

# ***HOMO RELIGIOSUS OR HOMO CONSUMPTOR? CONSUMPTION AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF MEN BORN IN THE 1990s***

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## ABSTRACT

### ***Homo religiosus or homo consumptor? Consumer and religious practices of men born in the 1990s***

The goal of this paper is to examine if there is a relation between the religious practices and the consumption practices of men aged 18–30. The author derives her assumptions from the theory of cult brands and their religious-like background which were described i.a. by Benjamin R. Barber, Martin Lindstrom, Matthew W. Ragas and Bolivar J. Bueno. Due to the previous research the author formed a hypothesis that men who left their hometown are prone to quit their religious practices and engage in consumption practices, i.e. regular and structured activity subject to consuming non-FMCG goods. The author decided to conduct 20 in-depth interviews with men from the specified age group. The questions of the interview concerned the influence of advertising messages on interlocutors' brand awareness. The results of the research were ambiguous however they showed the existence of the dependence between religious and consumption practices. The article formulates questions for further research.

**Keywords:** consumption practices, consumption society, liquid modernity, religious practices

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The theory of the cult brand is an idea of creating brand identity based on the elements of religious communities. It is derived from the conviction that religious groups provide a unique sense of loyalty and affection. Matthew W. Ragas and Bolivar J. Bueno in their book “The Power of Cult Branding: How 9 Magnetic Brands Turned Customers into Loyal Followers (and Yours Can, Too!)” analysed nine powerful brands (Oprah Winfrey, Volkswagen Beetle, Star Trek, World Wrestling Entertainment, Jimmy Buffet, Vas Inc., Apple, Linux, and Harley Davidson) which, in their opinion, are “surrounded” by a group of loyal followers who are not guided by logic in their feelings towards the selected brand. In this meaning logical “approach” to a company or brand includes judging the specific product by its measurable features: price, parameters, market context.

### *Brand gospel*

In “The Power of Cult Branding...” Ragas and Bueno (2006, p. 14) offer a set of advice that aims to turn consumers into “brand evangelists”. The authors have examined nine companies, which they judged as “cult”. The distinction between the “cult” and the “strong” but still down-to-earth brand is based on the observation that the first is created by the beliefs of the consumers and second is just a construct of marketers and its idea does not assume any emotional involvement (Ragas, Bueno 2006, p. 21). Ragas and Bueno (2006, p. 20–21) indicate that being a part of the brand community gives the members similar social rewards as they can gain engaging in the life of a religious group, i.e. a sense of belonging and communion. The two researchers claim that the brand believers and the cult believers do not have any distinctive features and cannot be described as psychically weak, lost or mentally limited (Ragas, Bueno 2006, p. 21). Margaret Singer who studied the social structure of religious cults and sects proves that the majority of their members originate from successfully functioning families and they manifest healthy and proper behaviour (Singer 1995).

Ragas and Bueno (2006, p. 23) point out that postmodern society is a fragmented organisation and the sense of community is not a trait offered by the idea of a capitalist system. They assume cult brands may function as a substitute of multigenerational family, being a support group of people who “think in the same way” and by the way buy some products, which is perceived as a secondary issue. Ragas and Bueno (2006, p. 27) refer to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and prove that cult brands cover only the needs of the higher level of the pyramid – self-fulfilment and psychological needs. Owning an Apple MacBook does not equal owning any other computer. For the cult brand community members owning a MacBook is an element of the social image they chose.

Martin Lindstrom is known as one of the most successful contemporary marketers and brand expert working with both consumer and corporate clients. In his book “Brand Sense: Sensory Secrets Behind the Stuff We Buy” he presents the

similarities of functioning of a brand and a religious cult. The author suggests “smashing” a brand and abstracting 12 elements of its philosophy: picture, colour, shape, name, language, icon, sound, behaviour, service, tradition, ritual, and navigation (Lindstrom 2010, p. 58). Lindstrom (2010, p. 206) suggests that these are also the components of a religious cult, however he underlines that brands are much less successful in the impact they have on society. He puts religion as a model of identity building (Lindstrom 2010, p. 141):

For an enormous percentage of people religion provides certainty in a world that’s changing in an incomprehensible pace. It offers a blueprint of how to live, and a roadmap that extends way into the future, going so far as to ensure security beyond death.

