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# Happy Life as a Commodity: Deconstructing Narratives of Success in Global Consumer Culture

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## Abstract

The commercialization of happiness is one of the paradigmatic philosophical problems of contemporary global consumer culture, as the market for wellness services, self-help, and online platforms offers wellness as a commodity for sale, while more and more people in developed countries experience depression, anxiety, or disappointment in their lives. This is a paradox that requires not empirical but philosophical research: the oversupply of wellness services and the deterioration of well-being. This work aims to unravel the philosophical premises of the commercialization of happiness in global consumer culture by analyzing its simulation logic, disciplinary practices of gender, and their traumatic consequences. The methodology includes philosophical discursive analysis, Derrida's deconstruction, and comparative philosophical analysis of the Frankfurt School and poststructuralist models based on 40 scientific articles published in 2018–2025. The analysis proves that consumer culture creates

a simulacrum of happiness – a copy without an original – which structurally displaces real well-being instead of providing it. Gender discourses of success are disciplinary practices that have colonized subjectivity, transforming structural inequality into individual failure, a process of self-alienation. The impossibility of commercializing well-being creates a philosophically different version of trauma, rethinking the current mental health crisis as a structural rather than an individual problem. Alternatives based on the philosophical foundations of intrinsic values and non-market values can provide real conceptual material to counter this colonization of the inner world of the individual. Such results add to philosophy an interdisciplinary interpretation of the study of happiness that simultaneously advances critical theory, feminist philosophy, and well-being.

**Keywords:** happiness, globalisation, consumer culture, traumatic experience, success, gender, well-being.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century, happiness became one of the most popular commodities in the global economy. Meditation apps, wellness retreats, life coaching programs, positive psychology courses, and self-help books make up a multi-billion dollar industry based on one promise: well-being can be bought, optimized, and delivered as a commodity. This is one of the most important phenomena of contemporary consumer culture from a philosophical point of view – and one of the least studied from a purely philosophical perspective.

At the heart of this phenomenon lies not only an economic but also an ontological problem of philosophy. The commercialization of happiness radically changes its essence: it is no longer perceived as an internal aspect of human well-being, or *eudaimonia*, as Aristotle described it, but as an external one that can be acquired, manifested, and disseminated. The consequences of this ontological shift are far-reaching, and questions of subjectivity, authenticity, gender, power, and existential suffering must be considered from a philosophical point of view.

The relationship between consumer culture and happiness is the subject of growing scientific interest in various fields. Cabanas and Illouz [1] have revealed how the science and industry of happiness function as a system of social control, creating compliant and self-managed subjects whose dissatisfaction is systematically directed toward individual treatment options rather than the system. Davies [2] demonstrated that the happiness industry was a product of the collision of utilitarian philosophy, behavioral economics, and neoliberal governance, transforming subjective well-being into a metric, a management tool, and a purchasable commodity. These fundamental works form the critical basis on which this study is based, but they discuss the philosophical aspects of commercialized happiness not so much from a philosophical point of view as through the prism of political and economic terms.

The correlation between consumption and well-being has been explored in more detail in recent empirical and cultural studies. As Torres et al. [3] have quantitatively demonstrated, material consumption creates only temporary satisfaction rather than lasting happiness, which is empirically confirmed by ancient philosophical criticism. Rini [4] also discussed how the media and online commercialization of culture are transforming the experience of culture into a standardized and passive process of consumption, supporting the Frankfurt School's philosophical interpretation of the culture industry. Habib [5] applied Baudrillard's model of postmodernism to consumer culture to show how signs and imitations of happiness usurp the real experience of the contemporary media space.

Badr [6] critically analyzes the wellness industry as a particular commercialization of happiness and shows how the culture of neoliberal wellness has stolen the terminology of self-care and community health, transforming it into an individualized, commercially mediated practice that represents the interests of the market rather than well-being. This thesis is developed by Albina [7], who also argues that mainstream wellness culture reinforces the systematic exclusion of marginalized populations and repackages systemic inequalities as individual health failures. Sustainability Directory [8] continues to highlight the paradox of consumer culture and happiness, which is that despite the unprecedented availability of wellness products and services, levels of depression, anxiety, and existential dissatisfaction are rising throughout the developed world.

