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Children's Commodification on Baim Paula's YouTube Channel

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Abstract

The commodification of children's phenomena on social media raises various problems. The massive development of social media makes commodification carried out by any media user easily. It could be that the perpetrators are unaware that they have carried out a form of child's commodification into a commercially valuable. This research aims to reveal the children's commodification on Baim Paula's YouTube channel. Through this research, the authors hope to provide advantages to raise awareness of YouTubers or influencers to be more aware of creating content that involves children. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a discourse analysis approach of Norman Fairclough. The object of the research is conducted by analyzing the children's commodification of Lala. The data collection technique used is documentation of two videos on Baim Paula's channel related to the children's commodification. The analysis of Baim Paula's contents shows that commodification tends to be the commodification of content. It manifested in the child's commodification of Lala. Even though positively, Lala gets a place to develop her talent. Hence, it benefits media users, in this case, Baim Paula.

Keywords: (*Children's Commodification; Social Media; Content Innovation; YouTube*)

Abstrak

Munculnya fenomena komodifikasi anak pada media sosial menimbulkan berbagai kekhawatiran. Masifnya perkembangan media sosial menjadikan komodifikasi dengan mudah dilakukan oleh siapapun. Bisa saja pelakunya tidak sadar telah melakukan bentuk komodifikasi anak untuk tujuan komersial. Riset ini berupaya mengungkap bentuk komodifikasi anak pada channel YouTube Baim Paula. Melalui penelitian ini penulis berharap dapat memberikan manfaat untuk menggugah kesadaran para YouTuber atau influencer untuk berhati-hati dalam pembuatan konten yang melibatkan anak-anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis wacana Norman Fairclough. Pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik dokumentasi pada dua video dalam channel Baim Paula yang berhubungan dengan topik penelitian. Hasil penelitian yang ditemukan adalah komodifikasi yang dilakukan Baim Paula merupakan komodifikasi isi/konten, dalam bentuk komodifikasi anak terhadap Lala. Meskipun secara positif, Lala mendapatkan wadah pengembangan bakat. Sehingga selanjutnya membawa keuntungan bagi pemilik channel, dalam kasus ini, Baim Paula.

Kata Kunci: (*Komodifikasi Anak; Sosial Media; Inovasi Konten; YouTube*)



INTRODUCTION

Social media and their users are becoming more diversified, and this trend is likely to continue. It is a phenomenon that appears as technology advances. As an internet-based application, social media allows users to interact by creating and sharing content and receiving information from other users virtually (Banyumurti, 2018; Nasrullah, 2015). One way to think of social media is as an online intermediary that improves user interactions and social ties.

Since the beginning, social media has grown as a new medium till present, especially YouTube. YouTube is one of the most popular video-sharing platforms used by digital audiences. Besides television broadcasts, YouTube is a platform that has become a choice for entertainment in the form of audio-visual. The reasons are more simple and more flexible according to users' preferences. Nobody needs to have any technical skills to access Youtube since it is incredibly simple to use. Users are free to choose any kind of video content they wish to watch at any time and there are no restrictions on how many times they can watch it (Atmakusuma, 2013).

Not only as a viewer, but the user can also be a content creator, often called a YouTuber. This website provides a simple and integrated user experience that enables users to upload, post, and view streaming videos without the need for technical skills (Burgess & Green, 2018). All people are motivated to become YouTubers since YouTube is so accessible. Public figures, governments, preachers, and even ordinary individuals are starting to build YouTube channels for a variety of interests. Those factors help YouTube become more well-known and accessible to the general audience.

Several studies have looked at YouTube content, such as a qualitative descriptive study by (Mukarromah & Putri, 2021) that shows how addicting YouTube has become for millennials. So millennials must have the ability to select positive content. In addition, YouTubers or channel owners should share information that offers helpful insights and knowledge. Another essay by (Masfupah, 2021) covered a critical discourse analysis of the video "Caknun dan Teror" on the Mata Najwa YouTube channel. Masfupah tries to show that the Mata Najwa program not only develops discourse but also answers the public's information requirements. Semiotics can be a helpful tool for developing YouTube content and is not just for textual analysis. As explained in (Farisi et al., 2021), to identify the YouTube channel content of Kang Ujang Busthomi's findings indicate that representations of the divine in various symbols correspond to the relationships between religious and secular symbols.

