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EMOTIONS AND CONSUMPTION:
MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS IN THE DISCOURSE
OF SOME BRITISH AND POLISH NEWS WEBSITES

INTRODUCTION

The media offer two major approaches towards consumption and consumerist behaviour, i.e. either as a destructive action affecting the social life, a “total”, objectifying agenda,¹ or as an important action on the path to economic development, and in the cultural dimension—an area of self-expression, self-creation. Intense consumption practices are supposed to stimulate civilisational progress or to develop and maintain a sense of well-being, to attest to the liberty in the economic and identity choices. Which of these discourses is most prominent in the context of the coronavirus pandemic? Do journalists point to the necessity of changing of the current consumption patterns? Do they question the lifestyle typical of the upper class, the middle class and all those aspiring to follow their fashion? Or do they

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¹ Journalists promote the ideas by Zygmunt Bauman and his book *Konsumowanie życia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2009); Richard Wightman FOX and T. J. Jackson LEARS, *The Culture of Consumption* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Anthony GIDDENS, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość: “ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, trans. Alina Szulżycka (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo PWN, 2003); Sut JHALLY, *Codes of Advertising, Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society* (London: Routledge, 1987); Hans KJELLBERG, “Market Practices and Over-Consumption,” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 2, no. 11 (2008): 151–67; Celia LURY, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Grant MCCracken, *Culture and Consumption II: Markets, Meaning, and Brand Management* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2005).

recommend a quick return to the previous level of consumption activity? Does the pandemic promote saving? Does it give a chance to reduce the environmental cost of consumerism? Shall we focus on the stimulation of the consumption growth? Shall we lift COVID-19-related restrictions as they lower the spending costs in many areas?

According to economic experts' estimates, private consumption has a tendency to decrease, on average, by 35% during the time of the imposed restrictions. A pandemic reduces the supply of the work force and increases the risk of redundancies at work. Economic experts expect that 40% of those active professionally will at some point experience a period of unemployment during a pandemic. Do journalists address these alarming statistics? Do they warn against the consequences of reduced consumption? Or rather, do they present balanced opinions, optimistic prognoses and specific guidelines that could be particularly useful in the prevailing stressful conditions, whose massive character poses a real health risk to the society?

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The analysis is intended to determine the dominant types of the discourse on consumption, presented in the selected media, and the types of emotions that they evoke. A qualitative and quantitative analysis was performed, pertaining to the publications on the news websites *polityka.pl* and *bbc.com*, leading to a contrastive analysis of media representations of emotions in these media.

The objective of this study was to address the question of the level of emotional content in the discourse on consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our analysis of two opposing discourses on contemporary consumption revealed the strategies behind emotional content in the texts. Relying on emotions interferes with the logic and rationality of opinions and does not help to ease the mind in difficult times. The emotional load is intensified by hyperbole, labelling, using value-laden forms, accusing the opponent of intentional wrong-doing, implying insincere intentions and negative attitudes. Emotional representations in the discourse have a metaphorical and

expressive character. The debating subjects go to extremes, with morality acting as the limiting force.²

Does the media coverage, presented on Polish and English websites during the COVID-19 pandemic, traumatise or soften the discourse? Do the analysed portals hit the emotional tones? Do they present the news selectively, offer pessimistic prognoses or perhaps, on the contrary, do they focus on the positive and the potential ways of resolving the situation?

1.2 MAIN ASSUMPTIONS

We made certain assumptions in our study. In the area of language, the basic assumptions refer to the use (or lack thereof) by the journalists, the authors of the texts, of the terms related to consumption, such as *zakupy/kupowanie* (shopping), *konsument* (consumer), and *konsumpcja* (consumption). These were the keywords entered in the search engines of the text archives. The choice of the keywords is reflected in the corpus of the study.

Another assumption concerns interpretation frames that were expected to be found in the texts. The frames were obtained through a deductive approach, as their existence was assumed on the basis of literature analysis.³ The analysis led to the conclusion that the media present two extreme image-frames of consumption, i.e. the frame of “hyperconsumption and a necessity for change” (HNC) and the frame of economic stimulant” (ES). There is a third discourse possible, which points towards consumption as “a daily routine” (DR), which is modified in the context of “new normality”. The first approach focuses on spectacular manifestations of conspicuous consumption and a necessity to reject this excessive practice. The journalists warn against a probable return to the pre-pandemic level of consumption activity. In line with another approach, intense consumption maintains the sense of well-being in society. In the times of crisis, a stimulation of consumption activity seems to be the greatest challenge for the authorities. The third approach views consumption as a daily routine, resulting from a habit, comfort or social duties, which has little, if anything, to do with hyperconsumption (HNC) and consumption seen as a factor of economic growth (EC).