The combination of these contributions helps to fill a significant theoretical gap: although the sociological, economic, and psychological aspects of commercialized happiness have been widely discussed, the characteristic philosophical aspects of this phenomenon, its contribution to theories of subjectivity, authenticity, and the good life; its connection to gender as a disciplinary process; its capacity to create traumatic experiences; and the philosophical resources with which to think beyond its logic remain unexplored in a single, integrated philosophical package. In particular, the convergence of discourses on commercialized happiness and gendered ideals of success and traumatic experiences has not been theorized, nor has the critical perspective of the poststructuralist and Frankfurt schools aimed at dismantling these discourses.

This article fills these gaps by attempting to philosophically analyze discourses of happiness in international consumer culture, i.e., drawing on the critical theoretical achievements of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry, Foucault's discourse analysis, and feminist philosophical approaches to neoliberal subjectivity. The article explores how consumer culture creates a simulacrum of happiness instead of happiness, how gender narratives of success become a disciplinary technology that reproduces power asymmetries under the rubric of individual empowerment, how the structural inaccessibility of commercialized well-being creates traumatic experiences, and outlines philosophical alternatives to the logic of commercialization and conceptualization of authentic well-being.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophical research into the commercialization of happiness is playing an increasingly significant role in contemporary interdisciplinary research, drawing on the history of critical theory, welfare politics, welfare economics, and cultural studies. This literature review traces the main theoretical coordinates of the field, identifies the main conceptual approaches that can be applied to this study, and points out the theoretical gaps that this study aims to fill.

Haybron [9] conducted a systematic study of the philosophical origins of the concept of happiness, and her contribution

to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy reinforced the two main traditions in which the concept of happiness was theoretically substantiated: the hedonistic tradition, which views happiness as a combination of subjective states of pleasure and absence of pain, and the eudemonistic tradition, which is based on Aristotle and views happiness as a combination of human flourishing and the realization of human potential. It is this philosophical difference that has direct application to the current study, since the commercialization of happiness functions precisely by destroying this distinction, in which consumer culture offers hedonistic alternatives, pleasure, comfort, stimulation, as well as eudaimonistic flourishing, and thus creates what we will consider a simulacrum of happiness. It is the tension between these two philosophical traditions that constitutes the normative horizon on which a critical approach to commercialized well-being must be interpreted.

Agrawal et al. [10] systematically analyzed the economic aspects of happiness, and their bibliometric analysis of the economics of happiness revealed five relevant new research questions, such as the well-being paradox in happiness studies, the inadequacy of GDP as a measure of well-being, and the relationship between happiness and organizational culture. This literature confirms the fact that the hegemonic economic paradigm has recognized the inadequacy of material wealth as a measure of subjective well-being, but at the same time has attempted to adapt – rather than challenge – market logic by introducing the concept of happiness into it. Agrawal et al. [11] develop this idea by discussing the possibility of a happiness economy model for sustainable development, suggesting that well-being-oriented policies are a necessary shift in growth-centered economic rationality. Despite the value of these contributions, they are largely part of the utilitarian economic tradition and do not address the philosophical critique of commercialization that this study entails.

Empirical data on how economic growth correlates with happiness show a complex and nonlinear relationship between the two variables, and Lee and Goh [12] illustrate that there are limits to ever-increasing levels of well-being as a result of ever-increasing levels of material affluence. The philosophical significance of this discovery is considerable: consumer society's claim that the acquisition of goods, experiences, and services will lead to happiness is not justified in practice, but it cannot be justified in principle. The philosophical question that arises in this situation, namely why consumer culture still seems to offer what it cannot deliver, is precisely the question that this study will answer through the lens of Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry.

