

RESEARCH PAPER / ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN.

## Una reinención del consumo. A Reinvention of Consumption.

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### RESUMEN

Este artículo explora cómo los partidarios de lo que llamamos "estilo de vida menos es más/ecológico" predicán que hay que disminuir el consumo. A través del análisis de páginas y tiendas online de los promotores de este estilo de vida encontramos que, mientras promueven la espiritualidad, el minimalismo, el mindfulness y el cuidado medioambiental, paradójicamente, fomentan que los consumidores adquieran nuevos productos acordes a este estilo de vida. En consecuencia, producen lo que supuestamente combaten. Como resultado, el estilo de vida menos es más/ecológico, lejos de disminuir el consumismo, lo fomenta.

### ABSTRACT

This article explores how supporters of what we call the "less is more/ ecological lifestyle" preach the need to reduce consumption. Through the analysis of websites and online shops of the promoters of this lifestyle we find that, while they promote spirituality, minimalism, mindfulness, and environmental care, they paradoxically encourage consumers to buy new products in line with this lifestyle. Consequently, they produce what they supposedly combat. As a result, the less is more/ecological lifestyle, far from diminishing consumerism, encourages it.

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### KEYWORDS

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## 1. Introduction

Holy Man (Herek, 1998) tells a mystic man story whose beliefs about harmony and happiness are exploited by an infomercial channel to increase their sales. The film points out the growing commercialization of spirituality and connection between individuals as an excuse to generate desire for products that promise consumers more fulfilment and content in their lives.

Understanding consumer behavior is, without any doubt, a first prerequisite for shaping economic behavior and a better understanding of economic decisions. Economists acknowledge that exchange (consumption) and wealth are limited by the size of the market (Brunner and Meltzer, 1971) so, the prevailing economic system requires continuous consumption and growing markets to increase wealth. It is also known that, in free markets, rational behavior would usually prevail since individuals are characterized by self-interested goals and rational choices (Vanberg, 2004).

For a long time, satisfaction, self-interest, and rational choice have played a major role in marketing and advertising systems to retain old customers and attract new ones in an endless consumer race. The last decades of the 20th Century witnessed increasing research interest in subjective well-being, life satisfaction and consumer behavior (Rabin, 1998; Zavestoski, 2002) and their role in consumption growth (Witt, 2017). Research on consumer behavior revealed that a segment of the Western societies has been attracted to a) spirituality, minimalism, simple life, and mindfulness, and b) ecology and environmental care (Bahl et al., 2016; Jacob et al., 2008; Rosenberg, 2004; Sandlin and Walther, 2009). In this research we refer to this trend as the “less is more/ ecological lifestyle”. We are aware that not all ideologies in the first group are concerned with environmental care but, in a wide sense, it may be an indirect result of anti-consumption and decluttering. To illustrate behaviors on this subject we searched on web pages from less is more/ecological lifestyle promoters in U.S.A., U.K., and Germany. The terms ecological and environmental care will be used indistinctly.

Inspired by Buddhism and Gandhi’s life, the less is more/ ecological lifestyle has spread in Western societies through self-help books, films, yoga practice, and social networks, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. A superficial look at this seemingly new way of consuming and relating to the environment could reveal the beginnings of substantial changes in consumer society and the dominant economic model in Western society. For example, some believe (Mick, 2016; Rosenberg, 2004) that mindfulness, brings awareness to automatic responses to an external stimulus to consume, helping consumers to distinguish between a choice and an impulse to buy. Simple life and minimalism enthusiasts affirm that waste reduction, decreasing global warming, and a meaningful life are only a few benefits of living in moderation (Bahl et al., 2016; Maniates,

2002; Sandlin and Walther; 2009). There is no doubt that environmental care is having an increasing impact in society (Bahl et al., 2016). People buy locally grown organic food, recycle, wear eco-friendly brands, bike instead of driving, but as Carter (2007, p. 2) asserts “Yet global capitalism and consumerist lifestyles grow ever more demanding on the environment.”. With this in mind, it is fair to ask whether less is more/ecological lifestyles help to reduce over-consumption. A glimpse to supermarkets, social networks, advertising, and media, reveals a growing number of products and services inspired by the less is more/ecological lifestyle created to increase our buying list. That is probably the reason why Bell (2015, p. 1) argues that “we should perhaps let go of efforts to resolve environmental injustice within the constraints of capitalism and, instead, build an alternative economic system that can meet human needs in the context of a harmonious and respectful relationship with nature”.

