



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## Poverty Porn as a Sign of a Postcolonial Wall Between “Us” and “Them”

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Msc in Globalization, Brands and Consumption

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**Hand in date:**

26<sup>th</sup> of May 2014

## Abstract

One of the problems that people were trying to overcome for years is poverty. Almost half of the population lives on \$2.50 a day. However, it appears that poverty could also be seen as the symbolic resource rather than a financial state. So called “poverty porn” is being widely used by NGOs for marketing purposes as a tool for fundraising. This research presents the analysis of poverty porn through postcolonial lens, narrative theory and own reflection upon colonialism imprints in marketing of poverty. The aim of this research is to uncover the problems of social marketing such as a stereotyped representation of poverty that is being widely used by NGOs for fundraising purposes. The research question addresses two issues: firstly, it highlights necessity to analyze how poverty is being used for marketing purposes and, secondly, it addresses a need to define consumer attitudes and responses towards it. By examining these two aspects we aim to address poverty marketing from a reflexive perspective since we perform analysis from both researchers’ and consumers’ perspective. Consequently it enables us to perform a qualitative research which contributes to optimization of marketing practices so it could stand in line with objectives of social marketing.

The issue of poverty marketing and poverty porn was addressed in this qualitative study by critically analyzing three cases and eight interviews through applying narrative and postcolonialism theory. As a result we have identified various positions towards poverty marketing such as sadness, happiness, mistrust, neutrality, shock, savior, empowerment, survivor, disguise and many more. The research shows that poverty porn practice appears to be reinforcing the distinction between the West and the non-West since the advertisements are directed towards the representation of “the inferior other” and is more likely to provoke financial donations rather than social involvement. In other words, poverty porn plays a major role in positioning the West as more superior and empowered as they are the ones who can “save the other”. The roles of the superior West are basically being exaggerated in the advertisements. Thus one could say that such poverty marketing does not stand in line with social marketing and its intention to transform society for a common good.

The outcome of the study is that there are definite pros and cons of a current marketing of poverty; however, it has to be adjusted to make sure it reaches original objectives of social marketing. The contribution of the research can be presented in four points since (1) this is a critical reflexive study, (2) which addresses notion of “poverty porn”, and (3) is analyzed from a postcolonial perspective by (4) the use of a qualitative research method.

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# 1. Introduction

One of the problems that people were trying to overcome for years is, unfortunately, poverty. Almost half the world or over three billion people live on less than \$2.50 a day (<http://www.globalissues.org/>). However, there does not seem to be a single unified definition of what it actually is, since all of the social scientists have failed to provide a rich description of the phenomena. How could we define poverty, what does it look like? Does it have particular features such as size or shape? Much of the research has been done on poverty, where it has been defined as a series of “lacks”, such as lack of money, skills, healthcare, and so on (Blocker, et al., 2013). It mainly talks about what people in poverty do not have as if there are certain gaps that need to be filled in (Johnson, 2002), which could be a bit confusing since possessing certain items, tools still does not make you a wealthier person overall. The other stand on poverty has been presented by Reardon and Vosti (1995), where the poverty has been defined as a continuous action, where a series of decisions are made about the household assets (human resources, buildings, animals), and community assets (institutions, infrastructure and natural resources). Depending on how “good” or “bad” the decision is defines the present situation at any period of time. According to Pritchard (1993), who has conducted a content analysis of textbooks on social problems; the majority of books would present the federal definition of poverty, which is based on the amount of money needed to provide a basic subsistence diet and if the amount is lower than the one suggested the person is considered to be poor (Neubeck, 1991).

Basically, as defined by Hagenaars and Vos (1988), all definitions of poverty can be fit in one of the following categories:

1. Poverty is having less than an objectively deadline, absolute minimum.
2. Poverty is having less than others in society.
3. Poverty is feeling you do not have enough to get along.

However, it appears that poverty could also be seen as a symbolic resource that is being used by NGOs for marketing purposes rather than a financial state that world is dealing with.

Charitable donations have become vital financial sources of the ongoing development of civil society organizations that are willing to improve the poverty situation. The reason for it, for the fact that NGO are major players when it comes to dealing with poverty is that according to Eikenberry

(2009) there has been “...an increased drive to privatize government and for nonprofit and voluntary organizations to replace government in the provision of public goods”.

Current marketization of poverty within NGOs is an example of a “new philanthropy” as NGOs are pushed to apply market-based model of management (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004; Bajde, 2013) due to impact of environmental factors, governmental shifts and resource constraints. According to Andreasen (1995) NGOs apply social marketing, which has its emphasis on adopting commercial marketing technologies, influencing voluntary behavior with a bottom line to change attitudes for a social benefit and contribute to individuals, families or the society and not the organization itself. On the other hand, Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) and Eikenberry (2009) argue there is no place for NGOs to adopt market-based strategies of marketing since it is incompatible with democracy, citizenship, accountability and public interest. Furthermore, the market model does not stand in line with democratic values of fairness and justice.

Lately there has been a lot of criticism of how NGOs raise awareness and fundraise. If to look at the following advertisement, that could be found pretty much anywhere (newspapers, television, etc.), you could see a typical example of how NGOs apply poverty for marketing purposes or so called, newly developed term - “poverty porn”. Poverty porn could be any type of media, which exploits the poor’s condition to generate the necessary sympathy or support for a given cause. Typical poverty porn image would be black and white, expose an African child staring blankly into the camera waiting for a viewer to help.



One could say that since it is for a good cause and serves its purpose there is no problem with it.

*“There is a reason this depiction of poverty has become so popular among humanitarian aid organizations. When it comes to profitability, poverty porn delivers on its promise”* by Roenigk, 2014

However, the question is - has NGO advertising gone a bit too far? Could this way of advertising be still referred to as a social marketing? As human beings we are bothered when people are being simplified and exploited for the sake of gathering funds. It seems that most of the NGOs “Africanized” poverty as such, generalized and stereotyped the term itself (Harrison, 2010; Kirk, 2012), which is damaging Africa`s reputation. How ethical or fair this way of advertising actually is?

The purpose of this research is to answer the question of *“How is poverty being used by NGOs for marketing purposes and what are consumer positions towards it?”* that will help to fulfill and contribute to an understanding of poverty not just as a financial state but as a symbol used by NGOs for the fundraising purposes as well as gain consumer insights, emotional appeals towards the utilisation of it as such. In doing so, we will conduct interviews where participants will be given a chance to share their experiences and thoughts about poverty porn practices. Adding to it since it is a fairly new term that has been mainly discussed online in blogs, it would be interesting to experience it ourselves as well as it gives a chance to increase the reliability of the research.

As based on available sources most of the previous researches have identified three major problems when it comes to poverty being used as a symbol that need to be discussed if to capture the depth of the material. The following problems are: marketing, ethical and political, where each one of them adds a valuable perspective into understanding of the researched topic. Social advertising as a part of marketing problem needs to be looked into since social marketing emphasizes on changing behavior for a common good that most of NGOs claim to be doing. At the same time it is important to address aspect of producer stories, or message presented in marketing materials and its effect on individual and collective image. The other major topic of discussion is the political one where authors tend to raise the question of who is responsible for making a change when it comes to poverty problem as a financial state and symbol. The final and the most relevant to this research is the problem of ethics where it is important to talk about the stereotypes that are being created, africanization of poverty, its pros and cons. The topics identified above will be discussed in a greater detail in the literature review part to introduce the reader into the topic and prepare for the analysis part.

## 2. Literature Review

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*In the following chapter we are going to review previous research which uncovers the subject of poverty porn and poverty marketing as such. At first structure of the literature review is explained, and then we elaborate on each of the aspects presented in the first part. Since there is no existent research on “poverty porn”, the literature review is based upon articles about poverty in its usual definition.*

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### 2.1. Structure of the Chapter

Based on the existing literature regarding the representation of poverty by NGOs, three major topics or problems have been identified for the further discussion, namely marketing, ethical and political. Neyland and Simakova (2009) article has been employed as an inspiration for the structure of the following chapter since it provides a rich overview of marketing and ethics issues supported by different researches of various authors. It is important to look into ethics and marketing as according to Neyland and Simakova (2009) ethic marketing is “...*something beyond regular management technique*” since it affects identity creation of individuals and the society itself. At the same time marketing and ethic problem is overlapping with political problem in the existing literature.

As based on Neyland and Simakova (2009), firstly, it is vital to look into social marketing and its objectives, since it gives us a good understanding of the reasons for exposing poverty as marketing practice. At the same time we also need to know how poverty marketing affects power relations and authentic understanding of the world around us. In such manner we will uncover both marketing and ethical problems of poverty representation. It calls for a research within a social marketing as it emphasizes on changing behavior for a common good (Andreasen, 1995), where producer stories play a crucial role.

Secondly, it is crucial to address the second issue as discussed by Neyland and Simakova (2009), namely standardization of marketing. The authors believe there is a desire to systematize and standardize ethics through codes of conduct, regulations and certifications. In our research we do not look into practicalities in terms of regulations of marketing however, we address stereotyped representation of poverty in order to discuss how far marketing can go. In this study we would like to see how poverty has been stereotyped and presented to the society by and for the Western world.

Thirdly, Neyland and Simakova (2009) argue that ethics should be seen from a reflexive perspective to point out rights and wrongs of marketing; there is a need to gain understanding of practice and engage in co-creation of ethics of marketing between marketers, producers and consumers to eliminate “the crisis of consumers’ perception of marketing” (Willmott, 1999; Gordon, et al., 2007) or, in other words, there is a need to assess how the practice produce and reproduce ethics (Neyland and Simakova, 2009; Crane and Desmond, 2002) in order to stimulate organizations to work for overall interest of society and motivate individuals to “freely” pursue their self-interests (Crane and Desmond, 2002).

Therefore, summarizing written above, the literature review will discuss the existent marketing, political and ethical problems through the following topics that are closely related to the researched question: social marketing, producer stories, stereotyping, ethics of representation and social engagement.

## **2.2. Social Marketing**

As a business aspect, marketing aim is to meet and satisfy customer needs in such way that would be profitable for business (Tadajewski and Brownlie; 2008). However, back in 1952, Wiebe raised the question that has changed the understanding of marketing tools, “Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?” meaning that there is no unified marketing approach that could be applied for all products and services without being another example of business’s lack of taste (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). Back in 60s there was a need for the marketing discipline development to be more socially relevant and pay more attention to customer needs rather than being obsessed with the profit. Brown (1998) in his article has categorized and summarized the factors that lead to the emergence of social marketing:

1. Increased needs of non-business organizations for marketing services.
2. Attacks on marketing’s negative impact on society.
3. The emergence of exchange theory.
4. The coalescence of social marketing oriented theory.
5. The decline of consensus-oriented perceptions of social reality.

Kotler and Zaltman (1971) with their article “Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change” were at the forefront of the development of such term as social marketing that was later re-defined by Andreasen (1995) as:

*“...the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society they are a part of”*

Over the last decades social marketing has emerged to be the dominant approach applied by NGOs and even in some cases replacing any other communication. Although, NGO is considered to be a social act (Bajde, 2009), wherein organizations serve roles of value guardians, service providers, advocates and builders of social capital (Salamon, 1997; Kramer, 1981), market influences and resource constraints have pushed NGOs to adopt marketing practices, specifically social marketing (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004; Eikenberry, 2009; Bajde, 2013) that stays in line with their goal to solve the problem of disadvantaged communities (Freitas-da-Costa et. al., 2011).

Certainly, most of the academic papers on marketing would portray social marketing in a positive way (Dholakia and Dholakia, 2001) and sometimes for a valid reason. For example, Witkowski (2005) referred to social marketing as a tool that has infused fundraising, attracted volunteers and supportive campaigns. On the contrary, when searching in the literature outside of marketing studies one could find a very opposite opinion. In his work on social condom marketing in Mozambique, James Pfeiffer (2004) notes how the popularity of social marketing across the globe is not actually “...driven by the individual behavioral change” but rather “...the widespread embrace of social marketing by many international NGOs and Ministries of Health, especially in Africa, can be traced more directly to the promotion of privatization and free market economics in the era of structural adjustment across the region”. In such manner, social marketing cannot be simply perceived as a neutral tool to promote behavioral change.