Based on a statistical analysis by SocialBlade, the Katadata site has published information on the top 10 Indonesian YouTubers in terms of subscribers (Aeni, 2022). Additionally, the seventh-ranked channel belongs to Baim Paula. On June 4, 2016, celebrity couple Baim Wong and Paula Verhoeven launched the channel. Vlogs, gift-giving and almsgiving, and practical jokes are some of its content categories. The average number of views for each video post ranged from 800,000 to 2,000,000. According to NoxInfluencer's analytical statistics, Baim Paula's channel has 1,860 uploaded videos, with a total viewer count of 4.1 billion (*Baim Paula Dasbor YouTube Stats & Analytics*, 2022).

Like the media industry in general, to ensure the viability of their channel, YouTubers must have a plan for competing with other content creators. According to the Uses and Gratification theory, audiences would naturally choose to consume media for specific reasons, such as to satisfy wants for information or entertainment, among many others (Humaizi, 2018). Therefore, So, in order to keep the audience interested, Baim Paula keeps coming up with innovative and creative ways to create content.

Baim Paula invited Shabira Alula, alias Lala, a 3-year-old child who is currently trending on TikTok, on his YouTube channel in February. The public has successfully become quite interested in Lala thanks to her fame. 4.7 million people saw Lala's debut video on Baim Paula's channel, which led to her continued appearance in other videos. At least 12 videos have been uploaded about Lala since her initially appeared on the channel. It certainly contributes to Baim Paula's profits because the high viewers and subscribers are also a one source of income for YouTubers (Dahlan, 2015).

However, innovation and creativity are not without problems. BaimPaula's Channel often causes public debate due to its controversial content. For example, the content of scolding an elderly

man named Suhud, the phenomenon of Citayem Fashion Week and HAKI, and the most current one is police prank content by pretending to be a victim of domestic abuse. Now Lala's fame has been used even further by Baim Paula's channel. Her cute personality and smart talking style are assets that can attract the audience. There are signs that children are being commodified, and Lala ends up being used like a commodity. Due to the fact that kids still don't know what's good or bad for them, this scenario is concerning. On average, they haven't been able to pick which one they want to do or don't want to do (Akmalia & Ardiani, 2021). Consider the possibility that their "work" as the content object may be under coercion. In that situation, it will have an impact on children's development and growth (*Influencer Anak: Hati-Hati Eksploitasi Anak Di Media Sosial*, 2019). Commodification is the process of transforming things valued for their use into marketable products that are valued for what they can bring in exchange (Mosco, 2014). In addition to commodification, media political economy theory also includes the concept of spatialization and structuration as aspects of media dominance. The political economics theory of media, according to Vincent Mosco, places a focus on media products including publications, books, videos, films, and viewers.

The three types of commodification that Mosco defined are the commodification of content, audience, and labor. First, the commodification of content is a point of view that indicates that the commodification process involves the production of content as a commodity that may be accepted by society. The second is audience commodification. According to Dallas Smythe in Mosco (2014), the audience is the main commodity of mainstream media. Media firms build audiences and distribute them to advertisers as a process that results in mass media. The third is the commodification of labor. A cohesive idea, creativity, job design, and execution—or the capacity to carry out the task—are what make up the workforce. Workers in this commodity not only create material and are compensated for doing so in order to please the audience, but they also generate audiences as a commodity (Mosco, 2014).

Ibrahim and Akhmad (2014) include two types of commodification in their book that Mosco does not mention. Specifically, the commodification of childhood and values. The commodification of values includes the commercialization of religion and education. Meanwhile, the commodification of childhood is a media-created fiction of childish images. Children's commodification raises concerns about disruptions in their life that may have an impact on their growth (Ibrahim & Akhmad, 2014). Some of the commodification practices of children are easily seen in traditional broadcast media such as television. For example, through the medium of children's talent-hunt stage performances, soap operas, or even reality Shows. With the advancement of technology and communication, the practice of commodification has spread to the fields of new media and social media.

Lately, many parents have involved their children in creative industries such as YouTubers or Selebgrams as media to express themselves and develop children's talent interests. Along with deadline demands or endorsement offers, children can become targets for commodification and exploitation. Children become vulnerable to threats and risks that have now occurred, for example, cases of child abuse or paedophilia. While kids are not yet entirely capable of dealing with severe threats. Even though there are prohibitions against sexual exploitation and child labor in the Child Protection Law, PPPPA Regulation, and many other laws, this is still insufficient to spark a person's interest in talent. Due to this, it is important for parents to constantly monitor their children's development and progress (Hayati, 2022).