Branding continuously strives to achieve authenticity and build a relationship with consumers that extends from cradle to grave. By its longevity, religion automatically assumes an authentic, loyal, lifelong relationship with its adherents.

Lindstrom (2010, pp. 141–142) enumerates the features of religion that should inspire marketers in creating brand’s identity: 1. a sense of belonging; 2. a clear vision; 3. enemies; 4. evangelism; 5. grandeur; 6. storytelling; 7. sensory appeal; 8. rituals; 9. symbols; 10. mystery.

Lindstrom emphasizes that the brands have to unite all of these features by one value: immutability. Religion is an unchangeable, eternal system. Strongest brands also have a suggestion of this eternity. As an example, Lindstrom (2010, p. 213) refers to the case of New Coke. In 1985 Coca-Cola decided to slightly change the taste and label of the famous drink, and rename it to New Coke. That was the first change since the 99-year existence of Coca-Cola on American market. When the information was released to the media, many consumers set off to the shops to accumulate supplies of their favourite drink. Biggest fans founded an association – Old Cola Drinkers of America. In May 1985 indignant consumers organised a demonstration in Atlanta against New Coke. The Coca-Cola Company answered their expectations and after 79 days of selling New Coke it withdrew the product.

Lindstrom (2010, p. 216) calls this kind of brands “ritualised”. Coca-Cola is a part of consumers’ lives and it constitutes an element of their everyday life as well as festival habits. Concluding this case, the author points out that quasi-religious brands cannot be changed neither outwardly nor internally. The consumers did not accept the Coca-Cola rebranding – even if it was implemented by the brand itself.

As we can see religion and brands have common features. Tomasz Szlendak (2008, p. 8) indicates that in postmodern consumption society consumer customs are spreading on to other spheres of life. We can walk around the shop and choose preferred products from the wide range of assortment. Szlendak observes the same pattern when it comes to religion – many contemporary Christians do not attend Sunday masses but they are getting married according to the ritual and they

do piously celebrate Christmas. When the religious traditions get secularized and lose their original meaning, society is looking for a different, easier, more practical source of values, which will help dealing with the contemporary confusion. Szlendak (2008, s. 60) points out that both religion and consumption can perform the same function as they are irrational and they appeal to magical thinking. He assumes that science could provide a rational system that would serve as a universal indicator for a postmodern human being. Anyway – rationality is not what the consumers are looking for.

### *Liquid or stable consumers?*

The author of this article decided to carry out a research that would show if there is any dependence between the religious practices and the consumption practices. Abovementioned theories assumed that religion and consumption may fulfil the same needs of contemporary societies, which are based on the idea of liquid modernity (Bauman 2015). In this case the needs are constant but methods of their realisation are flexible and they adjust to currently available resources. We could call it an “economy of meeting the needs” as a postmodern human being chooses the means and methods which are simple, accessible and immediate. Edward Luttwak (1998, p. 245) considered Americans as hyenas and baboons which are thoughtlessly plunged into addiction of shopaholicism, just to fill their emotional void. The questions that the author of this article wanted to answer in the research were: Are men prone to fulfil their emotional and transcendent needs by consumption practices? Does leaving one’s hometown strengthen this trend?

The author decided to conduct in-depth interviews with 20 respondents aged 18–30. The age group was chosen due to the consumer potential of adolescent men and convenience sampling. The interviews were carried out in May and June 2017 and they related to four topics: brands, religiosity, lifestyle and personal consumption scheme, life values. The author prepared a set of questions therefore the interview may be called semi-structured. In view of the character of the study each interview consisted of a different number of questions which depended on the examined person’s temper and openness. The author who was also the researcher tried to be neutral and to avoid posing any pressure on the interlocutors. Nevertheless, an interview is not an anonymous method and one cannot avoid social, personal, and cultural impact. Anyway, the aim of the study was not reaching the transcendent truth but rather getting to know the declared preferences supported by the participant observation.