### **2.3. Producer stories**

Postmodernism offers new opportunities for global markets to participate in a “social act” that serves religious, economic, political or social objectives in the community (Bajde, 2009). This affects the way people consume, behave and communicate with others in the society. One of such social acts is anonymous donations through intermediate organizations or NGOs (Bajde, 2009) as a

way to prove own humanity and enrich an element of collective and individual identity (Berking, 1999) which consequently shapes consumers' attitude, their identities and perception of the world around them (Neyland and Simakova, 2009). Organizations affect our world perception through their producer stories, which consequently affect individual identity creation. "Producer stories" tell about a producer's or main character's background, their lifestyle and needs, and hence organizations offer a chance to experience authenticity of poverty and see a version of the outside world (Neyland and Simakova, 2009). Consequently, this addresses matters of concerns as linking to "the other" or "Orient", authentic understanding of poor and help to poverty abatement. It builds a world in a product, which motivates us to participate in creation of ethical world (Neyland and Simakova, 2009). Neyland and Simakova (2009) argue that consumers might see their own images in the products they consume, and thus such process has political, social and ethical consequences (Willmott, 1999). This links to symbolism of consumption. Supporting any type of NGO became a symbol since consumers are able to enhance their images through support of "the other." As Corrigan (1997) said *"we find ourselves in the realm of objects so much as in the realm of signs: so consumers consume not so much to accomplish specific concrete ends, but signs in general for general social ends."*

## **2.4. Stereotyping or Africanization of Poverty**

African equals poor – typical stereotype in Western world that has been heavily developed and put in peoples mind by NGOs. African people are usually portrayed as helpless, destitute and referred to as "other". Kirk (2012) explains negative stereotype of "the other" as:

*"...the grateful receivers are simply understood as poor, needy, and without control over their own destiny. Further, "the poor" are understood as undifferentiated group without intrinsic strength, often referred to through the shorthand of "Africa," where nothing ever changes".*

This sort of framing without a doubt contributes to the creation of stereotypes of the developing world as uneducated, miserable and incapable of freeing themselves (Kennedy and Hill, 2010; Clark, 2004). It is common to see advertisements produced by NGOs where one could see a hungry African child with bloated stomach staring gauntly at the camera waiting to be saved. Whether or not these images are an exaggeration, the fact still remains that poverty is deeply rooted in Africa (Egbuiwe, 2008), therefore it needs to be dealt with and in such manner some would say that the end justifies the means.

On the contrary, some academics disagree saying that, “...*these advertising campaigns are not only insensitive and offensive to the vast majority of Africans, but they also reinforce the Eurocentric stereotype of Africa as a continent of savages*” (Osa, 2010).

Adding to an idea, stereotyping or Africanizing poverty misrepresents the poor. In reality, poverty is multidimensional and has many faces and no single, simple solution to it (Smith, 2012). Therefore, NGOs claiming to work for a good cause are actually damaging the image of Africa rather than representing poverty as multi-faceted and illustrating it in the way that is calling for activism rather than charity.

## **2.5. Ethics of Representation**

Charitable donations have definitely become a vital financial source for the development of communities in need. Kirk (2012) has stated that NGOs mainly emphasize on two areas of marketing: consumer marketing and retail operations, public policy and traditional advocacy. Therefore, marketing has become a crucial field for NGOs since they have to draw peoples` attention if to promote any kind of voluntary behavior. Such researchers as Woodside and Singer (1994) agree that the way information is labelled or, in other words, framed is very likely to influence consumers` decision. According to Hilary (2013) NGOs apply both positive and negative appeals in consumer marketing to communicate social problem and address a need for a social change. Each of the appeals has individual objectives to affect cognitive frames of consumers. Consumer research studies by Ditto and Lopez (1992), Homer and Yoon (1992) found negative appeal to be more eye-catching and persuasive that would normally translate into a donation. Therefore, there is no surprise that NGOs have deployed negative appeals or as Wells (2013) calls it “melodramatic modes” to gather funds. Diana George (2001) understands this approach by questioning whether “*In a culture saturated by the image, how else do we convince people that – despite the prosperity they see all around them – there is a real need out there?*” but does not support it claiming that showing African children being helpless, staring out at the camera, which could be referred as poverty porn creates a problem of representation. Considering discussed above, is social marketing, therefore morally neutral, working on encouraging behavioral change around the world or is it a tool that has been used to its` extreme to encourage funding forgetting the basic principles of what social marketing actually is.

## 2.6. Social Engagement

The new paradigm emphasizes on issues rather than institutions, collaboration between sectors and groups, which, consequently, contributes to resource access, innovation capabilities, legitimacy and accountability. According to Prithcard (1993) *“All knowledge is socially constructed and, therefore, serves the vested interests of its creator”*. It highlights power of creator and since NGOs have a role in *“...mobilizing public attention to social problems and needs, serving as conduits for free expression and social change”* (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004) it is important to analyze how knowledge is constructed and what message creators deliver to the rest of the world. The transformative goal of NGOs and their marketing practices is to highlight the idea of justice and equality. Kirk (2012) believes there is a need to highlight standards for a common moral good and promote ways how consumers could contribute to work of NGOs rather than saving life of “the others”. In order to succeed with such transformation it is necessary to understand why people believe in what they do rather than discovering what people think about global poverty (Kirk, 2012; Johnson, 2002) because understanding of consumers’ behavior might turn into a powerful tool to influence consumers and transform society to achieve a common good (Kirk, 2012).

According to Kirk (2012) it is important to understand that overcoming global poverty needs engagement from all the public, private and governmental organizations because *“...the idea that the fight against mass global poverty is the job only of politicians and business leaders, and that the attitudes of the general public are not at all instrumental or relevant to their decision-making, is clearly untenable”*. There is a need for cooperation and support among consumers and politicians because *“...without an informed electorate, politicians will continue to use bottom billion merely for photo opportunities, rather than promoting real transformation”* (Collier, 2007). Johnson (2002) supports the idea of Kirk about support between politicians, public and businesses as he believes there is a clear need to understand poverty, learn more about “the others” or who are poor, because only in such way we will be able to help the ones in need. It is important to learn “the other” because poverty categorization does not exist as such, it does not have a “unifying face” and poverty is quite complex issue and requires individual assessment (Pritchard, 1993; Johnson, 2002).

At the same time Kirk (2012) addresses issue of trust towards ethical behavior of NGOs since NGOs are seen as exploitative and hence their motivations tend to come across as questionable. This consequently affects establishment of support and engagement between consumers, politicians, NGOs and businesses and consumers positions.

## 2.7. Positioning of the Research

As based on the existing research we can see that, although NGO sector, its cognitive influences, value systems have been researched and well developed, cognitive frames and values in the NGO sector are still in need of more exploration (Kirk;2012). Kirk suggests that, for instance, researchers should look into frames that support beliefs on global poverty and social issues across Europe, the US or emerging countries. Authors like Kirk (2012) and Bajde (2013) also argue that researchers need to gain understanding of consumer beliefs and uncover why they do things the way they do rather than defining what consumers think about poverty. As based on this gap in the research, we decided to analyze how poverty is being used in marketing in the context of NGOs with emphasis on ethics and marketing of poverty representation since social marketing applied by NGOs affects identity construction and power relations in the society. By analyzing issues of poverty representation we aim to discuss political, social and ethical consequences of social marketing by NGOs. In such manner we mainly contribute to marketing and ethics studies by applying qualitative research to fill in the gap so we could understand consumer positions towards the use of poverty for marketing purposes that interviewees have possibility to express through storytelling. It is important to highlight that most of the previous researchers have employed quantitative method with no insights from consumers which limited their ability to grasp consumer positions towards marketing. The aim is to perform analytical assessment of qualitative research in order to analyze phenomena of marketing of poverty. Furthermore, we perform analysis inspired by postcolonial study of “Orientalism” since it helps to explore marketing of poverty from a new perspective. Above all, this is the first academic study that mentions the notion of poverty porn that has been mainly discussed in blogs and other online sources and in essence represents the number of problems when it comes to ways NGOs market poverty and the use of poverty itself as a symbol. To sum up, the purpose of the research is to perform an analysis of poverty representation, the way poverty is being marketed and how poverty affects power relations in society, and at the same time, we want to look into consumers’ positions towards such practices as poverty porn.

### 3. Theory

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*The next chapter represents two sources of inspiration for this research. The following discussion will be based upon narrative and postcolonial theory as a combination of a storytelling approach and a reflexive theory that enabled us to coherently analyze how poverty is being used for marketing purposes in the Western world as well as consumer attitudes towards it.*

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#### 3.1. Narrative Theory

Narrative research takes its roots from history, literature, sociology, education and anthropology. However, different fields of study have implemented their own approaches to it (Chase, 2005). For example, sociological approach could be found in Cortazzi (1993) and Reissman (1993), a psychological approach in Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998); qualitative approach in Elliott (2005) and organizational orientation in Czarniawska (2003).

The researchers mentioned above have provided ways and tools for analyzing, understanding the stories lived and told. Czarniawska (2004) defines a story or a narrative (could be used interchangeably) as:

*“...a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected”*

White (1980) claims, that one point of the change from positivism towards interpretation in the social sciences has been a reintroduced attention to the human *“impulse to narrate”*. This reconceptualization of human beings as narrators and text as their *“products”* to be understood and interpreted could also be seen as the critical moment for nursing scholars as it reveals and possibly suggests solutions for analytical problems about validity and objectivity (Sandelowski, 1991), which means that language could finally be seen as *“something scientific”* (Geertz, 1988).

Currie (1988) refers to narrating as a fundamental human activity, a mode of thinking and being, meaning that people tend to form their memory of what has happened in the form of narratives such as myths, stories or reasons for doing or not doing. Narratives or, in other words, stories are shared and discussed in order to understand our own as well as the lives of other people (Polkinghorne, 1988). Stories are international, transcultural and are *“simply there, like life itself”* (Sandelowski, 1991).

Researchers across the various disciplines have different views on what a story, narrative must consist of to be labeled as narrative. For example, Cziarniawska and Gagliardi (2003) suggest applying such tools as plot and character that should help to organize raw, fragmented material into meaningful text whereas Soderberg (2003) in her study of change process in a telecommunications company has added such criteria as motives. At the same time, Polkinghorne (1988) and Bal (1985) were also emphasizing on such factors as time and place, rhythm and pacing. In such manner, one could say that so-called tools, characteristics of narratives could or should be chosen in a way that assist researcher to reveal the fruitfulness of the collected data and answer the research question.

Therefore, narrative theory will primarily be used to answer the first part of the research question “How is poverty porn being used by NGOs for marketing purposes?”, where the analysis will be based on three images, applied by various NGOs and the selected labels that will assist the storytelling are : plot, roles/characters and moral lessons. Plot and role labels will assist when analyzing the story behind the picture, whereas moral lesson label will aid when it comes to drawing conclusions regarding the use of poverty for advertising purposes. The reason for applying narrative theory is mainly constructed upon the fact that if to understand the attitudes, emotions and trends regarding the subject one should pay attention to the stories that are being told, spread and shared in the society as they are the representation of an everyday life or as Tsoukas and Hatch (1997) put it “...it gives you access to and appreciation for context”. Above all narrative approach is a great tool when it comes to researching a sensitive topic since people are not restricted or judged on what they think but are rather encouraged to talk and be honest when it comes to their opinion.

### **3.2. Postcolonial Theory**

Europe’s colonies constituted to almost 85 % of the Earth’s area (Headrick, 1981; Said, 1979), thus colonization and decolonization have deeply affected the structure and relations of the entire world (Prasad, 1997, in Prasad et al., 1997). Colonialism is one of the most influential moments in history which has affected and shaped West’s perception of the non-West (Said, 1979, 1993). Said (1995) argues that West sees people of color (Prasad 1997, in Prasad et al., 1997; Said, 1995) or non-West members through “...an imperial lens, which was initially created during the colonial era”. Therefore, postcolonial theory enables researchers to understand some of the complexities of racial and cultural dynamics in the Western world.