Several studies are related to this research and belong to the same topic. (Akmalia & Ardiani, 2021) identified the practice of commodifying children through endorsements on the Instagram account of influencer Zaskia Adya Mecca. Furthermore, (Kardiman & Windratno, 2016) wrote about the process of commodifying children to Rafatar on the reality show "Janji Suci Raffi dan Gigi" produced by Trans 7.

Other studies are carried out by (Choirunisa, 2016) and (Sari, 2015). Both of them used Mosco's political economics theory to analyze how children were being used as commodities in the RCTI program "Idola Cilik". Additionally, (Sari, 2015) explores the history and capitalism of commodification. What is the National Commission for Child Protection's Chief's interpretation of

the program, furthermore?. Research on the theme of commodification was also conducted by (Gita & Haryono, 2019) on the topic of the commercialization of sensuality on YouTube, (Lestari & Adnani, 2020) on the topic of the meaning of halal commodification in Zoya's Hijab Advertising, and (Arifin, 2019) on the topic of the commodification of da'wah content on YouTube.

It is clear from the core study mentioned above that the practice of commodification develops and takes place in response to societal requirements. The practice of commodification is becoming more commonplace along with technological advancement. Previously, only traditional media capitalists could engage in commodification practices. However, with the advent of new media, anyone can easily do it (Rianto & Pambudi, 2021). For financial gain, they can commodify a variety of items in any format and through any media.

This research uses a media political economy perspective, focusing on how child commodification occurs on Baim Paula's channel towards Shabira Alula. The author used two videos posted by Baim Paula entitled "LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA.." and "LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR, NEMPEL SAMA KIANO. JOGET BARENG & NYANYI!!!" as the subject of the study. Because the two videos represent the forms of commodification of children carried out by Baim Paula. The novelty of this research lies in the research subject, Baim Paula's YouTube channel, and the object of research, Lala.

With this essay the author hopes to make a substantial analytical contribution to the study of the political economy of social media, which has grown significantly among Indonesians, particularly in relation to the commercialization of children. Furthermore, this research is likely to bring practical benefits by boosting awareness among YouTubers or influencers to be cautious while generating content involving children in order to prevent exploitation.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study with a media content analysis technique based on Norman Fairclough's discourse analysis. Descriptive research is undertaken when there is already knowledge about an issue or condition but it is insufficiently thorough, thus the researcher creates a detailed description.

Then there are three dimensions to Fairclough's discourse analysis: text analysis, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. First, Fairclough notes that text can be broken down into three categories at the text analysis level: representation, relationship, and identity. Second, at the level of discourse practice, it focuses on how a text is produced and consumed. Third, the level of sociocultural practice is the assumption that the social context outside the text or media affects how discourse appears in the media. Even if it is not directly related to the text, it does affect how the text is produced and interpreted (Eriyanto, 2012).

The YouTube channel of Baim Paula is the subject of this research. Conclusions based on the results of the study will be applied to the research subjects. There is a research object in this research subject. Analysis of the commodification of children to Lala through videos posted on Baim Paula's channel is the research object.

The author use documentation as a data collection technique. The authors focus on research by only selecting videos linked to research as operational steps in the documentation. On Baim Paula's channel, Lala appears in 12 episodes. The author, however, only focuses on two videos entitled "LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA .." and "LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR, NEMPEL SAMA KIANO. NYANYI & JOGET BARENG !!!"

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of text or language as a social practice is the subject of Fairclough's discourse analysis approach. As a result, the analysis must focus on how it is moulded and developed by specific social relationships and social contexts. What is meant in this text model is not just writing but also the

language used by the media, such as in publications, television, videos, films, and other visual output outcomes. So the researcher applied this analysis to two videos from the YouTube channel Baim Paula with the titles "LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA .." and "LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR, NEMPEL SAMA KIANO. NYANYI & JOGET BARENG !!" that were posted sequentially on March 12 and March 27, respectively.



