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# THE RELIGIOUS ESSENCE OF SHOPPING AND THE PROMOTION OF THRIFTINESS AS A PRINCIPLE OF FRUGAL HEDONISM

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## Abstract

Consumption is not merely an economic phenomenon, but also a social, cultural, political, and anthropological one, involving a range of religious and spiritual practices and symbols. The primary objective of this study is to interpret the process of shopping, through the perspective of religious thought, as a sacrificial ritual. A religious interpretation of shopping will subsequently enable the phenomenon of thrift to be understood as an ethical norm of transcendental significance in the behaviour of the modern consumer. The secondary objective is to demonstrate how thrift is retained as a traditional attribute of Protestant ethics in the setting of contemporary consumer culture. Here the effort is to identify a modified dimension of thrift as part of a new non-ascetic idea. A third, related objective is an effort to demonstrate that thrift, as a complement to patterns of consumer behaviour, has now been transformed into a part of hedonistic practices. The article proposes my own theoretical concept of frugal hedonism, incorporating the dimension of thriftiness as an alternative pattern of a non-ascetic lifestyle. It defines two main pillars of frugal hedonism, comprised of voluntary restraint in attitudes toward material values and deferred consumption. It questions the thesis of a strictly ascetic and rationalized conception of thriftiness as an expression of consumer deprivation, as it may concurrently have a hedonistic dimension, contrary to certain theories of shopping, through the achievement of goals that are valued higher, such as mental well-being, stress reduction, and overall higher quality of life in areas of non-material life experience.

*Keywords:* shopping theory, alternative hedonism, thriftiness, consumer culture, sacrificial ritual

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## 1. Introduction

Theories of shopping generally follow economic, sociological, psychological, behavioural, and not least, marketing directions of thought. The phenomenon of shopping is an important part of the discourse over consumer culture, consumer behaviour and consumer decision-making, and is therefore becoming a subject of interdisciplinary research interest. Shopping and

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consumption are thus studied using models of commercial transactions, analyses of household finances, or models of corporate profits as phenomena both economic and otherwise, which are being driven intensively by marketing efforts oriented toward increasing the volume of shopping activities on global markets. At the same time, they are also examined as sociocultural categories saturated with and carried out through a system of social and cultural values and norms, including ethical principles and symbolic life expressions. This has been confirmed not least by a meta-analysis by Pattaro and Setiffi performed on a robust sample of several hundred peer-reviewed academic texts published in international scholarly journals [1]. Shopping and consumption are thus not merely existential issues, in the sense of the practical provision of basic necessities of life, but also existential issues determining symbolic life trajectories in the form of constructing identities and shaping lifestyles, values, attitudes, or social roles. Numerous authors focus on the symbolic dimension of shopping on a transcendental level, in the form of religious and spiritual properties, functions, and meaning in various research contexts. Relevant studies are appearing in theories of consumer culture that demonstrate the penetration of original religious ideas and spiritual practices into the neoliberal world of hypertrophied consumerism [2]. Also relevant are studies tracking the statistical relationships between types of religious belief and specific consumption practices and models of purchasing decisions [3]. Also inspiring are individual efforts by researchers, for example, analysing the influence of religiosity on perceptions of advertising messages [4], or forms of sharing and communicating religious symbols and visualizations of the sacred in digital media [5].

Discourse on shopping is often dominated, incorrectly and very simplistically, by “*visions of immeasurable spending and hedonistic debauchery*” [6]. Little attention is paid to the phenomenon of thriftiness and the motives behind the voluntary saving behaviours of consumers. This is one of the reasons why terms such as “frugal consumer identities” [7], “frugal innovation trend” [8], “thrift shopping” [9], “collaborative consumption” [10], and last but not least “voluntary frugality” [11] are gradually gaining ground in the discourse of shopping theories.

Sustainable consumption, determined by frugality, saving behaviours and self-restraint in the area of consumption, is a fundamental political and social issue in the context of climate change, environmental threats, and - in recent times - the unfavourable macroeconomic situation, the energy crisis and the economic recession spreading worldwide [12]. Issues of consumer frugality and sustainability in areas of sociological, economic, and anthropological thought have received increased research attention in recent years in the context of religious thinking [13].

