International Baccalaureate

Extended essay cover

Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number	
Candidate name	
School number	
School name	
Examination session (May or November)	May — Year 20|3

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: _Visual Art_

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: _TO · WHAT EXTENT DOES COMMERCIAL ART AFFECT CONSUMERISM_

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

HAD AN INTERESTING QUESTION TO EXPLORE, BUT IT DEPENDED UPON HER GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF 'WHY' RATHER THAN JUST 'WHAT', ALTHOUGH SHE TOUCHED ON A FEW ISSUES WHICH STARTED TO UNPACK THE REASONS FOR THE EFFECT, THESE REALLY WEREN'T ABLE TO GO FAR ENOUGH TO 'PROVE' HER ARGUMENT. SHE QUOTES EXTENSIVELY FROM A FEW SOURCES DEPENDING TOO MUCH ON THEIR DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC RATHER THAN DEVELOPING HER OWN. IN THE END SHE IS LEFT WITH A CONCLUSION WHICH STATES THE OBVIOUS, AN INDICATION THAT SHE HAS EXPLORED AND UNCOVERED ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION WITHOUT REALLY MOVING THE DISCUSSION INTO A HIGHER LEVEL OF ANALYSIS. ILLUSTRATIONS MAY HAVE FURTHER HELPED THIS POTENTIALLY SUCCESSFUL QUESTION TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent ☐ 5 ☐ hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: Date:

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2		2	
B introduction	1	2		2	
C investigation	1	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	1	4		4	
E reasoned argument	1	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	0	4		4	
G use of subject language	0	4		4	
H conclusion	0	2		2	
I formal presentation	0	4		4	
J abstract	1	2		2	
K holistic judgment	1	4		4	
Total out of 36	8				

To what extent does commercial Art affect Consumerism?

Subject: **Standard Level Visual Art**

Candidate Number:

Advisor:

Date: **January 9, 2013**

Examination Session: **May 2013**

Word Count: **3330**

Abstract

The following Extended Essay investigates the central question of "To what extent does commercial Art affect Consumerism?" For the question to be answered as thoughtfully and comprehensively as possible, it has been narrowed down the parameters of Art and Consumerism in my own community.

The investigation started with a simple observation of my surroundings and daily life, which led me to recognize the strong relationship that exists between commerce, marketing, design, and Art. As much as this field of study is multi-faceted, I decided to focus primarily on three elements (electronic products, school environment, media) and two case studies (North Face Phenomenon in S. Korea, Starbucks Coffee). Taking a step forward in the investigation, I performed a personal interview with a Graphic Designer, Christian "Chili" Gallei, and Disney's Character Technical Director, Si-Hyung Kim, as well as an anonymous survey amongst my peers. Incorporating a variety of sources, this Extended Essay aims to cover both the theoretical aspects and real-life examples of Art's involvement in today's consumerist society.

After such thorough study, I came to a conclusion that commercial Art affects Consumerism to the extent that the two cannot be regarded separately. The branding image, reputation, and marketing strategies of companies in all areas of electronics, academic environments, clothes, media, and food and drinks are driving factors to influencing an audience to buy, use, and to ultimately consume.

Word count: **227**

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Introduction

As an Art student, I have always wondered how practical Art is outside of the mere school studio and how much it actually affects our society, culture, and lifestyle. To thestart of this investigation, I decided to spend a day carefully observing the effects Art has on me as an individual. After coming up with a long list of observations, I realized that all the products I buy, clothes I wear, school I go to, etc are all, in one way or another, determined by their designs, branching image, and ultimately Art. Though some people now take it for granted, Art has become extremely interrelated and even inseparable from our lives and the choices we make to buy, use, and consume. That is when I came to question, "To what extent does commercial Art affect consumerism?" As much as the question is significant to understand the roles visuals and advertisements play in both subconsciously and consciously influencing our consumption, it is indeed too broad of a topic to comprehensively cover in this investigation. Hence I will be focusing on the effects Art has on my own daily life, which will serve to generally represent the lives of students in the international community. This Extended Essay will primarily be divided into three sections—the school environment, electronic products, and social media—which will reflect my peers and my particular involvement and contributions to today's consumerist society.