² Marek KOCHAN, “‘Przyklejanie etykietek’, czyli o negatywnym określaniu przeciwnika,” *Język a kultura* 11 (1994): 86.

³ Marek PALCZEWSKI, “Koncepcja framingu i jej zastosowanie w badaniach newsów w Wiadomościach TVP i Faktach TVN,” *Studia Medioznawcze* 1, no. 44 (2011): 33.

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

In line with McCombs,⁴ we assumed that priming and framing, the subtypes of agenda-setting, are the crucial processes ordering the media content, providing context through the selection, exposing, omitting or extending of news. Basically, they point towards the significance of a given piece of information. Research proves there is a correlation between media agenda and public agenda.⁵ Agenda-setting is linked with bias, when one of the stances is favoured at the cost of another. Following Denis McQuail, various types of bias were distinguished: explicit (unwitting, partisan) and implicit (ideological, propaganda). The implicit, hidden and unintentional bias could be detected through a careful study of the text, by uncovering hidden assumptions and value judgments.⁶ James Tankard distinguished eleven so-called mechanisms useful for singling out different interpreting frames. In the case of media analyses, these are: headlines, subheadings, photographs, captions, selection of quotations, selection of references, leads, logos, statistical data, boards, paragraphs and conclusions.⁷

We can also talk about two aspects of attention paid to public affairs: its amount and tone.⁸ Agenda-setting shows when and why a given topic is subject to a public debate and how it shapes the discourse. Framing concerns an analysis of the discourse tone, i.e. elucidating the meanings that make the public opinion focus their attention on a particular aspect of a given issue. Framing allows one to define these topics, set up parameters for public discourse. Our analysis is based solely on framing. According to Robert Entman: "Frame works through selection and foregrounding of certain features of reality while others are kept in the background, so that a balanced story is presented, together with its causes, moral implications and precautions."⁹

⁴ Maxwell McCOMBS, *Ustanawianie agendy: media masowe i opinia publiczna* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2008).

⁵ The following literature should be mentioned here: Catherine LUTHER and Mark MILLER, "Framing of the 2003 U.S.-Iraq War Demonstration: An Analysis of News and Partisan Texts," *J & MC Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2005): 78–96. Frank R. BAUMGARTNER and Bryan D. JONES, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁶ John STREET, *Mass media, polityka, demokracja*, trans. Tadeusz D. Lubański (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006): 17–18.

⁷ James W. TANKARD, "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," in *Framing Public Life. Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen Reese, Oscar Gandy and August Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001): 95–106.

⁸ BAUMGARTNER and JONES, *Agendas and Instability*.

⁹ STREET, *Mass media, polityka, demokracja*, 33.

Framing refers to the process of a specific conceptualisation or a change in the understanding of a scene.¹⁰

In journalism, *framing* refers to the majority of the texts. Journalists initially try to prepare a text in an objective way; however, in order to organise information in a systematic and effective way, they start to use frames. They are often used under the influence of the frames used by other members of public life. Texts become an arena of competition, where particular subjects compete to promote their own view of social and political issues. The frames, according to Catherine Luther and Mark Miller, are favoured by political and economic (corporations) and they reflect their interests.¹¹

The next stages of our analysis are aimed to:

- 1) determine the weight (significance) of given discourse frames on consumption in the time of the pandemic;
- 2) determine the way of attributing values to information on consumption through a calculation of the proportion of keywords with negative or positive connotations.

A deductive method, relying “on an already-established, a priori definition and operationalisation of the frame, which is then confronted with the analysed news”¹² was used to identify the frames. The research procedure is based on the comparison of the features of the frame, assumed a priori by the researcher, with those observed in the text. We assumed, after Palczewski, that a given interpretation frame is present in the text if two out of four research questions were answered positively.¹³ This method does not only validates the procedure in the future research but also provides the ground for a quantitative analysis of corpus texts. It is also an interesting starting point for qualitative analysis.

The identification of the frames was done through qualitative analysis. Whether a text was assigned a given frame depended on the style of presenting and commenting on an issue, on the quotations coming from its supporters and opponents, the voices of experts and other people relating to the issue and consumption behaviours during the pandemic.

The frame of hyperconsumption (HNC) was identified on the basis of four indexes, i.e. positive responses to the following questions:

¹⁰ Dennis CHONG and James N. DRUCKMAN, “Framing Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (2007): 103–26.

¹¹ LUTHER and MILLER, “Framing.”

¹² PALCZEWSKI, “Koncepcja framingu,” 33.

