SAVINGS BEHAVIOR OF YOUTH IN POLAND IN TIMES OF MASS CONSUMPTION: HOW «INFECTION» WITH CONSUMER MYTHS WEAKENS THEIR EXPENSE CONTROL AND TRANSFORMS THEM INTO CONSUMPTIVE ZOMBIES?

A starting point for the reflection presented in the paper is over-indebtedness among young people from Poland. This phenomenon has become visible since Poland started to experience rapid economic growth. In order to better understand this problem scholars have decided to use reductionist approach and tried to analyse it thanks to the category of “financial self-control”. This approach is characteristic not only of psychologists, but also of economists. In the paper

I would like to show that money-saving behaviours are normatively regulated, and we should seek the origins of these regulations in society itself. It would be valuable, however, to treat society not as a fully organized and coherent order, but as a cultural battleground. At the present, one can observe, among others, the clash at this cultural battleground between two orientations: ascetic culture and culture of consumption. Because saving behaviours are part of the ascetic culture, it would be interesting to find out more how the culture of consumption colonizes “social order” and weakens this originally ascetic ability to money-saving. It seems that significant role in the process is played by the consumer myths (the social myths which are the part of the culture of consumption). I decided to test an assumption that these myths have their impact on the
ability which is usually described as “financial self-control”. I reconstructed these myths during group interviews conducted among students of one of the faculties of the University of Łódź in Poland. After that, I prepared questionnaire and decided to measure to what extent young people were “infected” by them.

Finally, I conducted a survey among 307 students of the same faculty. The outcomes coming from the survey at least partially confirmed my assumption. It seems that “infection” with these myths leads to “mutation” of intermediary structures – cognitive structures that play an intermediary role between norms and behaviours resulting from them. The stronger is this “infection”, the more young people turn into consumptive zombies and lose control over their expenses.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM

By their nature, most renewable energy (RE) sources cannot be matched to demand as easily as fossil fuels. Natural sources of energy cannot be conjured up in each moment that we need energy: some days the wind does not blow, and the sun does not shine. Hydropower may be unavailable during drought periods, and biomass crops experience crop failures (just like food crops). Most RE sources have low capacity factors and are less consistent than fossil fuels, which increases cost [2].

Renewable solar and wind energy sources have low operating costs - once generating facilities are built, there is little additional cost for producing energy each year. While this is an operating advantage over fossil fuels, it comes at the cost of higher capital expenditure. Building a RE plant is similar to building a fossil energy plant plus buying all the fuel that the fossil plant will use over its lifetime. Few homeowners would purchase a gas furnace and at the same time purchase all the gas the furnace would use over its life [3], [4]. Yet by their nature, this is what is expected for most RE sources. The high capital cost of most RE sources means that renewable electricity cost is sensitive to interest rates. High interest rates make renewable sources significantly less attractive when compared to fossil fuels, while low interest rates make renewables more attractive. Changing interest rates effectively changes the cost of RE, since interest rates determine the cost of borrowing for initial capital investment [5].