Background information on Consumerism and its relations with Art

Andy Warhol, a famous American Pop Artist once said, "You can see a billboard for Tab and think: Nancy Reagan drinks Tab, Gloria Vanderbilt drinks Tab. Jackie Onassis drinks Tab, and just think, you can drink Tab too" (Cullers). Though this quote derives from the last century, Warhol's response to Consumerism, as also reflected by his art works of Campbell's Soup cans, Coca Cola, and other extensive silkscreen collections, is perhaps an accurate description of how materialistic our society has become over the years (Comenas). Since the Industrial Revolution, which allowed mass production and manufacture of goods, people have become increasingly enticed and even engulfed by the omnipresent advertisements at a surprisingly subconscious level (Augustine). Driven by the society's standards and perceptions, people's "needs" for living are steadily crossing over the boarder of their "wants" and "desires." In fact, it is not a total exaggeration to say that people these days are never satisfied; even with abundant food, clothes, gadgets, and many other resources, people always want more, of better quality and quantity (Stonehouse). As much as they feel fulfilled and productive when such desperate wants are met, the society is gradually becoming wasteful and greedy for more (Augustine).

Hence, in such a technologically and socially progressing society today, I come to question where art and design come into play. Without doubt, people are increasingly purchasing products not solely based on their functionality and purpose but rather on their design and uniqueness.

Element # 1: Electronic products

To Christian "Chili" Gallei, an Austrian graphic designer expert at unifying a comprehensive range of media into harmonic expressions, corporate design means, "building an identity that provides a unique perception of the company, organization, brand, or even a person" (Marker 24). Design is indeed vital, especially for companies, in conveying their societal, cultural, and artistic values altogether to the public and more importantly, to their costumers (Gallei). In a recent interview with Mr. Gallei, I asked him for his opinion on the importance of design in today's market. He started his answer with a thought-provoking line, "Design is just one part of the whole package." Though design is not the only aspect that appeals to people and sells its products, it definitely plays a role in representing the idea in visual terms (Gallei). For example, he added, "Apple's logo is the perfect match for the brand. It has the best selling electronics and the logo well portrays the virtual idea behind its products." However the important point, he told me to consider, is that if the idea behind a particular product is not sensational in the first place, even the most brilliant logo would not add any value to it. Only because, as for the case of Apple, "its idea of personal computers and music players was spectacular," the logo and its visuals came together as one package to win the attention of the public and ultimately money from its consumers (Gallei).

In Mr. Gallei's home country of Austria, multiple music player companies locally existed long before today's leading electronic manufacturers were introduced to the market. Though their names were not as widely recognized, these local music players did serve their basic functionalities. "They [local music players] brought about new ideas of how to store music. They had numerous functions—you could listen to music, radio, etc—but there were no names for them. One disadvantage, however, was that these players were really complicated to handle and thus did not appeal to the public as much. And then, the grand corporations released their new versions of music players. Its functions were not that new. In fact, the machines could only play music... But they had a brilliant design. They were appealing and easy to use—all in one packet. (Gallei)"

What a corporation is selling along with its product and brand name is a *lifestyle* and *social acceptance* (Gallei). As individuals, we have become so conscious of our social status and what the society thinks of us. "If you buy a music player from the local market and bring it to work the next day, you need to explain to everyone what it is. On the other hand, if you get one from a well-acknowledged company, you do not need to explain to anyone what it is. Everyone knows it. You're automatically on the same side—the safe one. Corporations are selling more than the product itself—they are selling social acceptance" (Gallei).

According to Professor Pelle Ehn from Malmö University in his book *Work-Oriented Design of Computer Artifacts*, "participative and creative approaches to design are championed as

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candidates to replace systematic or rationalistic design" (Kolko). In other words, aesthetics can no longer be disregarded over practicality. To figure out to what extent Professor Ehn's theory applies to my surrounding international community, I performed a short anonymous survey amongst my peers regarding how much they take design into consideration when buying electronics. The results were the following: Of the 21 students who participated, majority claimed to personally own cellphones (95.2%), laptops (100.0%), music players (95.2%), and cameras (66.7%), which they said to replace regularly every one or two years. Majority of the surveyed pool also responded that the design and branding of such products are as important as, if not more important than, their functionalities. One student responded, "Their [electronic products'] specifications do not matter that much to me as long as they meet my basic requirements and needs. What matters then is more about their popularity and appearance: design, weight, etc. " The results clearly support that "creative approaches" are progressively taking the place of "rationalistic designs" (Kolko).

