Mídia, Consumo e Infância: Produção e Sujeição dos Corpos por Adereços e Acessórios

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Resumo
O artigo, de abordagem bibliográfica e qualitativa, insere-se no campo das discussões sobre as infâncias, cultura e mídia. Com um olhar foucaultiano e a partir do conceito de dispositivo pedagógico da mídia de Fischer (1997; 2002), realizamos uma leitura crítica acerca da lógica da indústria e de suas apropriações estratégicas, que apostam na criação de produtos e acessórios a serem usados como parte integrante do corpo da criança. Como resultado, o trabalho sinaliza a pluralidade da infância, influenciada por fatores sociais, culturais e políticos, e a presença da mídia e do consumo como elementos que afetam a formação das crianças como consumidoras e suas identidades. A mídia é vista como uma ferramenta que ajuda a produzir desejos e promover uma cultura de consumo insaciável na infância. Mídia e consumo acabam conformando modos de ser e existir, tornando o público infantil objeto de disputa do mercado e da indústria.

Palavras-chave: Consumo. Cultura midiática. Identidade. Infâncias. Mídia.

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Media, Consumption and Childhood: Production And Subjection Of Bodies By Props And Accessories

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Abstract

The article, with a bibliographical and qualitative approach, is part of the field of discussions about childhood, culture and media. With a Foucauldian perspective and based on Fischer's (1997; 2002) concept of media pedagogical device, we carry out a critical reading of the logic of the industry and its strategic appropriations, which focus on the creation of products and accessories to be used as part of the child's body. As a result, the work signals the plurality of childhood, influenced by social, cultural and political factors, and the presence of media and consumption as elements that affect the formation of children as consumers and their identities. The media is seen as a tool that helps to produce desires and promote an insatiable consumer culture in childhood. Media and consumption end up shaping ways of being and existing, making the children's audience an object of dispute in the market and industry.

Keywords: Consumption. Media culture. Identity. Childhood. Media.

Medios De Comunicación, Consumo E Infancia: Producción Y Sujeción De Cuerpos Por Utilería Y Accesorios

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Resumen

El artículo, con abordaje bibliográfico y cualitativo, se inscribe en el campo de las discusiones sobre infancia, cultura y medios. Con una perspectiva foucaultiana y a partir del concepto de dispositivo pedagógico mediático de Fischer (1997; 2002), realizamos una lectura crítica de la lógica de la industria y sus apropiaciones estratégicas, que apuestan por la creación de productos y accesorios para ser utilizados como parte de parte del cuerpo del niño. Como resultado, la obra señala la pluralidad de la infancia, influenciada por factores sociales, culturales y políticos, y la presencia de los medios de comunicación y el consumo como elementos que inciden en la formación de los niños como consumidores y de sus identidades. Los medios de comunicación son vistos como una herramienta que ayuda a producir deseos y promover una cultura de consumo insaciable en la infancia. Los medios y el consumo acaban configurando formas de ser y existir, convirtiendo al público infantil en objeto de disputa en el mercado y la industria.

Palabras clave: Consumo. Cultura mediática. Identidad. Infancias. Medios de comunicación.

Introduction

In the school environment, we encounter different groups of children, each accompanied by their social, cultural, and historical particularities. Along with these, one characteristic stands out that perhaps defines them as part of a contemporary mode of childhood shaped by the time we live in. We are referring to the belongings and objects that accompany children in the classroom, as well as the accessories that have become indispensable within consumerist childhood culture, especially those that can be attached to the body itself, such as superhero and princess t-shirts, light-up shoes, sneakers and flip-flops featuring Disney characters, headbands, watches, or accessories worn by mini-influencers, among many others that are worn close to the skin. This reality imposes an urgent need for us to critically reflect on what is presented as something natural and inherent to childhood.

The relationship between consumption and childhood follows a logic of possession, where owning becomes a way to acquire power, purchase satisfaction, and adopt certain lifestyles (DORNELLES, 2005). In the waves of contemporary childhood, permeated by the production-consumption relationship that dominates it, the child who accesses digital networks desires and dreams of the products their eyes can see. Monetary figures ride higher and at an ever-growing and steady pace, such that the internet niche stands as a pedagogical iceberg in the midst of childhood. In other words, we are not merely talking about products but about objects that carry ways of being and shape subjectivities.

