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REINTERPRETING SOCIAL LIFESTYLE OF URBAN CULTURE
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CONSUMERISM
THROUGH PRINT MEDIA

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MENGINTERPRETASI SEMULA GAYA HIDUP SOSIAL BUDAYA BANDAR DALAM KONTEKS KONSUMERISMA MENERUSI KARYA MEDIA CETAKAN

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidik nilai gaya hidup sosial masyarakat bandar menerusi pusat membeli-belah melalui konsep konsumerisma yang menjelaskan nilai kepuasan, keinginan dan obsesi terhadap jenama dan komoditi. Kajian ini mengintegrasikan aspirasi dan interaksi pengalaman gaya hidup seharian masyarakat moden di bandar dalam konteks materialisma dan urbanisma. Elemen utama di dalam kajian ini adalah obsesi, emosi, tingkah laku dan interaksi sosial. Pelukis utama yang terlibat dalam kajian ini adalah Andy Warhol, Guillaume Bijl, Peter Blake, Christo and Jean-Claude, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Andre Grusky, Denis Darzacq, Duane Hanson, Barbara Kruger, Claude Closky dan Luo Brothers. Idea terhadap aspek konsumerisma dalam karya-karya pelukis yang dirujuk mengutarakan isu persekitaran dan sosialisasi masyarakat dalam memanifestasi citarasa kepuasan, keinginan dan obsesi terhadap simbol komoditi dan seterusnya membentuk gaya hidup. Konsep Bandar dan Pusat Membeli Belah, dan konsep Materialisma dalam Kepenggunaan digunakan sebagai panduan kontekstual projek penyelidikan. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan praktik studio menerusi pendekatan eksperimentasi studio, refleksi sendiri, sesi kritikan dan ulasan kontekstual. Sumbangan projek penyelidikan ini dalam bidang Seni Halus adalah dengan memberi koleksi simbolik visualisasi dan perhubungan isu-isu kolektif budaya baharu dalam konteks status, santai dan hubungan sosial dalam memberikan representasi makna terhadap pusat membeli belah. Kajian ini memberi impak dalam penjaan pemahaman dan persepsi baru terhadap pusat membeli belah yang dilihat sebagai inkubator yang bersifat variasi serta pelbagai, sentiasa berubah dan membentuk budaya baharu menerusi semangat dan tingkah laku, keinginan dan kepuasan serta ekspresi masyarakat. Kajian ini juga memberi suatu cadangan ke atas persepsi terhadap fungsi pusat membeli belah sebagai agen pembentukan budaya baharu yang berteraskan aspirasi dan keinginan dalam pengalaman hidup seharian.





ABSTRACT

This research project investigated the value of social lifestyle of urban culture within shopping malls, through the concept of consumerism that manifest the sense of satisfaction, desire and obsession toward brands and commodities. The research sought vast aspirations and interactions of modern urban lifestyle in experiencing everyday life in the context of materialism and urbanism. The key elements in the research project consist of obsession, emotion, behavior and social interaction. The key artists involved in this research are Andy Warhol, Guillaume Bijl, Peter Blake, Cleas Oldenburg Christo and Jean-Claude, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Andre Grusky, Denis Darzacq, Duane Hanson, Barbara Kruger, Claude Closky, and Lou Brothers. The reference artworks carried out a suggestion of how the belief system on consumer lifestyle had been projected and developed. The concept of Urban and Shopping Malls, and the concept of Materialism within Consumerism were used to contextualised the research project. A studio practice method was used through studio experimentation, self-reflection, critique sessions, and contextual review approaches. The research project's contribution to the field of Fine Art has been to establish the collective issues of new culture of status, leisure and social relationship as new symbolic forms of representation of meaning in shopping malls. The research project contributed in correlating of how shopping malls could become as a continuous changing incubator in producing and shaping current urban trending enthusiastic and culture behavior of desire, satisfaction and expression. Furthermore it would become as a suggestion for new perspective on mind set towards urban culture lifestyle and turn as new culture of desire and satisfaction in everyday life experience.



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CHAPTER 1

CENTRAL ARGUMENT (INTRODUCTION)



This research investigates the value of lifestyle in urban society through the creation of art works which explore and manipulate images and texts based on principles of consumerism. The research was conducted through the evaluation of consumer values of consumption within the major shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur. Yusniza K. and Chee Lih, Frankie Lee (2010) stated that “Shopping malls are constantly being upgraded to cater to the increasingly fast-paced and cosmopolitan lifestyle of the Malaysian people” (p. 187). In addition they indicated that :



Malaysian shoppers are motivated to visit malls because of the ambience, interior design of the malls, convenience, accessibility and promotion. Evidence shows that there is a strong relationship between shopping mall characteristics and actual action of shoppers in visiting shopping malls. (Yusniza K. and Chee Lih, Frankie Lee, 2010, p. 187)

Urban areas or cities are known to symbolize the unity and combination of varieties influences. It represents and mirrors the value of social culture within it. As stated by Clark (2003), mention that urbanization concept containing some urban lifestyle is a reflection of the pattern that are related to social, economic, behavioral, fashion culture, taste, identity and all of this is part of the aspirations of the people who live in it.

