



Selling a lifestyle: A representation study of Kylie Jenner's cosmetic advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Kylie Jenner's advertisements construct and disseminate meanings of beauty, luxury, and motherhood through Stuart Hall's representation theory. Using qualitative document analysis of two YouTube advertisements Kylie Lip Kit and Kylie Baby the research applies Hall's encoding/decoding model within a postmodern framework to analyze how visual and narrative strategies shape audience interpretation. The findings show that Jenner's self-representation operates at the intersection of eugenics and commodification, transforming beauty and motherhood into aspirational consumer identities. Her branding reinforces neoliberal discourses of self-reinvention and feminine subjectivity in digital culture. This study extends Hall's representation theory into the domain of influencer driven brand culture, highlighting how celebrity entrepreneurship reconfigures cultural symbols within social media advertising. This research offers a novel extension of representation theory by situating celebrity motherhood within the political economy of influencer driven luxury branding.

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1. Introduction

Celebrity advertising has emerged as a global cultural phenomenon that profoundly shapes consumption patterns, lifestyle aspirations, and identity formation in contemporary society. In the digital era, celebrities function not only as product endorsers but also as symbolic figures whose public personas embody desirable ways of living. This phenomenon is particularly dominant in the United States, where celebrity culture intersects with advanced branding practices and digital media infrastructures. Through social media platforms, celebrities construct narratives of authenticity, relatability, and success that extend beyond individual commodities, transforming advertising into lifestyle storytelling. As American popular culture circulates globally, celebrity figures increasingly influence transnational standards of beauty, fashion, wellness, and entrepreneurship (Marwick, 2015).

Within digital capitalism, influencer-driven branding intensifies the role of celebrities as cultural intermediaries who merge personal identity with commercial enterprise. Social media platforms allow celebrities to communicate directly with audiences while embedding promotional messages within curated representations of their daily lives. Consequently, advertising is often perceived as an extension of personal authenticity rather than overt commercial persuasion. This blurring of boundaries between private identity and marketable persona positions celebrity advertising as a

powerful mechanism of cultural meaning production that shapes how individuals understand success, femininity, and selfhood in neoliberal consumer societies (Abidin, 2020; Banet-Weiser, 2023; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Flood, 2019).

A prominent example is Hailey Bieber whose beauty brand Rhode exemplifies the strategic convergence of personal branding and commercial enterprise. By promoting a minimalist and “clean girl” aesthetic, she effectively translated her public image into a cohesive brand identity that resonates strongly with generation Z consumers (Hertiar, 2022). This phenomenon parallels the earlier success of Kylie Jenner, whose brand Kylie Cosmetics capitalized on her extensive social media influence to establish a highly profitable cosmetics empire. Both cases illustrate how contemporary celebrity advertising in the United States operates through the commodification of persona, the cultivation of aspirational lifestyles, and strategic utilization of digital media ecosystems to drive consumer engagement and brand loyalty (Sawaftah et al., 2021).

Digital beauty culture has transformed the production and circulation of aesthetic ideals. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms enable influencers to merge personal identity with commercial branding, blurring the boundaries between authenticity and advertisement. Within this environment beauty becomes both a cultural symbol and a marketable commodity, deeply embedded in neoliberal values of self-branding, consumerism, and self-reinvention (Banet-Weiser, 2023; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Elias & Gill, 2018) influencers therefore function not only as marketing agents but also as cultural intermediaries who shape contemporary standards of femininity and aspiration.

Kylie Jenner stands as a central figure in contemporary digital beauty culture, illustrating how social media branding can transform celebrity visibility into entrepreneurial success. Her transition from reality television personality to business mogul demonstrates the power of platform-driven self-branding in shaping modern celebrity identities. Through Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, she promotes Kylie Cosmetics and its extensions, Kylie Skin and Kylie Baby, while constructing an aspirational narrative that combines luxury aesthetics, cosmetic transformation, and motherhood. This curated self-representation positions Jenner as a symbol of postmodern beauty and self-made success, resonating with young audiences navigating identity and aspiration in the digital era (Marwick, 2015). Her visible cosmetic enhancements further contribute to shifting beauty norms by normalizing aesthetic modification and reinforcing consumer-driven ideals of hyper-curated femininity (Atiyeh et al., 2024; Hermans et al., 2022).