At the visible tip of this iceberg, we see the rampant access to media, with a large portion of the child population handling interactive screens, particularly those of cell phones and tablets. The hidden part is composed of the large and powerful industries whose flagship is the profitable commerce consolidated through the construction and exploitation of children's desires, as well as the recreation of desires, either through new artifacts or the continued promotion of existing ones. This is the backdrop for the present text, which is proposed as a reflective tool to address what piques our curiosity: it aims to problematize how the logic of industries has appropriated the strategy of connecting media-driven products to the child's body, merging object and subject into one.

The concept of the body (or bodies, due to its multiple ways of presenting itself), on which we base this text, stems from the understanding of Guacira Lopes Louro (2019), which goes beyond a perspective focused on the anatomy and physical structure of a living organism. For the author, bodies are constituted, signified, and altered through culture and within a complex and constant network of

knowledge and pedagogies that act on the identity and subjectivity formation of each individual. Thus, they are not confined to biological factors, as they are subject to distinct impositions.

In the same vein, Jeffrey Weeks (1995) points out that the body is not fixed, as it is altered, modified, and transformed according to its needs and desires, making bodies inconsistent: "The body changes with the passage of time, with illness, with changes in eating and living habits, with different possibilities for pleasure or with new forms of medical and technological intervention" (LOURO, 2019. p. 16).

Our bodies, in this case specifically children's bodies, are shaped by many processes. As Louro (2019. p. 17) emphasizes, there are undeniably investments in ways and strategies of intervening in bodies, whether through clothing, scents, or adornments, for example, which blend with diverse cultural impositions and conform to the aesthetic, hygienic, and moral criteria of the groups to which we belong.

Our goal is not to focus efforts on finding solutions to curb consumerism in childhood, but to point to reflective elements that can contribute to discussions addressing the specificities of the plural childhoods observed in schools.

The study aims to reflect, based on the relationships established between cultural industries and childhoods, on how the dynamics of large corporations operate through the production and sale of children's products and accessories, a process that has been widely utilized as a tool of power in children's everyday lives. To this end, we draw on authors in the field, such as Dornelles (2001; 2005), Fischer (1997; 2002), Andrade and Costa (2010), Petersen and Schmidt (2014), Steinberg and Kincheloe (2001), among others. The article is situated within the broader context of childhood cultural studies and adopts a Foucauldian perspective (FOUCAULT, 1988; 1997; 2000) as an analytical lens, also grounded in the authors' experiences as educators working with children and in initial teacher education courses.

The construction of the article led us to highlight several considerations, among them the notion that the easy access to media and the massive expansion of content platforms, along with the promotion of personalities and characters through these media tools, have been essential in fostering the production of children's accessories and objects that promote a sense of belonging, representation, and power, in relation to the most prominent symbolic figures on digital networks. As a result, children experience a sense of satisfaction when consuming and wearing the accessories they desire.

From television access to children's protagonism on cell phone screens: the pedagogical media devices

Studies on media and education, as well as the language strategies that operate in the production of subjects, have been explored and debated due to the complexity surrounding this pair of concepts. In this field, the works of researcher Rosa Maria Bueno Fischer stand out for highlighting that television (now alongside other tools such as cell phones and streaming platforms) promotes audiovisual products that are not limited to entertainment, but also encompass educational, didactic, cultural, and informative dimensions, in such a way that "[...] the information and communication media construct meanings and play a decisive role in the formation of social subjects." (FISCHER, 1997. p. 60).

The author works with the idea that media and communication processes are immersed in complex issues, as they are directly linked to the production of contemporary subjects within culture, considering that "[...] we live in a time characterized by a true cultural revolution, driven by the forces that assume, in the daily life of contemporary society, the various forms of communication and information" (FISCHER, 2002. p. 153).

As technology became more incisively introduced into society, other changes also began to be progressively observed, whether in behaviors, ways of living, or in the very subjective formation of individuals. In this sense, we align with Fischer's (2002. p. 153) perspective when she considers that "[...] it becomes impossible to close our eyes and deny that media spaces also constitute places of formation—alongside schools, families, and religious institutions." We are shaped by different forms of knowledge, and those areas where power is organized and disseminated, such as libraries, TV, cinemas, newspapers, magazines, toys, advertisements, video games, books, sports, etc., constitute themselves as pedagogical spaces (STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001. p. 14).