The primary objective of this study is to gather arguments supporting the paradigm of the religious-spiritual essence of shopping as a sacrificial ritual against the backdrop of the discourse of consumer culture using Daniel Miller’s *A Theory of Shopping* [14]. This allows for a deeper and more detailed

understanding of the meaning of thriftiness in the context of an ethos of modern consumerism that incites unrestrained consumption and uncontrolled spending.

The secondary objective is to demonstrate the influence of certain ideas of Protestant ethics in the contemporary structures of the consumer culture of modern consumerism. I focus specifically on the principle of thriftiness as a component of Protestant asceticism, elaborated in detail by Max Weber in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [15]. Here Weber uses the method of ideal types to describe the capitalist entrepreneur, indeed ascribing crucial importance to frugality, self-discipline and thriftiness. I illustrate that the ideas of Protestant ethics are still firmly entrenched in late modern capitalism, albeit in a modified form that moves away from their initially ascetic conception.

The third objective is to demonstrate that thriftiness, as a complementary component of patterns of shopping and consumer behaviour under the conditions of accelerated consumerism in wealthy societies, is loosely intertwined with the original ascetic principles of Protestant ethics, albeit transformed as part of hedonistic practices. I am thus proposing my own theoretical concept of frugal hedonism, incorporating the dimension of thriftiness as an alternative pattern of a non-ascetic lifestyle. At the same time, I question the thesis of a strictly ascetic and rationalized conception of thriftiness as an expression of consumer deprivation, as it may concurrently have a hedonistic dimension, contrary to certain theories of shopping [16], through the achievement of goals that are valued higher, such as mental well-being, stress reduction, and overall higher quality of life in areas of non-material life experience.

## **2. Consumer culture and the discourse on thriftiness**

The discourse on consumer culture is highly ambiguous and combines a variety of interdisciplinary approaches, including economic, political, sociological, anthropological, historicizing, and, last but not least, ethical, religious and spiritual perspectives. One of the most lucid and comprehensive theories of consumer culture is offered by Lury, which applies sociological-anthropological directions of thought to capture contemporary trends of consumer behaviour in the context of the effects of values and cultural norms, as well as of ethical, symbolic, and spiritual meaning ascribed to elements of everyday life [17]. The religious and spiritual functions of consumer culture represent an important dimension of understanding current theories of consumer culture [18]. In other cases, religious and spiritual values even form the basis of complex theories of consumer culture and present an analytical tool for understanding the purchasing behaviour and decision-making of modern consumers [19].

Theories of consumer culture are typically characterized not only by an interdisciplinary approach with a significant emphasis on the sources of religious and spiritual parameters of consumption, but also by reflecting very rapid and hard-to-predict changes against a background of important social events [20].

It has been confirmed that various parameters of consumer culture are undergoing transformations and adaptations in the postmodern era, some of which are intensifying or even hypertrophying, while others are weakening or disappearing altogether [21].

There is no doubt that shopping patterns, models of consumer behaviour, and mechanisms of psychological decision-making are transforming and reforming in various ways as a result of economic, environmental, social, political, and religious changes. Consumers' value worlds are being revised against the backdrop of the covid-19 pandemic, economic recession, inflation, the energy crisis, the migrant crisis, the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, global climate change, and as a result their associated shopping patterns are changing. At present, scholarly attention is increasingly turning to identifying and further understanding the motives and manifestations of sustainable and ethical consumption and the role of spirituality in promoting ideas of more thrifty consumption [22].

Against the backdrop of a turbulent economy, instability in financial markets, the energy crisis, rapidly rising consumer prices, it logically follows questions of potential and real risks of declining standards of living and growing economic insecurity are being addressed as topics in various fields of research [23]. A variety of consumer adaptation mechanisms are being identified and explained in the form of differing consumption practices, shopping patterns, decision-making strategies, and psychological processes. Of interest in this sense is the work of Lindblom and Lindblom, which uses sociological methods to characterize the relationship between the economic crisis and the development of shared consumption in Finland [24]. Here the authors managed to identify social factors and other social demographic variables that strengthen or, on the contrary, weaken the adoption and implementation of the principles of a sharing economy.