The primary focus of postcolonial theory is based upon spanning culture, discourse and ideology (Nandy, 1983; Dirks, 1992; Niranjama, 1992; Said 1979, 1993; Tiffin and Lawson, 1994; Prakash 1995), where one of the most important objectives was understanding the complexity of web of processes by means of which the colonial encounter worked to generate the perceptions or images of the colonizers and the colonized (Prasad, 1997, in Prasad et al., 1997). In comparison to colonialism theory, which emphasized on the research and analysis of the economic, political and military impact of Western colonization, postcolonial theory aims to understand how these notions are manifested in words through the symbolic and discursive work. Therefore postcolonial theory provides nuanced and complex analysis and representation of imperialism and aims to analyze how ideological and cultural features of colonialism “...*have survived the end of the colonial period*” (Tiffin and Lawson, 1994; Nandy, 1983).

The power and knowledge relations between cultures can be discussed in terms of “orientalism” since it provides understanding of colonialism and imperialism at the level of representation (Said, 1995; Prasad; 2003; Moulettes, 2009), which is primarily embedded in language. This representation is dependent upon the West, Western institutions, political ambience of the representer and culture, and not upon the Occident, or the non-West, since the idea of “orientalism” is bounded to Western representation techniques that produce knowledge and affect perception or image of the Occident (Said, 1995). In such manner it becomes difficult to reclaim the voice of “the other” as there is a lack of agency and inability of “the other” to speak up for themselves (Spivac, 1988).

Originally a term “the Orient” was applied as a definition for Arabic countries, East in Said’s works. In our research we apply definition “the Orient” as a synonym to “the other”, “the non-West” and African countries since it refer to a notion of the “orientalism”. Said (1995) states that “orientalism” refers to”...*the Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient*”. Basically “orientalism” is a discourse of dominance (Moulettes, 2009), wherein the main objective is “...*to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction*” (Bhabha, 1994). In other words, “orientalism” is a distribution of geopolitical awareness and discourse of inequality of power, shaped by the exchange of political, intellectual, cultural and moral power (Said, 1995). Discourse of colonization is fundamentally based upon an ontological “the other” which is “...*the focal point for distilling and concentrating opposites of all those*

*privileged moral, ethical and aesthetic attributes which contribute to the colonizer's self-image*" (Prakash, 1997, in Prakash et al., 1997). As in words of Said (1979) "...*the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as ... [the Orient's] contrasting image, idea, personality, experience*". Postcolonialism is built upon ontological and epistemological contrast (Prakash, 1997, in Prakash et al., 1997) since it has created binary division of the world with two contrasting parts: Orient and Occident (Said, 1995), modern and backward, superior and inferior, good and evil (Moulettes, 2009), active and passive, nation and tribe, modern and archaic (Dirks, 1992; Nandy, 1983, Prakash, 1995). The discourse of colonialism represents "the Orient", also referred as "the other", with negative stereotypes and characterized as "irrational", "childlike", "different" (Said, 1995), and the identity of "the Orient" consisted of elements as, for instance, "cruelty", "unkindness", "backwardness", "absence of initiative", "lack of logic" (Said, 1979). Consequently, image of "the Orient" is represented through the themes as "decadence, degradation and decline" (Dirks, 1992), which portrays "the Orient" as "...*only being fit (in an ontological sense) for conquest, subjugation and colonization*" (Prakash, 1997, in Prakash et al., 1997).

Bhabha (1994) explores ambivalence in the colonial relationship, cultural emancipation and effect of it on not only the non-West, but also the West world, and concludes that there is a cultural hybridization due to similarity and differences between "the Orient" and "the Occident". He argues for constant movement of identities and cultural emancipation since "...*identity cannot be pre-given, irreducible, colonizer or colonized be viewed as separate entities that define themselves independently*" (Moulettes, 2009). However, the discourse of colonization has regarded the non-West as a highly eligible object for Western ownerships (Prasad, 1997, in Prasad et al. (1997)). Even though the non-West was represented as "weak and feminine", it also had an image of a threat to the West since the non-West was portrayed as "...*the unpleasant likelihood of a sudden eruption that would destroy .. [the Western] world*" (Said, 1979). In such manner, colonization of the non-West seems to be threatening and advantageous, weak and explosive, controlled and uncontrolled or even rebellious at the same time (Said, 1979, 1993; Spurr, 1993; Prasad et al., 1997).

Considering the hierarchical system of colonialism binarity and a cultural domination, we aim to analyze empirical data with a help of postcolonial theory in order to explore, unveil and analyze the imprint of the colonization in NGO marketing and understand reality through analysis of symbolism of language.

### 3.3. Combination of Postcolonial and Narrative Theories

The decision to employ a combination of both postcolonial and narrative theory is supported by the fact that they should enable us to examine poverty porn marketing and its representation as well as consumer positions towards such practices. As it has already been discussed above the narrative theory allows researchers to collect representation stories, narratives that are shared and discussed (Polkinghorne, 1988) that should assist in explaining why people do things the way they do. In our research narrative theory gives us a chance to present the marketing of poverty and reveal untold stories behind the advertisements that will afterwards be analyzed through postcolonial perspective. By looking beyond the advertisements and interpreting symbolism and narratives presented in the images we gain deep and rich understanding of the researched phenomena. At the same time we employ postcolonial studies to analyze narratives because postcolonialism inspires and provides us with the guidance for the narrative analysis in this research. It could possibly help to see the advertisements from a two-folded perspective (“us” and “the other”), since postcolonial theory is based upon the hierarchical binaries between the represented and the represental, “the Orient” and “the Occident”. In the analysis of “orientalist” relationship we aim to emphasize on the explicit evidence in terms of settings, narratives, social and historical circumstances, as well as invisible representations in text or the interviews, artistic and imaginary text of the advertisements. By combining these two theories we are able to tell and analyze narratives at the same time, question our own assumptions about “the Orient” as analysts and consequently provide a reflexive analysis of the empirical material. In such manner we analyze exteriority since it enables us to examine the representation rather than the “truth” of a culture. We put a strong emphasis on analysis of exteriority as Said (1995) argues “...*the exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West..., for the poor Orient*”.

## 4. Methodology

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*This chapter contains the methodological reasoning behind our approach of the research. Firstly, we present research strategy and reasoning for it which combines the use of case study analysis and semi-structured interviews. We also argue for the data collection and participant selection. As the next step we present the data analysis technique. The coming chapter ends with highlighting the ethical considerations of this research.*

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### 4.1. Research Strategy

We have made our decision towards implementing qualitative strategy, which could be considered to be of a less formal approach than quantitative but highly appropriate in this case since words and symbols that people attach to them during the interviews are the preferred form of data collection (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 386). It is through language and signs people express their feelings towards a situation, for instance, their attitudes towards the poverty and the way it is being marketed. We accept the fact that people are capable of assigning meanings to their environment thus, qualitative approach is the most appropriate as it allows us as researchers to engage in face-to-face interaction which is the closest a person can get to investigating participants' mind and gives a chance to "*...take the role of the other*" to acquire social knowledge (Schutz, 1962; Lofland, 1995). Or in other words, "*...understanding of phenomena can be lost when textual data are quantified*" Kaplan and Maxwell (2005).

Bryman and Bell point out that qualitative research has been accused by some for being too impressionistic and subjective as well as lacking transparency and subjectivity. However, we believe and are being supported by other researchers that "*...qualitative research is actually the only way to access the meanings, feelings*" which give content to social processes as, for instance, the one this research is concerned with (Jones et al., 2005).

Quality could be considered as the most crucial part or a parameter throughout the entire process of the research. However, it appears that the well-known criteria as reliability, validity and generalizability, that are generally used to assess quantitative research are not appropriate when it comes to qualitative one. The debate over the topic of quality judgment of qualitative research has

led to the development of varied positions proposing that the meanings of terms should be adjusted (Azham and Hamidah, 2011).

This research takes a position of Lincoln and Guba (1985) that advise transferability, dependability, credibility and confirmability to be the measures of the quality. The following choice is determined by the fact that Guba and Lincoln, so as us, are critical of the opinion that there is a single absolute truth and account of the social world that is presumed when judging quality against validity and reliability (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 395). All contributors of our research were presented with an interpretation of what information has been collected, so it could be validated. In such manner, we assured the credibility of the research. Dependability was guaranteed by keeping all the records in an accessible manner, whereas confirmability stands for the objectivity. As qualitative scholars our aim was to create, what Geertz (1973) calls “*thick, rich descriptions*” that supports a notion of transferability.

## **4.2. Research Method**

Inductive method was applied in the research, as according to Bryman and Bell (2011: 13) this method is mainly appropriate for a qualitative research. Additionally, the method gives a great opportunity to link the research and theory. The method is applicable for this research since by answering the question we are going to draw conclusions based on assessment of marketization of poverty and consumer attitudes. Based on the fact that the research took place during 10 weeks and has restricted resources we have applied case study and interviews as methods to gain the understanding of consumer positions towards the poverty being used for marketing purposes.

According to Flyvbjerg (2006) case studies contribute to a learning process since such methodological approach produces context-based knowledge and it creates detailed view of the reality. Easterby-Smith et al (2008: 97) supports the idea of gaining thick description of life or context-based knowledge since case study is an essential method to define meaningful relationship between practical implementation and abstract ideas presented in the cases. By applying case study for this research we were able to build theory upon the phenomena and work on juxtaposition as based on Eisenhardt (1989). Furthermore, idiographic approach to the case studies enables to gain rich understanding of the case (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 60) and as according to Siggelkow (2007) case study is valuable as a method since it also allows illustrating abstract ideas and importance of particular research question. In such manner, case study let us to explore the case in detail and

prepare question for semi-structured interviews. Despite the fact that Flyvbjerg (2006) argues about the method's subjectivity, Walton (1992) believed that case studies might have the highest chance of theoretical contribution to a research. On the other hand, case studies do not allow generalizations (Easterby-Smith, 2008: 97) since we emphasize on research of three particular cases out of millions available out there. We employ multiple-cases analysis since applying single case-study might contribute to a narrow and idiosyncratic theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) that might restrict the contribution. Hence we decided to research three cases, which would represent different images of poverty porn being used for marketing purposes.

Knights and McCabe (1997) argue that research should include several methods since it enhances quality of the research. However, we emphasize on one qualitative method, namely interviews, due to time and resource restraints. We chose semi-structured interviews, since it enables researchers to gain understanding of issues, events and behavior from interviewees' perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 467). Adding to an idea Leidner (1993) stated that semi-structured interviews are a flexible research method since it gives room to address topics of a particular interest to the interviewees.

According to Alvesson (2003) researchers can take three positions on interviewing: neopositivism, romanticism, localism. Considering each of the positions, the decision was made towards the romantic position since it enables to create trust and commitments between participants and interviewee (Alvesson, 2003). Fantana and Frey (1994) recommend to emphasize on honest and morally reliable "real" conversation and "empathic understanding", which enables to reduce a chance of getting socially desirable answers. Moreover, romantic position gives a chance to interviewee or respondents to actively participate in knowledge co-production (Alvesson, 2003).