Due to the effective participation of television in the lives of children and its educational potential, Fischer (2002. p. 153) develops a line of reasoning, based on the Foucauldian theoretical perspective, with the objective of:

> [...] showing how the media (and particularly television) operates in the sense of effectively participating in the constitution of subjects and subjectivities, as it produces images, meanings, and ultimately knowledge that, in some way, contribute to the 'education' of individuals, teaching them ways of being and existing in the culture in which they live.

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Two decades ago, Fischer (2002. p. 155) developed the concept of the pedagogical media device based on Foucault's definition of the 'apparatus of sexuality,' which we refer to in order to support the current discussion:

> […] I describe the pedagogical media device as a discursive apparatus (since discursive knowledge is produced within it) and at the same time non-discursive, given that what is at play in this apparatus is a complex web of practices of producing, broadcasting, and consuming TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, in a certain society and a specific social and political context, from which there would be an incitement to discourse about 'oneself,' to the permanent revelation of oneself; such practices are accompanied by the production and dissemination of knowledge about the subjects themselves and their confessed and learned ways of being and existing in the culture in which they live.

Our attempt is to understand the dispositive as a concept in constant transformation, so that, even though it was conceived by the author in a completely different context from today, it can still be applied to the realities and everyday life of our time. If, twenty years ago, television was the main driver of children's consumerism, today, we can talk about other formats that have taken on the task of turning children into consumers—not only of products, but of ideas and ways of being.

Since the 1970s, children's programming has been present on Brazilian television, with shows like *Vila Sésamo and Sítio do Pica-pau Amarelo* marking a generation. In the 1980s, initiatives such as *Clube da Criança, A Turma do Balão Mágico, and Xou da Xuxa* brought more than just cartoons to children's programming. These variety shows featured children from different places competing for a spot in the audience, eager to participate in contests and win prizes. The children's programs and their hosts became intertwined with major brands through the launch of dolls, toys, food, accessories, clothing, shoes, and LPs. The toys handed out at the end of games and activities were also featured in commercials during the shows, as on the other side of the screen was a child now seen as a consumer. A powerful yet indirect consumer who influenced the family's purchasing decisions for clothing, toys, food, and even automobiles.

By the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, Brazilian television still featured an extensive lineup specifically designed for children. Mornings on major networks, like Rede Globo, were filled with segments aimed at holding children's attention: TV Globinho and its classic cartoons - *A Caverna do Dragão* (Dungeons & Dragons), Baby Looney Tunes, *As Aventuras de Jackie Chan*, Digimon, Dragon Ball Z, *A Turma do Pato Bill*, *As Tartarugas Ninjas* (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles), *Três*

Espiãs Demais (Totally Spies), *Hamtaro, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Pokémon, Pica-pau* (Woody Woodpecker), *Bob Esponja* (SpongeBob SquarePants), Sonic - and other channels like *TV Cultura and Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum* massively entered people's homes and became part of the childhood and lives of many Brazilians.

Is this entire media organization, aimed at entertaining and engaging children, a positive action in favor of childhood, or is there excessive interest behind it all? To reflect on these questions and their implications, we refer to the work Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood by Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe (2001), which prompts us to consider the commercial and profit-driven strategies that underpin the television curriculum, as well as the programming that aligns with capitalism. In other words, there is an evident corporate production of children's culture, shaped by the media not only to sell but to project and educate future loyal young consumers. We are surrounded by a cultural pedagogy that "[…] frames education in a variety of social areas, including but not limited to the school environment" (STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001. p. 14). In this sense, it is not just formal educational institutions that are tasked with teaching or developing strategies to educate.

Until quite recently, the battle for the attention of the child audience was led by the two major open television networks in Brazil. On one side, Rede Globo with TV Globinho; on the other, SBT with *Bom Dia e Companhia*, both heavily investing in their morning schedules with animated cartoon catalogs, interspersed with advertisements for children's products. In recent years, however, programming has shifted away from focusing on this group, opting instead for shows aimed at the home, such as *É de Casa*, *Encontro*, and *Mais Você*, considering that the child audience has migrated to other platforms.

Notably, there has been a decline in the daily presence of television in children's lives. On the other hand, the increased use of other technologies, such as cell phones and tablets, has driven the rise of platforms like YouTube channels, which quickly gained popularity. And have children stopped consuming shows, cartoons, and products? No! They have simply migrated to other spaces. Data from a study conducted by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (CGI) in 2021 on internet use by children and adolescents in the country sheds light on this scenario:

> In recent years, the online presence of children and adolescents has grown in Brazil. According to data from *TIC Kids Online Brasil*, the proportion of internet users aged 9 to 17 increased from 79% in 2015 to 89% in 2019. Data collected by *TIC Domicílios* shows that internet use was even higher in 2020: 94% of individuals aged

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10 to 17 were internet users in Brazil (NÚCLEO DE INFORMAÇÃO E COORDENAÇÃO DO PONTO BR, 2021. p. 28).