Although the very concept of commercialization has been subjected to rigorous philosophical and sociological analysis by Hall [13], who identifies four different types of arguments regarding the commercialization of everything in the social sciences and calls on the social sciences to be more conceptually specific in their use of this critical term. Hall's analysis is of particular interest to the current study because it provides the philosophical premises for distinguishing between the commercialization of material objects, the commercialization of practices and relationships, and, most relevant to us, the commercialization of subjective states, which include happiness and well-being. It is this conceptual precision that allows the current study to explain more rigorously what exactly is at stake in the context of the marketization of happiness.

This study draws its greatest philosophical resources from the critical theoretical tradition of the Frankfurt School, which is thoroughly reviewed by Celikates and Flynn [14]. From Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of the culture industry, which discusses the production of mass culture under capitalism with standardized desires and passive consumers, to Marcuse's analysis of repressive desublimation and Habermas's theory of the colonization of the lifeworld by market rationality, this tradition provides a systematic philosophy of how consumer culture undermines the preconditions for genuine human flourishing. Bilić [15] picks up on this tradition and transfers it to the digital realm, showing how platform capitalism and digital media reproduce and deepen the logic of commercialization of the culture industry in the contemporary environment of social media, algorithmic governance, and digital labor.

Overall, the analyzed literature creates three main theoretical coordinates for the current study, namely: the philosophical difference between genuine and commercial happiness; the structural inadequacy of market logic as a mechanism for human well-being; and the critical theoretical tradition that offers conceptual tools for the philosophical debunking of discourses on consumer happiness. However, contemporary literature has not adequately recognized the intersection of these coordinates with the dimensions of gender, traumatic experience, and the simulacral logic of digital consumer culture, a gap that this study seeks to fill.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the qualitative theoretical research design is based on philosophical analysis and critical discourse. The study does not involve the collection of empirical data, experiments, or the involvement of people. Instead, it considers a collection of academic works, philosophical writings, and scientific books as the main source of analysis.

The material basis of the research consists of two classes of sources. The first group consists of classic philosophical texts, namely Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* [16] and *The Consumer Society* [17], as well as theoretical works in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, such as the works of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse on industrial culture and commodity fetishism. The second group consists of the latest peer-reviewed scientific publications for 2018–2025 found in the Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals, relating to the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, gender studies, and critical theory. Forty scientific sources were selected for analysis.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: direct relevance of sources to the thematic intersections of happiness, commercialization, consumer culture, gender, success stories, and well-being; publication date of the sources (2018–2025), corresponding to the present day; scientific viability of the sources, in turn, based on peer review status or affiliation with one of the recognized academic institutions. Sources were filtered out if they included happiness or well-being only from a quantitative psychological or economic perspective without philosophical discussion, or if they were published before 2018 and did not represent canonical philosophical texts.

Philosophical discourse analysis is a fundamental approach to analysis, interpreted as a systematic examination of conceptual frameworks, ideology, and normative presuppositions in cultural and scientific texts. This method corresponds to Foucault's theory of discourse, where the emphasis is placed on text not as a carrier of information, but as a point of construction and reproduction of power, subjectivity, and social norms (Foucault, 1978). A sample of publications from the wellness industry, self-help discourse, and academic texts was subjected to discourse analysis to identify recurring ideological strategies for commercializing happiness.

The second theoretical tool is the philosophical deconstruction practiced by Jacques Derrida, which is used to analyze the successful discourse of domination prevalent in globalized consumer culture. Internal contradictions and hidden meanings in the narratives examined, especially those related to gender, achievement, and well-being, were also revealed through deconstruction.

The third tool is comparative philosophical analysis, which is used in the study to compare the critical theoretical perspectives of the Frankfurt School and poststructuralism in order to assess their different contributions to understanding the commercialization of happiness. This analytical process was divided into three consecutive stages: systematic coding of texts based on key thematic topics; mapping of conceptual frameworks onto specific cultural phenomena; and overall synthesis of results in the form of a detailed philosophical argument about the paradox of commercialized happiness in a world of global consumption.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. THE SIMULACRUM OF HAPPINESS IN GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE

Contemporary consumer culture has undergone ontological changes in the most radical sense: happiness can no longer be perceived as a purely existential phenomenon, but can be created, packaged, and sold as a commodity. This needs to be philosophically understood using Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and hyperreality, which provides the most acute conceptualization of the commercialization of subjective experience in late capitalism.