Deeper insights were gained through semi-structured interviews giving a chance to free flow of discussion since interviews were flexible in nature and interviewer was taking a supporting role during discussion rather than a leading one where the respondent might feel obliged and restricted to certain opinions. In order to avoid impact of researcher's standing point we have employed semi-structured interviews, enabling respondents to freely discuss the research problem. Since marketing of poverty might be considered as one of the sensitive topics we have applied one-to-one interviews, allowing freedom to express own opinions without being judged. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over "talking questionnaires" since the aim was not only to gain personal opinion towards the research question, but also to understand emotions and behavior of respondents as it might bring on some more valuable insights (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

### 4.3. Participant Selection

Semi-structured interviews participants were selected by implementing convenience sampling, which is a nonprobability technique that allowed us to use resources that are accessible, cooperative and are within the reach, such as friends and classmates. Even though this technique and a research based on it usually cannot be generalized, it is still very useful when generating insights and ideas which is exactly the aim of this research. Moreover, it has to be mentioned that this type of sampling is the least expensive and time-consuming and since this research was limited to 10 weeks was the most obvious to implement (Malhotra, 2010: 377). However, we still aimed to invite knowledgeable people of various ages that might have different views on the topic or as put by Lavery (2003), “...who are diverse enough from one another to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience”. The respondent profiles are represented below:

	Name	Age	Occupation	Summary
1	Judit	22	student	Does not support any type of NGOs, has never heard of “poverty porn”, but is aware of how poverty is being used for marketing purposes
2	Renske	24	student	Supports 4 different NGOs, very interested in the topic but has never heard of “poverty porn” as a term
3	Thomas	22	student	Very concerned about the environmental problems but does not support any NGOs on a regular basis. Has never heard about “poverty porn” but found this topic to be extremely interesting for the discussion
4	Michael	27	student	Does not support NGOs and has never heard of “poverty porn” or poverty being used for marketing purposes. Generally did not seem to show any interest in the topic
5	Margarita	45	self-employed	Has never heard of poverty porn and does not support any NGOs
6	Arina	21	student	Does not support NGOs and has never heard of “poverty porn” or poverty being used for marketing purposes
7	Karla	29	student	Does not support NGOs and has never heard of “poverty porn” or poverty being used for marketing purposes
8	Karen	29	barmaid	Has heard of “poverty porn” and is an active participant when it comes to charity

As Bryman and Bell (2011: 508) addressed number of interviews should increase until the research findings become repetitive. In our case, 8 interviews were sufficient enough to provide us with various opinions on the same matter or as Baker (2008) put it, "...range of responses". At the same time, it was impossible to conduct more interviews due to time and budget restraints.

#### 4.4. Data Collection

In order to collect rich data and, consequently, provide appropriate, multilateral analysis of the phenomena we have considered several data collection aspects throughout the research. We have collected the relevant data from existing sources as well as primary data through semi-structured interviews, which has assisted us in answering the second objective of the research question, meaning defining consumer positions towards the poverty being used for marketing purposes.

In terms of data collection, the departure point was to select images that will assist in developing the topic and show the use of poverty for marketing purposes from all possible angles. During the selection process we were looking for advertisements that would represent poverty from both positive and negative perspectives. However, each of the cases had to contain some elements of poverty porn.

In such manner, we chose one image (Advertisement 1) which represents poverty porn in a neutral way by that we mean having a background that might distract the viewer and possibly make him/her think of more global problems rather than poverty itself. The first advertisement might also highlight one of the main issues of the Western society, namely overconsumption. The second advertisement represents poverty porn in its extreme nature since poor starving kids are portrayed on it, where one of them is gazing at the viewer and at the same time there is a lack of action. The last advertisement contains positive appeal, has more action to it and hence it represents another possible visualization of poverty, which could perhaps be used by NGOs for marketing purposes but could still be considered to be a poverty porn but in a "milder". One could also say that it might provoke some thoughts regarding the western attitude when it comes to life and its values.

**Advertisement 1:**



**Advertisement 2:**



**Advertisement 3:**



The next stage of the research was to conduct semi-structured interviews. The participants were introduced to the topic, objectives and process of discussion as advised by Bryman and Bell (2011: 513). Furthermore, the participants were asked to sign an ethic agreement, which addressed ethical aspects of the research. We made sure to conduct interviews in relaxed atmospheres, in unthreatening places so respondents could feel free to speak up their mind as considered crucial by a majority of researchers (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008: 151). Interviews took place in both participant and interviewers houses as well as on neutral territories such as café or parks and would last from 10 to 30 minutes depending on participant interest in the topic. We have followed McCracken's (1988) advice to record the interviews on mobile devices as well as transcribe them, so it could stand as the evidence.

As interviewers we took a "passive position" by avoiding any strict direction of the interview but at the same time making sure to address any necessary topics of our interest and interest of the research (Bechhofer, Elliott and McCrone, 1984). The discussion would usually begin with open-ended questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 512) asking respondents to tell us a story behind an advertisement. Open-ended questions allowed participants to navigate the discussion (Bryman and Bell (2011: 512). Moreover, by asking open questions about knowledge, normative standards and values (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 254) and emphasizing on themes or topics, which needed to be discussed during the session, we were able to gain understanding of consumers' attitude, their beliefs, positions and behavior.

It should be noted that as unexperienced researchers we have come across the problem of not being able to facilitate a longer dialogue with some of the respondents, so the fact that we had some basic questions prepared beforehand has been of a great help.

## **4.5. Data Analysis**

We have put our emphasis on a reflexive pragmatism view at a stage of assessing the collected data (Alvesson, 2003: 14) as pragmatism enables researchers to balance skepticism and reflexivity when analyzing the data and thus, it enriches the quality of the analysis. In this way this research benefits from avoiding "*...naivety associated with the belief that data simply reveal reality*" as well as "*...creativity following from an appreciation of the potential richness of meaning in complex empirical material*", (Alvesson, 2003).

The analysis of ways poverty is being used for marketing purposes in the context of NGOs was based on a narrative analysis and guided by three major points suggested by Cziarniawska (2003): plot, roles and moral lessons that have been a helpful starting point that has provided us with background knowledge for the second stage of the analysis, namely semi-structured interviews.

In order to interpret the gathered data we have applied coding approach addressed by Bryman and Bell (2011: 585). Coding was complemented with a discourse analysis since the gathered data contained both verbal and nonverbal elements and the objective of the research method was to discover the double-folded nature of the language (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 252). By applying this type of analysis we were able to interpret the data in a meaningful way and create categories to represent findings (Alvesson, 2003).

The analysis chapter is divided into the following two parts that are being analyzed with a help of narrative and postcolonial theories. Firstly, we analyze the advertisements in order to explain how poverty is being used for marketing purposes and how one could see it. Afterwards, interviews are being examined aiming to reveal the consumer attitudes towards such marketing practices. In such manner, we will critically explore postcolonialism imprint on marketing of poverty in the context of NGOs.

#### **4.6. Ethical Considerations**

According to Diener and Crandall (1978) ethics of research could be presented in four main areas: harm to participants, privacy and anonymity, deception, and informant consent. In order to consider an ethic of emotional and physical harm to participants we asked the participants whether it was fine with them to mention their names in the research. Keeping in mind ethic of informant consent (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 133) we have revealed the goal of the research to all of the respondents. Moreover, we made sure that participants were aware of the fact that they can reject answering a question or quit the discussion at any point if they feel uncomfortable. We decided to create a confidentiality agreement, which presents ethical dimensions and process of the research. By doing so, we were able to assure informant consent and consider ethic of disclosure of presence and intentions (Kozinets, 2002) and avoid deception within the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 137).

## 5. Narratives in the Advertisements

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*The following selection of advertisements is justified by the fact that the aim was to represent poverty from different angles but at the same time address yet a similar issue of “poverty porn” or representation of underdeveloped countries. Herein we analyze each of the advertisements to present how poverty is marketed by NGOs and how poverty itself is being used for marketing purposes.*

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### 5.1. Garbage Kids



#### **Plot**

It is impossible to say where this photo has been taken and why children are being involved in it. In a way, this picture is emotionless, shocking but not surprising at the same time since people are used to be exposed to that sort of, in a way, violent pictures. This is an example of poverty porn, where poor people are passively waiting for help, taking no action. Herein passiveness and lack of action is a sign of the non-Western society. It represents “the other” as weak, passive and dependent on “the Orient” as it was noted by Said (1995).

In this picture we can see two inert black African children from underdeveloped or undeveloped country, who are lightly dressed in clothes that one might see as or associate with “Western clothes” such as T-shirts with slogans on it, however, no shoes or sandals are visible in the picture, since children feet are buried in the garbage. The Western clothes are a sign of the colonized society since they use the goods, which were most probably provided by the colonizer. In the words of Said

(1995) this could be a sign of power relations between the colonizer and the colonized, since “the Occident” is the one, supporting “the Orient” with some basic means. Said (1995) argues that:

*“It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries”.*

Absence of shoes could be considered as a sign of archaic society that lives in a world of “lacks” as they might not have some of the basic goods. Children are portrayed in a way that they appear to be helpless, inferior, lost and where the only way to support is to donate some money which supposed to do good for them. In such manner concepts of the 19th century as “inferior”, “passive”, “dependency” highlights colonial imprints in the advertisement.

The main thing in the picture is that takes most of the space and grabs the attention is garbage pile as if human life is miserable and worthless when compared to all that rubbish and misery around them. Such contrast enriches inferiority of the colonized people. We could also say that “garbage pile” could be directed towards “the Occident” or receiver of the message in order to stimulate some change in his/her lifestyle because garbage pile could be a consequence of its daily over consumption and lack of self-control. Garbage pile could also be a symbol of “our” lifestyle, where we do not care about anything but “us” and tend to be ignorant when it comes to the life of “the other”. Adding to an idea, this might be considered as symbolism of our daily existence since people tend to emphasize more on monetary rather than human values. It basically presents contrasts of “them”, meaning “the Orient”, which are in a need for basic care, versus someone like “us” who have everything and yet are still greedy. It could be also considered to be a sign of political vision of reality highlighted by Said (1995), whereas he emphasizes on the fact that “orientalism” promotes difference between “us” and “them”, unity of each of the worlds and European superiority rather than unity of two different worlds:

*“Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures”.*

Such contrast of power between “us” and “the other” represents the hierarchical binarity addressed by Said (1995) and Prasad (1997, in Prasad et. al., 1997).

### **Roles**

Children or as suggested before “colonized people” in this advertisement are taking passive roles, almost do not add any weight or value to it. Passiveness could be seen as the lack of movement or dedication towards it as such or just simple unwillingness to work towards achieving the set goal, in instance, being able to become equal to western people or desired standard of living. In such manner, African children are presented and yet again offensively stereotyped as the ones waiting for help from the outside world, the superior “Occident”. Ironically, the pile of garbage in the background might be seen as a symbol of the Western world that has produced all that waste and rather than assisting with development of African people is actually throwing, causing yet more problems.

One could also notice the fact that parents are not depicted in this photograph. Although we are not aware about what has happened to their parents, the kids might be presented as “fighters for life” if we consider that they might have lost their family, or their parents got sick or unemployed and now they have to search for food or some useful goods in this garbage. Therefore this image is missing that warm touch, feeling of unity that family gives. Why is that? Is that a symbol of a “lost cause” situation where you are left on your own to fight for your happiness or a social marketing trick to make a viewer go “It seems I am the only one who can save or help them” that is unfortunately nowadays appears to be the most effective way to raise funds. On the other hand, image of fighters could be considered a threat for the West as noted by Said (1995). It is a threat since the African society might have a higher moral power in some perspective since the kids are presented as quite healthy characters that might be looking for some goods and are reluctant when it comes to giving up.

### **Moral Lessons**

This picture could possibly provoke empathy as highlighted above but could or even should also make “the Occident” think about their consumption habits and its effect on the environment and generally world around us. It should provoke the action, global change of the Western society rather than a singular donation provoked by a feeling of compassion. This image should be able to put things into perspective since orphans are there on their own surrounded by tons of garbage whereas

we can't get enough of useless, ridiculously expensive things around us. These children already have their feet buried into the ground and as long as people will not stop consuming as obsessively, inconsiderately as they do now the next picture or advertisement might as well be without children but garbage itself. It is the time the West reflects on its selfish and egocentric behavior.