*There won't be any better symbol<sup>1</sup>*

While synthesising the answers the researcher compared the opinions with the declared behaviours, which – in many cases – did not coincide with each other. The first section of the interview concerned the approach to brands. Even if the examined men stated they feel related to some brands they say they do not spend time shopping and many of the brands stand only as a kind of a construct of desire which they do not crave to realise, and at the same time – lose.

Asked about the brands they perceive as strong, so-called lovemarks – “Love-marks [...]. They reach your heart as well as your mind, creating an intimate, emotional connection that you just can't live without” (Saatchi & Saatchi 2017) – the examined men mentioned Adidas, Canon, Apple, Nike, Mercedes, Sony, and Ferrari. They admitted those brands were “important” for them as they feel emotionally related to their products and ideas. Despite the fact that the interlocutors could enumerate many strong brands and indicate which of them they feel related to, only four of 20 participants of the study declared that brands are important for them. One of them stated: I always notice brands. I think it even increases with age, while the other said: I pay big attention to brands. Always. Since I was 15 and I started being conscious of the existence of the brands.

One of the examined men declared: I wanted to have Nike clothes. All of them, while the other said: If there is any brand which persuaded me to buy its products – it was Nike. Nike has amazing advertisement, they are wonderful. The deeply emotional relation to Nike is closely connected to football and the Polish football culture: When I was at school if I had any free time I was playing football. I was really into it. Really. And I had to have a specific soccer cleats: Nike Tiempo or Nike Mercurial Vapor. I was the biggest star at our court and I needed to have white cleats with a huge Nike logo. And later he added: I was one of the most popular boys at school, so I had to show off, I had to have best shoes. Shoes were an absolute base. I was going to sport competitions and I just had to have Nike shoes, that was a higher need. The other examined man confirmed this view: You cannot get rid of this if you were born in a place like this. I couldn't afford buying nice clothes and I was playing football, everybody there wanted to have Nike outfits. The same person later concluded his statement: The Nike logo is stuck in my head and there won't be any better symbol. Even if I know they have a really low quality. I don't understand it.

The other sports brand given was Adidas: It is a total brand. When I was a kid everybody wanted to have Adidas sneakers. They couldn't be fake, they had to have three stripes. Another person declared the only product he is dreaming of is an Adidas complete tracksuit: I would jog in it or just wear it at home, I just want to have it not because it is practical but because of the desire to possess. It would have to be a thin, fitted, black tracksuit. The same man declared a real attachment

<sup>1</sup> All the fragments of the interviews have been translated from Polish to English by the author.

to the brand by his next statement: In secondary school I bought Adidas sneakers and I wore them for six years, I was really delighted. I think every pair of shoes should be like those Adidas sneakers. He finished by saying: Everybody knows Adidas.

The researcher has noticed that the interlocutors were often relating Nike and Adidas yet each of them was able to say which of those two brands he prefers. What is really specific is that the emotional attachment to brands was formed in childhood – I think in primary school I had a full consciousness of the existence of brands.

*If Apple disappeared, I would feel a great emptiness*

Apart from sport brands the interlocutors indicated companies producing electronic devices: Apple, Sony, Canon, and, less frequently, Samsung. Apple was the one that caused most emotional reaction. Two of the examined men declared Apple as their favourite brand. One of them stated: If Apple disappeared, I would feel a great emptiness, while the other represents more rational approach: Why Apple is the best? Because of the specification of components. Benchmark. How fast the processor works. The interlocutor who manifested deeply emotional approach to Apple admitted: I have some negative experience with Apple. The first thing I bought was an iPad. Six years ago. It was defective. [...] Apple didn't accept my complaint. [...] Even if I recommend this company, I have really unpleasant memories.

His statement confirms the irrational approach to brands, which motivates consumers to pay for the sense of belonging and the prestige of being a member of the worldwide Apple community. Another interlocutor confessed: I was always dreaming of an iPhone, now I am secretly dreaming of an iPhone 6. I bought a case for my Samsung 5 so that it looks like an iPhone. This consumer can be called a passive user. His impact cannot be underestimated – by narrating his Apple story he contributes to creating brand's image. He does not say he desires intangible assets like happiness or love. He desires a phone, a piece of metal and glass, that symbolizes a certain set of values.