Haines and Lee also empirically analysed consumer attitudes towards sustainable consumption in times of financial uncertainty, using fashion as an example in a sample of the US population [25]. This study was able to define three different consumer segments using an online questionnaire survey on a sample of 168 respondents. In so doing, one of these consumer segments is typically oriented towards values of thriftiness and frugality, empathy, low levels of personal stress, and rejection of a consumerist approach to life.

A distinct orientation towards sustainable consumption and the adoption of principles of thriftiness as an important attribute of consumer behaviour in the millennial generation was noted by authors Falke, Schröder and Hofmann based on their own empirical findings [26]. They succeeded in empirically demonstrating that the shopping patterns of this generation are significantly influenced by their specific value structure and employment status. However, the most important part remains that millennials are highly sensitive to sustainable consumption and have a positive perception of its importance and function against a backdrop of escalating climate change and environmental risks.

The promotion of ideas of thriftiness under the conditions of contemporary consumer culture is also empirically confirmed by Kutlu [27]. This author uses statistical methods to address the question of the relationship between the personality traits of consumers, namely their thriftiness and conscientiousness, and their religiosity and degree of aversion to wasting food. Kutlu applied an online questionnaire technique and identified five different consumer segments in a sample of 301 Turkish consumers. Above all, he empirically demonstrated positive correlations between an aversion to wasting food on the one hand and conscientiousness, thriftiness, and religiosity on the other.

The authors Djafarova and Foots conducted qualitative sociological research in the UK based on the technique of semi-structured interviews [28]. The goal is to identify factors that incite representatives of Generation Z to transform an intention to buy ethical goods into actual purchasing behaviour. In doing so, they used a model of the theory of planned behaviour and found that the sample of Generation Z representatives studied has a desire for ethical shopping and an interest in environmental issues very firmly embedded in their value structure. Here, of course, ethical shopping is hindered by thriftiness, which in the case of this sample serves as a powerful, albeit presumably temporary barrier. According to the authors, thriftiness and ethical behaviour also manifest in this generation with a preference for a sustainable lifestyle, recycling, food choices, and reduced consumption of clothing.

Mohamed Sadom al. examined the environmental consciousness and thriftiness of hotel guests in the setting of the Malaysian hotel industry [29]. They conducted their own empirical research based on quantitative information gathering methods and statistical data analysis and found a positive correlation between the environmental attitudes of guests and their willingness to be thrifty. They also pointed to the importance of environmentally conscious advertising and the effects of green marketing strategies in enhancing thrift. Their findings in particular can help with setting up effective marketing strategies and advertisements addressing a significant segment of customers oriented towards thriftiness and aversion to wasting natural resources.

### **3. Thriftiness and the religious essence of shopping as a sacrificial ritual**

Based on a literature review of scholarly studies from recent years, we can observe the gradually growing discourse of thriftiness in various theories of consumer culture. These conceptions include in part various theories of shopping interpreted through the perspective of religious and anthropological thought. The reason is that, under certain circumstances, shopping can be understood as a form of religious ritual reminiscent of the ritual of sacrifice.

Theories of sacrifice traditionally appear not only in anthropological thought but also in the Bible. *“And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.”* (1 Kings 8.63, KJV)

We find sacrifice as a religious ritual in the context of Miller's theory of shopping [14]. According to Miller, sacrifice in fact plays an important role in any theory of consumption, as it represents a constant rite of passage between production and consumption [30]. The sacrifice serves here as a means of reconciling the divine power that stand behind all of creation. Through sacrifice, consumers absolve themselves of the guilt they have incurred through consumption, as consumption leads to the diminishing of the world, i.e. the erosion of the product of the divine power. Shopping can thus be likened in its first phase to potential destruction in the sense of diminishing and consuming something, where the sacrifice is represented as an act of violence or destruction. Shopping can be experienced as something between excitement and fear, of arousal and fear of consequences. As a rule, the purchasing process starts with hedonistic spending, which in turn triggers fear of endangering the household budget and financial reserves, and then leads to a strategy of thrifty behaviour.