## 5.2. Begging Society

### Plot

This is an example of classical poverty porn as it primarily represents starving black people, who experience lack of food and clothes. Poverty is being used to its extreme, disturbing way by representing one child in focus, gazing at the viewer almost making it uncomfortable to look at him. Black and white colors add a bit of drama and tragedy to the entire situation, where life is portrayed as the one without the purpose and positivity in comparison to imperial world. As said by Said (1979) and Moulettes (2009), “...*the imperialist powers needed to define themselves as center and the Other as backward, weak*” that could be also seen through the selection of colors.

On the secondary level, the ad represents African adults, probably parents, who hold their kids forefront to highlight the issue that their kids need some support. Since the parents hold their kids forefront it could be interpreted as parents' inability to satisfy some of their and their kids' basic needs.

The kids do not have any clothes on, which symbolizes poverty and maybe even primitivity of the tribe in an underdeveloped country. The photo has a tribe of people in it, highlighting the child, who grabs all of our attention. In such manner, feeling of personalization or closeness does not appeal to

“the Occidental” or a “receiver” of the message. On the contrary, the ad represents unity of the starving people and generalizes them through emphasizing on oneness of “Africanized” society. As highlighted by Said (1979), the non-west could also be seen as the threat due to their strengthened sense of community “...*the unpleasant likelihood of a sudden eruption that would destroy...[the Western] world*”.

The visual has no tagline attached, which makes the image less active towards “receiver” of the ad, however, most of the characters on the plot look towards a “receiver” of the message, which gives a perception that people on the advertisement are begging us for help. Said (1995) also claims that “*Orientalists were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined*”. In such manner, this is very likely to activate our feeling of compassion and desire to help them, and consequently provoke us to compare “our” situation to “their” life.

### **Roles**

It could be said that the characters in the ad mainly take a noble role since they do not take any action towards improving their situation, at least none could be seen in this image. The lack of movement could also be seen as the rejection of development (Said, 1995). However, comparing to the previous image this one has a strong message behind it, and an active desperate call for help, especially from parents at the background. “The Orient” could also be described as a “...*locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption*” (Said, 1995). We, Westerners, could only imagine how hard it should be for parents to ask for help, not from a neighbor but “us” – “Occidental”, well developed countries, a portrait of success and accept the fact that they are incapable of supporting or providing a bright future for their children where their children can have not only basics but that extra luxury around them. What strength of character, ability to suppress ego for a desperate call for help. In such manner, they are represented as inferior and weak characters to “the Occident”. This is a standard example of the advertisement, which represents the stereotyped “Africanized” society that awaits or begs for help from the outside world as people are portrayed as impecunious, poverty-stricken.

### **Moral Lessons**

Poverty porn is unfortunately concerned not with the bigger picture but with the individuals that are portrayed in the image - this person needs your help and this person is incapable of making a living

himself. The advertisement highlights the importance of helping to those, who cannot afford to satisfy their basic needs. Considering the plot, and the passive roles of characters, one could conclude that the advertisement emphasizes on stimulating a desire to help them in a minimal way - donating some money monthly; however, it does not provoke any change in us as “receivers” of the message. On the other hand one could see how troubles unite people and push them to stick to each other whereas the Western society keeps working towards the financial targets that unfortunately



neither unite nor make anyone truly happy.

### 5.3. Happy the Way They Are

#### Plot

This photograph in some ways is completely opposite to typical poverty porn since first of all, it is not presented in black and white colors, secondly we cannot see any starving African children staring at us, lacking of any movement or emotions. However, it is considered as a poverty porn image since it is stereotyped in a way that the phenomenon of poverty is strictly African.

At the foreground we could see three women that are busy working and are smiling at the same time. It represents a developing country, where the colonized tribe works hard towards a brighter future. Of course the poverty is still visible and that could be assumed first of all, by the fact that women are working in the field which historically always been men work and secondly, by what women are wearing. Yes, the poverty cannot be hidden in these advertisements but this picture still has a completely different mood, vibe to it due to the fact that we could see people actually doing something, they are working and trying to make things right in their lives. These women are not asking for help or look confused but rather positive about what they have. This people have less than we ever had but are still smiling, emotional and humble. This is contradiction to what the

concepts of “*passiveness, weakness and inferiority*” discussed by Said (1995) since the characters are visualized as the ones, trying to make a bit of change in their life. It might be a sign of what Said (1995) addressed as a potential threat to the West, since they are presented as another culture with some kind of developing power. It is our contention that the way we see “the Orient” and what “the Orient” thinks of itself has been significantly shaped by the continuous work of the Western societies that have been downgrading the image of Africa with the means of literature and media that is aimed at a global audience. Morally strong and spiritual Orient has been put into shadows for a long period of time, told to feel weak and helpless. Such view has also been supported in works of such respected authors in postcolonialism as Said (1995), Spivac (1988) and Bhabha (1994).

At the same time it presents a tribe of a backward developed country since they use goods which were most probably provided by “the Occident”. Consequently this visualizes “the Orient” as an object for “the Occident”, which is inferior and needs support from the superior West to improve its own quality of life.

In such manner this advertisement represents two contrasting views addressed by Said (1995): the non-West is a threat to the West and at the same time, it is an inferior tribe, who accepts and needs support from the West. It is quite a unique representation of poverty porn since the advertisement presents both inferiority and strength of “the other”, which consequently puts the West in a position of superior society and the one, who get a rival represented by the non-West.

### **Roles**

The women in this picture take an active role by being engaged in action, busy working as well as taking a positive attitude towards it that they express through emotions. These primitive people are working towards a brighter future almost seems like they are inviting us to join them and put things into perspective regarding our own lives where sometimes objects have a greater value than humans.

### **Moral Lessons**

It could be said that the colonized people in the picture are proud of what they have and if we want to help them in their further development we should support or teach them rather than donate and throw money at them without thinking. Moreover, what might be another message behind it is that

it is very easy to stop appreciating what you have and just lose yourself chasing after more valuable goods. This image could also be seen as the one that addresses human values of “the Occident”.

#### **5.4. Poverty Porn Marketing**

By presenting the analysis of the following three cases we are able to present a poverty narrative in the advertisements and spot postcolonial imprints in marketing of poverty. Poverty is being marketed as a stereotyped vision of the weak and inferior “other”, distinction between two worlds, power and knowledge inequality. The advertisements are created upon the world perception, where “the Orient” takes a position of the weak passive inferior society, who requires help from the superior “Occident”. Unfortunately it seems like the voice of “the other” is almost downplayed in the images since the representation is based upon knowledge of the West, and not “the Orient” itself. However, comparison of the two worlds addresses moral points of “the Occident” as a “receiver” of the message since the advertisements contain uncovered messages with moral lessons. The question is whether consumers spot any moral points or not, and whether they react on those. Moreover, we are interested in finding out consumer positions, their emotions and responses towards such poverty porn marketing. We are going to address this matter in the next chapter.

## 6. Consumer Positions

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*The next section is addressing the second part of the question, which emphasizes on consumer attitudes towards the way poverty is being used for marketing purposes. Throughout the analysis of the conducted interviews we have identified several consumer positions or reactions towards the ads analyzed above. Herein we are going to perform critical reflexive analysis of consumer positions towards marketing of poverty in the context of NGOs.*

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### 6.1. “Same, Same but Different”

*“There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power” –*  
Said (1995).

Said (1995), Spivac (1988) and Bhabha (1994) argue that colonialism has shaped the West’s perception of the non-West and the non-West perception of themselves. One might expect that stereotypes would largely change throughout time, however, it seems that even though time passes by and society develops and transforms through, for instance, globalization and cultural emancipation, postcolonial world perception still exists and is strongly grounded in current world. Although Western citizens have travelled a lot, they rarely learned from or about the non-West (Moulettes, 2009). On the contrary, the West noted and documented common assumptions about “the Orient” (Said, 1979; Said 1995).

As based on the research colonial imprints are still present in marketing communication and can be spotted in consumer perceptions of the world since people still live in a world of the hierarchical binaries, where such terms as the West and the non-West, superiors and inferiors, “us” and “the other ”still exist (Said, 1995, Prakash, in Prakash et.al., 1997). For instance, Michael presents distinction between “them” and “us” or Europeans by saying: “...**they need Europeans to raise money for them**”. In such manner he unifies Europeans or Western world and opposes it to the non-West needy people, who need only or mainly financial help from us, superior people. This is a sign of hegemony addressed by Said (1995) since Europe and the West is considered as superior society,

wherein the non-West is presented in contrasting light and positioned as a weak and inferior non-European identity. Thomas also presents the hierarchical power binarity in a fairly similar way:

*"... we should probably make some radical changes in the way that **we** see the world and the way **we** interact with people in **other countries with other economies** and especially with people that are poor that **need our help** because **we** have so much to share".*

Herein Thomas emphasizes on social construction of the world, and highlights that it is basically divided into two oppositions or contrasting parts of “us” and “the other” or as he calls it “...*other countries with other economies*”. At the same time he addresses some kind of obligation that our world has towards “the other”, namely supporting them and sharing a part of what we owe in our life since we are the superior society due to our background, as he says:

*"...**we** are born here and **we** are **privileged**, and **they** are born there and **they** are **fucked anyways**".*

In such manner Thomas elaborates upon social and cultural distinction among the two worlds, meaning the West and the Non-West, which takes a hierarchical position same as it was by Said (1979, 1995). At the same time Margarita highlights the aspect of power inequality and domination of the West, and hence presents colonization imprints by saying the following:

*"Proud that **Europe** finally managed to help **them, African people**, and **we** can see some results..."*

Margarita refers to superiority of Europe, its power and continuity to help “the other”. It feels like she argues that the progress of African people is an achievement of Europe rather than cooperative action between European and African society. She automatically delegates passive roles to the African people presented in the third advertisement.

Distinctions such as “us” versus “them”, “passive” versus “active”, “European” versus “African” support the argument of social duality as well as the hierarchical binarity presented by Said (1995). Nowadays consumers position poverty marketing as a representation of Africa and life out there. Poverty porn stimulates mainly negative perceptions of African society since it represents passive tribes who have to deal with their unfortunate life conditions.

## 6.2. “Lost Cause”

*“The crime was that the Oriental was an Oriental, and it is an accurate sign of how commonly acceptable such a tautology was that it could be written without even appeal to European logic or symmetry in mind. Thus any deviation from what were considered the norms of Oriental behavior was believed to be unnatural...” - Said (1995).*

When excluding the voice of Africa, people tend to stereotype life conditions of “the other”, and hence “the other” often becomes characterized as the one who is poor, has no bright future and lives in a world, where everything is sad and bad. The representation of a lost cause through emphasizing on needy starving kids, who live in a world of “lacks”, is a tool to address a need for help and reaction from Europe. “The others” are positioned as the ones, who gave up on fighting for their life since they have no control over their life. As Thomas says:

*“We are born here and we are privilege, and they are born there and **they are fucked anyways**”.*

The quote represents his position towards poverty and people represented in the advertisements one and two. He perceives the poor people as a lost cause since they are the ones who are just waiting and even begging for help, and they have to deal with the situation since they were born there. This is basically their “crime” if related to the words of Said (1995). “The Oriental” is born that way, and has to live in such poor conditions. Same argument of “the crime” of being “the Orient” is supported by Karen:

*” Picture has been taken in Africa, one of them countries, where people are **always poor and in need** ...These people are obviously in need, **waiting for help** and are **sick and tired**, almost looking angry”*

She addresses a passive attitude of “the other” since they are “waiting for help”. She addresses inability of locals to handle poverty issue on their own. Karen basically says “the other” needs us, Europeans, to help them to solve their poverty issue. Although she does not specify what kind of help they are waiting for, during the interview we understood that she understands financial support to be the main way to help “the other”. Karen also highlights continuity of poverty issues of “the other” represented in the advertisements. By saying “*people are always poor*” she stresses on the fact that such situation is a lost cause since there is no change happening and most probably nothing helps to improve situation in that underdeveloped country. As Said (1995) claims that passive

attitude of the other is perceived almost like a protest towards development since they are simply unable to make a change. Margarita adds on the idea of a lost cause by saying:

*"I actually feel **very disgusted** by the fact that **poverty is always being shown as African problem**. There are so many countries out there that are in need but no, NGOs are very stubborn or maybe blind...and just keep ignoring it. In fact, I don't feel like going to Africa at all and I might sound stupid but it has a lot to do with the fact that **Africa is always portrayed as a country of misery and poverty**"*

It just shows that people have these stereotypes towards Africanized poverty. Lost cause is also associated with despair of "the other". Feeling of despair can be seen in Arina's words, where she addresses the world of "lacks" of "the other":

*"I feel sad since I understand that the world is unfair, it is hard to understand why some people get everything in their live, while some **do not even have simple clothes and they die from hunger.**"*

At the same time she perceives that people in Africa "die from hunger". In such manner she represents weakness of "the other" to fight for his/her own life, and once again expresses despair of life of "the other". Another sign of despair can be seen in following quote:

*"It might be a very poor country, where are **many problems** such as poverty, unemployment, starvation, lack of education ... basically it represents **a low level of life**..."*

Arina highlights the fact that there are many problems in life of "the other" since they have "...a low level of life", where they have no education, jobs, food or money. They are poor and depending on the outside world. Karen, Margarita and Arina also present the idea that the Africanized society is a lost cause and "the others" are unable to make a change on their own. Africa is considered to be a lost cause wherein "everything to be so sad and so bad..." as Renske and Michael say. Even though some of the advertisements emphasize on a positivity existing in African countries, people more often see sadness beyond the images. Consumers believe situation is a lost cause and it is difficult if not almost impossible to make a change for a better life in those countries. As Thomas says:

*"It's just a stereotype that all African countries are **poor, underdeveloped** and are **one big shithole**.... It makes these poverty pictures a little bit less overwhelming. It's not like there is much poverty that **there is nothing you can do** because it is what I think most people feel, think about it."*

Stereotyping of a lost cause is quite a common position among the respondents. It can be said that Africa is perceived as inferior colonized tribe, whose life cannot be changed. Karen supports the idea of duality among superior and inferior individuals within society since, for instance, she says:

*“...it just makes me want to give up as **we, Europe** I mean, have been fighting for ages to improve the situation and then again, that sort of picture and this **miserable kid** is looking at you”.*

Karen highlights the unity of Europe, where she belongs. She represents Europe as a proactive state continuously fighting for a change; however, Europe does not achieve desired goals since there are still “miserable” people out there, who still need support from Europe. Basically she emphasizes on active role of European people who try to make a change in the world of “the other” and passive role of “the other” and unsuccessful transformation against poverty and other related issues. At the same time Karen presents power inequality, where Europe has a power to make a change, while “the inferior others” only accept help from Europe, and take no active position themselves to make a change for a better life. However, she does not say anything about how poverty marketing affects Europe, whether it stimulates any transformation in the European world.

Consumer perception of “the other” and positioning the advertisement as a representation of a “lost cause” can be explained through “orientalism” notion. According to Said (1995) *“...Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, as accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied-indeed, made truly productive-the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture”*. This quotation explains why consumers perceive Africa and poor countries as a lost cause. The following stereotype has occurred as a result of historical exchange of knowledge between cultures, long history of political relationships between cultures and knowledge sharing. Such stereotyping seemed to be true representation of “the other” since the knowledge about “them” and the voice of “the other” was never required.

It seems like the advertisements illustrate duality of our society since the advertisements present “the other” as a lost cause and Europe or the West society becomes a warrior or savior who can make a change. The advertisements of “poverty porn” enhance image of a lost cause and strengthen negative perceptions and stereotyping in the West. However, as it is represented on the third

advertisement there is another side of African society since they actually try to make a change in their life. Unfortunately this part is downplayed in poverty marketing because of the strong emphasis on extreme “poverty porn”. The question is does such poverty marketing really addresses what it intends to do through downplaying the voices and roles of society?

### 6.3. “End Justifies the Means”

*“...My whole point about this system is not that it is a misinterpretation of some Oriental essence – in which I do not for a moment believe – but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting. In other words, representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks” – Said (1995).*

It appears that we live in a world with “worst is best” attitudes. Journalists, producers and unfortunately aid workers might have something in common. If you think about it all of them are out there looking for the same thing - a catchy story whether it is going to attract viewers or fundraise. Sad eyes, begging kids, static positioning, lightly dressed and skinny individuals - all of these are signs of a “poor” life, which needs to be improved. Almost no one is after happy smiling faces anymore but rather some drama that will hopefully evoke some emotional response.

As according to Karen poverty porn advertisements are applicable since people are uneducated about the true situation in Africa. The voice of “the other” is not presented through the advertisement, so population relies on what is presented to them. Psychologically people react on begging pictures since this is our stereotype of poverty. As Karen noted:

*"I am very frustrated by the fact that there is a **stereotype of what poverty should look** or maybe it is because people are uneducated and the only way to convince them to donate **is to push that hard** by showing this **off putting images.**"*

“Poverty porn” is known for its negative appeals and begging messages from needy helpless people. As Karla expresses herself:

*"It also pretty sad, because adults carry their children and it feels like **they want to display** this is what is happening. The adults want to display their **bad living conditions...**It is like they **are trying to say** “These are my children. They **suffer**, and they **need help.**”*

Karla positions the second advertisement as a representation of the lost cause of the Africanized society and she feels like the advertisement represents the reality beyond the image. Karla says she can almost hear the voice of the African people as they choose to display their bad life conditions, to show their life in its extreme to attract public attention. One of the most obvious reactions or emotional appeals for such poverty porn advertisements are sadness or frustration as, for instance, Judit states:

*“These pictures are taken so it makes the rest of civilization to say something like **“Ahhh...poor them”** to make us feel that we have actually everything in comparison to them”.*

Judit argues advertisements are made to stimulate feelings of compassion and sadness and highlight inequality and unfairness of life. It probably works since she immediately reflects on her life and things she owes, she compares herself to the poor people presented in the advertisement one and two. Such mirroring of herself to the world of “the other” can be interpreted through “orientalism” lens of Said (1995). Contrasting her life to the life of “the other” is based on the binarity which was discussed previously. Judit perceives her life as full of various things, wherein “the other” lives in a world of “lacks”.

However, a bit more positive advertisement and exposure of another poverty porn situation is less effective towards her since it did not get such a reaction of comparison. Such behavior can be explained by Thomas:

*“I think the point of NGOs is to ....Well ok, let’s assume that all NGOs have completely honest intentions, then I think that means justifies the end or no, sorry **the end justifies the means**. If you want to get people to **open their wallets** you not going to get far with **smiling people** because it just does not give the same **reflexive reaction**. For example, if you see someone falling on the ground it is the same thing. If this person is smiling you would be like “Ahhh, ok ok..”. You might even give him a hand but if you see **someone falling over and crying** you would be running up there and you would be helping that person. So I think in that sense **NGOs can definitely use it and as long as it helps these people, creates a better life for people that are in that area they would be even grateful to be in that picture.**”*

Yes, there is no doubt that poverty porn delivers on its promise when it comes to profitability. NGOs have put this approach through testing and it has always come back with good results otherwise it would have not existed. Said (1995) proves a point that advertisements serve specific

goals in their representations. He argues that advertisements are efficient since much of the time advertisement reach the set objectives. In such manner he proves the point that “end justifies the means”.

In fact, it seems that people are more willing to donate when they see a suffering child or a woman, as in the advertisement number two, rather than a happy healthy tribe with smiles on their faces, as in the advertisement number three. It makes consumer become more reflexive and compassionate.

*“I would say the first one, with the garbage. The second one is way too much in your face, very disgusting. The last one is definitely a no go, they look positive, **why would I give them money?** You know what I mean?” - Michael*

At the end of the day, poverty porn is the consequence of well-intentioned organizations such as NGOs attempting to raise money for the good cause and it works. If people are in need then surely showing it to the full extent is the easiest and the quickest way of raising funds. According to Renske poverty porn makes us react in an obvious way and feel compassionate to “the other” and obligated to help them financially since we live a better life:

*“It is just, it’s sad of course but the second picture is way more **intense** and has a **bigger effect**.... Well this one you would want to **give money** to because you **HAVE TO**....”*

Consumers think about financial help in most of the cases. It is a confirmation that NGOs reach short term objective of saving the poor. However, it does not stand that close to the objectives of social marketing and working for a common good since it concentrates our attention only towards monetary values.

#### **6.4. “Not Like in a Trouble”**

*“The orient as a representation in Europe is formed-or deformed-out of more and more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called “the East”” – Said (1995).*

As we can see consumers become kind of “brainwashed” by the media nowadays. As based on Said (1995) the perception of “the other” is a continuous process of forming and deforming information about the non-West. Previously the knowledge about “the Orient” was mainly constructed through literature (Said, 1995, Prasad, 1997, in Prasad, et.al., (1997)), while nowadays it happens by the means of journals, articles, videos, etc. Thus through decoding and encoding of advertisements

people became “brainwashed” about the situation in poor Africa. Not surprisingly, sadness in kids eyes, starving kids, bad living conditions stimulate more emotions and responses than poor people who make a bit of change. Knowing that people make a change or seeing a stereotyped advertisement stimulates another position, namely neutrality. Consumers do not feel like taking any action on advertisements or reflecting on anything in their life. Everything seems to be fine, and that is the way it is supposed to be. As Judit says, for instance:

*“They do not look like they are in trouble. So I do not feel that sad for them. they have a job, and they are happy.”*

Let us first emphasize on her feelings. She perceives that people presented in the advertisement are fine. Nothing triggers her to be compassionate or encouraging, neither happy for them, just as Thomas argues:

*“When it comes to this one, picture 3, I would **not be triggered to contribute** because **it does not seem that they are in need of anything.**”*

It feels like positive presentation of a bit progressing society, however, which is still behind in its development, does not stimulate any compassion. Consumers forget about signs of help in the image. They see a smile and it makes a cliché in their mind that those people are fine, and most probably they do not need any assistance or help since they got out of “the hole of poverty” where they have been stuck for quite a while. Consequently the signs of underdeveloped society become illuminated from the image. Such positive representation decreases power of the superior over the colonizer and it shows strength of “the other” “to survive on their own and live happily in their own surroundings without assistance from the superior. In the theory of Said’s work (1995) it can be interpreted as a fear of losing its power to “the other” since “the other” shows power by existing on its own and makes “the Orient” resistant to respond to poverty marketing in the same manner. Threat of power imbalance might be one of the reasons beyond neutral response of the consumers.

Poverty porn is a stereotyped poverty. Consumer position of neutrality seems to be a reflection on the fact that poverty porn has been used for marketing purposes for a long time. Thus consumers might not even react on poverty porn marketing since they are so used to it. In words of Judit it sounds like:

*"These pictures might not motivate me to do that much...This particular picture (picture two) does not motivate me to make any change in myself because I **have seen such pictures** before. I do not consider that these pictures will motivate me to make any change."*

She says it is all about the advertisements. Media has been presenting the same types of poverty porn advertisements for such a long time that they are not efficient in any way on some people. When consumers see a slightly positive advertisement of poverty porn it does not evoke any emotions at all. Consumers seem to stay emotionally neutral and take no proactive action to encourage further development of the poor people. It seems like some people of the West might just lack compassion towards such happy people since as Michael's says people become less considerable due to positivity of the advertisements:

*"I feel **less considerable** about them as they seem to be positive anyways. We always **tend to think that they are feeling so bad and sad, hungry** and what not but **they actually are happy people**...The last one is definitely a no go, **they look positive, why would I give them money?** You know what I mean?"*

He basically proves that happiness does not necessarily stimulate compassion and desire to help "the other". Somehow they forget about stereotyping of a lost cause and forget that those people still might have difficult times. As Arina stated about the third advertisement:

*"Women look happy and cute I would say. They **do not look like starving people** who are in an **emergent need for any kind of help.**"*

She stresses on the fact that characters seem to be content and this consequently illuminates all other issues those people might have in their life. This kind of advertisements immediately erases the touch of negative stereotyping of a lost cause. Success and progress of "the other" shows us their abilities to live on their own. Once an advertisement does not emphasize on our feeling of being a superior society, savior of the inferior one, consumers do not respond to it. Is it because "the inferior other", who seem to be happy, and hence they simultaneously take a competitive position in consumers' life? Or is it happening because people became more materialized and self-conscious and forget to be happy for others? What is the reason behind it?