If in the past television was responsible for educating and driving sales, today, the internet has become the primary means of access and intermediation between children's commerce and the children themselves. Alongside this, media and major film productions are accompanied by sales strategies, not only for their movies and cartoons but also for a range of accessories that enter the market as niches of sales and desire for those consuming the children's cultural industry: "The mass media culture is part of the socializing cultures of children and shares with children's cultures the imaginary universe of childhood" (BARBOSA, 2007. p. 1068).

YouTube, as an internet tool, has emerged in this space as a strong apparatus for stimulating consumption and advertising, whether through adult digital content creators or through child YouTubers themselves. These are children with their own channels who showcase their routines, purchases, personal items, among other topics, speaking directly to their young audience and promoting hidden and unregulated advertising.

To give an idea of how vast and powerful children's consumption is in relation to media, we present a table listing the top ten highest-grossing animated films, as compiled by the American business and economics magazine in 2015.

Table 1 - Ranking of the Top 10 Highest-Grossing Animated Films

Rank	Title	Gross Revenue	Year
1°	Frozen	US$ 1.27 bilhão	2013
2°	Minions	US$ 1.14 bilhão	2015
3°	Toy Story	US$ 1.06 bilhão	2010
4°	The Lion King	US$ 987.4 milhões	1994
5°	Despicable Me 2	US$ 970.7 milhões	2013
6°	Finding Nemo	US$ 936.7 milhões	2003
7°	Shrek 2	US$ 919.8 milhões	2004
8°	Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	US$ 886.6 milhões	2009
9°	Ice Age: Continental Drift	US$ 877.2 milhões	2012
10°	Inside Out	US$ 792.2 milhões	2015

Source: Data published by Forbes (2014)

The data, although from 2015, show that the market established in and through the media field, along with its megaproducts aimed at children, is powerful and highly profitable. Through these

animations, in conjunction with other technologies and advertisements, children become a specific group that consumes and desires what they see. Thus, "[...] children's entertainment, like other social spheres, is a contested public space, where different social, economic, and political interests compete for control" (STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001, p. 19).

The films and their characters extend into various market niches, as characters become the face of other products. Princesses and superheroes move from the screens to adorn accessories, clothes, and objects that children dream of and incorporate into their daily lives. This follows the logic of "[...] investing, therefore, in a population with a significant number of useful individuals, capable of bringing social and economic returns to society" (DORNELLES, 2005, p. 30). Children are at the center of consumption, and the children's products industry has been shaping these young consumers.

Childhoods, consumption, and media

To begin, it is important to make two key points regarding the concept of childhood: the first is that childhood is a construction shaped and influenced by social, political, and cultural aspects, resulting in a plurality that escapes any fixed or homogeneous character. In other words, "Childhood is a social and historical artifact, not simply a biological entity" (STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001, p. 11). Thus, it is more accurate to speak of *childhoods* in the plural, as they are many and diverse.

Childhoods are (re)invented in different spaces and times, through their relationships with the world and the experiences lived in daily life among children of various ages and contexts. In this sense, the ways of being a child are in constant flux, where "[...] economic, social, familial, and electronic changes, combined with children's access to the information they are exposed to in a globalized world, have been revealing new ways of being a child" (DORNELLES, 2005. p. 72).

Momo (2007. p. 6) sinaliza que a infância está inscrita em uma matriz de inteligibilidade que:

> […] Contemporary times are marked by peculiar conditions, intertwined and implicated in what has been widely known as postmodern culture. It is believed that significant transformations have changed the way we exist in the world. These cultural conditions are thought to produce childhoods that are distinct from the modern childhood innocent, docile, and dependent on adults.

This initial understanding leads us to the need to think about contemporary childhoods in relation to the multiple cultural fragments that shape and constitute them (PETERSEN; SCHMIDT, 2014). The plurality of childhoods demands that this category be understood "[…] not as a unitary

notion, but as a social and personal experience, actively constructed and constantly redefined" (BARBOSA, 2007, p. 1065), as childhoods are indeed heterogeneous.