Thriftiness here can be likened to the second stage of the ritual of sacrifice, characterized by the acknowledgment of the suprapersonal authorities of the divine and transcendental world. The reason is that thriftiness, or rather minimalism, during the course of shopping serves not only to legitimize the act of shopping, where shopping can be and often is interpreted and even presented as an act of saving. Frugal consumption behaviour during the course of shopping, as in ceremonies of ritualized religious sacrifice, leads to the appeasement of transcendental forces and represents service to higher instances, far beyond the individual horizons of interest. In the context of shopping, thriftiness is not only a certain negation of consumption, but a strategy for reconciling suprapersonal forces before the act of consumption itself. At the same time, we perceive thriftiness as an ethical norm, one identified with good. Thrifty behaviour during acts of shopping essentially represent a goal-oriented effort to give something up in favour of something above us (e.g. the household). This serves as the zenith of the second phase of the ritual of sacrifice.

In the third phase of the ritual of sacrifice, there is a departure from transcendental forces of a divine character and indeed a return to earth, back to one's social place. The means of such a change has traditionally been a consecrated sacrificial meal that is distributed to others and at the same time sanctifies social relationships. Thus, in this last phase, the world order is restored: namely, the subordination of humanity to divine forces and the confirmation of the hierarchy of social relationships. We can see a parallel here in the goods purchased in households, sanctified by the act of thriftiness of the shoppers and their ability to sanctify relationships within the family. This is why the appeal to eating together at a single table as part of a family has such significance, as it becomes a shared ritual of sanctification through sacrificial eating. We can interpret the significance of the mutual giving and sharing of common gifts in the same way.

#### **4. Ideas of Protestant ethics and thriftiness in the setting of modern consumerism**

In the religious ritual of sacrifice, we can identify parallels not only to shopping and overall consumer behaviour, but to thriftiness as well. Thriftiness and frugality are part of the traditional values of Protestant ethics and asceticism.

Chriss summarizes a number of basic principles of Protestant asceticism and its connection to business activities [31]. These basic principles include, for example, the ‘waste of time’. It is one of the most serious sins to waste time, whereby it is necessary to avoid idle talk, passiveness, excessive sleep, and other similarly unproductive activities. A related sin is ‘inactive contemplation’, whereby true believers should avoid idly contemplating the world and should instead focus on fulfilling their obligations as part of their vocation at all times, except on Sundays, which are designated for rest. Another principle is ‘private profitableness’, whereby believers are not to avoid opportunities and chances to achieve personal gain and private advantage. On the contrary, every such opportunity must be seen as a sign from God, and a failure to seize such an opportunity is considered a sin. One principle relevant for further analysis, of course, is thrift, one of the fundamental pillars of Protestant ascetic morality. The faithful occupy the role of stewards in relation to property, which has been entrusted to them by God and over which they have responsibility. People should therefore not spend foolishly and recklessly, for they should feel an obligation towards their property.

We can apply some of these principles in the non-traditional perspective of contemporary consumer culture and shopping and attempt to loosely interpret them in the context of consumers and consumer behaviour. As a model, we can equate the faithful with ordinary consumers; likewise, churches as material centres of religious belief can be likened to the contemporary form of supermarkets as the sites of the shopping ritual. The principles of ‘waste of time’ and ‘inactive contemplation’ manifest in a consumer context with the powerful and intensive promotion of marketing strategies for timeless shopping and a consumerist lifestyle. Consumption activities are presented here in a marketing sense as productive and goal-oriented acts, meaningfully occupations of one’s time in life, as they are an integral part of forming an identity and lifestyle. The emphasis on perpetual shopping (including nights, weekends, and holidays) essentially breaks down the boundaries of work, family, and private life and loosely connects all spheres of life in shopping malls on any given day and at any time. In the ethos of hypertrophied consumerism, time spent outside of shopping zones can resemble the unproductive ‘sin’ of idleness, since a person’s value in such a setting is based on his or her options for active and regular participation in the consumer culture - “*but rather that messages have become part of a culture that posits individuals as losing their worth if they are unable to consume...*” [16, p. 564]. In the spirit of the principle of ‘inactive contemplation’, consumption may therefore also be seen as a kind of obligation, in the sense of a vocation. The meaning of the principle of ‘private profitableness’ is actively capitalizing on opportunities to achieve private