This article offers a critique on how less is more. Ecological lifestyle advocates try to influence consumer behaviour to diminish consumption while, paradoxically, their efforts are directed at selling. As a result, they produce what they oppose.

## 2. Welfare theory and consumption.

Traditional welfare theory recognizes that individual preferences are crucial in exploring the conditions that allow for the highest level of social satisfaction among individuals. Well-being then is the sum of the well-being of all individuals in a society (Lange, 1942). Welfare can be defined as one’s feeling of seeing all the physiological and psychological needs achieved. Social welfare is the satisfaction experienced by individuals in a community in terms of their needs and aspirations in the present time and the future. Social welfare depends on economic welfare which is related to resources distribution and revenues in a community to satisfy material needs (Witt, 2017). As a result of the economic welfare experienced over the past decades in the developed world, consumption has increased to extraordinary levels. In this respect, Witt (2017) tries to measure the welfare effects of the growth and transformation of consumption, claiming that “the growing consumption in the high-income economies is motivated in part by needs that are difficult to satiate and therefore promise little, if any, welfare gains when expenditures are raised further” (p. 291). He also affirms that, satisfying those preferences may or may not result in welfare gains.

Scitovsky (1976) criticized that welfare economists associate welfare with consumption and, consequently, with economic growth. He affirms that, by focusing on the consumption of goods, economics has ignored another crucial source of satisfaction, which he called pleasure, defined as the chance to challenge our capabilities, to have a sense of mastery and to perceive things and people that take us to a new level of

expertise. He also noted that consumer buying behavior can be influenced by comfort or by novelty. Comfort can be achieved from a certain level of consumption, whereas novelty represents a challenging experience for consumers' capabilities.

Scitovsky affirms that, when it comes to the comfort option, consumers show a remarkable knowledge about the products they buy. However, the novelty option produces uncertainty that menace the anticipated level of comfort. In this case, there are two sources of uncertainty; the first one is identified as the unknown factor related to the fact that the consumer is about to have a new experience; some emotions may be experienced by the consumer, such as curiosity before novelty is resolved. The second source of uncertainty is called consumption skill. According to Scitovsky, individuals develop consumption skills through exploration and learning (Pugno 2014).

Given information asymmetries (Stiglitz; 2002), consumer knowledge tends to be imperfect. The fact that individuals know the product characteristics, use and benefits does not guarantee that they know its exact origin, composition, production process or impact on the environment of both the product and its components. For example, many skin cleansers are advertised as being extracted from plants, without artificial coloring, and not tested on animals, but companies do not report millions of plastic bottles that these products generate as waste. Some skin products also contain plastic microspheres that end up in the sea introducing toxic sub-stances into the food chain (Shoe, 2018).

Scitovsky also affirms that consumers will pursue novelty if the new experience is consistent with their consumption skills, i.e., it is challenging, but not too much. Witt (2017) instead identifies some needs that Scitovsky does not mention, such as affection, care, sensory and cognitive stimulation (or "arousal"), positive self-image, and status and social recognition. These needs may also lead individuals to challenge themselves to consume unfamiliar goods.

As an increasing number of individuals are adopting the less is more/ecological lifestyle, companies, markets, and social media have followed the trend. Thus, because it has become a trend and many people are following it, it is fair to say that adopting a consumption behavior based on the less is more/ecological lifestyle may be challenging for consumers, but not too much. Hence, consumers may be tempted by novelty as Scitovsky predicts. At the same time, to maintain the trend raising, producers make efforts to convince consumers to choose the comfort option to stay consuming those products once the novelty is gone as Scitovsky warns. But, because of information asymmetries, consumers may be unaware of specific facts about less is more/ecological lifestyle. In addition, the increasing importance of social media may boost needs identified

by Witt (2017) like positive self-image, and status and social recognition to adopt less is more/ecological lifestyle consumption pattern. In the following section, we will examine the roots and variants of this trend.

### 3. Less is more /ecological lifestyle.

As we established before, the less is more/ecological lifestyle advocates for minimizing consumption, praising ethics of simplicity, and rejecting a society of too much. We may ask when this way of thinking started and why. In the United States, the '60s witnessed the revival of the back-to-the-land movement from the '30s and the rejection of powerful corporations and government by disenchanted people wanting to go back to basics (Jacob, 1996). It is not the aim of this article to analyze the origins of this movement, we just want to trace a line between early movements of masses embracing simple life, minimalism, mindfulness, eco-friendly lifestyle, and the recent revival of these ideas.

