

# Chapter 21

## Consumption Ideology Constructed on Body and Sexualization in Kids Wear Advertisements

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### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, children's advertisements are problematized. The victims of advertisements are not only adults but also children. The identities of girls and boys, those used in children's clothing advertisements, are worrying because in these advertisements girls and boys are separated from their children identities and identified according to their sexual roles as men and women. The chapter makes a semiology analysis of an advertisement and reveals the identity of the child who became a sexual commodity.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Children are the live messages we send to a time we will not see. (Neil Postman)*

The era that we live in, advertising has become an integral part of our lives. In addition to advertising on radio and television, newspapers or new media, streets and even public transport became advertisement space; our daily lives have been circulated by advertisement boards and live screens. Today it can be conveniently said the entire human life is shaped by the advertising industry.

Consumption is a dynamic process that encompasses all segments of the society, regardless of age, gender, material status or social class. In postmodern era, consumption which is not regarded as meeting a need by people; not only on adults, but also on children who will create the future of the society, is effective. The most important instrument for sustaining consumption ideology is undoubtedly advertising industry that surrounds every part of our life. Advertisements that ensure to capitalist values to continue, serve the current system; not only the adults, but also the children are targets in advertisements which

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are constituted for increasing the consumption. The advertising industry does not only promote children to consumption when advertise products that they meet children needs like eating-drinking, entertainment or clothing; but also serve to reproduce the capital order raising a loyal consumer group. When it comes to children, the advertising industry, which is supposed to act responsibly; harm children with the advertisements that look after capitalist benefits.

Many ethical values are ignored in the advertisement for children in order to increase consumption. Especially, the problem shows up with the generations who indigenise the dominant sexual roles, eliminated from child identity, become “*miniature adults*” by child actors who are used in kids wear advertisements. Kids wear advertisements which position girls and boys as men and women, do not hesitate to attack the child’s body and even use those bodies as a sex object. The impact of this situation on children’s mental, physical and psychological health is not important for the industry.

In the scope of the study, the consumption society and the consumption ideology which constructed through advertising, will be discussed firstly. Right after children’s advertisements, their effects on children and the form of construction body and sexuality as the main problem in children’s advertisements. Finally, the body and sexualization problems in children’s advertisements will be examined through the “*Children with the Style*” commercial film which is recently released by the Koton brand and recommendations for the problematic area will be listed.

## **Modern Society and Consumption Culture**

Consumption; is generally defined as the state of spending / using things that are produced so that the lives of the individuals can be maintained. Another definition for consumption can be made by the use of goods and services. However; this term expresses more than meeting the needs and the use of goods and services in our era. The change in the definition of the consumption term is directly related to modernization and its aftermath. Even the societies which are seen after the modern period have become defined with this term.

The term of consumption society is explained by two different approaches. The first of these is the view that the consumption society means economic development and welfare by approaching from the positive perspective. Featherstone (1996: 142) explains this society by saying: “Consumption society is the society that has provided economic development, can meet all the needs of people in capitalist world.” According to this explanation, individuals meet their needs, satisfy themselves and this brings welfare. This approach, which defines current system as a valid ideology; is based on the thesis that the production will increase when the consumption increases and welfare will increase when the consumption increases. Therefore, it can be said that this view is the general argument of the people who advocate the capitalist market economy.

The second view which Baudrillard leads, criticizes the view that consumption can provide economic progress and increase welfare. When the concept of consumption society is explained via needs and capitalism, the meaning which is expressed becomes clear. Today, the term of need is not defined as a simple necessity, but when it refers with welfare gives the sense. Consumption can be explained by the belief in the absolute power of the indicators. Welfare and wealth, thus consume brings happiness. Consumption does not seem a labour or a result of production process, it is perceived as miracle by individuals (Baudrillard, 2008: 23-24). The happiness comes from this miracle is, first and foremost, an “*equalization*” or “*privilege*” (Baudrillard, 2008: 52). Nevertheless, this equalization / privilege has a

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