¹³ Ibid.

- Does the text use phrases relating consumption to hedonism, materialism, shopaholism, a waste of money?
- Does the text use any other pejorative terms in order to highlight negative aspects of the contemporary phenomenon of consumption?
- Does the text include a suggestion of changes in contemporary, negative consumption patterns?
- Does the text state that the pandemic can facilitate changes in the contemporary consumption patterns, promote saving, give a chance to reduce environmental costs, to reduce consumerism?

The frame of consumption as an economic stimulus (EC) was identified on the basis of the following indexes:

- Does the text use phrases relating consumption to economic growth, social well-being, GDP increase or other measures of income?
- Does the text point to a need to stimulate the consumption growth (including a lift of the pandemic restrictions) in order to get back on the path of economic growth?
- Does the text offer perspectives and actions that can facilitate getting back on the right economic track?
- Does the author of the text threaten the readers with the consequences of reduced consumption?

The frame of consumption as a daily routine (DR) was determined on the basis of the following questions:

- Does the text use phrases relating consumption to everyday, routine practice?
- Does the text point to potential problems with shopping, the buying and selling of goods?
- Does the text include suggestions on how to do shopping during the pandemic?
- Does the author of the text point to changes in everyday consumption practice due to the pandemic?

1.4 MATERIAL

The study was conducted in late July and early August, 2020, with the use of the materials published online *Polityka* and the *BBC* between March 1, 2020 and July 30, 2020. Both websites are considered as models in terms of publication standards. Today these are opinion-forming news portals of a socio-political character, with a long tradition, targeting educated readers. It is worth noting that their editors' views on the world were not important (these

could also influence the choice of frames, however, this could be an object for another study). They were selected based on the assumption that their texts will be quite balanced, neutral, not imposing any interpreting frames on the readers.

We collected 175 texts with a search engine and some keywords. We rejected 46 texts which used the term “consumption” in the contexts not related to the formulated frames. Finally, 129 texts were subject to our analysis (47 from *polityka.pl* and 82 from *bbc.com*).¹⁴

2. RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

2.1 FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY OF FRAMES

The frames were found present in the majority of the analysed texts (sometimes multiple frames as there were two or three frames found within one text).

Table 1. Frequency of frames used by the *Polityka* and *BBC* websites

Frame	<i>polityka.pl</i>	<i>bbc.com</i>
Frame of hyperconsumption and a need for changes in the consumption patterns (HNC)	28 (40.4%)	26 (22%)
Frame of consumption as an economic growth stimulus (ES)	12 (17%)	19 (15.8%)
Frame of consumption as a daily routine (DR)	31 (42.6%)	74 (62.2%)

Source: own study.

Interestingly, the neoliberal discourse was not the dominating one in the analysed texts. An economic growth and GDP index were not the most important in the context of the pandemic. The issues such as lifting the restrictions in order to stimulate an economic growth or to boost consumption were not touched upon. Instead, other issues were raised such as the essence of economic growth. Questions were asked: Growth for whom? At whose cost? What is its goal and where does it lead? What is the right path of growth? The GDP index was criticised and some negative consequences of

¹⁴ URL addresses for these *Polityka* and *BBC* articles are listed in the Bibliography.

GDP growth were mentioned, e.g. environmental pollution and a decrease in quality of life (despite an increase in consumption).

Discussions were started about the usefulness of various methods of measuring social and economic phenomena and the credibility of the results was questioned. Economic growth was not always considered a growth. There was an attempt not to define growth in a narrow, mechanistic way, so that it could be also viewed from other perspectives, e.g. the quality of life or well-being. It was proven that the choice of a measuring method has an influence on what we do, on what policy-makers do, and on what we strive for. According to the authors of the report on the growth measurement: "Once we apply false measurements, we will get false objectives;... our statistical and accounting system to a great extent forms a perspective through which we perceive the world."¹⁵

Within the HNC frame, the most widely discussed topic was the danger related to improper choices of consumption and management, standing in opposition to the human nature, and manifesting themselves in spreading technological inventions in the economic area.

The HNC and DR frames were present equally frequently in the analysed texts available at *polityka.pl*, at least in terms of sheer numbers. The dominant frame at *bbc.com* was DR (62% of texts). The HNC frame was present in 40% of the analysed texts at *polityka.pl* and 22% at *bbc.com*, while the ES frame 17% and 16%, respectively. Moreover, texts published at by the BBC were more internally diverse than at those by *Polityka*. Some texts employ both the HNC and ES frame (the mixed frame), as well as elements of other discourses, e.g. breaking the law by drinking alcohol in public or by not wearing masks.

