fifteen total cases. This could be due to any number of circumstances, some of which include location being tied to family life, location being some point of personal comfort, or location representing some object of experience (i.e., New York is the best work location because that is where all the action is).
In contrast to work intensity and location, either industry or salary was sacrificed in 86% of the participants’ cases. This leads one to infer that an individual graduating from college and going into the work force is willing to give up their (potentially overoptimistic) salary goals in favor of being in their ideal location doing what they want to do. As it related to industry, this particular batch of respondents seemed to illustrate that industry was not a concern so long as they were doing consulting of some kind.

**Overall failure and success analysis**

Of the fifteen respondents, ten of them failed to match their real-time job scenario with their consumption vision preferences. The remaining five individuals matched in all four categories analyzed.

In an attempt to quantify this statistic using salary ranges: of the five individuals that matched in all four categories, three of them were within the top 5 salaries surveyed. The remaining two “all-matchers” were not in either of the two lowest quartiles of salary range. This data leads one to infer that those students who had the forethought to visualize their ideal job scenario in the form of consumption visions were rewarded with additional motivation and eventual monetary success.

**Additional correlations**

This section is intended to highlight the correlations between data that did not pertain to all categories at once. It is here that some of the most interesting and unexpected patterns in the data can be seen.
Participants who had a mismatch between their real-time industry choice and their consumption vision ideal

Of the six respondents that made a sacrifice by not getting their ideal industry, none are included in the top 5 highest salaries of the sample. In addition, all but one of them got their ideal location (as well as work intensity).

This correlation points out the importance of the category location over the category of salary. For the participants to have not gotten their ideal industry, they would have had to prioritize some other category. The absence of these five individuals in the top 5 highest salaries illustrates that monetary gain was not the catalyst that pushed them to sacrifice their ideal industry. Instead, with 83% of them receiving their ideal location, it stands to reason that this was the reason industry ideals were sacrificed. To be fair, the same could be said for work intensity. With 100% of the participants getting their ideal work lifestyle, this category could also stand to be the reason industry preference was ignored.

Participants who had a mismatch between their real-time salary preference and their consumption vision ideal

Of the six respondents that made a sacrifice by not getting their ideal salary, 100% of them achieved their ideal location (as well as work intensity).

This correlation highlights a potential trade-off between salary and either location or work intensity. For the participants to not have gotten their ideal salary, they had to have had some reason. Considering the flawless statistic that 100% of them got their preferred location, it would be a rational assumption to conclude that location was the direct cause of salary sacrifices. Again (with apologies toward the redundancy), work intensity could
also have been the reason for salary sacrifice as a result of the six “salary-sacrificers” achieving their ideal work lifestyle 100% of the time.

*Participants who specified their consumption vision industry as “consulting”*

Of the six respondents who specified their ideal industry as “consulting,” 100% of them acquired real-time jobs in the consulting industry.

This correlation illustrates the affect that consumption vision forethought as well as education has on goal achievement. As a result of various influences (to be discussed in the influence section), these six students had the cognitive assumption that they wanted to go in to the consulting industry. This outcome is further validated through the knowledge that these six respondents, as a collective, applied to roughly 60 job positions (number is calculated using the averages of the six individuals provided job application ranges).

With this many applications each (10 on average), these participants applied to more job positions than 100% of the other respondents (excluding two whose range “6-10” has a 20% chance of making their numbers equal). As a result of this finding, it is quite apparent that these six individuals had an extremely concrete idea of the profession they wished to enter in to. In addition, the fact that their average application number is above the other respondents’ by a multiple of two illustrates the increased goal-oriented mindset of these six individuals.

*Participants whose industry preference was not “consulting”*

Of the ten respondents whose consumption visions implied that they had no interesting in going in to consulting, 50% ended up in real-time consulting positions, 20% ended up in
their exact ideal position, and 30% ended up in positions entirely different from their specified preference.

This correlation shows one of two things: (1) the participants’ consumption visions reflected an ideal occupation that they could not feasibly achieve, or (2) education has a striking ability to change the perceptions and ideals of students considering first-time jobs. With all ten of these students actively taking classes in the consulting track, it stands to reason that the 50% who went into consulting were swayed in this direction by educational influences. This can be validated through a qualitative analysis of the 5 individuals’ consumption vision influences. Of the five who accepted consulting positions, four made mention to educational experiences that led them to their ideals and one insinuated his/her proximity to teamwork and technology was the cause.