In the '70s many publications influenced people opinions regarding lifestyle, consumption, and environment. For instance, D. Elgin and A. Mitchell published *Voluntary Simplicity* (1977), inspired by the book *The Value of Voluntary Simplicity* written by R. Gregg in 1936. Earhart, H. Byron published *The Ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and Its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns* in 1970. W. LaFleur released *Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature* in 1974, while P. Robinson wrote *Some Thoughts on Buddhism and the Ethics of Ecology*. These are only some examples that reveal the interest in alternative views of understanding life and consumption.

The 1990s was a decade in which society witnessed more sophisticated forms of marketing and advertising, at the same time, the globalization process brought to people's homes products from all over the world. As the Internet, computers, and software developed, the world became more efficient at releasing and obtaining information, products and services. The 1990s was also the decade where people began to feel more attracted to the idea of a simple life, for example, Jacob (1997) and Sale (1993) found evidence of an increasing number of North Americans involved in simple/ecological lifestyles. The *Holy Man* (Herek, 1998) reflects this paradox.

Less is more/ecological lifestyle is nourished by several ideologies, i.e., mindfulness, consumer resistance, anti-consumerism, voluntary simplicity, and minimalism. It is based on the idea of a better self, conscious consumption, and care for the environment. The Theravada Buddhist meditation practice of Vipassana, also known as insight meditation and renamed mindfulness in the West, is an instrument to develop self-control of emotions and thoughts. Rosenberg (2004) affirms that, throughout this practice, individuals eventually become conscious of how consumption choices result from unconscious impulses directed by advertising. In this light, mindful consumption helps consumers make choices that are consistent with their values and

preferences by developing self-regulation abilities to make choices based on their priorities. Sheth et al. (2011) establish that the act of consumption has two elements, a tangible one, related to the behavior of consumption; and an intangible one, identified as the necessary mindset to show a specific consumer behavior. By acquiring mindful consumption skills to modify behavior and mindset, individuals can control the problem of overconsumption. Mindful consumption does not reject or deny consumption, but pleads for downsizing overconsumption to an optimal level for the consumer. By doing so, mindful consumption leads to personal, community, and ecosystem care.

Consumer resistance, anti-consumerism, and voluntary simplicity could seem very similar concepts with subtle differences among them. Consumer resistance refers to rational individuals that consume but, at the same time, struggle against the marketing system, escaping or resisting commercial pressures or influences that are discordant and opposed to their beliefs (Peñaloza and Price, 1993). Resistant consumers rebel against the power of marketing system practices, evaluating consuming options as good or bad, ethical or unethical, sustainable or unsustainable, responsible or irresponsible. For that reason, resistant consumers must rely on a normative framework to guide their practice (Cherrier et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011).

Marketing rebels typically show two attitudes: a) skepticism, raised by advertising, product claims, pricing strategies, and distribution, that lead to perceiving the marketplace as confusing, conflictive, and antithetical; and b) pro-active resistance to any attempt of marketing pressure (Dobscha, 1998). Consumer resistance does not necessarily lead to ecological care. Small businesses, unknown brands, or a tight marketing budget do not guarantee eco-friendly practices.

In contrast, anti-consumerism is in opposition to the processes of consumption by refusing and limiting the purchase, use, and possession of certain products. (Lee, et al., 2009). The real meaning and scope of the term, though, is vague. For instance, in the article *The Social–Psychological Bases of Anticonsumption Attitudes* (Zavestoski, 2002), the author analyses the nature of voluntary simplicity, affirming that “anticonsumption attitudes take many forms, one current manifestation that is growing in popularity is the practice of voluntary simplicity” (Zavestoski, 2002, p. 149). Meissner (2019) links a minimalist lifestyle with some aspects of anti-consumption. Soper (2008) describes alternative hedonism as a form of anti-consumerist ideology that aims for environmental care and disappointment with consumerism, while Albinsson et al. (2010) describe anticonsumerism as a heterogeneous collection of practices. Cherrier et al., (2011, p. 1758) argue that “anti-consumption practices stem from consumers’ subjectivity (personality, experience, and self-concept)”. Accordingly, anti-consumers' decisions are taken from the basis of specific rationality that, in turn, is positioned with-in subjective narratives, experiences, traditions, culture, and practices.

lyer and Muncy (2009) argue that voluntary simplicity is a wide field of research that includes anti-consumption. Voluntary simplifiers prefer production instead of consumption, advocate material simplicity, develop ecological consciousness, and self-growth (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977; Johnston and Burton, 2003). Voluntary simplicity implies values and actions from consumers who seek a meaningful life that avoids the clutter of goods that are not relevant to their main purpose. This movement aims to “push our society in a direction which is more ecologically conscious, more frugal in its consumption, more globally oriented, more de-centralized, more allowing of local self-determination, and so on.” (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977, p. 15).