The rapid growth of urban development contribute in maximizing the urban life potential. It does not just patternize the economic structure but also bring the value added of local social relationship. Baudrillard J. (1998), posited that “In the modern consumer society we consume not only goods, but also human services and therefore human relationships” (p. 15). It is proven through the competition among shopping malls owners in providing the best services to the customer.

The concept of a centre under one roof or one-stop shopping centre become more relevance and practical for today shopping malls, and yet unconsciously it becomes a social therapy to the visitors. The social lifestyle

which is collected in one space and connected through several aspect of life.

Terblanche, (1999, as cited in Ali, K. A. M. & Alolayyan, M. N., p. 1 (n.d):

There are various purposes for consumer visiting shopping centre which are to do shopping, entertainment, to rest, spend time with friends etc. Shops, food court, restaurants, cinema, children's games area, interactive entertainment, social use areas, relaxation places and promotion areas now become a major component in shopping centre.

The ability of shopping malls provide and cater the urban society needs and desire conscious and unconsciously effected the way of urban society life in form of physical and spiritual. Hence, the strong financial capability of among urban people more a less contribute in maintaining shopping malls as place to fullfill urban people desire and obsession.



Figure 1.1.1 Some examples of the Luxury Branded Retails Located in KLCC

The existence of shopping malls in major city shopping centres such as Suria KLCC, Pavillion, The Garden Malls and others, contribute towards the dynamic growth of luxurious (Figure 1.1.1) or exclusive goods in the broader

consumer market. A lifestyle which includes luxury goods has become a part of both individuals and their reference groups.

The consumption of luxury goods purchases may also bring self-esteem to certain individuals, classes or groups of people. Kapferer, (1997) stated that “...luxury is the appendage of the ruling classes”, (as cited in Wiedmann et al., 2007, p. 2) and in addition Holt, (1995) mention that “consumer may use luxury items to integrate the symbolic meaning into their own identity” (Vegnerson and Johnson, 2004, p. 7).

Furthermore some consumption of status products could represent and embellish one's ego. Financial ability and buying power in urban society determine whether obsession results in the fulfillment of a person's desire of luxury goods which ultimately becomes a part of their ego, self-satisfaction, and personal lifestyle aspirations. According to Wiedmann et al. (2007, p. 4):

A customer's luxury value perception and the motives for luxury brand consumption are not simply tied to a set of social aspects of displaying status, success, distinction and the human desire to impress other people, but also depend on the nature of the financial, functional and individual utilities of the certain luxury brand.

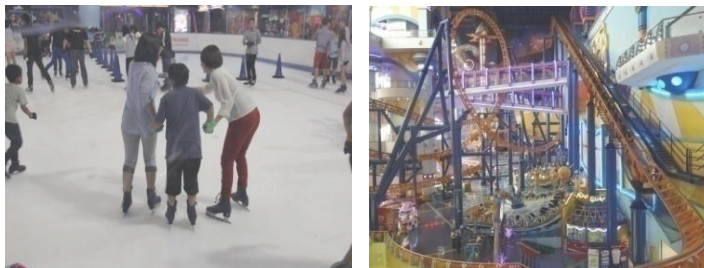


Figure 1.1.2 A few examples of recreational service provided by shopping malls to attract people in Berjaya Times Square Kuala Lumpur.

Shopping malls has become a centre for social interaction and casual and recreational activities (Figure 1.1.2) which will eventually become a space for information exchange among the social community. Ng, C. F. (2003), stated that “...they are not only a centre for shopping but also serve as a community centre for social and recreational activities” (as cited in Nur Hafizah Juhari, Hishamuddin M.Ali, Nurhayati Khair, 2012, p. 5). In addition, Ahmad, Z. U. (2007), believed that “...shopping centre is a place to socialize and for recreation”. (as cited in Yusniza K. and Chee Lih, Frankie Lee, 2010, p. 185). Shopping malls are not only for fulfilling the internal obsession through the consumption but it rather becomes a location for establishment of cultural development.

Despite with the emergence of sophisticated malls, which could fulfill the urban needs and demand from consumers, some researches have also found that the human behaviour becomes a part of the reasons for consumers to visit shopping malls. Most consumers will attract more space which could provide them with all their needs. The more services implemented on shopping spaces, the more people will join the environment. According to Kirkup and Rafiq

(1999, as cited in Yusniza K, and Chee Lih Frankie Lee, 2010, p. 187)

stated:

...Key elements to attract and retain customers of shopping malls are, accessibility/location, external and internal mall design, the assortment of retailers, leisure attractions, the communication mix, the cost of access, the customer services provided, and the interaction between, centre, store and customer participants.

Shopping malls could become silent indicators of the culture development in the urban areas. Shopping malls full with infrastructure provide possibilities in transferring the image of culture to the community, locally or internationally. Moreover, all the latest and newest products or commodities spread to the society through shopping malls and consumerism activities.

The capability of malls in fulfilling the satisfaction of urban consumers' desire is significant to mall owners to equip all their spaces in accordance with peoples' needs. Nowadays, shopping malls can be considered as platforms in constructing, changing, adapting and showing a social lifestyle among urban people through the medium of clothing, foods, goods, and many more which can be found in the malls.

Mike Featherstone (1991), stated that lifestyle is a part of "One's body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car,