According to Baudrillard [16], postmodern society has reached a state of hyperreality, where signs and representations are no longer connected to any reality they represent, but rather form an order of their own self-referentiality. The simulacrum, the copy, has no original and becomes the dominant form of cultural existence. The theoretical prism applied to the phenomenon of happiness provides a basic paradox: the wellness industry, the cultural industry of self-help, and the digital platform do not represent, but rather imitate, true well-being, an image of happiness that circulates without any human well-being. However, according to Kellner's [18] observations in his analysis of Baudrillard's work, postmodern consumer society organizes identities and desires in the context of appropriating images and codes, rather than around the essence of human experience.

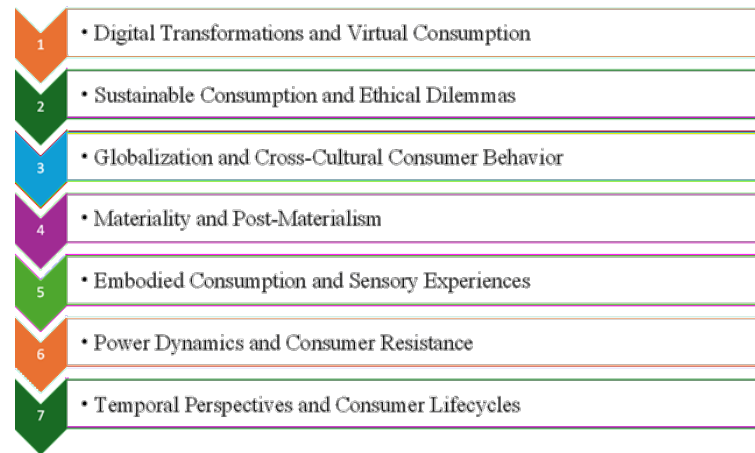
This is a process that takes on special philosophical significance in the context of globalization and digital transformation. The figure shows seven main directions for future research on consumer culture, among which the dynamics of digital transformation and virtualization of consumption, intercultural behavior, and embodied aspects of consumer experience, however, occupy a central place.

As Figure 1 shows, the direction of consumer culture research is narrowing to issues of digital mediation, globalization, and sensory aspects of consumption, which are directly related to the philosophical question of commercialized happiness. Direction 1 (virtualization of consumption) reinforces Baudrillard's logic of hyperrealism: digital platforms (Instagram, TikTok, health apps, etc.) create and promote idealized images of happiness, success, and well-being that have no referential connection to real experience. Indeed, these images are precisely fourth-order simulacra – signs that, according to Baudrillard's typology [16], have lost all connection with reality and exist in a state of pure simulacrum.

Ahmed [20] continues this analysis, showing how consumer society creates desires based not on real needs but on the logic of signs and codes. In this semiotic order, happiness is a floating sign – it is always promised, postponed, structurally impossible to realize. Buying a wellness retreat, a mindfulness app, or a self-optimization program does not make a person happy; it creates an impression of happiness that quickly loses its symbolic value and requires another purchase. Patterson [17] calls this the hyperreal cycle of consumer satisfaction: a feedback loop where the experience of happiness based on simulation, in turn, reproduces the circumstances of its own incompleteness.

This picture is further complicated by the intercultural aspect revealed in Figure 1 (direction 3). Kessel van et al. [21] show that hyperreal logic is not culturally neutral, but is actively promoted through global digital media infrastructures

that export Western discourses of success and happiness into the cultural environments of different societies. This internationalization of the simulacrum of happiness is a kind of symbolic violence: it imposes on subjects who may have radically different existential and cultural coordinate systems a specific – historically and culturally specific – idea of what constitutes a good life.



**Figure 1.** *Future directions in consumer culture research. Source: Faster Capital [19]*

The commodification of happiness through the logic of simulacra, in philosophical terms, is a kind of colonization of the inner world: the most personal aspects of human experience – joy, pleasure, meaning – are appropriated, generalized, and returned to subjects in the form of market images. The result, according to Baudrillard’s structure, is not the satisfaction of desire, but its reproduction in a very systematic way to ensure that the consumer machine continues to run smoothly at the expense of real human prosperity.