In addition to the previously mentioned relationships, this correlation accentuates the in-or-out mentality of the consulting industry. With such a large percentage of consultant burn-out (80-85% within the first 6 years), students must be absolutely sure that their personality fits the mold of the industry (WetFeet, 2008). As a result, it is no surprise that only 27% of the students surveyed in the consulting track had lasting intentions (consumption visions) of entering the consulting realm. In the same sense, an interesting follow-up study would be to evaluate how the participants fare who ended up in consulting with no previous intention of doing so.

**Consumption vision influence dimensions**

This summary pertains to the influences involved in the consumption visions of all respondents. Using the constant comparison method, qualitative answers were
normalized into a group of categories that encompassed the content of all original responses. Following this, these categories were further compartmentalized into overarching dimensions. The four dimensions that represent all influences on the participants consumption visions are education, loved ones, personal, and prior experiences. Each of them is discussed in further detail below.

*Education*

The topic of education was one of the most mentioned influences on participants’ consumption visions of future career ideals. This dimension represents themes such as High School experiences, Penn State classes, and Penn State professors. Twelve out of the fifteen respondents mentioned that some form of education experience heavily affected their career ideals, as well as their future decision on occupation.

This dimension was hypothesized to be a large influence on participant consumption visions, but with 80% of respondents making mention to educational influences, it has much more sway than I had anticipated. This is potentially due to the fact that adolescents spend more than ¾ of their childhood in activities associated with academia. The fatherly mantra “Your only job is school” is a clear indicator that education occupies the majority of childhood attentions, or at the very least that schooling is considered one of a child’s most frequented environments.

*Loved ones*

The topic of loved ones, while not the most mentioned in the consumption vision influence results, was frequently the first to be mentioned. This dimension represents themes such as family and significant others. Seven out of the fifteen respondents
mentioned loved ones in some fashion or another as having influenced their decision. In some cases, parents helped their child talk over the options and they came to a decision as a collective. In others, a child learned what he/she did not want in a profession by watching his/her parents (such as what work-life balance was the most optimal).

This dimension appeared to be consistently used in general terms in the data. That is to say other influences were mentioned in detail, while the loved ones category was consistently represented through phrasing such as “my girlfriend is there” and “my family.” This could potentially be due to the fact that family is involved in every decision an adolescent encounters, so it is all but assumed that their role in the formation of future end-states is enormous.

**Personal**

The topic of person can be considered the “miscellaneous dimension” in that it is comprised of all categories that relate to personal preferences or attributes. The themes represented by this dimension include love of the subject area, personal skill sets, personal gratification, personal drive, and avoiding boredom. Ten out of the fifteen respondents mentioned personal attributes or personal reasons unrelated to the other themes that influenced the creation of their particular consumption vision. As an example, one respondent mentioned that he/she “wanted to make something that they could call their own.” Another mentioned that he/she “took a programming class in High School and fell in love.”

This dimension, as the most encompassing of all themes related to personal preference, is a very useful summary of how an individual’s non-verbalized preference can be a
motivational influence for future decision making. Here, the personal needs and thought processes of the respondent are evaluated in a vacuum without the biases of other people or events. If I were to be looking for a benchmark to judge personal motivation, this category would be the source of my data. That is not to say that those who made no mention of personal influence are not self-motivated, but perhaps it is useful to point out that those who did make mention of these things are personally driven.

*Prior experiences*

The topic of prior experiences was a dimension that was not frequently mentioned, but that in my mind was the most influential theme when it was referred to. In this dimension, themes such as travel, prior work experience, and the external media are present. Six out of the fifteen respondents made mention to influential past experiences that helped them in the development of their career-oriented consumption vision. As an example, one respondent mentioned that “two prior internships doing auditing made him not want to do that.” Another said that “previous work experience has helped him discover what was important to him.”