*Audi. You know, I'm a man*

Other brands described by the interlocutors as 'strong' were related to automobiles: Audi, Mercedes, Ferrari, and BMW. When the researcher asked one of the examined men if he had a favourite brand, he answered: No. I don't think so... Or maybe an automotive brand. Then yes, Audi. You know, I'm a man. The other concluded: If you give me a Mercedes GL S4 AL right away, I would take it. But I am not dreaming about it.

The majority of the study participants admitted they were aware of the manipulations carried out by the global corporations. Nevertheless, they confessed they feel they are susceptible to persuasive messages, too. The interlocutors believe the “no name” products are not “worse” than branded products but branded products are more expensive due to the costs of marketing and advertisement. One of the examined men found branded products more significant, leaving a mark in the society. When you have them you are not anonymous, you pay for your identity.

The case of Coca-Cola was one of the most captivating trends that appeared in the study. Many of the interlocutors mentioned Coca-Cola as a well-known, worldwide brand but at the same time they were criticising brand’s identity: It is not that Coca-Cola is a tasty drink that you like. They say Coca-Cola means happiness and joy, “drink Coca-Cola and you will be happy.” It is a huge manipulation. Another examined man stated: It’s all fake. Coca-Cola promotes love and friendship. Soda and friendship? What do they have in common? Yes, we can drink Coca-Cola. We can do it together but it has nothing to do with any friendship. At least I don’t want it to be like that. The interlocutors were often relating Coca-Cola with McDonald’s as two inseparably combined brands. One of the participants of the study confessed: I used to live in a small town and every trip to McDonald’s was a big event for me. School trips were stopping by McDonald’s because for us that was the most important point of the whole excursion. And later he concludes: I like eating in McDonald’s and I recommend it even if I know it’s unhealthy. We can observe that this approach is utterly irrational but at the same time the person is aware of the irrationality of this behaviour.

The interlocutors do not see brands as subjects which represent certain values. They stated the ‘idea’ of a brand is only a result of specific corporate identity and does not show real beliefs of the founders or employees. One of the participants of the study admits: No. Jacobs Krönung coffee has nothing to do with any life values, it’s all advertisement.

Analysing the age structure of the interlocutors, the researcher noticed that the older they were, the more connected to certain brands they felt. Benjamin R. Barber (2008) wrote a book on ‘infantilization’ of modern societies in which he proves that international corporations try to create a consumer that is an eternal teenager (so-called “adultescent” or “kidult”). Thanks to that the same product may be sold in all the age groups (Barber 2008, p. 9). This implies the brand preferences are being created in early childhood and later they are just being supported and only slightly modified. Nevertheless, the participants of the study revealed that their attachment to certain brands is dependent on their earnings (which in their case were increasing with age), and, consequently, the availability of the products. That aspect could be also related to the need of life stability that was observed among older interlocutors (aged 26–30). Many of them declared that selected brands give them the feeling of firmness as they know the products they buy are ‘unfailing.’ What is surprising, the higher level of education represented the interlocutors, the more emotionally attached to brands they felt.

*I needed some routine because I've lost my natural environment*

The second part of the interview concerned the religious practices. The interlocutors were very frank when talking about their beliefs or, on the contrary, lack of faith and a craving for transcendence. The majority of them were raised in Roman Catholic families (only one interlocutor admitted: my parents never went to church. I have never ever seen that in my life.). We can easily divide them into active Catholics, lapsed Catholics and atheists. Many of the active Catholics confessed that religious practices are for them a kind of a routine that increases their sense of security: When I left my hometown and came here to study, I needed some routine because I've lost my natural environment. I've noticed that going to the church, the same every Sunday, helps me to organise my weekend. Even if I don't listen to what the priest says.

The author made a special synthesis of the statements declared by the interlocutors who moved out of their hometown, almost in all cases in order to study at the university in a bigger city. The hypothesis assumed that changing the environment could work as a factor initiating the abandonment of religious practices and replacing them with consumption practices. Four out of 20 participants of the research quit religious practices after moving to a bigger city. The important thing is that they do not decided to do it immediately after leaving their hometown. Almost all of them did it after one or two years of independent life away from their family. One of the interlocutors manifested the opposite tendencies and the new environment contributed to the fact that he became – as he said – a neophyte.