#### 4.2. GENDER NARRATIVES OF SUCCESS AS DISCIPLINARY MECHANISMS

Gender aspects of the narrative of success in global consumer culture cannot be included in the philosophical analysis of commercialized happiness. Gender does not simply influence these stories, but shapes their disciplinary structure. Building on Foucauldian concepts of power and subjectivity, this section will argue that narratives of neoliberal success are employed as disciplinary practices to create gendered subjects who internalize market values as personal virtues and transform structural inequalities into individual responsibilities.

Rutherford [22] shows that feminist psychology has documented many examples of how women are constructed as ideal neoliberal subjects characterized by self-management, expanded powers, and constant optimization. This construction is not the result of engineering, but rather what Foucault calls technologies of the self: that is, practices through which people position themselves as subjects in accordance with dominant normative codes. In neoliberal consumer culture, these technologies take the form of wellness, productivity, and self-improvement programs that promise happiness as a reward for successful self-management. This is philosophically important because it means that the pursuit of happiness is not a free existential project, but a disciplinary practice embedded in asymmetrical power relations.

Dabrowski [23] reinforces this critique by arguing that neoliberal feminism, oddly enough, is willing to acknowledge gender inequality only in order to dismiss it. This ideological construction of the “self” makes structural criticism secondary and turns political issues into psychological ones, positioning the concept of success as something that can be achieved individually through the right choices and attitudes. A woman who does not achieve the promised happiness is not interpreted as a victim of the power structure, but as a person who has not optimized herself enough – a philosophical shift that transforms her oppression into individual failure.

The following Table 1 summarizes the main philosophical aspects of gender success stories that were identified in the reviewed materials:

As shown in Table 1, the gendered architecture of success narratives operates simultaneously on several different philosophical levels, including subject construction and ideological displacement, as well as digital amplification and affective internalization. A particularly striking example of this dynamic is the theme of influencer culture on Instagram, presented by Ris and Polesana [25], which is a vivid example of the realization of neoliberal femininity in hyperreal spectacle and its dissemination. The figure of the influencer becomes a disciplinary inscription, proving to millions of followers the right way to live, be happy, and be successful, while simultaneously becoming the consumers they aspire to be.

Chowdhury [26] defines the philosophical generative concept of self-alienation to explain the affective-discursive mechanism by which neoliberal subjects de-identify and marginalize those aspects of themselves that do not conform to

idealized normative standards. This philosophical concept reveals the nature of disciplinary power based not on external coercion but on the colonization of subjectivity itself. The subject who internalizes the imperative to be constantly happy, productive, and successful does not experience this imperative as oppressive, but as a state of freedom – a state that Marcuse would describe as repressive through desublimation.

**Table 1.** *Gendered success narratives as disciplinary mechanisms: key philosophical dimensions*

Dimension	Characteristic	Philosophical Implication
Subject construction	Women as ideal neoliberal subjects	Technologies of the self as disciplinary power
Ideological displacement	Structural inequality reframed as personal failure	Depoliticisation of gender oppression
Digital amplification	Influencer culture as normative performance	Hyperreal femininity as simulacrum
Affective dimension	Self-othering as internalised discipline	Subjectivity constituted through exclusion
Resistance potential	Collective action vs. individual optimisation	Philosophical critique as emancipatory practice

Source: compiled by the authors based on Rutherford [22]; Dabrowski [23]; Bernstein and Jakobsen [24]; Ris and Polesana [25]; Chowdhury [26]; Radhakrishnan and Solari [27]

As Radhakrishnan and Solari [27] also show, the gender order of neoliberalism is not homogeneous but intersects with class, race, and geography, creating hierarchically differentiated forms of subordination. This intersectional aspect reveals the philosophical inadequacy of universal discourses on happiness that assume the existence of a homogeneous subject who can have equal access to the promised good life. In summary, gender discourses of success serve as disciplinary practices that create, control, and reproduce gender subjectivities on behalf of consumer culture, making the deconstruction of these discourses of success a critically important and urgent philosophical task.