The second point involves considering and problematizing childhoods from a Foucauldian perspective, viewing them as a field shaped by power-knowledge relations, in which media, technology, and consumption play central roles in governing and exerting power over the child population. Postmodern children are not exempt from power regulations (DORNELLES, 2005).

It is precisely by taking these aspects into account that we turn to debates on consumption in childhood, specifically concerning this group that always desires more. We live in and are part of a consumer society, as Bauman (2008) points out, and within this society, "[…] all people, regardless of economic conditions, gender, age, and social group, are called to be part of the consumption networks" (ANDRADE; COSTA, 2010, p. 230).

Based on Buckingham's (2007) studies on the growth of consumption in the era of electronic media, and the notable expansion of products made available by companies to consumers, Andrade and Castro (2021, p. 5) emphasize that children have become a relevant consumer group across all markets, as "[…] in this landscape of growth, both in consumption and the supply of goods, children also emerge as a key market audience, similar to what was observed with adolescents in the post-war era."

For quite some time, the child population has been recognized as a high-potential and, therefore, profitable consumer group, accessible and a prime target for sales strategies, as Dornelles (2005, p. 91) explains: "The cultural goods market for children becomes a phenomenon in the 1980s. That is, from this decade onward, the children's market becomes visible, and the child is manufactured as a client/consumer by magazines, television, the internet, and marketing agencies".

The alliance formed between the economic market, childhood, and consumption is highly productive and leads us toward new ways of constructing and experiencing childhoods (ANDRADE; COSTA, 2010). The term *new*, as used here, does not imply novelty, since consumption has long been part of children's daily lives. What is new relates to the various subjectivities that are presented to children on a daily basis, instilling in them different aspirations, wants, and desires that fleetingly become part of the childhood of consumption. This form of childhood, in turn, is shaped to be insatiable in its desires, which are constantly being updated (ANDRADE; COSTA, 2010).

Thus, we recognize that childhood cannot be thought of as separate from the logics of the market and consumerism, because "[...] we have in our children a consumer in training, and the media has taken advantage of this with a strong appeal to affection, adventure, and power" (DORNELLES,

2001, p. 107). The media occupies a significant space in society, including in the lives of children, both for those who enjoy free access and for those who do not have the same conditions. As Girardello (2005, p. 1) points out, "[...] the explosion of the internet worldwide has even impacted the imaginations of children who have never touched a computer keyboard."

Aligned with the process of supply and purchase, the media emerges as a strategic point, as it is responsible for producing desires, propagating wants and truths, and circulating the most varied products that become coveted by children: "In this way, the market addresses subjects not only by producing desires but also by creating mechanisms and devices to ensure consumption, that is, a pedagogy of consumption" (DORNELLES, 2005, p. 94), which operates in a coordinated and expansive manner. As a result, "The media is a fundamental part of the engine that sustains consumer society. It is the media that makes us aware of things we didn't know existed, needs we didn't know we had, and values and customs from other families, societies, and continents" (CASTRO, 2015, p. 284).

In today's world, permeated by technology, internet access has become part of everyday life. Specifically, the younger generations are introduced to this parallel world within the first months of life, as television and mobile phones become the new babysitters, captivating and holding the attention of babies with their vibrant and bouncing colors and melodies. Digital platforms like YouTube and other streaming services have been normalized as caregiving aids. Thus, it can be said that many contemporary children consume the virtual world, and as they appropriate it, their subjectivities are shaped by the media pedagogies that enter our homes: "Even though YouTube, a priori, was not designed for children, it is clear that the platform has become a media environment appropriated by them" (ANDRADE; CASTRO, 2021. p. 4).

Born in the digital age, children consume the technologies that surround them and, in a quick and effortless manner, appropriate their tools. They are able to access information and products with just a simple tap on a smartphone screen.

> It is the large media corporations, tirelessly showing us the things we don't yet have but "need" to possess, that are often in the driver's seat. Children have become the target audience, not only for children's programming but also for advertisers. With this significant shift, individuals who once needed to be protected have transformed into individuals who must primarily be consumers. Children now have access to information that was previously reserved for adults or, at the very least, required adult approval within the family before reaching them (CASTRO, 2015. p. 13).

The different ways of being a child are shaped by various discourses and forms of knowledge, whether they stem from school institutions or other sources such as media and consumption, that is, through cultural pedagogies (DORNELLES, 2005). As Tomaz (2020, p. 13) points out, "[...] the prevailing values of a society are embedded in its cultural products and communicate desirable ways of being and existing in the world, thus producing subjectivity." These various influences shape contemporary children and play a decisive role in producing the consumerist childhood.