benefits. These opportunities are not to be understood as random phenomena, but as divine signs, directed by divine will to certain of the chosen. Here we can see a parallel with discount promotions and the wide portfolio of offers of various customer advantages, direct and indirect, immediate and future benefits. Each similar offer of consumer benefits acts as a unique and temporary challenge to be capitalized on. Consumers step into the role of the chosen ones with whom the personalized discount promotions produced and designed by marketing specialists resonate. Failure to take advantage of similarly advantageous opportunities becomes a 'sin' in the context of behavioural economics, since for consumers, the potential loss (a failure to take advantage of the opportunity) is a much stronger motive than achieving potential gains – *“people evaluate many outcomes as gains and losses, with losses usually carrying more weight than gains”* [32]. Related to this is the principle of thriftiness, which has become an integral part of marketing strategies and today *“savings-oriented customers comprise an interesting market segment”* [33, p. 205].

The current discourse of consumer culture suggests a powerful anchoring of the motives of thriftiness and frugality in contemporary consumer behaviour and shopping patterns. At the same time, this discourse leads to the conviction that motives for thrifty consumer behaviour are not by far driven merely by economic, practical and existential reasons in the sense of *‘I have to save because...’*, but also by motives non-material or value-oriented, attitudes or opinions that go beyond the selfish and utilitarian goals of individual interests in the sense of *‘I want to save in order to...’* [34]. According to Tatzel, thriftiness is always either an adaptation to involuntary poverty or becomes a question of intentional and voluntary choice [35]. Thus, the motive for thriftiness can of course be an unfavourable economic situation, poverty and minimal opportunity to participate in consumption, leading to involuntary frugality and forced saving. In such cases, thriftiness is not a matter of free choice but one of necessity. Moreover, there is abundant empirical evidence demonstrating the initiation of thriftiness not as a result of adverse external economic conditions of life, but as the outcome of one's own decision or lifestyle choice. *„A frugal lifestyle does not depend specifically on resource deprivation or scarcity, but instead related to beliefs, identities, and pro-environmental and social behaviours.”* [7] The motivation of a preference for voluntary frugality might be the search for mental balance, stress reduction, or gaining more time for family and one's own hobbies. According to other authors, voluntary frugality brings benefits in the form of emotional and social well-being [36]. In the context of alternative hedonism theory, frugality, a departure from material values, and the general simplification of life are sources of well-being and more lasting pleasure [22, p. 54]. In this perspective, frugality therefore changes from its originally ascetic quality to the direct opposite, i.e. the value of sensual pleasure of a hedonistic type.

Thriftiness also has a transcendental level, where the effort to achieve changes beyond one's own life trajectory become a symbolic expression of life opinions, beliefs, and attitudes in the form of specific consumption activities. It is part of a virtue ethic, oriented towards an environmentally conscious way of life, interconnected with the spiritual dimension of life and religiosity, reinforcing beliefs about the importance of the universe and its meaning, far beyond individual interests and selfish goals. According to certain authors, thriftiness is an inherent part of consumer culture and, in the form of the virtue of Protestant ethics formulated by Max Weber, is firmly rooted in modern capitalism as a complementary part of it - *"...it is possible for shoppers to regard virtually the whole of the shopping expedition and the purchase of almost any specific item within that expedition, not as an act of spending at all, but as an act of saving"* [14, p. 56]. The principles of Protestant ethics are also maintained to have a strong background in the capitalist mentality and the religious elements of Calvinism to be a significant attribute of our times. *„In view of the following two postulates of Weber, however, it is reasonable to conclude that the religious factor has relevance for contemporary scene.“* [37, p. 15] In the context of Weber's reflections on the influence of the Protestant work ethic on the development of modern capitalism, authors Kersting, Wohnsiedler, and Wolf point out that some "common interpretations" of Weber's theses somewhat neglect their own theses on the importance of thriftiness and frugality as a key mechanism of contemporary capitalism [38].