### 4.3. THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE OF UNATTAINABLE WELL-BEING

This section presents the results of our philosophical discussion about the relationship between commercialized discourses on well-being and traumatic experiences. As we will see, this systemic discrepancy between the happiness proclaimed by consumer culture and the happiness that people currently enjoy is not simply a market failure, but a structural creation that leads us to recognize the trauma of unattainability: a form of existential suffering associated with the inability to meet externally imposed standards of well-being.

We analyzed Arnold [28] and identified a critical philosophical process by which Western discourse on mental health supports but does not question this situation. The pathologization of unhappiness, the transformation of unhappiness into a form of diagnosis, treatment, and, most importantly, localization at the individual level, is an ideological apparatus that replaces structural criticism. When a subject who is not supposed to receive the promised happiness is directed toward therapy, medication, or individual improvement instead of political consciousness, the trauma of unattainability is transformed into a psychological problem, and its structural roots are not seen or preserved.

Enright's [29] research also confirmed this result. We found that capitalist thinking is a kind of sociocultural trauma that manifests itself not in isolated destructive incidents, but in a constant low level of violence that is normalized by impossibility. The theme of consumer culture is constantly raised as the subject and object of happiness production: on the one hand, people are told that they can be happy, and on the other, they are forced to face the facts of their failure every day. We call this two-sided trap a philosophical form of commercialized suffering, where the very pursuit of well-being becomes the cause of unhappiness [30].

Table 2 below shows the main results of our comparison of traumatic mechanisms identified in the sources we analyzed:

**Table 2.** *Philosophical dimensions of traumatic experience in consumer well-being culture*

Traumatic Mechanism	Manifestation	Philosophical Dimension	Source
Pathologisation of unhappiness	Mental illness as individual failure	Depoliticisation of suffering	Arnold [28]
Chronic normalised impossibility	Perpetual self-inadequacy	Structure of commodified suffering	Enright [29]
Neurobiological harm	Stress, anxiety, cognitive decline	Material dimension of ideological violence	Kokorikou et al. [31]
Class-based trauma	Working-class mental health crisis	Intersection of economic and existential suffering	Castaneda [32]
Alienation from authentic desire	Consumption as failed self-medication	Ontological dimension of trauma	Olivier [33]

Source: compiled by the authors based on Arnold [28]; Enright [29]; Kokorikou et al. [31]; Castaneda [32]; Olivier [33]; The Wellness Society [34]; ShoutOut UK [35]

We have identified five distinct but philosophically related traumatic processes through which the culture of consumer well-being causes suffering, as shown in Table 2. Of particular relevance to our study is the conclusion of Kokorikou et al. [31], which serves as the basis for a theoretical neurobiological model adopted to define the material (rather than merely discursive) dimensions of such trauma. Their work confirms our philosophical thesis that the damage caused by commercialized stories of happiness is not only ideological but also engraved in the neurobiological structure of the object, manifesting itself in the form of chronic stress, anxiety disorders, and cognitive impairment.

Analyzing Castaneda [32], we discovered another philosophical level that most of the main descriptions missed: the intersection of economic instability and existential suffering. We found that the trauma of unattainable well-being is not distributed evenly throughout the social organism, but rather accumulates disproportionately among people whose material circumstances most visibly deny consumer guarantees of happiness. This observation prompted us to rethink the trauma of commercialized happiness as a socially hierarchical condition determined by class, gender, and geography [36].

The most ontological explanation for this state is Olivier's [33] work, which we have considered as a philosophical basis. Using Lacanian and Marxist perspectives, we traced how consumer culture creates a fundamental experience of alienation from genuine desire: the subject learns to find in commodities what can only be found in real human relationships, work, and meaning in life. As our case studies of ShoutOut UK [35] and The Wellness Society [34] showed, this has led to the opposite result of the expected increase in well-being in the context of the development of the wellness services sector, namely to the paradox of a decrease in well-being, which was the subject of research into this philosophical problem that underlies this work.