## 6.5. “Progress is There”

*“...the Orient is thus Orientalized, a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications ... as the true Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgment, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist” – Said (1995).*

Another consumer position that is visible throughout the empirical data is a feeling of happiness for a progressing society and positioning “the other” as the one with a superior power due to its moral and spiritual values. It is important to highlight that this position appears only towards the third advertisement where people are shown in a positive, content way. Looking into the third advertisement Renske addresses the active role of the Western society in the life of the Oriental since she believes that there is a chance to teach, “the Orient” can progress once “the Occident” gives them tools and shares the knowledge:

*“This one (picture 3) is a bit more **proactive** maybe, more about **trying to teach people** rather than us rich people throwing money at them but also **teach them how to work or how to make something of themselves** which gives them a lot of satisfaction as well. For me, personally, that is a better cause as I would like to support that, think of something entrepreneurial and get that sense that **you actually help them to make progress....**This photo just generally **makes me happy** as those people seem to be making **progress** with getting food for their children and their families, community. They seem to be **almost satisfied with what they are doing**”*

Renske believes we can make a change by enrolling ourselves in their daily life, so African people would be content due to their progress. It is through sharing the knowledge westerners fulfill the need for helping people since it appeals to be a rewarding process.

There were several people supporting the idea of progress and the feeling of relief due to the fact that *“...we can finally **see some results, grateful people.**”*

The unacceptable reality is that too many African people still use methods passed from generation to generation that are way outdated. It is clear that it is not the money that would solve the problem but the valuable experience that westerners should share. The knowledge and power inequality is visible and is the problem to be dealt with that will fight the hunger and other troubles that come with it (Said, 1995).

## 6.6. “Fighters for Life”

*Unless the Orient was seen for what it was, its power – military, material, spiritual – would sooner or later overwhelm Europe. The great colonial empires, great systems of systematic repression, existed to fend off the feared eventuality” – Said (1995).*

Although “the other” is perceived as a notion of a lost cause, “the Orient” in the advertisements is also positioned as a fighter for their life. Desire to move on, fight against appalling life conditions, and survive characterize “the others” as survivors and strong personalities as Margarita states:

*“It just makes me so much happier to see that **people in Africa are not helpless, not sitting there waiting for us to help** but are actually **fighting for the life, loving it.**”*

Margarita presents active side of the Africanized society that takes active roles and has control over its lives. They basically stop relying on help from the superior Western countries and show that they can make things happen on their own. However, she still highlights difficulty of such a life since she stresses on the fact that they have to “*fight for the life*”. Same definition of fighting is used by Arina when she expresses her opinion towards the way the poverty is being marketed in the third advertisement:

*“It definitely makes me feel very sad, especially when you see these **kids, who have to fight to survive on a daily basis.** They have to **fight to survive** in such conditions where **they lack everything** and there is almost **no one to help them.**”*

Arina perceives characters in the poverty porn advertisements as survivors, who have to deal with their unfortunate conditions. That is what they have in their blood since they “*fight to survive*” every day. She also addresses continuity of the issue by saying “*they have to fight on a daily basis*”. Moreover, she highlights an issue that there is “*no one to help them*”, which means she addresses an issue of absence of people out there to assist them to solve their poverty issue. Renske , Thomas and Michael also highlight the power of “the Orient” and the non-West’s ability to handle problem on their own by saying the following in regards to the first advertisement:

*“They live in Africa and they are on a garbage dump because they are probably **searching for some food and other useful units that they might be able to use for building** maybe a house or for*

*playing with maybe?...as they are kids and they **have nothing better to do anyways at the moment.***  
– Renske.

*"I guess they are **looking for food or something to build the house** with..."* - Michael.

*" I think it's very bad actually that these places are in opened air in the first place and secondly, that they are not restricted for people to get there but I guess that is in a lot of cases **easier for poor people pick up the good stuff and maybe they even help them with that**"* – Thomas.

Strength and power of a survivor of “the other” could be considered as one of the dogmas addressed by Said (1995):

*“...the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible)”*.

Herein Said highlights fear of the West since “the Orient” might gain power to threat the West, even destroy them if the power of the non-West grows and they might eventually take over the West and annihilate cultural values and ways of living. Said believed that originally the non-West has military, material and spiritual power, however, power of “the Orient” has been suppressed by the Western world. If we consider a cultural emancipation and evolvement of the Africanized society, then such warrior characteristic of the non-West could be seen as a sign of what Said (1995) referred to as a fair that the non-west will actually outperform the Western countries. It seems like the non-West is stronger than the West since “the Orient” might have stronger personal values and norms. This is why Said defined the non-West as controlled and uncontrolled, weak and explosive at the same time. This contrast and power of “the other” is presented in some of advertisements since the advertisements visualize an inverted version of dominant world form or nation-state relationship since “he Orient” takes an active role in changing his/her own life.

## 6.7. “Facing the Reality”

*“For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived.  
Orientals lived in their world “we” lived in ours”* – Said (1995).

Guilt, shame, shock – these are quite common responses and positions towards the marketing of poverty among the respondents. The interviewees felt shocked to face the reality, where starving people beg for “our” help. However, people accept extreme poverty porn as the strongest argument to take some action towards poverty reduction and improvement of life of “the other”. For instance, Arina and Thomas express their positions towards poverty porn exposure in the advertisements:

*“I feel like the first two pictures **are the most efficient**, especially the second one. When I look into sad eyes of that poor guy, I want to give him everything I have, so he would at least smile.”- Arina.*

*“If I had to choose it would probably be the second picture because it really **goes to your heart**, you know. It is **really confronting** I would say. Especially because **this kid is so incredibly skinny** and all these people around him **they look very serious and unhappy and sort of like numb** almost. He is the only one that looks into the camera, it is almost like a **cry for help, concerned eyes**” – Thomas.*

Extreme poverty porn positions a strong feeling of compassion towards “the other”. It “...*goes straight into your heart*”, reaches core of the issue and provokes consumers to react in order to solve problem of “the weak other”. It makes consumers feel guilty that they have not reacted towards poverty issue. They feel responsible for what is happening to “the other” since the West let it happen.

*“Emmm....**Shocked...**I would say **shocked**. I would not say hopeless, but I would say **I feel guilty** because I can see these kids live in a bad condition and **this is the reality**... I did not realize that this is happening or might be happening at the same moment when we talk here now.” – Karla.*

*“As a mother, I **feel very sorry for them** two kids. I am **frustrated** and almost **ashamed** that we get to live a much better life....” – Margarita.*

Marketers play with a feeling of shame, guilt and our responsibility towards “the other” by addressing our geopolitical awareness about inequality and fairness issues and encourage and empower us to react to this. It represents, what Said (1995) calls “*political vision of reality*”, which is based upon difference and contrast of two worlds. This difference is also represented in terms of dominance and superiority between two worlds since the non-West people are presented as inferior characters. One might say that marketers emphasize on obligations between colonizer and the colonized by representing the non-West as weak characters and, consequently, playing with our

feelings of compassion and responsibility for the weak ones. We have to help them since we are strong and wealthy society, in other words, we have to give back to the society since we are known as the superior Western representatives, who have power to save “the other”. Renske addressed this issue by saying following:

*"Well this one (Picture 2) you would want to give money to because you **HAVE TO**, like you feel bad if you would not do anything".*

Marketers position the characters in plot as the ones waiting or even begging for help. They present it as a daily reality, which we are trying to avoid. Hence it positions consumers as being shocked to face such reality. Marketers present poverty porn in its true colors, which sometimes seems to be quite extreme. Extreme in a way, that appears that we are the only saviors who can help to the inferior society. In such manner colonial perception, power inequality, and dependency upon the worlds is represented in the advertisements. Consequently, it positions the advertisements as representation of a true reality of what is happening in Africa.

## 6.8. “Where Does My Money Go?”

*“The East is a career”. –Disraeli (1847).*

As you may have noticed many people have addressed the monetary donations to NGOs as the only way of solving the current problem of poverty. Unfortunately poverty porn plays a major part in building this sort of opinion that does not help but on the contrary keeps pushing the society further and further away from the desired result.

Moreover, it was noted that there is an emerging trend of losing hope in NGOs which consequently leads to the lack of participation and donations from the western society. The reason behind it is a lack of trust towards NGOs and the way the donated money is being allocated. No surprise, since scarcely a week goes by in the world without allegations in public sector. Good example would be Greece where money allocated to NGOs has been poorly misused between 2000 and 2008 (Menzel, 2014).

Nevertheless, the resistance to participate could also be seen as the great excuse that people use for not donating, it was brought up by one of our participants, Thomas:

*“Then there are these NGOs that **people don’t trust** and keep thinking that third of collected money goes to managers and their bonuses. I think these kind of things are great **excuses** for people not to give because they are like “Nah, I am not going to give” and “Nah, **they will take the half of the money anyways** and only 25% will go to African governmental agency and maybe only 50 cents of my donation will actually reach the ones in need”. That is a great reason for people not to do it and I think this is very sad.”*

In the end of the day could it be just an excuse to avoid making a change by emphasizing on a lack of trust towards NGOs and its activities? However, there is a definite need to communicate programs and activities of NGOs in order to present a report of using donations.

There are several other positions that came up as a reason why some people are so resistant to donate even though they come across a poverty porn marketing that is supposed to provoke empathy and trigger a donation. For example:

Judit: *"The thing is that I do not believe in just giving money, that people should think “ I am such a good person, I gave money”. I think if you are interested in helping you should also be interested in knowing **what you are giving for, and what is happening with your money, and all of this**"*

Karla: *" I think the storytelling is important...if I knew this picture is part of an NGO program, and I knew **where I donate money to, how they** (meaning people on the 3rd picture) **are benefiting from it**, then I would definitely support the 3rd picture/ NGO. I would know that the community is progressing and I do make a change by supporting them"*

The problem here is in the lack of communication from NGO side rather than people being callous and heartless. People deserve to know how their money is being used for a good cause, where it goes. In such manner, poverty porn is no use when it comes to provoking donations.

## **6.9. “Let’s Make a Change, or Not...?”**

*“...The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” – Said (1995).*

One might expect that since we face the miserable reality through the advertisements, now we would try to make a change, improve the global poverty problem through involvement into NGOs

or just supporting them financially but do we really make a change if we engage into NGOs or transfer some amount of money, or we actually do it for our own benefit and our own branding?

As based on our research it appears that some consumers see poverty porn images as a chance to donate and hence apply it as a tool for personal development and enhancement of own images. It becomes almost like a branding tool for consumers. For instance, if we look into Arina's statement, she says:

*"Primarily it motivates me to **think about my own life**, appreciate everything I have, and do not turn in a person who always complains that he/she lacks something."*

In her response we can see a reflection of her "me" image since she reflects on how thoughts about poverty and poverty marketing affect her own behavior. She finds some departure point for her image creation in poverty marketing. She assesses what she could potentially learn from the advertisement. In such manner poverty marketing becomes a stimuli to enhance own images and work upon own image of a good citizen, who appreciates whatever she has and ethically acts in regards to "the other". As Karen formulates it:

*"Smile and keep smiling, **appreciating whatever we possess**."*

She sees a sign of inspiration beyond the image and projects it on herself. She basically reflects on her own life and thinks how to make something for her own sake. It could be considered as a sign of egoistic altruist lifestyle, since by seeing poverty porn we reflect on how we should enhance our own life and appreciate everything we have in it. Another example of such egoistic altruist feature is visible in following quote by Thomas:

*"I should probably do more in that sense but **you always feel that you have nothing to give away**. On the other hand, **we kind of have...**"*

He highlights issue of egocentrism by saying "you always feel that you have nothing to give away". Comparing his life to the life of "the other" he can see that in the end of the day people can help "the other" by taking something out of their life since the Occident owes so many things. In such manner Thomas emphasizes on relationships and social structures within the society, wherein the ones owing many things can help those, who live in a world of "lacks" and cannot help themselves. However, as noted by Thomas, people often forget about their ability to share with the ones in need.