Three of the examined men declared that moving their hometown did not influence their religious practices which remained unchanged. Five of the interlocutors who did not change their environment (they were born and raised in a city of more than 500,000 inhabitants) admitted they quit their religious practices at the age of 14–18. The factor that may influence this tendency is the higher liberality and secularisation of the so-called “big city life”. The other issue that should be considered is the fact that they did not lose their sense of security – due to not moving – so religious practices do not have to play that stabilizing role in their lives. Only two out of eight interlocutors who did not move call themselves ‘active Catholics.’ There was no dependence between the level of education and the declared religiosity.

A big percentage of the examined men admitted that quitting religious practices had difficult or unpleasant consequences for them. It is worth underlining that this problem concerned only people who moved out of their hometowns. One of the interlocutors confessed:

I was tormented when I had to go there [to the church – H.P.] and do my thing. And this guy is staring at me and he puts something in my mouth. And maybe he even thinks I went there because I wanted, while I came there because my mom told me to do so. That really sucked. I was asking myself: Why do I do it? Why do I come here and show that I wanted to come, for example during the confession...? Why?

Because this is our little scheme. It was always kind of stressful during the confession when some guy, some stranger tells you how you should live. He criticised my behaviour while I felt that my behaviour was OK. That was really stressful for me.

The abovementioned interlocutor was doubly threatened – on the part of his family and of the part of the church. He abandoned religious practices when he moved out from his hometown. In many other statements of the examined men the author has noticed a sense of relief which they felt after quitting religious practices. They were often forced to participate in liturgy by their mothers who had control over them until they lived in a family home. Leaving the hometown was often the stimulus that encouraged them to leave the church, too. Nevertheless, they admitted they felt like doing it many years before (often at the age of 13–16) but they were limited by the parental authority. After moving to a bigger city, the majority of my interlocutors continued participating in Sunday masses but, as they stated, they were doing it without any conviction.

The researcher did not notice any relation between age and religiosity. In every age group the percentage of men describing themselves as practicing Catholics, passive Catholics and atheists was almost the same.

Only three out of 20 interlocutors were convinced that quitting religious practices has a negative impact on life. The rest stated that religiosity is a matter of personal choice and a person who decides to stop practicing is only losing an unreal support. The interlocutors confirmed they profess Christian values even if they would not call themselves active Catholics.

Only one of the examined men confessed his approach to religion changed immediately after he moved out of his hometown: I realised what religion really is and I stopped believing. I met new people. I am not a type of man who doesn't change his mind. I let other people convince me. I am not an idealist anymore, I am more of a realist. Another participant of the study who described himself as an active Catholic admitted: I feel I became relieved from morality. Now my lifestyle is much more hedonistic.

### *No thinking. Just school, no decisions, no choices*

The third section of questions concerned lifestyle and shopping habits. The majority of the interlocutors who left their hometowns admitted their lifestyle has changed completely. Only one of them had a different observation and he stated his life remained almost the same except that he feels more emotionally mature: In high school when I had some free time I was playing football, now this activity is limited. I play once a week. I think this is how adulthood looks like.

The interlocutors stated they spend the biggest percentage of their income on meeting basic needs: paying the rent, buying food and fuel. The things they like to spend money on are related to their passions, e.g. sport or photography. The income level of the participants of the study did not influence their approach to

shopping. Only one of the interlocutors declared he considers shopping in general as a pleasant activity (and he was the oldest participant). Only men at the minimum age of 25 admitted they like shopping while younger participants unanimously stated that shopping arouses their anxiety. They do enjoy possessing and using certain products but the action of spending money makes them feel nervous. Men at the minimum age of 25 declared a general higher level of life satisfaction and stability, as well as higher revenues. The majority of the men participating in the study prefers to do the shopping via Internet.