#### **4.4. RESISTANCE TO COMMERCIALIZATION: PHILOSOPHICAL ALTERNATIVES**

The above sections have demonstrated that the commercialization of happiness is a structurally entrenched manifestation of symbolic and existential violence [37]. The philosophical question that arises as a result is not only diagnostic but also normative: what resources of thought does philosophy have to think outside the logic of commercialized well-being, and what possibilities for resistance to global consumer culture exist within and outside of it?

According to Sayer [38], there is a point of entry in the philosophical tradition provided by the idea of a moral economy that distinguishes between internal and external goods. Internal goods, whose value is an integral part of the practice that generates them, such as genuine friendship, artistic interaction, or true self-knowledge, cannot by their nature be transformed into commodities without radical changes that destroy their value. External goods, on the other hand, are precisely those that consumer culture packages and sells as alternatives to internal goods. The philosophical significance of this distinction is that it allows us to identify what exactly is being commercialized in the process of commercializing happiness, which is not only an economic process but also an ontological shift, as a result of which the most important aspects of human existence are replaced by their market simulacra.

Noonan [39] develops this philosophical thesis in the field of political economy, arguing that the pursuit of external goals – wealth, status, productivity, external recognition, etc. – not only fails to bring true well-being, but, on the contrary, harms it. The philosophical implications of this discovery are enormous: the hegemonic economic rationality of consumer culture, as it turns out, is not only insufficient for human prosperity, but is also structurally antithetical to it. According to this view of the good life, people do not need to optimize external rewards, but rather develop internal values, which are precisely those that cannot be compared.

Munn et al. [40] raise this question in the light of philosophical ethics and argue that this hedonistic treadmill created by consumer culture – the continuous process of acquiring, adapting, and updating desires – can be broken not by further consumption, but through a radical reorientation toward non-market sources of meaning. They support their argument by referring to the philosophical traditions of Epicureanism and Stoicism and argue that true happiness lies not in the satisfaction of multiple desires, but in their philosophical reduction – an argument that directly challenges the very premise of consumer culture.

Davies [2] provides the broadest philosophical horizon for discussing this issue, placing the happiness industry in the long tradition of utilitarianism and illustrating how Bentham's project of maximizing happiness was colonized by neoliberal governance as a tool for controlling the population. In contrast to this tradition, the philosophy of human subjectivity defines human subjectivity as irreducible to measurable utility – the claim that true well-being cannot be quantified, standardized, or sold, but must be freely formed by each subject in the unique uniqueness of their own existence.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The results of the current study contribute to a philosophical understanding of the commercialization of happiness in the following, highly relevant ways, and their implications extend far beyond scientific philosophy to the broader cultural and political context of the contemporary global community.

Our main observation that consumer culture creates a simulacrum of happiness rather than happiness itself echoes and reinforces the findings of Becker et al. [41], which show that the influence of neoliberal ideology has a noticeable negative impact on well-being, making people feel lonely and depriving them of a sense of social belonging. To their empirical explanation, we can add a structural explanation for this paradox: neoliberal consumer culture is not simply a failure that does not bring happiness as an unintended consequence, but it is constitutively incapable of doing so, because the logic of commercialization makes happiness a relative good of an internal nature, a commercialized object of acquisition, and thus systematically establishes its structures, authentic connection, shared meaning, and existential involvement in such a way

that it eliminates the very conditions of well-being in the direct sense of the term. It is this structural inability that empirical psychology can see, without being able to explain it exhaustively, which is revealed by philosophical deconstruction.

Our discovery regarding the gender architecture of success narratives adds a component to the existing literature that has not been adequately theorized before. Although the role of women as ideal neoliberal subjects has been widely covered by feminist scholars, our analysis will show that such positioning is not simply an ideological imposition, but a philosophical structure, a kind of disciplinary power that shapes gender subjectivity in the most intimate sense of the term in self-understanding. Self-alienation, as one of the significant processes that, in our opinion, plays a central role in this process, unfolds in such a way that the trauma of unattainability is perceived not as an external factor, but as a feeling of internal inadequacy, which makes it philosophically invisible and politically defenseless. This observation is consistent with sociological descriptions of the ideological role of neoliberal feminism that exist in the literature, but at the same time complements them philosophically.