Moreover for generations, antiques have been of great value. Yet products, especially electronics are now treasured for less than five years. In fact, scratches and natural stains no longer signify the uniqueness of the products but rather their imperfection and a need to replace them. Society's perception of value seems to have drastically changed along with the introduction of the consumerist culture, as people are never easily satisfied nowadays; they only demand for the newest, fastest, and the most powerful tools. Such priority can be justified considering the vision of "I am what I have" and how the society has changed to define one's identity based on his possessions (Gallei).

As expectations and demands surge high, competition between corporations has also peaked. Since technological advancements for our everyday electronics have almost reached their maximum, one of the only factors that distinguish a product from another is its effective design and marketing plan (Gallei). This perhaps explains why demand and production have formed a positive correlation, making design an inevitable aspect of consumption. As much as "everyone becomes engraved in such materialistic society unless isolated from the media and public opinions in the first place," design has come to greatly determine our daily living atmosphere and environment (Gallei).

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Case study # 1: North Face phenomenon in S. Korea

The increasing importance of designs and brand images can also be reflected by the North Face phenomenon that peaked in South Korea last year. Elementary to high school students alike mass-purchased North Face padding jumpers, so-called "uniform worn over uniform", not for its original purpose to stay warm but rather for social acceptance in school (Chan). Though not distinctly spoken about within class, students' status and popularity were directly classified by the type of jumpers they chose to wear. For instance, the "losers" at the bottom of the social class wore the North Face Nupste 2 at about US $220; rankings up the scale were Dry Loft and Nuptse 1, both much more costly than Nupste 2. And the ultimate "bosses" and bullies wore the most expensive Himalayan Down Parka at about $660 (Chan). Due to the pressure to keep up with such ridiculous trend, students were bound to purchase the most expensive and famous jumpers available in stock. The jacket's practicality and quality did not matter so much, as they were solely concerned with the social acceptance assured by wearing one to school. According to a Korean student interviewed by Yonhapnews, "Students think foreign products are cooler than Korean products. All [his] friends like Western food, Hollywood movies, and products like iPhones. Everybody follows trends... If someone uses it, [he] wants to use it" (Liebsch). This phenomenon surely validates Mr. Gallei's thoughts upon corporations selling a lifestyle along with the product itself. In this extreme case, students who could not manage to afford the authentic North Face jumpers or wore clothes from less recognized brands were immediately made fun of and even looked down upon (Chan).

However by the end of 2012, North Face's immense brand image in Korea finally crashed after numerous cases of bullying, initiated by stealing and forcefully taking away of padding jumpers, were publicized. Now, its reputation is more associated with "clothes bullies wear" and students from elementary to high school have stopped purchasing and wearing its jackets altogether. Such instant response clearly portrays how essential brand reputation is in marketing and setting a trend in today's society.

According to emeritus Professor Choi from Anyang Science University in her thesis "The effects of Internet Shopping Mall Attributes on the Clothing Purchasers' Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty," people generally choose what clothes to wear based on the company's prestige and brand image, quality, aesthetics, durability, and fitting. The brand's service and product quality as well as its prestige and reputation play a vital role in winning its costumers satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Choi, 92). Although it is hard to generalize which factor is regarded the most since personal values differ from one individual to another, the upper social class tend to prioritize brand image and quality, while the lower class would take price and durability more into consideration.

Nevertheless, amongst the younger generation, brand image may be thought as the number one priority regardless of one's social class, since following the ever-changing trend is extremely vital to earn a socially accepted status within and beyond school life. It is no wonder then that North Face's parkers were commonly referred to as "backbreakers" in Korean, signifying how parents would have to 'break' their 'backs' to work in order to afford their children clothes with maker brands (Chan).