The texts posted on the two websites were mostly framed in the direction of describing everyday consumption practice during the pandemic (almost half of the texts at *polityka.pl* and more than a half, 62%, at *bbc.com*). Analysing the level of saturation with the frames, the HNC level was higher for *Polityka*, as 17 out of 28 texts included 2 affirmative replies to the asked questions, while for the BBC it was 13 texts. The ES frame was used similarly at the portals. In the case of the DR frame, the texts available at *polityka.pl* fulfilled 3 out 4 framing criteria, while at *bbc.com* it was 2 criteria out 4 (the data are presented in Table 2).

¹⁵ Quoted by Marta OLESIK, "Nie jest jeszcze za późno, by zmienić kurs," *Polityka*, April 4, 2020.

Table 2. Level of saturation with the frames in the analysed texts

Frame	Number of positive indexes in the frame	polityka.pl	bbc.com
Frame of hyperconsumption and a need for changes in the consumption patterns (HNC)	4/4	5	3
	3/4	12	10
	2/4	11	13
Frame of consumption as an economic growth stimulus (ES)	4/4	1	2
	3/4	3	6
	2/4	8	11
Frame of consumption as a daily routine (DR)	4/4	5	10
	3/4	16	26
	2/4	10	38

Source: own study.

An analysis of the character of the indexes behind the presence (or absence) of a given frame shows that one of the questions concerning the frame of consumption as an economic growth stimulus had little effect on the results. It was question 2 related to journalists pointing towards a need to stimulate the consumption growth (including a lift of restrictions) in order to boost economic growth (Table 3 presents a detailed distribution of answers).

Table 3. Frequency of positive answers to the index questions at polityka.pl and bbc.com

Frame	Question no.	polityka.pl	bbc.com
Frame of hyperconsumption and a need for changes in the consumption patterns (HNC)	Question 1	21	11
	Question 2	16	6
	Question 3	11	19
	Question 4	10	24
Frame of consumption as an economic growth stimulus (ES)	Question 1	12	19
	Question 2	2	6
	Question 3	9	18
	Question 4	7	5
Frame of consumption as a daily routine (DR)	Question 1	31	74
	Question 2	29	71
	Question 3	12	38
	Question 4	24	66

Source: own study.

2.2 EMOTIONAL CONTENT IN THE ANALYSED TEXTS

556 phrases were found in the texts, which were attributed with explicit connotations. They either evoked negative (318) or positive (238) emotions. The Polish or English versions are not always equivalent. They are given in the original form, and grouped according to their meaning. Pairs such as *wirus/virus*, *pandemia/pandemic*, *zachorowania/infected*, *zgony/deaths* were not counted separately. Below is a list of the most frequent phrases with negative connotations:

- (globalne) załamania gospodarcze, rynków finansowych/global, massive, largest worldwide) declines; (wielka, naturalna, gospodarcza) katastrofa/ (economic) catastrophe; worst-case scenarios, negative shift; (permanentny) kryzys/(massive, economic) crisis, failure, (unprecedented) fall, collapse; lost control;
- dystans społeczny/social distancing; restrykcje, obostrzenia/ (uncomfortable) restrictions, lockdown; zakaz/ban;
- ryzyko/risk; zagrożenie, stres, (niewyobrażalna) presja, traumatyczne doświadczenie—fear, anxiety, frustration;
- (rozpasana, oszalała, ostentacyjna) konsumpcja/over-consumption, negative lifestyle outcomes;
- damaging (wildlife), brutal trade; destruction of the natural world, danger (to human health).

Here is a list of the most frequent phrases attributed with positive connotations:

- positive strategies, shift/(wielki) przełom (w ekonomii); transformacja (gospodarki, społeczeństw)/fundamental transformation; szansa (na rozwój)/ (huge) changes; significant challenges;
- more powerful and more profitable growth; phenomenal growth (e.g. of online shopping);
- ekorozwój/climate-friendly recovery, balance for nature, sustainability, reduce waste; wrażliwość (społeczna, ekologiczna), (nowy) zielony świat;
- luzowanie restrykcji/restrictions to be lifted; reduction in demand growth;
- solidarność—charity, care, (huge) relief; support;
- positive lifestyle outcomes solutions, healthy recovery;
- (natural) optimist.

What is surprising is the proportion of the expressions with positive connotations. They were mostly used in the HNC frame. It should be concluded

that both portals did not rely heavily on emotion-laden content as a journalistic means of expression.