One of the examined men stated he misses the lifestyle he had when he used to live in his hometown:

*This life was easy, pleasant, and today I can appreciate it. No stress. My life was ordered, I didn't have to think, all the duties were imposed. I was just going to school every day. No thinking. Just school, no decisions, no choices. [...] the way of my life was straight; my goals were clear. Later when I went to the university, I had to make important decisions, I had to start thinking about my future career. I asked myself: where should I go? The fact that before leaving my hometown I did not have to make choices was great. Until the age of 19 that was very convenient and I loved that.*

The same interlocutor presented uncritically enthusiastic attitude to brands. The researcher analysed his statements and described him as a role model of a postmodern consumer. In his case consumerism was a method of meeting higher needs. He confessed he had a craving for something that will determine the rhythm and direction of his life as he felt anxious and lost. At the same time, he admitted he had favourite brands (Burton, Red Bull, Patagonia) and he unwaveringly believes in their superiority: if I have something of my favourite brand, my mood improves and this thing is in my view more valuable because of the brand. He confessed he has a problem with making decision even it comes to choosing a chocolate bar he wants to eat after dinner. His second problem when it comes to shopping was that he cannot resist special offers even if he did not plan to buy a certain product.

The researcher noticed that the abovementioned interlocutor represents the type of a consumer which was taken into consideration while constructing the hypothesis and the research questions. A man who moved out of his hometown and lost the support he used to have, which resulted in the constant feeling of anxiety. In his case consumption practices act as factor that lowers the stress level. A sense of well-made choice, i.e. buying a product of a reputable brand, is temporarily reducing anxiety but it will never reach its source. This scheme motivates a person to continuous shopping which provides a sense of relief.

*I just don't want to look like my father*

Almost all the interlocutors declared they do not want to reproduce the lifestyle of their parents. They admitted they do not want to look like them (the thing is that

I just don't want to look like my father) and that the way of leaving of the previous generation was dramatically hopeless, chaotic, lost, old-fashioned, not to be reproduced, completely different than mine. This might be the factor encouraging infantilization – young people representing the “X” and “Y” generation have no suitable models or authorities to learn from.

The unique situation that took place in Poland influenced personalities of people born after the political system transformation that started in 1989. Introduction of a free market economy encouraged people to work in a backbreaking manner. A big percentage of the people born in the 1990s did not see their parents very often when they were children (Eichelberger 2013). That resulted in the sense of being abandoned, devoid of any useful life pattern, which determined personalities of young people. Psychotherapist Wojciech Eichelberger (2013) observes a big increase of narcissistic and borderline personality disorders which are based on the feeling of constant anxiety and low self-esteem masked with conceit and risky behaviour.

### *Something leftist has to be bad even if it's good*

The fourth set of questions concerned life values. While synthesising the answers of the interlocutors the researcher distinguished two types of views: conservative and liberal. One of the participants of the study declared: something leftist has to be bad even if it's good. The majority of examined men admitted their current opinions on life and world are influenced by the environment in which they grew up.

The researcher asked the interlocutors to enumerate three life values which they perceive as essential. The most frequently given answers were: family (eight interlocutors), love, dignity (four interlocutors), happiness, fairness (three interlocutors), God, honesty, friendship (two interlocutors). Other given answers were fidelity, diligence, loyalty, truthfulness, responsibility, health, peace, rationality, Poland, freedom, money, and self-realisation. Family as a life value was indicated by the men of both conservative and liberal outlooks on life. They also stated their values are Christian: We can say religion is an old thing but it's not old-fashioned, the values are universal: be good.

A big percentage of the participants of the study declared they do not want to change their current lifestyle and even if they earned more money, they would not dramatically change their everyday life. Nevertheless, they do want to cherish their dreams and to necessarily make them come true. Travelling is one of the most common longing:

*If I was able to go to the mountains I would go. [And why you are not able to go?] I don't have a car. I mean, I could go but I would prefer to go, you know, in a nice way. Wake up on Saturday morning, eat my breakfast and then decide: "I am going to the mountains!". And now I can go and wait on the bus stop while the eighth bus*

*is passing me by because it is full, and I don't get inside. This is what I am talking about, you know.*

Another interlocutor declared he likes to spend his money on travelling because he appreciates seeing things that take his breath away. Asked if he had more money, would he travel more, he replied: no, because I guess then I wouldn't have time to do it, so those two things exclude themselves. Those statements are in a way irrational, they include elements of magical thinking, and they show that in the interlocutors' opinion dreams are to be dreamt, not realised.