Buying is power! Children's accessories and the consumption of products that become part of the body

In the previous sections, we highlighted the presence of media in the daily lives of (the vast majority of) children and how it operates as a facilitator for certain products to reach this group's awareness and accessibility, or at least become objects of desire for child consumption. What we already know is that media is tied to countless market-driven actions, using various strategies to reach the largest number of regular buyers. Among these strategies, we highlight one observed in the school setting: the sensation of power evoked by objects and accessories that integrate into the child's body. As noted, "Obviously, power mixed with desire produces an explosive cocktail; however, the colonization of desire is not the end of the story" (STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001. p. 21).

Jenkins (2008) presents and discusses the concept of media convergence in a context of intense social transformations and technological development. The author argues that there is a process of blurring the boundaries between different media and their uses, leading to a culture of convergence where various types of media coexist with common purposes, whose messages harmonize and amplify each other. In the case of products aimed at children, advertising aligns with different platforms that allow for greater circulation and reach of messages, consequently expanding the desire for possession and purchase. Studies explore the most effective language to use, children's interests, and associations with characters, among other strategies, which even invite children to participate in the construction of their identity.

In our practice as teachers of young children and trainers, we frequently observe that children place immense value on certain objects that are part of their daily lives, assigning different levels of importance to their belongings. This differentiation in value can be linked to the object's function in relation to its owner. For example, there is a clear distinction between a superhero toy and a T-shirt with a cape featuring a Marvel hero. The first is for play, carried in the child's backpack, with pieces that can be manipulated and directed by the child's actions. The second is on display and blended

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with the body; in this case, the child does not merely possess the object they become the object. The child's body becomes the stage to represent what they want to be. Of course, these observations are not universal, but they highlight everyday situations that need to be analyzed.

Pich and Manske (2022) problematize how the discursive entanglement disseminated by the media operates in the constitution of self-practices and the governance of bodies, on which there is a strong political investment, as discussed from a Foucauldian perspective. Thus, control, capture, and tutelage prevail, imposing governance over individuals' lives, a process amplified by digital media that reinforces behaviors and ways of thinking. In this network of power relations, modes of subjectivation permeate and shape our bodies and behaviors.

In the classroom, it is very common for children to display the products they carry, which in turn give them a sense of possession. These products fuel the child's imagination, allowing them to become what the object represents: for instance, wearing a crown makes the individual feel and act like a princess, imitating those depicted in movies or cartoons, and this seems to carry more significance than owning a doll adorned with small jewels.

The relationship between body and technology is discussed by Lemos (2007), who recognizes that both merge, as the body becomes a hybrid field of artificial interventions, among which accessories can be considered. Thus, the physical body is associated with various devices promoted by the media and produced by the industry, leading us to consider that communication technologies have significantly shaped who we are, how we socialize, and how we interact with reality.

Many of the objects, accessories, and adornments sold on websites and in children's departments are present among boys and girls in classrooms. What becomes evident is that children's products begin to lose their primary function in favor of what they may or may not represent. For example, a cap is traditionally a piece of clothing designed to protect the head and skin from the sun's rays. However, a cap adorned with braids, like those of the character Elsa from *Frozen*, shifts its purpose to include long blonde hair as part of the wearer's body. These are not merely objects made for children; they are accessories, clothing, and adornments designed to integrate with and become part of the child, also assuming the role of shaping subjectivity, tastes, preferences, and idealizations.

The combination of media and the use of various technological tools daily fuels the desire to have and accumulate what is fashionable, opening a door to children's power: the power of purchase and the satisfaction of fulfilling desire. However, it is important to highlight that "[…] power engages both the conscious and subconscious in ways that evoke, no doubt, desire, but also guilt and anxiety"

(STEINBERG; KINCHELOE, 2001, p. 21). The product serves to inscribe the child within groups, generating a sense of belonging and conferring status.

Dornelles (2005, p. 90, emphasis in the original) refers to this consumer population as *cyber-childhood* the children of the digital age:

> The new production-consumption relationship constitutes the child as a target consumer, subjected to appeals that individualize and fragment them: the so-called postmodern *cyber-infant* subject. Postmodern children are captured by the regulations of power. They learn from an early age that consuming means possessing certain objects or social markers, and adopting a certain lifestyle becomes a 'necessary condition' for 'happiness' it is equated with power. Therefore, consumption is also a form of power, a mode or style of self-subjectivation or self-governance.