According to Lim, the ideas of Protestant ethics are so firmly connected with the modern era that its elements are quite evident in the functioning of social networks [39]. The ideas of Max Weber are clearly reflected in her critical analysis of the functioning of Facebook [15]. *"His argument has held over the past century as lifestyle ad campaigns continue to prey on a sense of iniquity, virtue, vocation, entitlement, and salvation. However, modern social media platforms have perfected this ascetic propriety by injecting ranking logic into intimate personal online sociality.... Weber's 'spirit of capitalism', the more that Facebook algorithms promote a vigilant sense of pious morality in the vein of 17<sup>th</sup>-century asceticism, the more they generate friction free capital flow."* [39, p. 2] The application and relevance of the originally religious elements of Protestant asceticism can be observed in the contemporary world of economic behaviour. Authors Beretta, Miniero and Ricotta identify four different clusters of consumers from their own empirical analysis of consumer behaviour in the context of analysing the sharing economy [40]. These are the profile types of consumers referred to successively as 'rational and liquid', 'hybrid and question mark', 'solid in transition', and 'hyper solid'. The mutual differences between these consumer behavioural models are significant in a range of parameters, but all of them are found to share, to varying degrees of intensity, the significant element of thriftiness as a reference to the principles of Protestant ethics.

## 5. Frugal hedonism

Frugal hedonism may represent part of an alternative hedonism, specifically based on creative shopping patterns and often ethically motivated consumer decision-making. The essence of frugal hedonism is the achievement of non-material rewards in the form of mental well-being, life satisfaction, feelings of harmony, quality of mental and physical life, health, spiritual experiences, and other personal and social values. The first principle of frugal hedonism may be the thesis of “*living richly by frugal means*” [41, p. 77]. It rejects the impulsive and volatile pursuit of fleeting sensual pleasures and immediate gratification of needs. It expresses a high degree of self-discipline, self-control, and personal responsibility in its approach to material values, resigning itself to the many superficial experiences and impulses of commercial entertainment. Consumption patterns of frugal hedonism are most likely adapted to the model of a ‘liquid consumer’ who prefers the principles of the sharing economy, economically rationalized shopping, and socially, ethically, and aesthetically conditioned purchasing decisions. The mentality of frugal hedonism motivates consumers to reinforce the values of sustainability, relativize the value of owning things, and reject the accumulation of those things. Here consumption patterns are based on an approach of ephemeral and dematerialized consumption and flexibility and elastic adaptability to a rapidly changing market environment. This is typified by being generally frugal and restrained, empathic, materially undemanding, and conscientious. It can represent an appealing and pleasant alternative to the hectic style of consumerism, one that brings joy and inner satisfaction. Frugal hedonism lacks the more pronounced manifestations of subcultural life, the collective dimension of civil engagement movements, publicly criticizing the unethical practices of companies and boycotting their products. Instead, it is based on variously adapted individual strategies of consumer behaviour and non-conflict initiatives of direct support for ethical purchasing. Frugal hedonism effectively combines the economic rationality of thriftiness and spontaneous hedonistic pleasure. *„Regular pound store shoppers find pleasure through the functionality, simplicity and spontaneity of pound store shopping...Consumptive thrift in pound stores is certainly a dialectical process involving both economic and hedonistic shopping.“* [16, p. 562-563] Frugal hedonistic shopping is much more motivated by practical needs and rational considerations of thriftiness, ethical, and environmental principles than by egoistic desires to achieve subjective wants, unrestrained whims, and fleeting experiences.

The mentality of frugal hedonism rejects the cult of immediate gratification of needs and is instead oriented on the horizon of future events and happenings. It is a manifestation of individual responsibility, humility, self-control, and awareness of obligations and duties towards oneself, one’s family, and one’s close social community, as well as a manifestation of the promotion of the idea of social, ecological and environmental sustainability. The second principle of frugal hedonism may be the thesis ‘better than now’. This is a