Minimalism can be explained from an aesthetic point of view, linking its roots to the “Less is more” artistic movement from architect Mies van der Rohe where the “less” was able to overcome luxury and excess in arts, but also as a tool to reduce consumption focusing on what is essential for living a more meaningful life, aiming for high quality but low quantity. Minimalism pursues simple design, quality, value, and practicality (Zero =Abundance, 2017; Millburn and Nicodemus, 2011). Some scholars affirm that minimalism is different from voluntary simplicity because of its artistic origins (Błoński and Witek, 2019); some insist that it is another name for voluntary simplicity and decluttering movement (Rodriguez, 2017) some others consider minimalism as part of voluntary simplicity or simple life movement (Shi, 2007; Hausen, 2018). We believe that minimalism is more a critique of the culture of consumption and excess, whereas voluntary simplicity also involves environmental care (Rodriguez, 2017; Meissner, 2019). Simplifiers and minimalists have the same opinion on anti-consumerism, decluttering, superficial relationships, overspending, and working in a meaningful job. Both advocate for a conscious life, but minimalism focuses more on design and quality.

In summary, the ideologies analyzed are against the market system and overconsumption but in favor of ethical practices, ecological consciousness, and self-growth. According to Zavestoski (2002, p. 151) “One explanation for the recent flurry of interest in the ideas of voluntary simplicity is that people experiencing unhappiness and discontent are linking these feelings to the media- and culture-driven messages to consume increasing amounts of goods and at greater rates”. This explanation may also apply for the other ideologies examined in this section. We have no doubt that behind the less is more/ecological lifestyle concerned citizens are trying to find a path to a happier life and a better society. However, despite their anti-consumerist attitude, most less is more/ecological lifestyle promoters are focused on selling as we analyze in the next section.

#### 4. A reinvention of consumption?

In section 2, we discussed how economic welfare and consumption are closely related. Consumption brings satisfaction to consumers, but also knowledge throughout the consumption experience. Nevertheless, this knowledge will be incomplete because of the asymmetry of information. We also discussed that, the marketing system has adapted to matching people's needs and concerns, demographic changes, and new social trends (Olsen et al., 2014; Luchs, et al., 2010). Still, the marketing system's key objective is the acquisition and retention of customer profitability (Kumar, 2015; Libai et al., 2002), which inevitably will lead to increase consumption. Knowing that, the question we pointed out before rises again, is less is more/ecological lifestyle helping to downsize overconsumption?

A profile of Western less is more/ecological lifestyle adherents reveals that they are not average citizens and they do not see themselves as regular consumers (Sandlin and Walther, 2009; Zavestoski, 2002). revealed. Also, less is more/ecological lifestyle followers are mostly white, middle-class, well-educated people. They believe that by reducing, clearing, and tidying up their belongings they will live a better, more ethical life. As a result, many of them feel morally superior to regular consumers. Although less is more/ecological lifestyle adherents tend to own fewer objects, preferring natural, renewable raw materials, they usually are well-designed best quality products promoted by different media (Sandlin and Walther; 2009). Hence, it is not surprising that less is more/ecological lifestyle authors show third-party advertising and/or sponsored content (Table 1) proving that while encouraging simplicity, they promote new products for a new simple life. As some products are discarded, the new high-end minimalist products replace them, encouraging production and confirming that this lifestyle "maintains aspects of consumerist ideology" (Meissner, 2019, p. 13). A quick review of some blogs in Table 1 reveals that, for example, Zero =Abundance (2017) blog promotes Japanese architecture, design and Zen philosophy. It invites the reader to discover the power of "less", recognizing how economic growth leads humanity to a disaster. Next, the reader learns how designers lead design and architecture from luxury and excess to simple, affordable, and beautiful designs. The blog also shows designing, houses, and neat gardens that do not seem very affordable to most people. Additionally, it mentions a guideline to influence the economy to focus on happiness, encouraging the reader to explore alternatives (new designs and products) to efficiency, as a result, they will find happiness and self-esteem. Zero =Abundance also releases sponsored content from an online store. Joshua Becker's Becoming Minimalist is a website designed to reduce the noise that disrupts the quiet of your heart and soul and help people to figure out what is getting in their way by buying Becker's books, online courses, and talks. The description under Cost/Availability legend warns readers: "Again, my heart is for the life-giving message of owning less. And I work hard to accept as many reasonable speaking opportunities as possible. Unfortunately, not all requests can be accepted. But it can never hurt to ask... regardless of your group's size." (Becker, 2021). He also