Figure 1.
 [LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO
 INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA ..]
 Source: YouTube Baim Paula

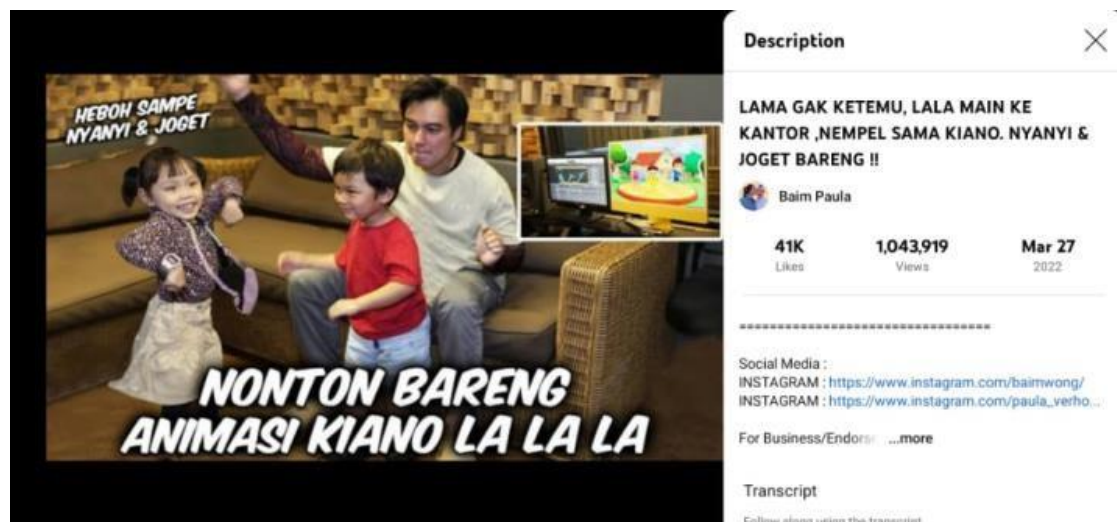


Figure 2.
 [LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR ,
 NEMPEL SAMA KIANO, NYANYI & JOGET BARENG !!]
 Source: YouTube Baim Paula

These two videos are seen to be sufficient to represent the practice of child commodification. Whereas these two videos depict Baim's interactions with Lala and show Lala as a cheerful and well-spoken child. Not to mention, Baim demonstrated how Lala was featured as a voice actress in the animation production process, giving Lala's family the impression that their child was receiving talent development opportunities and then could be known to the larger community.

a. Research Result

The results of text analysis, discourse practice, and social discourse from the two videos will be explained in the following table and description:

1. Text Analysis Findings

Table 1. Text Analysis by Two Sample Videos

Analysis Level	Findings
Representation	<p>The video content entitled “LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA ..” and “LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR, NEMPEL SAMA KIANO, NYANYI & JOGET BARENG !!” was created by Baim Paula and his crew. Wherever in the content they exploit and use Lala, a three-year-old child, as an object</p> <p>Lala is a representation of a toddler that enjoys communicating with others. Her connection with the Baim family also piques the interest of the audience. By displaying the sentence "HEBOH SAMPE NYANYI & JOGET" in the video thumbnail, Baim Paula decided to utilize capital letters to make it appear as though they are yelling at the viewer.</p> <p>The title also includes an exclamation point, which according to Indonesian grammar rules denotes an affirmative statement, a command, or an exclaim. To show that something exciting has happened and that everyone in the audience should be informed of it.</p>
Relation	<p>Four participants were identified by the author at this point: Baim, the Kiano Animation Production Team, Lala, and her parents. The Production Team and Baim both have the same position with regard to this relationship issue. Then Lala's parents were in a subordinate position. Furthermore, Lala's status is under the control of her parents. Lala must comply with instructions from Baim and the Production Team in order to fulfill her responsibilities as a voice actor. In the meantime, viewers who average 2 to 4 million are shown in the media audience as parties who support the idea that the public will enjoy and value the information about Lala. Also visible in the comments section is the audience's awe and respect for Lala's talent.</p>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baim and the "Kiano La La La" Animation Production Team have made it clear that they intend to commodify Lala. In several scenes, Baim and Tim make an appearance in the frame to direct Lala regarding the show's topic. • Lala is also 'employed' by her parents biologically. Considering how her parents walk with her as she follows Baim and the production team's instructions. • As a child, Lala worked in an environment that most people are unaware of since it demonstrates a suitable recording studio and good team management.. She was helped by her smart talking style and her willingness to follow Baim and the production team's instructions.

Source: Researcher's analysis

2. Discourse Practice Analysis

Discourse practice analysis concentrates on the production and consumption of texts (Gita & Haryono, 2019). The findings at this level are based on an analysis of the Lala-related content on Baim Paula's YouTube channel, particularly the two videos mentioned above.

Since 2021, Shabira Alula has gone viral on social media. Initially, her TikTok content with her father was frequently entered into the FYP (For Your Page) page. Her cute personality, as well as her intelligence and enjoyment of communicating with others, might attract the public's attention. In February 2022, Lala gained more and more popularity. Her parents and she are frequently invited to various television shows and YouTube channels.