3. QUALITATIVE RESULTS

A detailed analysis of the frame elements can offer interesting results. As was mentioned earlier, framing of information is accompanied by the use of appropriate language. The HNC frame is the frame most charged with positive emotions in the context of emotional discourse. The texts rely on expressions such as *wielka szansa/big chance*¹⁶ (e.g. when talking about air quality during the lockdown¹⁷), *pozytywne strategie/positive strategies* (e.g. of legislative support of biodiversity or consumption, investment choices),¹⁸ *nowej, światowej ekonomii/new world economy*,¹⁹ *Wielkiej Transformacji/Great Transformation*,²⁰ *nowego, zielonego świata/new, green world*,²¹ etc.

It was claimed that the pandemic will lead to self-isolation and a change in the models of spending leisure time²² into a “mniej kosztowny system” (less wasteful system),²³ it “przestawi globalną gospodarkę w stronę większej wrażliwości społecznej i ekologicznej” (will direct the global economy towards greater social and ecological sensitivity),²⁴ “spowolni wskaźniki produkcji i konsumpcji” (will reduce production and consumption rates), and also “nauczy rozumieć i kontemplować naturę” (will learn to understand and contemplate nature).²⁵ What is more, coronavirus was supposed to appear at the right moment,²⁶ and turned out to be “przełomowym dla środowiska momentem” (the environment’s big moment),²⁷ “fascynującym okresem dla środowiskowych spraw” (a fascinating time to address environmental issues),²⁸ “oknem dla refleksji na temat właściwego i złego konsumowania”

¹⁶ An English quote is given only when it comes from *bbc.com*.

¹⁷ Steffan MESSENGER, “Climate Change ‘Bigger Threat’ than COVID-19,” *BBC*, July 7, 2020.

¹⁸ Soutik BISWAS, “Dark Truth Behind India’s Post-Lockdown Liquor Lines,” *BBC*, May 14, 2020.

¹⁹ Victoria GILL, “Covid Recovery Could ‘Tip The Balance’ for Nature,” *BBC*, May 21, 2020.

²⁰ Edwin BENDYK, “Czeka nas Wielka Transformacja. Jaki świat po pandemii?” *Polityka*, April 1, 2020.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Agnieszka KRZEMIŃSKA, “Turystyka po zarazie,” *Polityka*, June 16, 2020.

²³ “Gucci slashes ‘stale’ seasonal fashion shows,” *BBC*, May 26, 2020.

²⁴ Jerzy BACZYŃSKI, “Ciemna Wielkanoc,” *Polityka*, April 8, 2020.

²⁵ “Rethink: Pope Francis warns poor have become part of landscape,” *BBC*, June 22, 2020.

²⁶ BACZYŃSKI, “Ciemna Wielkanoc.”

²⁷ “The Environment’s Big Moment?” *BBC*, May 30, 2020.

²⁸ Justin ROWLATT, “Could the Coronavirus Crisis Finally Finish Off Coal?” *BBC*, June 9, 2020.

(an outlet for a reflection on the rights and wrongs of consumption).²⁹ Generally, this peculiar time allowed for positive changes.³⁰ It was regarded as “wczesne oznaki bardziej ludzkiej ekonomii” (early signs of a more humane economy).³¹ The obligatory quarantine and the closure of most shops and shopping centres were supposed to make people reflect on their lifestyle, especially on consumerism. Conclusions were reached: “We usurped nature, we dominated and wounded it. We incited Prometheus, and buried Pan... world has increasingly had to bow to growing global concerns regarding over-consumption.”³²

A tendency to use an emotional tone was observed for *Polityka*, e.g. in its emphasis of the contrast between the current and desired ways of consumption. A positive discourse was replaced by pejorative terms, critical remarks: “The religion of ‘have-have-have’ takes its toll—the Earth’s resources are being drained, we are flooded by rubbish, economic differences resemble the feudal system.”³³ It was pointed out that “we ran nervously around shops, bought too much, focused on the material aspect of that time.”³⁴ It was also highlighted that the crisis “can do some damage but can also be a chance for development.”³⁵ The BBC journalists, more often than those at *polityka.pl*, pointed towards chances to “przyspieszyć pożądane zmiany” (fast-forward some of the changes required)³⁶ towards chances that go in line with the re-organisation of the improper behaviour. They rarely criticised consumption in its excessive form.

The content which qualified to the HNC frame was related to: positive change in the culture of eating meals,³⁷ limiting wild animals trade,³⁸ increasing the importance of pro-health movement, limiting meat consumption,³⁹ decrease in global fuel consumption (biggest since the Second World War), including coal.⁴⁰

²⁹ “Gucci Slashes.”

³⁰ “Rethink: Pope Francis.”

³¹ Ibid.

³² “Gucci Slashes.”