This dimension, in my mind, was a concrete way to understand the participants’ professional drive. This can be validated through the understanding that past experiences make up an individual’s viewpoint on future interactions. Throughout college, every student lives under the umbrella of pressure that is an internship. With one, students are considered to have a much higher chance at securing a lucrative full-time position. Without one, the opposite could be said. Past experiences make up the framework that
teaches us what we do enjoy and what we do not. As a result, this theme represents the most strict and limiting factor to options of profession than any other.
Conclusion
The objective of my study was to understand the correlation between IT students’ ideal career scenario and their eventual real-time job through the use of consumption visions. To examine the relationship between participants’ ideals and their final outcome, I used qualitative analysis methods such as Reasonable Quantitative-Qualitative Comparison (RQQC) and Constant Comparison Analysis (a qualitative analysis method developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss). I hypothesized that graduates would make sacrifices amongst key job attributes based on a sequence of primary influences. Results from my study support this hypothesis.

Key Insights
When looking at the results of my study as a collective, the following could be said about the relationship between a job seeker’s consumption vision career scenario and their actual real-time profession:

Within the Information Technology realm, students seeking first time employment are most concerned with satisfying their preferred career lifestyle and their work location at the expense of salary and industry ideals. Those experiences and influences that most inspire these decisions include (in order of frequency) loved ones, education, prior experiences, and personal nuances. Data from the observed sample indicate that detailed forethought of future career ideals has a heavy correlation with job acquisition and monetary gain.
Limitations

One strength of my research is that it analyzes a standardized sample of like-minded and career-driven individuals in both a quantitative and qualitative manner. This strength could also be considered a limitation, however, as the results of my study have the potential of only being applicable within this particular industry (consulting). In addition, my sample size limits the precision of the study as a result of it comprising of only fifteen students (as a result of having to discard those students whose answers were inadequate for my study). With a smaller sample size comes a potential for misalignments as a result of biased extremes. This can be seen in the work intensity category of my results. 100% of the participants’ consumption visions either matched with their real-time job scenario or were placed into the unknown category. Four of the fifteen responses had an unknown variable, further limiting the sample size and casting the impression that no one made a sacrifice as to work lifestyle.

Another limitation could be the geographic location of my respondents. All of the students surveyed originate from the east coast. This casts a potential bias on the location attribute in my interviews as a result of the fact that major metropolitan areas (where driven students would be encouraged to work) have a higher chance of being close to respondents’ loved ones.

Further Research

To extend my findings in an immediate sense, one could evaluate the circumstances of the same individuals six years down the line. This would be beneficial to see how motivation stemming from consumption visions carried the graduating consultants
through what could be considered the “burn-out period.” According to WetFeet, a career meta-database begun in 1994 by Stanford MBAs Gary Alpert and Steve Pollock, 80-85% of consultants abandon the industry in their first 6 years as a result of dissatisfaction or burn-out (2008). As a result of this unnerving statistic, the stability of these respondents’ motivation from consumption visions could be studied over a historical time period. This would result in applicable data to consulting that could prove to be extremely insightful.

On a broader scale, one could perform this same study on a much more diverse sample. This would take the study out of the realm of consulting, and apply it to other professions and industries where mental imagery in career decision making has a much larger influence on participants’ end-states. In the same sense, collecting data from individuals in varying industries would grant the opportunity to analyze the degree of consumption vision application by industry. The result would be a codified method of mental-motivation analysis that would dictate which industries were appropriate for varying individuals.

**Closing**

The main implication of this research is that consumption visions and their capacity to motivate an individual are invaluable in the sphere of career decision making. At such an impressionable age, students who take the time to understand why they want what they want will be at a significant advantage over those who fail to perform the self-analysis.

Consumption visions, as a structured form of the natural process of mental imagery, grant a unique and detailed perspective of idyllic career attributes over contemporary methods of personality-career fit.
WORKS CITED


Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Major:  
Option:  
Date: 

**Question #1:** Please write a short paragraph describing your ideal job scenario as it relates to:

**This is to be your mental ideals; make no mention to your real life job specifications**

Industry -  

Salary -  

Location -  

Length/intensity of the work day -  

Social environment/work culture -  

Corporate culture –
Question #2: What in your life influenced your previously described ideal? What happened to you / who influenced you in this direction? (5-6 sentences)
Appendix 2: Survey Questions

Major:
Option:
Date:

Have you accepted a full-time job after graduation?
☐ Yes
☐ No

How many job offers have you received over the past year? (legitimate/contractual offers)
☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2-3
☐ 4-5
☐ > 5

What is the salary range you fall in / hope to fall in?
☐ 0
☐ 10-40k
☐ 41-50k
☐ 51-60k
☐ 61-70k
☐ 71-80k
☐ > 80

Approximately how many jobs did you apply for?
☐ 0
☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ > 15

What is your real/ideal working location?