Baim Paula, a reputable Indonesian YouTube celebrity, also invited Lala. Her first video appearance was in "KENAL DARI TIKTOK, KIANO AJAK LALA NGE DATE KE MALL," which she shared alongside Kiano and Paula. Baim Paula's station saw an opportunity because Lala's fame quickly attracted the attention of millions of viewers. Lala is also friendly with Kiano, Baim's kid, thanks to her self-confident personality. So they keep making content that includes Lala.

On the video sample above that used by the researchers, Baim also purposefully involved Lala as a voice actor in the creation process of the animation "Kiano La La La," which he worked on in partnership with Lumine Studio (Indrasty, 2022). Through the content he created, Baim Paula received attention from both his subscribers and Lala's followers. A lot of audiences expressed their appreciation for Baim Paula's cooperation with Lala in the comments section.

3. Sociocultural Practice Analysis

Analysis at the sociocultural practice level makes the assumption that discourse in the media is influenced by social contexts that exist outside of the media. These data findings can be categorized into three groups:

a) Situational

Discourse can be different from other discourses if it is developed under distinctive and particular conditions. In Indonesia right now, YouTube is a popular kind of social media that has expanded beyond its original use as a substitute for television as a communication tool. YouTube is utilized as a platform for existence, popularity seeking, and even as a business (Arifin, 2019). A YouTube channel must also consistently release fresh content to draw viewers if it wants to remain active.

These days, a lot of social media users frequently produce content about children. Typically, parents use it to showcase their kid's cute personality, as Lala's parents did on the TikTok app, which later caused it to go viral. Baim Paula commodified Lala's fame by developing content that included Lala and drew the viewer's attention.

b) Institutional

This level relates to the impact of organizational institutions on process of production. The institutional findings demonstrate that Baim Paula and the Kiano Animation Production Team's use of YouTube is essential in their efforts to commodify children in Lala.

Youtube is one of the media platforms that has been specifically built to present various types of content and video categories for users to enjoy. The community has several reasons for creating Youtube channels, such as for financial gain. Having a large number of subscribers and viewers is one approach to get these benefits. The researchers' video sample, entitled "LALA DIBUATIN KARAKTER DI ANIMASI KIANO INI DUBBING PERTAMANYA .." and

“LAMA GAK KETEMU, LALA MAIN KE KANTOR, NEMPEL SAMA KIANO. NYANYI & JOGET BARENG !!”, attracted between one and three million viewers.

As a business company, Youtube surely wants to make as much profit as possible. One option is to monetize videos or content by including advertisements, which makes use of the large audience. A YouTube channel is alive thanks to the adverts; the more there are, the simpler it is for the channel to make profits and exist.

Advertisers are not unreasonable when it comes to placing product adverts into videos. They will absolutely select the top videos or the ones with the most viewership. The rating and sharing performance of a video is one of the indicators that advertisers keep in mind when putting advertisements on YouTube. This is a win-win situation for channel owners, marketers, and the YouTube institution as a whole.

c) Social

The social effect brought about by Lala's content on the Baim Paula channel is evident in the number of Lala's subscribers or followers who leave positive comments in the YouTube comments section. Many people applauded Lala for her speaking ability and also gave Baim their support so that he could keep developing children's talents and producing interesting content. Baim Paula had successful outcomes as a result of the popular response.

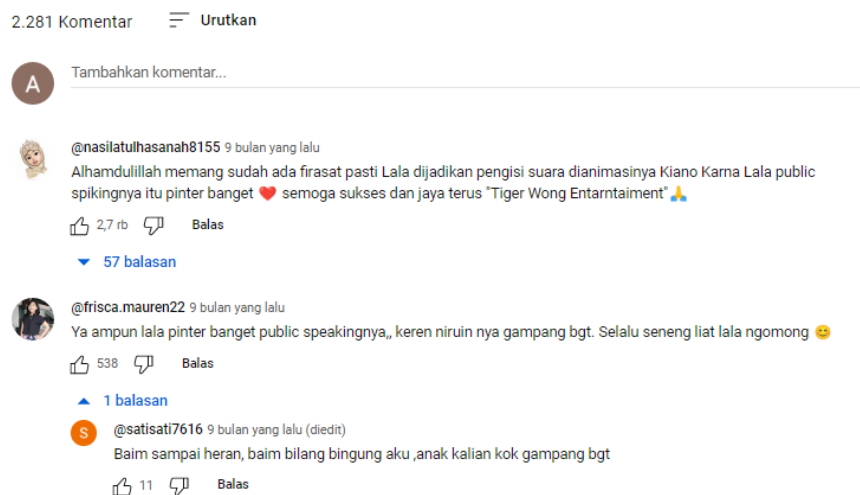


Figure 3.
Several positive comments in the Baim Paula's YouTube channel comments section
Source: YouTube Baim Paula