The last question of the interview was: "To have or to be?". Surprisingly to the researcher this question caused a lot of confusion. The answer "to be" was in many cases contrary to declared behaviour. To show the spectrum of the responses the author will cite several answers:

*It's really hard to compare these two things. I can't have anything if I don't exist. No. This is philosophy and everybody says: 'to be'. I just can't imagine a situation that I have something but I don't exist. Next question, please!*

*To be. I know it sounds pathetic, but yes, to be. Being doesn't give you anything but anyway I prefer to be.*

*To be, to be, to be, of course – to be. And to have at the same time. That would be the best. But first to be, and then to have. You can't really do it the other way around.*

## Conclusion

Conducting 20 in-depth interviews let the researcher thoroughly examine a little section of society. Observation of a small group enabled the researcher to devote a lot of time and attention to each of the respondents. The majority of the interlocutors had clear opinions about brands but they were rarely reflected by their behaviour. Men who declared that they do not pay attention to brands while they make shopping decision, revealed a highly emotional attitude to selected companies and their products. The study showed that the affection to brands increases with age and that even men who do not respect brands are able to give examples of strong brands, describe their logos and recall memories connected to those companies and certain products.

Participants of the research declared a need for a transcendence and many of them chose to realise in a 'traditional' (for their natural environment) way, i.e. by participating in the activity of Roman Catholic church. Nevertheless, a group of respondents decided to quit religious practices and meet their need for transcendence profiting from different means in a 'liquid modernity' manner.

The traits of character that presuppose to believe in the power of brands are typical for young adults born in the 1990s. This is a generation of people who have definitely rejected the lifestyle of their parents but at the same time they have

taken over traditional (to some extent) values of their community. The process of concretisation of these life values is prolongating, which might be one of the reasons for the infantilization of the society. In some cases, during this emotionally exhaustive process of adolescence, a favourite brand may provide an only signpost and point of support.

The research confirmed Tomasz Szlendak's statement that buying may reduce fear and anxiety. On one hand respondents who admitted they perceive shopping as pleasant were more mature, more satisfied and more willing to pursue their dreams or plans. On the other hand, interlocutors who declared they have problems with decision-making manifested strong bonds with selected brands which played a comforting role in their everyday life.

The initial hypothesis was not confirmed, nevertheless, the research questions were answered. The need of transcendence can be realised by giving a certain brand a special meaning resulting from the values it represents in the consumer's view. This phenomenon is probably an effect of the disturbance of the value system, which can be caused by moving out of hometown but also by other reasons. There is no direct exchange between religious and consumption practices but, in many cases, they meet the same need of reducing the sense of threat in everyday life. The most important clue for further research is the fact that the brand preference is less dependent on social, environmental factors and more related to emotional and psychological needs.

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## STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł przedstawia wyniki badań mających na celu określenie zależności pomiędzy praktykami religijnymi i praktykami konsumpcyjnymi mężczyzn urodzonych w Polsce w latach 90. XX wieku. Autorka opiera hipotezę zakładającą wspomnianą zależność na teorii kulturowych marek autorstwa m.in. Matthew W. Ragasa, Bolivara J. Bueno, Martina Lindstroma oraz Benjamina Barbera. Według tych koncepcji kultowe marki funkcjonują podobnie do wspólnot o charakterze religijnym. Jako metodę badawczą autorka wybrała wywiady pogłębione, które zostały przeprowadzone z 20 mężczyznami w wieku od 18 do 30 lat. Celem wywiadów było ustalenie sposobu oddziaływania reklamy na świadomość marek interlokutorów. Wyniki badań potwierdzają pewną zależność pomiędzy praktykami religijnymi i konsumpcyjnymi w sferze realizowanych potrzeb, a także wskazują obszary przyszłych badań.

**Słowa kluczowe:** płynna nowoczesność, społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne, praktyki konsumpcyjne, praktyki religijne