Consumer Culture: Dynamics of Consumption and Happiness

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Abstract
We present a photo-essay of happiness based on preliminary analyses of data collected in conjunction with Emily’s master’s research. Participants provided photographs of what happiness meant to them. Through phenomenological interviews and thematic analyses of both the photos and the interviews, we found two major themes: personal relationships and nature. Close relationships and nature both contributed to the women’s sense of being themselves and made them happy. Consumption played an instrumental role. The women did not consume to be happy, but consumption was part of their relationships with others. Consumption also manifest as detrimental to happiness in their perceptions of its damage to nature. Thus, consumption can contribute favourably to happiness, but consumers need to know more about its unhappy consequences.

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