³³ Sylwia CHUTNIK and Grażyna PLEBANEK, “Budujemy nowy dom,” *Polityka*, May 12, 2020.

³⁴ Katarzyna CZARNECKA, “Jak przeżyć Wielkanoc w czasach zarazy,” *Polityka*, April 11, 2020.

³⁵ “Rethink: Pope Francis.”

³⁶ MESSENGER, “Climate change.”

³⁷ “Tackling obesity ‘must be part of recovery plan’,” *BBC.com*, July 2, 2020.

³⁸ Helen BRIGGS, “Putting the spotlight on the global wildlife trade,” *BBC*, April 6, 2020.

³⁹ Caroline BULLOCK, “The foods we are all eating during lockdown,” *BBC*, June 28, 2020.

⁴⁰ ROWLATT, “Could the coronavirus crisis.”

When it comes to the frame of consumption as a stimulus of economic growth, the texts relied on expressions related to the apocalyptic visions of the fall: “The economy is dying. Shopping galleries became empty, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theatres were closed.... The automotive industry came to a standstill ... three factories of household appliances in Łódź are closed.... The list gets longer every day.”⁴¹ At the same time it was emphasised that consumption, “being the motor drive behind the economy,”⁴² needs to come back to its normal level. “To maintain consumption levels is of essence,”⁴³ was stated.

“Lockdown” was used in this frame as an “irrational”⁴⁴ solution intensifying inequalities, social tension and debts,⁴⁵ “economic, destructive catastrophe”,⁴⁶ “absolutely ridiculous”,⁴⁷ “irrational solution”.⁴⁸ It was compared to the Battle of Dunkirk, a “heroic operation but a great defeat”.⁴⁹ The recession proved to be greater than expected by the IMF reports,⁵⁰ an organisation which warned that “precautionary saving”, limiting consumption will destroy the economy.⁵¹ It was postulated that governments should take steps to stimulate consumers’ activity.⁵² Donald Trump was cited, announcing the opening of new businesses and convincing that they “cannot let the cure be worse than the problem itself.”⁵³ All these negative expressions were used in order to put emphasis on the need to put the economy on its feet.⁵⁴

As was already mentioned, the DR frame was used most frequently, appearing in half of the texts. It included the information on new ways of shopping, imposing restrictions, their lifting, types of products and services gaining in popularity, descriptions of reactions to the restrictions being softened.

⁴¹ Anna DĄBROWSKA and Adam GRZESZAK, “Tarcza, czyli listek figowy,” *Polityka*, April 3, 2020.

⁴² Anna GRZESZAK, “Mamy najgłębszą recesję od 1990 r., ale się podniesiemy,” *Polityka*, July 14, 2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Coronavirus in South Africa: President Ramaphosa Says Outbreak Will Get Worse,” *BBC*, May 25, 2020.

⁴⁵ “Lockdown is ‘economic catastrophe’, says William Hague,” *BBC*, June 16, 2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Reopening Shops during Leicester Lockdown ‘pointless’,” *BBC*, July 24, 2020.

⁴⁸ “SA court rules lockdown restrictions ‘irrational’,” *BBC*, June 3, 2020.

⁴⁹ “Lockdown is ‘Economic Catastrophe,’” *BBC*, June 16, 2020.

⁵⁰ Andrew WALKER, “IMF Says Decline in Global Growth Worse Than Forecast,” *BBC*, June 24, 2020.

⁵¹ “Precautionary Saving, Reducing Consumption Will Be Economic Scarring,” quoted *ibid.*

⁵² “Bank of England ‘ready to act’ as economy shrinks record 20%,” *BBC*, June 12, 2020.

⁵³ Quoted in “US hits record high in daily cases,” *BBC*, June 26, 2020.

⁵⁴ BENDYK, “Czeka nas Wielka Transformacja.”

The texts available at the portals offered descriptions of behaviour which overestimated the risk, with an accompanying irrational fear, as well as the taming of the risk, accepting the “new normality”. Stocking up on food, massive purchasing of products were characteristic of the initial stages of the pandemic (“Empty Supermarket Shelves”,⁵⁵ “Visiting a Local Supermarket Felt Like a Bad Dream”⁵⁶ at *bbc.com*). It was noted that “it led to brawls, snatching products away from other buyers’ hands.”⁵⁷ The onset of “madness”, “shops becoming empty”⁵⁸ was described: “Pasta sold out quickly, spaghetti was unavailable. People stock up on sugar and flour.”⁵⁹ The journalists pointed to the frustration and fear present among buyers: “They keep the distance. They look at each other’s hands and baskets.... Customers are afraid of the virus, checkers are afraid of customers. Everyone can be a potential carrier of the virus, nobody feels safe.... People lose their temper.... Cashiers work under unimaginable pressure, they are at the end of their tether.”⁶⁰