What are your assigned / anticipated working hours?
What type of work will you be doing / do you hope to be doing? (1-3 sentences)

What kinds of people will you / do you hope to be working with? (Personalities, goals, skills)
Pennsylvania State University, The Schreyer Honors College
- Bachelor of Science in Management, with a minor in International Business
- Bachelor of Science in Information Science and Technology

City University London - Visiting student in International Business
- Spring ’10
- London, U.K.

Bucks County Community College
- Fall ’03 - Spring ’06
- Newtown, PA
- 15 credits of incidental courses at night and during summers, starting in 8th grade
  (Phi Theta Kappa)

Princeton Capital Management, Inc. – Analyst. Worked with two portfolio managers to identify investment opportunities related to renewable energy. Developed an intuitive portfolio management system that provided a real time breakdown of the company’s three investment products.
- Princeton, NJ
- Summer ’10

Bank of America – Global Risk Management Summer Analyst. Worked with three due-diligence teams to assess risk associated with hedge funds. Analyzed risk based on twelve characteristics to develop guidelines to underwrite and monitor the bank’s credit exposure from hedge funds and to develop risk exposure limits.
- New York, NY
- Summer ’09

Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. – Global Private Client Summer Analyst in Global Wealth Management in its Global Bank Group. Developed a Project Portfolio Management (PPM) Database to analyze and manage all present, past, and future projects in the group based on numerous key characteristics.
- Hopewell, NJ
- Summer ’08

Educational Testing Service – Managed the department responsible for grading the AP French language test. There were thirty aides under me responsible for one hundred and fifty graders.
- Princeton, NJ
- Summer ’04-’07

Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity
- University Park, PA
- President of Sigma Class
  - Fall ’07 - Present
- House Improvement Chair & Alumni Relations Chair
  - Spring ’08 - Present

Leadership Jumpstart – STD Awareness Concert,  Co-Leader of Student Team
- University Park, PA
- Organized and executed an STD Awareness Concert at SOZO Inc.
  - Fall ’08

Student Government – Holy Ghost Preparatory School
- Bensalem, PA
- President of the Senate - Senior Year ’06-’07 & Executive Board Member - Junior and Senior Years ’05-’07
  - Ran all student events including fundraisers, dances, proms, community service projects, and everyday student affairs.

• People-to-People Student Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand
  - Summer ’05

• Holy Ghost Prep Tour of Italy and Greece
  - Summer ’06

• Cancun / Cozumel, Mexico
  - Summer ’01, ’02, ’03, ’05, ’08

• Various Ski Resorts – New Hampshire, Colorado, New York & Utah, Québec & British Columbia
  - Winter ’03 - ’09

• Touring while studying abroad - Andorra, Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England, Scotland), Vatican City
  - Spring ’10

• Phi Theta Kappa – Youngest regional member of the honor society of two year colleges.
  - Inducted March ’06

• Pennsylvania Governor’s School for Information, Society and Technology - Accepted with full scholarship to an intensive 5-week program at Drexel University, Philadelphia, dealing with the merger of business and technology to develop and manage information systems.
  - Summer ’06

• Pennsylvania Free Enterprise Week – Full scholarship to mock-manage a business simulation of a widget company over three years.
  - Summer ’06

Penn State Dance Marathon (THON)
- English as a Second Language Tutoring Center

Libertae Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center
- Community Service Core (CSC)
- Service trip to West Virginia

Scuba Diving (Certified Open Water Diver)
- Martial Arts (Tae Kwon Do, black belt)

Sports – Varsity Letter in Bowling. Played soccer, hockey, basketball, track, and golf

Music - Played trumpet, piano, and the bells
- Horseback riding, skiing, snowboarding, fencing

Scuba Diving (Certified Open Water Diver)