b. Discussion

According to the research findings, Baim Paula takes use of Lala's fame, which is now popular among the public. They take use of her popularity to make YouTube videos. Lala, who is just three years old, hasn't been able to decide on her own to participate on Baim Paula's YouTube channel. She only complied with Baim's and the Production Team's instructions with her parents' approval. Due to her age as a toddler, Lala does not profit financially in this situation. However, she also receives other advantages, such as access to opportunities for children's talent development.

Returning to the topic of parental approval, it may be claimed that lala's parents participated in the commodification of this child by allowing and accompanying the child as an object of commodification in YouTube Baim Paula video. It is just natural for parents to want to provide their children with chances for talent development; it is a sign of their love. However, according to Marx in (Ibrahim & Akhmad, 2014), anything within the capitalist

circle is commodification. We realize that, in order for Baim Paula's channel to remain active on YouTube, they must follow the algorithm criteria. Where they must get the required amount of likes, views, and subscribers in order to be monetised.



Figure 4.

Shot shows the sound recording session, Lala was directed by her parents and Baim.

Source: YouTube Baim Paula

Baim Paula's commodification in the video sample is more related to the commodification of content (Mosco, 2014). The commodification process is seen in the child's commodification of Lala. Uploads of Lala-related video are arranged in such a way that they attract attention and may then be monetized through the Baim Paula channel. This phenomena is a result of the commodification of childhood, according to Ibrahim and Akhmad (2014). The media turns children into a commodity with a monetary value in ways to construct a childish image.

Baim Paula also engages in other forms of commodification in order to maintain the audience's attention. It may be observed in how Lala's speaking talent is used to become a dubber for the cartoon "Kiano La La La". Throughout the production process, Lala must utilize her energy and brains to follow out numerous Team instructions. Nevertheless, this provided the audience a good impression about Lala's ability to develop her skills.

Mosco sees commodification, along with structuration and spatialization, as a form of the political media economy. Specifically, transforming assets that can be sold to fulfill market needs from items with use value. This YouTube commercialization takes place by commodifying content in order to increase views and profit. Commercialization in the television business, as well as on YouTube, is taking place through the commodification of broadcast content in order to gain financial exchange values through advertising activities. Ratings are a crucial instrument for assessing how well broadcast content can adhere to these commodification rules. Using Lala as content on YouTube to draw the attention of numerous people is a commodification that helps to Baim Paula's earnings.

CONCLUSION

This study has practical theoretical implications for studies in commodification theory and the political economics of media in general. In the world of capitalism, commodification takes many different forms. The commodification of children is becoming even more pervasive. It goes hand in hand with the exponential growth of the internet and social media and can be completed fast by anybody utilizing any medium. The elite proprietors of television media and other traditional media are no longer the only ones who can access it.

Following Fairclough's discourse analysis, the YouTube media industry's status as a business institution is what led to Shabira Alula's child commodification on the Baim Paula channel. Through the accumulation of views, likes, and comments, which are ultimately profit-driven, it was turning into a commodity traded and managed by the YouTube algorithm. The commodification of content is the method in use. Shabira Alula was used to boost ratings and share content in accordance with the YouTube algorithm. As a result, Baim Paula's channel profits even more from its Lala commodification practice.

According to the social environment, including children in the YouTube media sector provides a positive interpretation, which is that it may become a venue for developing talents and growing children's potential, in accordance with the characteristics of children. There is also a negative view that making children the object of YouTube video is a sort of commodification of children, which leads to acts of child exploitation. therefore it is regarded to breach children's rights protection and does not fulfill broadcast program requirements.

This Reality is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided and needs attention. It could be that the perpetrators are unaware that what they are doing is a form of child commodification that leads to the exploitation of a commercially valuable entertainment commodity. As a parent or adult, it is necessary to be more aware of the dangers that might arise before opting to include children in social media. Specifically, by knowing the regulations that safeguard children's human rights; understanding the personal characteristics of children; and the need for information literacy about the societies of the environment where they live; they may create safety for children.

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