principle defining the situation where immediate and impulsive consumption of a product gives way to behaviour motivated by consumption deliberately postponed. Behaviour thus motivated may have two mutually related sources with parallel effects. The first source may be a rational economic motive, accompanied by an elevated level of self-control and personal responsibility. This can consist of a long-term planned purchase, with a responsible approach to the household budget and the concentration of sufficiently large savings. The ability to resist the temptation to buy something and postpone consumption to a future point in time is not a sign of passivity, indecision, or resignation on the part of the consumer, but rather an active and often very well thought-out consumer attitude. In the perspective of frugal hedonism, not buying, not having, and not owning something can bring objective benefits in the form of increased savings and financial security, often also by reducing the material and non-material costs associated with the operation or maintenance of the purchased items. All of this has the potential to contribute to subjectively experienced psychological benefits in the form of reduced shopping stress and savings of time and energy. According to Bauman, delayed gratification is a real sacrifice for people in the rapidly changing environment of consumer society and under the pressure to immediately satisfy subjective needs and fulfil desires [42]. In the context of frugal hedonism, sacrifice is voluntary and positively interpreted, where consumers willingly give up something on one hand in order to gain something else on the other.

A second possible source motivating the act of deferred consumption is the possibility of looking forward to something, of living in the expectation that something pleasant is yet to come. Frugally hedonistic consumers can look forward to delayed gratification, develop fantasies and imaginings of their own, and live in the pleasant expectation that something positive, new, and interesting awaits them. The preference for delayed gratification is not only psychologically pleasurable but also effective in an environment of hypertrophy of consumer choice. Delayed gratification, realized in the future in the form of a planned purchase, is also a postponement of choice and thus a postponement of the often unproductive and exhausting search and comparison of the most appropriate purchase alternative. This is essentially a type of consumer behavioural pattern that reduces the pressure of decision-making in a chaotic environment of different types and variants of products.

The theoretical model of frugal hedonism is characterized by voluntarily restricted access to material goods and superficial and fleeting experiences, as well as deliberately deferred consumption. It represents a defensive strategy of adaptive behaviour in the ethos of consumerism and corporate pressure for ever more intensive shopping and uncontrolled spending. It is characterized by the potential for some resistance to, or at least mitigation of, the negative psychological experiences associated with an oversaturated shopping environment, including the negative social, environmental and ecological consequences of growing consumption.

## **6. Conclusions**

Miller's theory of shopping assumes an oppositional relationship between rational thrifty shopping on the one hand, and hedonistic spending on the other [14, p. 148]. In this perspective, shopping is firstly a matter of rational deliberation and thriftiness in order to satisfy basic needs. Such shopping is future-oriented; the purpose is to save and postpone potential rewards until a future period. In the second case, shopping is a hedonistic pastime with a tendency toward spending, which is oriented towards the present and towards immediate gratification. Here, one cancels out the other and the two models of shopping cannot be linked as they are strictly separate. The concept of frugal hedonism is based on the thesis that economic and hedonistic motives for shopping are interconnected and operate in parallel. As such, thrifty shopping can be simultaneously a combination of an attempt at economic behaviour and the promotion of hedonistic values. In other words, thriftiness in this newer perspective combines ascetic rational behaviour and behaviour motivated by the hedonistic values of positive experiences and encounters. Such a finding is significant because frugality may be a preferred choice of consumer behaviour under certain circumstances, providing not only actual savings in the economic sense, but also pleasurable shopping experiences. A number of business strategies are adapting to this by purposefully offering opportunities for frugal shopping.

Adopting principles of thrift and frugality can then have a much greater hope of being accepted by the consumer population if these principles are linked not only to the need for ascetic rationality in an economic sense, but also to the values of non-ascetic hedonism in the sense of freedom of choice in lifestyle. Frugal hedonism may be the preferred option for a way of life that brings not only personal but also social benefits. It may proceed from the concept of the sharing economy [40], voluntary frugality [41], or alternative hedonism [16] and many other civic initiatives promoting different models of frugality in a world of hypertrophied consumerism that devastates not only the environmental and ecological conditions for life, but also degrades the quality of social relationships.

There is research potential for further empirical verification of the theoretical concept of frugal hedonism. Deeper empirical analysis is merited not only by the psychological motivations of consumers and the subjective level of experiencing consumption activities, but also a more detailed study of value structures, including the religious characteristics of different socio-economic groups. Empirical studies should attempt to identify and analyse motives for frugal hedonism in the context of broader changes in lifestyles and consumer attitudes as individually beneficial and meaningful strategies that at the same time emphasize the idea of the ecological and environmental sustainability of social life.

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