The link between commercialized happiness and traumatic experiences, as the third key finding of this study, provides a particularly important direction for further research. As our analysis shows, the epidemic of mental health disorders observed in contemporary consumer societies is not only a health problem but also a philosophical problem: it is the impossibility of the happiness promised by consumer culture and the systematic pathologization of rational responses to this impossibility. This observation is consistent with the view of Mavelli and Cerella [42] regarding the manipulation and exploitation of individual desires in the algorithmic management of digital societies, which leads to the formation of subordination that is perceived as freedom and causes enormous psychological damage. The philosophical significance of this convergence is that it indicates that the mental health crisis of consumer societies cannot be separated from the philosophical crisis of commercialized subjectivity [43].

The fourth conclusion we have drawn regarding philosophical alternatives to commercialization is productive in the sense that it is linked to the biopolitical theory developed by Pele and Riley [44], which advocates a politics of life that goes beyond the neoliberal biopolitical framework. This argument is substantiated and expanded upon by our philosophical analysis: achieving profound well-being requires not only a transformation of social welfare policy, but also a radical philosophical reorientation toward inner well-being, toward the values of relationships and modes of human flourishing that are inaccessible to market logic. This conclusion has implications for political philosophy and ethics, as well as for the philosophy of education, which go far beyond the scope of this study.

The weaknesses of this study lie mainly in the shortcomings of philosophical and theoretical research: the lack of empirical confirmation and the selectivity that must be applied to the selection of philosophical concepts. Future research could fruitfully develop the current analysis by conducting empirical research on the real situation of the commercialization of happiness, comparing ideas of happiness and well-being in non-Western cultures, and exploring new digital technologies, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and algorithmic personalization as new centers of the commercialization of happiness. The intersection of commercialized happiness, race, postcolonial subjectivity, and the ecological crisis is also an important and under-researched philosophical area.

Overall, this work shows that philosophical criticism of discourses of happiness in global consumer culture is not merely an academic exercise, but an urgently needed critical practice that can serve a broader project of defining what viable human flourishing might look like under neoliberal consumer capitalism, and what philosophical resources can still be mobilized in resistance to the colonization of the inner world of the human being by market logic.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This work has shown that the commercialization of happiness in global consumer culture is a philosophically different kind of ontological shift that cannot be adequately explained by models of economic or psychological interpretation, but requires rigorous philosophical analysis. Our analysis points to a simulacral logic that shows that consumer culture is not only ineffective in achieving happiness, but actually creates its own simulacrum, creating a cycle of desire, acquisition, and renewed dissatisfaction that reproduces itself and propagates market relations rather than promoting human flourishing.

This study reveals the disciplinary architecture of gendered success as a particularly insidious aspect of the commercialization of happiness, which functions through the intimate colonization of subjectivity rather than through coercion that is visible to its victims, making its mechanisms philosophically invisible to them. Self-alienation as a concept in this situation is a fruitful new tool of analysis in feminist philosophy and critical theory.

The discovery of commercialized well-being as a source of traumatic experience is perhaps the most useful practical conclusion of this study, as it reframes the contemporary mental health crisis not as a collection of dysfunctional personalities, but as a structural formation of a philosophical condition that requires cultural and political, but not necessarily therapeutic, solutions.

The study found that simulacral logic, gender discipline, and traumatic experience are more interrelated than expected, so these three dimensions are manifestations of a single philosophical framework rather than separate phenomena. The main weakness of this study is its theoretical nature – it still needs to be confirmed in other cultural contexts.

Future research should extend this philosophical structure to non-Western conceptualizations of happiness, the contribution of artificial intelligence to the further commercialization of happiness, and the intersection between commercialized well-being, the ecological crisis, and postcolonial subjectivity [45]. Philosophy must assert that true human flourishing cannot be reduced to market rationality – and that this argument is also a form of protest.

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