Renske expresses a self-centric position by saying that:

*"You would want to contribute to make people happy, so when you see a photo like this (picture three) it makes you feel more positive and you feel good about yourself".*

Renske clearly shows that consumers take egocentric position, wherein “me” and the world around me become more important than other daily stuff. It might be referred to as Eurocentric aspect of “orientalism” by Said (1995), since he perceived “orientalism” as the Occidental’s tool to construct own identity, which is also considered to be a mirroring version of “the Orient”. It seems like consumers quite often respond to identity creation effect of the advertisement regardless whether it presents typical extreme poverty porn or a “milder” version of it.

## **6.10. Consumer Positions Towards Poverty Porn Marketing**

All things considered we have identified a variety of positions towards the use of poverty porn for marketing purposes starting from such obvious ones as being strictly against it and showing frustration through the words expressed by people that were neutral and could not care less. Overall it just shows the diversity of opinions that are out there waiting to be interpreted. However, it was a great experience to be able to analyse it with a help of postcolonial views that just opened our eyes to the fact of how much it still affects our society and how “brainwashed” we as a society are when it comes to what we perceive to be right and wrong. Postcolonial lens enabled us to see that consumers position the advertisements as a representation of the world around them, which is built upon the distinction between superior and inferior societies. The further discussion on this topic is to be found in the next chapter.

## 7. Discussion

*“If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction” – Said (1995).*

Nowadays people are almost “brainwashed” with stereotypes about the non-Western world and poverty porn, hence it is important to critically analyze its representation in current society and also define consumer positions towards it in order to be able to reflect on the situation. Thus by combining narrative and postcolonial theory we performed a critical study of poverty porn in the Western society. As based on the qualitative analysis we conclude that NGOs market poverty in various ways. It can take either active or passive roles in a way it delivers a message to “receivers”. Basically poverty porn markets social dualism and suppression of “the other”. It seems like good people end up doing bad things since the Western society suppresses the non-West without even noticing it. The non-West is suppressed, for instance, through poverty porn and exclusion of the voice of “the other”. Consumers position poverty marketing as a sad representation of the African reality, which might also be perceived as a true representation of the life “out there”. Poverty porn marketing also stimulates feelings of happiness, shock, disguise as well as sadness. Such marketing also makes consumers feel like they gain some kind of empowerment as they are becoming savior of “the other”. Considering consumer responses, their emotions and attitudes towards poverty representation in the advertisements, we identified several pros and cons of applying poverty porn for marketing purposes.

### 7.1. Building a Wall Between “Us” and “Them”

Generally “poverty porn” is a negative representation of starving “Africanized” society, who is passively seeking for help. In such manner, it addresses our feeling of compassion towards others and desires to help them. It often becomes one-way communication, which mainly has an objective of financial support from the message “receivers”. Since the 1960’s NGOs are known as a part of social marketing, meaning they are supposed to transform and improve social norms and values within a society. Consequently, NGOs are supposed to highlight current issues in our society as, for instance, overconsumption, life attitude, compassion to others, etc. The current advertisements take a passive role in the society since NGOs emphasize on helping the others through donations without addressing philanthropic aspects of individuals in the Western society. The question is whether it is

really possible to make a world to be a better place without changing our own life? It seems like current society emphasizes on quantity stuff rather than quality times. In daily routines, and rush after monetary values, we forgot about simple daily moments which could make us happy; we forgot about few things which make our life easier. We believe such aspect of our life should be highlighted in the advertisements rather than addressing poor “Africanized” society. Our perception about them is so badly stereotyped. Consequently, we should consider desires of people in underdeveloped world especially the ones who are being exposed in the pictures. Is it the way they want to be perceived? Is it the only way to highlight a need to help them? How does it affect them, and how does it actually address our philanthropic standing? Do current ads truly benefit to both “Africanized” and Western societies? Or should we consider both aspects in the next era of poverty marketization?

Assigning passive roles to the African society can affect global images. For instance, it could simply affect Africa’s image as a country. It would stimulate less tourism or interest towards a weak tribe, who live in underdeveloped world and fights to survive. People might become scared to discover Africa just due to wrong stereotyping. Consequently it affects image of the African people, their self-esteem and dignity since excluding the voice of the other prevents us from learning “the other” and discovering their culture and their desires. Poverty porn could be accused for robbing African people of dignity. Representing African people in such a standardized way does not help improve the situation but is rather building a wall between “us” and “them”. People stop seeing the world as a whole. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult if almost impossible. Poverty porn emphasizes on how different we are rather than on how we share similar values.

## **7.2. Are We Doing It Right?**

It could be definitely seen that poverty porn delivers on its promise since consumers felt compassionate towards the characters and felt like donating. In such manner poverty porn leads to charity and not a global change or activism since its practices simply fail to enhance the understanding of the complexity of the poverty problem as well as what changes need to be made to tackle it. On the contrary, it shows poverty as an issue that could be swiftly solved with money, where one needs to carry on donating month after month. Moreover, poverty porn also fails to see poverty as a multisided phenomenon that does not have a simple solution to it. Unfortunately, this does not reach long term objectives of social marketing since it does not provoke any social change

or evolvement of social norms and values. The research has shown how “poverty porn” reinforces distinction between the West and the Non-West since the advertisements are directed towards representation of “the inferior other” and provoking financial donations rather than social involvement and addressing social issues, and positioning the West as more superior and empowered since they are the ones who can “save the Other”. The roles of the superior West are basically downplayed in the advertisements. Thus such poverty marketing does not stand in line with social marketing and its intention to transform society for a common good since it does not improve social norms and values as social marketing originally intends to. Therefore, NGOs could be accused for dealing with the consequences of the poverty rather than addressing the core of the poverty issue.

It is crucial to empower correct people when dealing with a global issue just like it is important to choose who you vote for on the next election. We make our decision and shape our future. Therefore, letting media employ poverty for marketing purposes we let the wrong people steer the wheel. Poverty porn makes the West think that they are the only ones who are in charge of making it right or in a position to help and a lot of times this people might not be even aware of the problem as such. In such manner it reinforces distinction between the superior and inferior, the Orient and the Occident, colonized and colonizer. It consequently distributes passive roles to the superior savior of the West since they only emphasize on financial side of support. They take passive roles in poverty marketing since poverty marketing does not address issues of the Western world.

Poverty porn represents power duality in the world and highlights distribution of inequality in the world. Even though marketers have fortunate objectives in mind when creating poverty marketing, they still end up delivering evil tool to dual existing world.

The West poverty marketing stresses on unequal distribution of power, dominance of the West and morals of the world. In the end of the day we turn to think how it would affect us as persons if we donate to one or another NGOs. Such self-reflection is a sign of egoistic altruist entering current society. Evolvement of egoism and self-centrism might affect future development of a global citizen. We lose the sense of belonging to a community even though people like to shout that they don't and keep talking about how the technology enhances our ability to connect to the rest of world. No doubt, it really does but isn't the global citizenship is about being conscious of your decisions when it comes to policy making, consumption practices and what is happening to the planet as whole. What ethics, norms and morals such life leads to?

Poverty porn makes the complex human experience easy and understandable. Is not it ironic though that people tend to associate poverty porn with institutions that are meant to be deeply concerned about the wellbeing and development? Besides that poverty porn is a much bigger and dangerous problem than people tend to think of it since it represents the poor as entirely incapable of rescuing themselves, either at the micro or at the country-level. Poverty porn or stereotyping cultivates a culture of paternalism, where only you can be the savior which is damaging the Africa image and as a consequence the development process. In going down the path of the savior, people are likely to ignore the efficient policies. So it calls for action from media side to rethink current marketing approach and analyze whether extreme poverty porn is the only way to provoke donations and changes in the Western society as social marketing and NGOs intend to.

### **7.3. On a Positive Note**

However, it is worth mentioning what a strong impact poverty porn image had on selected respondents. It made them think about their own consumption patterns but not necessarily changing it. In a way poverty porn could be seen as another way to shape our mind or to remind us about values of compassion and obligation to help others. We can see that the Oriental or “the other” could possibly teach some people about how to enjoy life and value the smallest things. We could learn from African society how to be stronger in difficult times and times of “lacks”. Their desire to move on for a better life might inspire and scare us at the same time. In such manner, we should be more willing to cooperate, donate and help. However, does not it feel wrong when we consider the only way or the most powerful to be the one that exploits the extreme representation of poverty?

How callous have we become as a society where we place more value on material belongings rather than a human life. Is not it a form of degradation of us as human beings?

What`s the big deal with poverty porn? The deal is that the western society that is considered to be civilized is dealing with a global problem in such uncivilized way that unfortunately the majority still sees as “a good deed”. You would not want anyone to talk about you as an unwise person that is in need of education, you would prefer to be seen as a person who is talented and needs a bit of assistance. So why don`t we see the poverty problem in the same light? Why don`t we talk about African people as fully-capable but historically disadvantaged?

## **7.4. Contribution**

As we have already mentioned before it is the first academic study that mentions the notion of poverty porn that has been mainly discussed in blogs and other online sources and in essence represents the number of problems when it comes to ways NGOs market poverty and the use of poverty itself for marketing purposes. The analysis has been inspired by postcolonial study of “Orientalism” since it helped to explore marketing of poverty from a new, unknown perspective. With this study we made a major contribution to marketing and ethics research by applying qualitative strategy to fill the existing gap so we could expand the understanding of consumer positions towards the use of poverty for marketing purposes that interviewees had possibility to express through storytelling. We add to the understanding of this issue by providing a valuable opinion of customers that unfolds the fruitfulness of the material.

## **7.5. Practical Implications**

Firstly, postcolonial analysis could be applicable for marketing and governmental policymakers since this discussion addresses some aspects of intercultural communication which needs to be considered by institutions in order to make better policies to present the voices of both the West and the non-West societies. Secondly, this report could be considered as an explanatory tool to present colonialism imprints in poverty marketing as we believe it would contribute to marketing development in future. Last but not least this report can be used by NGOs themselves to reconsider their marketing policies and processes and apply this analysis for the future marketing innovation process.

## **7.6. Limitations**

The reliability of the case is validated since we chose the unique case for the research, which is assessed in a systematic way in order to assure trustworthiness of the research. Even though the data analysis is performed from pragmatic point of view, the research is still subjective in its nature. Unfortunately, distanced relationships with the interviewees could have caused both negatively biased responses as we believe familiarity with daily behavior of the respondents could have added some clarity analyzing the outcome of the interviews. However, freedom of interpretation contributed to higher reflexivity and flexibility of the analysis.

As Bacharach (1989) stated research has low generalizability if it is limited in space and time. Since the research is not a longitudinal, is limited to particular setting and is only based on three cases and eight interviews we conclude that the research has low generalizability. Bryman and Bell (2011: 61) also argued that meaningfulness of setting and cases affects generalizability aspect of a research.

## **7.7. Further Research**

To finalize the report we would like to suggest possible further research opportunities in critical marketing study. It is important to make more investigation into poverty porn since it has not been looked into in depth to unfold the entire package of related problems which affect almost everybody in the society. Thus we suggest employing a quantitative research to collect quantifiable data and to generalize our interpretations and assumptions from the qualitative study. At the same time it would be interesting to employ a cultural perspective in the research since it could contribute to a more valid and reliable findings. Moreover, we believe it is necessary to analyze the world's cultural and political distinction in order to be able to reflect on power relations and social construction and relationships.

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