publishes Simplify Magazine, a quarterly, digital publication that readers can purchase through the website.

He encourages contributors to release articles that include a list format of ideas or actions that readers can take i.e., “5 steps to live a simpler life”, “A definitive guide to minimalist fashion”, “Ten Tips for a Minimalist Wardrobe” (Becker, 2021). Simplify Magazine editor makes clear that they do not pay for contributed articles, but they do promote them in their social media accounts because Becker owns several websites to promote simple life. In the same fashion, Daisy Rosales’ Simplicity Relished blog publishes lists about things you should not over-look, i.e., “10 Simple Things you should have at home”, “7 Fool proof secrets to decorating with plants”, “5 Simple ways to decorate on a budget” while addressing questions on simple life, minimalism, and faith. Rosales’ blog shows a disclaimer warning her readers that it is a for-profit blog (Rosales, 2020).

Table 1. Some less is more/ecological lifestyle websites

Product sales/promotion

Name	Author	URL	Books	Podcast	Talks	Courses Training Classes	Magazines Digital content	Films Document aries YouTube videos	Patreon support	Must-have minimalist items	Online store	Third-part advertising/s ponsored content
A Slob Comes Clean	Dana K. White	<a href="https://www.aslobcomesclean.com/">https://www.aslobcomesclean.com/</a>	X	X								X
Becoming Minimalist	Joshua Becker	<a href="https://www.becomingminimalist.com/">https://www.becomingminimalist.com/</a>	X		X	X	X					
Bemorewithless	Courtney Carver	<a href="https://bemorewithless.com/">https://bemorewithless.com/</a>	X	X	X	X						X
Franca Magazine	Unknown	<a href="https://francamagazine.com/">https://francamagazine.com/</a>				X					X	X
Hej Doll	Jessica Doll	<a href="https://hejdoll.com/">https://hejdoll.com/</a>									X	X
I think we could be friends (The Minimal Mom)	Dawn Madsen	<a href="https://www.ithinkwecouldbefriends.com/">https://www.ithinkwecouldbefriends.com/</a>		X				X				X
KonMarie	Marie Kondo	<a href="https://konmari.com/">https://konmari.com/</a>	X			X		X			X	
Miss Minimalist	Francine Jay	<a href="https://www.missminimalist.com/">https://www.missminimalist.com/</a>	X							X		
Practigal Blog	Sheila Price	<a href="https://www.practigalblog.com/">https://www.practigalblog.com/</a>								X		X
Simplicity Relished	Daisy Rosales	<a href="https://simplicityrelished.com/">https://simplicityrelished.com/</a>								X		X
The Minimalists	Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus	<a href="https://www.theminimalists.com/">https://www.theminimalists.com/</a>	X	X	X	X		X	X			

<b>The Simplicity Habit</b>	Julianna Poplin	<a href="https://www.thesimplicityhabit.com/">https://www.thesimplicityhabit.com/</a>	X			X			X	X	X
<b>Viviendo Consciente</b>	Noemí Rodríguez	<a href="https://viviendoconsciente.com/">https://viviendoconsciente.com/</a>		X					X		
<b>Zero Habits</b>	Leo Babauta	<a href="https://zenhabits.net">https://zenhabits.net</a>	X			X					
<b>Zero Waste Home</b>	Bea Johnson	<a href="https://zerowastehome.com/">https://zerowastehome.com/</a>	X		X					X	X
<b>Zero=Abundance</b>	Mihoyo Fuji	<a href="https://www.interactiengreen.com/">https://www.interactiengreen.com/</a>					X		X		X
<b>Best Life Now</b>	Alexandra	<a href="https://bestlife-now.com/about/">https://bestlife-now.com/about/</a>						X	X	X	X
<b>Einfachbewusst</b>	Christopher Herrmann	<a href="https://www.einfachbewusst.de/">https://www.einfachbewusst.de/</a>	X				X				
<b>Julian</b>	Backpacker Dude	<a href="https://www.backpackerdude.com/">https://www.backpackerdude.com/</a>					X		X		X
<b>Faye</b>	Simple Days	<a href="https://simpledays.co.uk/about/">https://simpledays.co.uk/about/</a>	X			X					X
<b>Regina Wong</b>	Live Well with Less	<a href="http://www.livewellwithless.com/about/">http://www.livewellwithless.com/about/</a>	X			X					