In the texts available from the BBC news portal descriptions were toned down, even though they pointed to anxiety among customers: “We live in constant fear and anxiety—do not leave home, do not touch anyone, forget your routines—it is not a normal way of behaving.”⁶¹ However, positive emotions were also described, such as being overjoyed at the lifting of restrictions: customers were “excited” at shops reopening after a three-month “nightmare” closure,⁶² felt relieved at coming back to normality,⁶³ they were happy to be able to go out.⁶⁴ However, many were left with “unanswered questions”,⁶⁵ i.e. the authorities’ rules and regulations concerning shopping and services proved to unclear and unreasonable.

Most texts in this frame conveyed information on technical, logistics solutions related to social distancing and feeling of safety. For example, “jed-

⁵⁵ “Supermarkets Ask Shoppers to Be ‘Considerate’ and Stop Stockpiling,” *BBC*, March 15, 2020.

⁵⁶ Peter RUBINSTEIN, “Why Grocery Shelves Won’t Be Empty for Long,” *BBC*, April 2, 2020.

⁵⁷ DĄBROWSKA and GRZESZAK, “Tarcza, czyli listek figowy.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Anna DĄBROWSKA, Agnieszka ZAGNER, and Zbigniew PENDEL, “W sklepach nie ma Armagedonu,” *Polityka*, March 14, 2020.

⁶⁰ DĄBROWSKA and GRZESZAK, “Tarcza, czyli listek figowy.”

⁶¹ Dearbail JORDAN, “Five Ways Shopping Will Be Different from Now On,” *BBC*, June 12, 2020.

⁶² “Scots Queue in the Rain as Shopping Returns,” *BBC*, June 29, 2020.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Ali GORDON, “What Will Shopping in NI Look Like?” *BBC*, June 12, 2020.

nokierunkowy ruch” (one-way shopping traffic),⁶⁶ “wirtualny system kolejki” (virtual queuing system)⁶⁷ were described. “An obligatory set of products” was mentioned, i.e. most frequently bought products: “pasta, rice, flour, cleaning products, toilet paper”.⁶⁸

The purchase of everyday products increased by 57%, the purchase of products with a long shelf life doubled, and the purchase of hygiene-related products increased by 70% since the pandemic broke out (in the United States an increased demand for weapons and ammunition and in Poland an increased demand for “military food” was observed).⁶⁹ A change in shopping habits was observed when it comes to fashion, e.g. a preference for casual clothes, a decrease in meat consumption, or a change in models of doing shopping (less frequently but more).⁷⁰ A price increase was noted, as well as breaks in supplies (quite substantial in Britain).⁷¹ DIY practice gained in popularity: “They build furniture, paint walls, bake bread, brew beer. Today they sew safety masks and produce disinfectant liquids. They have an ambition to create stuff which normally should be available in shops. The spirit of Adam Słodowy is still alive.”⁷² A growing popularity of online⁷³ shopping was observed, as the previously popular business models were verified in the context of world markets collapsing. Both portals describe in detail conflicts between tenants and owners of commercial areas⁷⁴ but also examples of social support, new support initiatives aimed at helping to take care of other’s pets, kids, shopping.⁷⁵ Eight articles available at BBC.com were devoted to charity activity taken by all sorts of voluntary organisations.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ John ARKLESS, “Cardiff Shopping Arcades Plan Social Distancing Measures,” *BBC*, June 11, 2020.

⁶⁷ “Sainsbury’s to Try Out Virtual Queuing System,” *BBC*, July 28, 2020.

⁶⁸ DĄBROWSKA and GRZESZAK, “Tarcza, czyli listek figowy.”

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Adam GRZESZAK, “Kto zarobił na wirusie,” *Polityka*, May 15, 2020.

⁷¹ DĄBROWSKA and GRZESZAK, “Tarcza, czyli listek figowy.”

⁷² Adam GRZESZAK, “Zrób to sam!” *Polityka*, April 9, 2020. Adam Słodowy was an inventor and a long-time TV personality who presented various DIY projects.

⁷³ Simon READ, “Ocado Says Switch to Online Shopping is Permanent,” *BBC*, July 14, 2020.

⁷⁴ “Intu Warns Shopping Centres May Close As Funding Talks Continue,” *BBC*, June 23, 2020.

⁷⁵ Martyna BUNDA, “Solidarność w czasach zarazy. Pomagajmy i dajmy pomoc sobie,” *Polityka*, March 3, 2020.