Element # 2: School environment:

Having studied in an international environment for years, I have naturally been exposed to the powerful consumerist culture. Being the actual "target" of numerous advertisements, and having yielded to some by recklessly purchasing their products, I now too take a central part in further spreading materialism, especially to the younger generation, the future potential preys of industries. From buying laptops and music players from leading companies to rushing to maker brands for clothes in malls—we automatically take it for granted that their qualities are as outstanding as their label values and hence in most cases, base our decisions merely on their designs. Nonetheless, consumerism does not confine itself within the mere walls of products but rather extends to the wider boundaries of the society, like the school environment for instance. The International School Manila (ISM), though not as apparent as goods on sale, does indeed carry a distinct label and reputation through its logo, mascot, and even the school campus. The modern and substantially American architecture and facilities, typically not available in local schools, visually distinguish ISM apart from its surroundings. Moreover, the campus, clearly isolated from the local Philippine community—both in terms of its geographic location and the grand fences and gates that enclose every inch of the school—inevitably sells an image of superiority, prestige, and selectivity to all outsiders.

Founded in 1920 by American and British parents, ISM, then known as the American School, has always been reputed as a source of education for the wealthier class of the Philippines; in fact, throughout its history, the ISM student population has predominantly been consisting of dependents of foreign diplomats, and representatives from international organizations and multi-national companies in the Philippines (International School Manila).

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Element # 3: Media

"When people hear the brand Disney, they immediately associate it with high quality family films," replied Si-Hyung Kim, Character Technical Director at Disney when I asked him about its global reputation as one of the top animation companies (Kim). Because of such well-established image for high quality cartoons and movies, Disney rarely fails to construct an effective marketing strategy and hence attract mass audience for its showings in cinema. It is no wonder then that Disney's extensive market in Disneyland and its character products are costly and as appealing as the movies to a wide range of age and cultural groups.

Marketing strategies also largely determine the success and failure of movies, as seen with "The Iron Giant." A production by Warner Bros, who also took part in the famous animation movie, "The Incredibles", "Iron Giant" received never-ending praises from critics and professionals alike (IGN). However because it did not have an effectively supportive marketing plan, the movie did not perform as successfully in theaters as expected (IGN). The movie's commercial was misleading and under-representative of its fascinating quality and plot scheme, which ultimately lead to its failure in the box office (Frank).

Such marketing strategies are involved in not only movies but also social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. For instance, when users enter their private information to their accounts, it is sent to corporation companies to display suitable advertisements on their pages. Furthermore, search engines, like Google, tract users' information based on their previous searches and interests from social networking accounts, and give them a filtered search and subsequent advertisements based on their location, gender, age, and cultural group.

Case Study # 2: Starbucks Coffee Phenomenon

Besides the environment we live in and products we use, even food and drinks take part in our consumerist society. A classic example would be Starbucks Coffee; starting from a single store in Seattle in 1971, the Starbucks Corporation has expanded worldwide to over 12, 500 branches and 115, 000 employees—with such rate of progress, it is in fact expected to grow into a larger enterprise than McDonald's (Smith). According to Bryant Simon, who investigated the brand value of Starbucks by visiting about 400 branches in numerous countries in a year, "Starbucks did not introduce coffee and did not even introduce good coffee. But it did turn coffee into an identity. Starbucks shows us our desires but does not completely fulfill them. These include our desires for status, to be socially responsible and simply to have a place to go (Smith)." Having personally observed friends and peers around me collecting Starbucks stamps by purchasing drinks to receive the 2013 version of its annually published planners, it seems valid that Starbucks has created its own special label over coffee, stimulating even more consumption from its consumers.

Conclusion

Chromsky once said, "All over the place, from the popular culture to the propaganda system, there is constant pressure to make people feel that they are helpless, that the only role they can have is to ratify decisions and to consume" ("Consumerism and Design"). Just as this quote suggests, as the world is getting increasingly globalized and interconnected, individuals, especially young adults, are quickly exposed to new trends and their subsequent advertisements. Pressured by a fixed standard and perception the society advocates, students from the international community continuously consume, even without being consciously aware.

What predominantly distinguishes a product from one another these days is more than its functionality; it is the design. With the fast spread of opinions around the globe, a company's reputation and brand image are established. When such factors come together as one whole package, a product successfully attracts attention from its costumers, sells it social acceptance and lifestyle, and in turn gains even more popularity.

In such cycle of relationship between commercial Art and Consumerism, the two subjects cannot be thoroughly investigated if either one of the two is disregarded. Our everyday lives, thoughts, and interests have become so inseparable from both Art and Consumerism alike that all facets of the society seem to be influenced, in one way or other, by the two. However, as much as this Extended Essay was narrowed to study my own community, it would be reasonable to take the investigation further to address other aspects and widen its area of perspective.

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