Source: Prepared by the author

In the book *Minimalism, live a meaningful life* (Millburn and Nicodemus, 2011) the authors present a guide to becoming a minimalist in seven chapters. It describes how, after years of discontent they embraced minimalism, found health, followed their passions, improved their relationships and grew. The book has several references to Millburn and Nicodemus’ blog where you can purchase other books, documentaries available on Netflix and Amazon, subscribe to their podcast and buy tickets to join their tour to experience why it is better to live with less. Marie Kondo’s book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* aims for efficiency in chapter 1 when she affirms “Tidy a little a day and you will be tidying forever” (Kondo, 2014, p. 15) and confront us with the question “Why you should aim for perfection” (p. 17). Kondo transforms tidying up into a personal journey to a shining life. Home decoration items and the KonMari Method are available on her online store.

This analysis reveals what less is more/ecological lifestyle authors have in common: they employ less is more/ecological lifestyle as a tool of self-improvement, showing the optimal way of achieving success, personal objectives and a meaningful life which is shaped by the market’s logic as it fosters high-end consumption, it urges people to adopt the new trend, in the fashion of highly effective people focused on continuous improvement, exploiting the link between unsatisfied consumers and impulse buying behavior (Sandlin and Walther, 2009; Silvera et al., 2008). The idea of freedom and free time is implicit, which is a paradox since you must take care of your diet, buy healthy organic food, find your passion, exercise, declutter, achieve new goals, and increase them, a tight agenda to maintain the lifestyle they promote. At the same time,

this lifestyle requires new items that fit in the simplicity/minimalist description. In the end, this is still the old “more is more” philosophy.

Less is more/ecological lifestyle authors success formula can be described as follows: first, telling followers how unhappy, unsuccessful, or empty life they had before; second, explaining how they converted to this apparently “new way” to understand life; third, starting a blog or website to spread the good news and sell books, talks, courses, films, and must-have minimalist items. Less is more/ecological lifestyle authors encourage their followers to maximize their satisfaction through different products and practices, training then to downsize, declutter and simplify.

From an economic point of view less is more/ecological lifestyle authors focus they efforts on self-interest and individual choice whereas they disregard the market system and its growth orientation (Meissner, 2019; Sandlin and Walther, 2009) in consequence, the field where exchange and consumption take place remains unaffected. We can also observe that less is more/ecological lifestyle authors are not interested in changing the market system to slow down production; on the contrary, production increases, in part, because of their ideology. In other words, while less is more/ecological lifestyle supporters insist individuals must change their consumption behavior, they leave untouched the frame where that consumption takes place, moreover they even take advantage of it by creating a market of their own. Consequently, less is more/ecological lifestyle ends up being a reinvention of consumption.

## 5. Conclusion

Given the economic notion of scarcity, the maximization principle reminds us that individuals will choose the option that maximizes their satisfaction. The satisfaction of needs drives individual economic decisions. Individual satisfaction is related to subjective well-being (happiness). In the light of the arguments exposed, the lack of happiness, meaning, and self-content on one hand, and concern on environmental care on the other, seem to be key factors to change consumption patterns, yet consumerist lifestyle keeps growing. As we described, studies reveal that less is more/ecological lifestyle followers are truly engaged with their values. Probably most individuals participate in this lifestyle believing they can make a difference in the world and save the planet. Maybe the roots of less is more/ecological lifestyle were pure at the beginning, but it is still a trend nested in a society with a powerful market system that seems to have absorbed the spirit of this lifestyle, which means that, as soon as it is part of the system, it loses its power to fight overconsumption. Moreover, because consumption takes place in the market system, no matter how well-intentioned the consumer may be, the moment he consumes, he reproduces the system. Taking into consideration the arguments shown

here, we must accept that less is more/ecological lifestyle seems to be more a reinvention of consumption than a solution to overconsumption. It has indeed become a profitable industry.

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