

# **Sugar Coating Consumption**

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Professor: Penelope Kokkinos**

# Sugar Coating Consumption

## Shopping Around Project by Kevin Dykstra

The purpose of this project was to look at the consumer and cultural elaboration and exploitation via the shopping center. In the first part of the assignment we were asked to go on a shopping expedition and purchase an inexpensive item that we felt represented the surrounding culture. I decided to purchase my item at “Dollarama”. I very rarely browse for items in a “Dollar” store and go most often when I need something specific or I’m indifferent to the quality. This is very similar to how I would shop in a convenience store. What overwhelmed me the most as I walked up and down the aisles of cheap consumer goods was the volume of products that were on the shelves. This is a very similar feeling I get around Christmas time when I go into a shopping mall or a large department store and I’m awe struck by the sheer volume of goods. I find myself asking the question, where does all of this go, who buys all of this produce? Especially when you consider there are so many stores like this. I find it hard to believe that there are enough people to consume all of this produce. We really are a consumer society. In fact, we consume so much and it has become such a part of our capitalistic culture that we somehow feel obligated to continue to consume in order to maintain the long-term health of the economy.

Initially, this is what I thought my project was going to be developed around but then I saw the item that I eventually purchased for the bases of my project, I decided to focus my idea of consumerism to a specific demographic. The item is toy money for children. Of course, what better way to ensure that capitalism will hum along over the long haul, start consuming early! We can teach kids about money, about credit and of course about consuming. This should come as no surprise but studies are now showing the increase in consumption and associated impacts that promotion of consumption has on children. It is estimated today that children influence an estimated \$300 billion of family spending each year and experts estimate that more than \$12 billion a year is spent on advertising targeted at children.<sup>1</sup> When you ask a child now what they want to be when they grow up, would we be surprised if they said they want to make money?

Children today are bombarded by mass media. The Journal of the American Medical Association has said that children between the ages of 2 and 17 watch an annual average of 15,000 to 18,000 hours of television, compared with 12,000 hours spent per year in school.<sup>2</sup> Virtually from birth, children are bombarded with TV commercials, banner ads, billboards and product placement. Advertising to children has become such big business that they now conduct annual awards for the best children’s commercials. The 32 Golden Marbles awards includes categories like best ads for dolls, action figures, snack food, movies and video games, as well as a public service award (see Appendix for examples).

My “Shopping Around” project is a critique on consumerism in general and more specifically on the impact that advertising is having on children. I am concerned with mass consumption and the fact that we consume way beyond our basic needs. I am now more concerned about the intense advertising aimed at children. The mistakes we are making today with our children will impact us for generations to come. Children who define themselves in terms of their possessions is not the future generation we should be developing.

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<sup>1</sup> Critics denounce commercials aimed at kids as exploitation, [http://www.dadsanddaughters.org/Golden\\_Marble\\_Press.htm](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org/Golden_Marble_Press.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Behind Consumption and Consumerism, <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Consumption.asp>

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Shopping Around Project  
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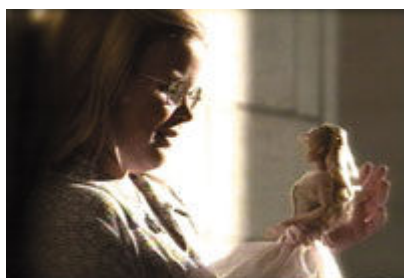
## APPENDIX – GOLDEN MARBLE AWARDS EXAMPLES

**1999**

Super Smash Bros. 'Happy Together'  
Category: Best Electronic/Video Game Commercial  
Advertiser: Nintendo Of America



Barbie 'Be Anything Anthem'  
Category: Best Doll Commercial  
Advertiser: Mattel



'The Last Donut'  
Category: Best Breakfast Food Commercial  
Advertiser: Hostess (IBC)



'Dogman'  
Category: Best Snack Food Commercial  
Advertiser: Cadbury Chocolate Canada

# Sugar Coating Consumption

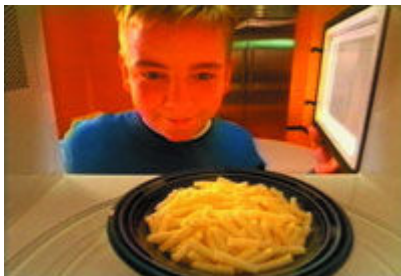
Shopping Around Project  
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'Michael vs. Mia'  
Category: Best Beverage Commercial  
Advertiser: Gatorade



'Platypus'  
Category: Best Food Commercial  
Advertiser: Kraft Easy Mac



'Carnival'  
Category: Best QSR Commercial (Quick Service Restaurant)  
Advertiser: Burger King



'BULLIES'  
Category: Best Commercial For A Television Network Or Kid Programming Block  
Advertiser: Fox Kids

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'Play Acting'

Category: Best Commercial For A Movie Tie-In  
Advertiser: Pepsi Cola Co./ Pepsi



'We The Children'

Category: Best Commercial Directed to Parents of Preschoolers  
Advertiser: Kellogg Canada



**1998**

Nintendo - "Tongue Lashing"

Category: Best Electronic/Video Game Commercial  
Advertiser: Nintendo of America, Inc.



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## Shopping Around Project by Kevin Dykstra

"Cool Blue Barbie"

Category: Best Doll Commercial

Advertiser: Mattel



Operation - "I'm the Doctor For You"

Category: Best Game Commercial (non-electronic / video game)

Advertiser: Hasbro Games



Frosted Cheerios - "Fly"

Category: Best Breakfast Food Commercial

Advertiser: General Mills Canada



McDonald's McWorld - "Dentist"

Category: Best Restaurant Commercial

Advertiser: McDonald's



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## Shopping Around Project by Kevin Dykstra

"Morse Cold"

Category: Best Beverage Commercial  
Advertiser: Kraft Canada



"I Can Play"

Category: Best Sporting Goods Commercial  
Advertiser: Nike