Consuming what is promoted by the media reveals the possibility of occupying a space of power, which "[…] is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a certain strength that some possess: it is the name given to a complex strategic situation in a given society" (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 103). Thus, while consumption can empower the buyer, it also generates profit for major product and entertainment brands and sustains their operation by shaping consumers' desires through strategies of power - media and advertising. We can observe that the acquisition of clothing and accessories linked to characters from the children's universe reveals "[…] a network of power over childhood" (FOUCAULT, 2000, p. 232), such that the logic of consumption begins to guide children's behavior and structure their subjectivities.

Although fashionable accessories may be considered wearable devices and viewed as non-invasive or minimally invasive technologies, as they do not interfere with bodily functions (BASSANI, 2022), the act of wearing them contributes to the construction of new and fluid identities, primarily shaped by media and corporate participation committed to the production of *kinderculture* a whole set of artifacts aimed at the children's market.

This production and consumption industry generates meanings about childhoods and shapes children's culture, which becomes conceptualized through a discursive construction permeated by power relations and governance. For Foucault (1997, p. 101), government is understood in the broad sense of "[…] techniques and procedures intended to direct the conduct of men: governance of children, governance of souls or consciences, governance of a household, a state, or oneself." Media production, in its broad and complex form, addresses boys and girls through various languages, with cultural artifacts laden with guidelines on ways of being and existing in the world (TOMAZ, 2020).

Thus, these media characters that fill children's imaginations, along with the artifacts that become part of their bodies, can be understood not only as expressions of power through the acquisition and wearing of superhero or princess costumes, but also as another way of defining what and who a child is. As Tomaz (2016/2017, p. 273) observes, "[...] analyses that investigate the relationship between media and childhood indicate that the constitutive elements of childhood are fabricated by societies through truths that are not revealed, but rather produced within symbolic disputes."

It is important to note, however, that there are already considerations recognizing children not only as consumers but also as active interlocutors: "Children's consumption practices reveal realities constructed by them through symbolic negotiations carried out on a daily basis" (TOMAZ, 2016/2017, p. 287). In this sense, while we acknowledge the conditioning, regulation, productivity, and governance of bodies resulting from the interaction between technologies, bodies, and childhoods, there are still possibilities for indeterminism, for creative escapes and appropriations of this context and its products.

Final considerations

Reflecting on the theme of childhood, consumption, and media represents an effort to understand the particularities of the ways of being a child in the 21st century, shaped by power relations that seize both bodies and minds. Undeniably, children are increasingly taking on a leading role in accessing and manipulating technological devices and digital media. However, it cannot be denied that this navigation in the online world has also become an active field for constructing and manufacturing ways of being a child; in this case, the child who desires and consumes products propelled by the discourses and representations surrounding them.

In recent decades, with the growing integration of media into the lives of Brazilians, the child population has assumed a prominent position as the target group for programming, advertisements, and, consequently, the sales strategies of products emerging from media-driven commerce. Today, what researcher Fischer (2002) called the media pedagogical device is present not only on television and open channels but, more significantly, on cell phones and the most popular platforms of the moment, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, among others, which act as true drivers for large corporate enterprises. The industry operates by creating desires and offering immediate sales of what the eyes can see.

What we infer from the analysis undertaken is a logical sequence applied to the child population: 1) The easy access to media and the expansion of content platforms; 2) The promotion of personalities and characters through these media tools; 3) The production of accessories and objects that foster a sense of belonging, representation, and power in relation to symbolic figures and children's characters in media networks; 4) The feeling of satisfaction from consuming and wearing the desired accessories on their bodies.

Companies and commerce are persistent and precise in their sales strategies. They establish positions, assume roles, and enter children's lives in a direct way, acting as key players in shaping subjectivities. Dornelles (2005) highlights that consumption experts create pedagogies, strategies, manuals, and desires to project and promote certain lifestyles. In other words, individuals are inserted into and addressed by a market logic sustained by the propagation of messages through media and communication channels.

It is important to note that it is impossible to exhaust this discussion in this text. The process of constructing this writing has sparked more curiosities and questions than conclusive remarks, as delving into the readings that tackle the triad of concepts consumption, childhoods, and media is always an adventure into turbulent waters.

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