COMMODIFICATION IN MODELING AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES: THE CASE OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN MARKET

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ABSTRACT
In the process of modernity, a major issue that human society has faced is commodification, which enables businesses to extend their economic exchanges beyond commodities to money, talent, nature, and even human body and beauty. Modeling industry that has a vital role in promoting the activities of marketers requires commodification of human beings as models. This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the positive and negative aspects of commodification in modeling and the attractions of modeling profession for youth in Southeast Asia, where firms in emerging markets heavily rely on modeling and promotion events for marketing their products. Using a formative model for commodification of the human body in modeling, the four major components including personal traits, body and health, economy, and culture and society were considered as the main motives for models to be commodified. The study entails five semi-structured interviews with models from different countries and applies qualitative analysis methods to analyze the findings. The results show that unlike previous research which only focused on the negative aspects of modeling, it is necessary to consider this type of commodification as a social phenomenon with some benefits for both society and business.

KEY WORDS: Commodification, modeling industry, postmodern consumption, supermodels, fashion