⁷⁶ “‘Consideration needed’ for Those Not Wearing Masks in Shops,” *BBC*, July 24, 2020; “Charity’s Plea to Increase School Uniform Grant,” *BBC*, July 31, 2020; “Sunderland Domestic Abuse Survivors Start Furniture Scheme,” *BBC*, July 28.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the articles devoted to consumption-related behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to reach the following conclusions. Firstly, the dominance of two frames, i.e. the one of hyper-consumption and the one of a stimulus to economic growth was not verified positively. The interpretative schema which was used most frequently was the frame of everyday consumption, with in-depth descriptions of changes in the “new normality”. Frustration of customers related to the restrictions tightening was described, as well as customers’ joy at the restrictions being lifted. *Polityka* used a more emotional language, especially at the onset of the pandemic. However, it should be noted that both portals did not rely heavily on emotional means of expression.

The texts were rather well-balanced, not very emotional, and some of them could be even considered as a model example of presenting various data and opinions. Many articles offered practical guidelines related to the steps that ought to be taken in order to avoid being infected. Such guidelines were mostly available at bbc.com, which testifies to the responsibility of the journalists. The articles offered hyperlinks to the vital information or health institutions.

The role of the media is today more important than ever before when it comes to the creation of a feeling of safety or guiding the society towards safety. They can contribute significantly to health recommendations being followed. When it comes to public safety, it is particularly important to effectively spread information and knowledge, very often of a dynamic character. The analysed texts fulfilled that role.

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EMOTIONS AND CONSUMPTION: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS IN THE DISCOURSE
OF THE SELECTED BRITISH AND POLISH WEB PORTALS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to test the hypothesis referring to the dominant ways of portraying consumption on some Polish and British websites during a pandemic—either as a social practice with huge chances to consume less or as a significant factor which affects economic growth. On the one hand, the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus could provide an opportunity to “fast-forward” some of the changes required. On the other hand, journalists recommend a quick return to pre-COVID-19 consumption lives, a stimulation of consumption in order to save the national economy.

The article uses a framing analysis to examine consumption-related texts from two most-read, opinion-forming Polish and British websites—*polityka.pl* and *bbc.com*. The framing analysis focuses on the practices involved in the shaping of public discourse; it responds to the need for research into the social significance of consumption.

It turns out that the two frames of consumption as 1) overconsumption in terms of the need of change in consumer attitudes and behaviour and 2) a factor that affects economic growth are not the dominant ways of portraying this phenomenon during a pandemic. The everyday consumption frame was found to be used more often than the aforementioned frames.

Keywords: consumption; framing analysis; pandemic; emotions.

MEDIATYZACJA EMOCJI W DISKURSIE O KONSUMPCJI
– ANALITYCZNE RAMY BADAŃ ZJAWISKA W OKRESIE PANDEMII

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu było zweryfikowanie hipotez odnoszących się do dwóch dominujących dyskursów o współczesnej konsumpcji umieszczonych w polskich i angielskich mediach w okresie pandemii – dyskursu o konsumpcji jako społecznej praktyce, której wymiary należy ograniczać albo o konsumpcji jako ważnej aktywności na ścieżce rozwoju gospodarczego. Czy dziennikarze wskazują na konieczność zmiany dotychczasowych wzorców konsumowania, czemu sprzyja okres pandemii, bowiem skłania do oszczędzania, daje szanse zmniejszenia kosztów środowiskowych? Czy też zalecają szybki powrót do dotychczasowego poziomu konsumpcyjnej aktywności, stymulowania wzrostu konsumpcji, znoszenia ograniczeń związanych z Covid-19, by ograniczyć ryzyko recesji?

W artykule wykorzystano technikę ramowania do analizy tekstów o konsumpcji z dwóch opiniotwórczych serwisów internetowych – polityka.pl i bbc.com. Analiza ramowa koncentruje się na badaniu praktyk związanych z kształtowaniem dyskursu publicznego i umożliwia realizację badań nad społecznym znaczeniem konsumpcji.

Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań ustalono, że dwa skrajne obrazy-ramy zjawiska konsumpcji 1) krytykowanej „hiperkonsumpcji i konieczności jej zmian” oraz 2) rama konsumpcji jako „stymulatora gospodarki” nie są dominującymi w medialnym dyskursie. Najczęściej pojawiające się wypowiedzi dziennikarskie odnosiły się do trzeciego dyskursu, który wskazywał na konsumpcję jako „codzienną, rutynową czynność”.

Słowa kluczowe: konsumpcja; analiza ramowa; pandemia; emocje.