Beyond aesthetics, Jenner’s influence has reshaped both beauty discourse and industry practices. Her lip enhancement aesthetic has popularized cosmetic procedures such as fillers and contouring, contributing to the normalization of cosmetic alteration in mainstream culture (Basalamah et al., 2025). Simultaneously, the launch of Kylie Cosmetics in 2015 transformed marketing strategies through limited product releases, influencer-driven promotion, and direct-to-consumer sales (Banet-Weiser, 2023; Johnston & Foster, 2025; Pius, 2025; Solomatina, 2026). This model reflects a broader trend in which influencers commodify personal identity, turning authenticity into a marketable asset (Marwick, 2015). As a hybrid figure, celebrity, entrepreneur, and influencer, Jenner’s brand blurs the boundary between self-presentation and corporate enterprise, promoting an aspirational yet commodified model of beauty grounded in consumer culture (Abidin, 2020; Duvall, 2024; Kumar, 2023; Verhaagen, 2025).

Previous studies have examined the relationship between celebrity culture, influencer marketing, and the commercialization of beauty in digital media environments. Research on influencer economies emphasizes how authenticity, intimacy, and self-presentation function as economic resources in attention-driven markets (Abidin, 2020; Marwick, 2015). Other scholars

highlight how digital beauty culture reshapes aesthetic ideals and promotes consumer-oriented constructions of femininity (Banet-Weiser, 2023; Duffy & Hund, 2015). Within this context, Kylie Jenner represents a prominent example of celebrity entrepreneurship, having transformed her media visibility into a global cosmetics empire through strategic branding and social media engagement.

However, previous research on Jenner's brand primarily focuses on marketing strategies, entrepreneurial success, and the economic impact of influencer-driven businesses. Studies also examine her influence on beauty trends and the normalization of cosmetic procedures among young audiences. While these approaches provide valuable insights into industry practices and consumer behavior, they tend to prioritize business performance and aesthetic trends rather than analyzing advertisements as cultural texts that produce ideological meanings. Consequently, the representational dimension of celebrity advertising remains insufficiently explored.

A significant limitation of existing scholarship is the lack of critical engagement with how digital advertisements construct and circulate meanings related to femininity, luxury, and motherhood. The application of Stuart Hall's representation theory and encoding/decoding model to influencer-driven advertising is particularly underdeveloped, especially in digital contexts where celebrities function simultaneously as producers and subjects of representation. Moreover, celebrity branding is often treated as an economic phenomenon rather than as a cultural practice embedded within broader ideological structures such as neoliberalism and postfeminism.

This study addresses these gaps by examining celebrity advertising as a representational practice that produces and disseminates cultural meanings within digital consumer culture. Focusing on Kylie Jenner's advertisements for Kylie Lip Kit and Kylie Baby, the research analyzes how visual and narrative strategies encode representations of beauty, luxury, and motherhood. The novelty of this study lies in integrating Stuart Hall's representation framework with influencer-driven brand culture, positioning celebrity advertising as a site of ideological production. By incorporating a postmodern perspective, particularly Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, the study further explores how celebrity personas operate as constructed yet persuasive realities.

The primary aim of this research is to analyze how Kylie Jenner's advertisements construct and circulate representations of femininity, consumer identity, and aspirational lifestyle through visual symbolism and narrative framing. By examining both encoding processes within advertisements and audience decoding practices, the study contributes to cultural studies scholarship on media representation in the digital age. Ultimately, this research demonstrates how influencer-driven advertising functions as a mechanism that shapes contemporary understandings of empowerment, motherhood, and success within neoliberal consumer culture, thereby extending representation theory into the domain of digital celebrity capitalism.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore how Kylie Jenner's advertisements construct and communicate meanings of beauty, motherhood, and luxury. A qualitative design enables an in-depth interpretation of cultural and symbolic meanings embedded within digital media texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research applies a document analysis methodology, focusing on visual and narrative materials produced by Kylie Jenner between 2015 and 2023. The selected period begins with the launch of Kylie Lipkit in 2015, which marked the foundation of Kylie Cosmetics, and extends to 2023 to capture the development of her branding, including the expansion into Kylie Baby and motherhood centered representation. This timeframe

therefore allows for the analysis of both the emergence and evolution of her entrepreneurial and maternal identity in digital advertising.

Purposive sampling was employed as the primary sampling strategy to select data that were most relevant to the research objectives. As a non-probability sampling technique, purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of research units based on specific characteristics, criteria, and their capacity to provide information-rich insights into the phenomenon under investigation, rather than relying on randomization (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018; Fatta et al., 2018). This approach is commonly used in qualitative research where the emphasis lies on analytical depth, contextual understanding, and theoretical relevance rather than statistical generalization. Accordingly, the primary data consist of three YouTube videos: two official advertisements, Kylie Lip Kit and Kylie Baby, and one vlog titled Official Kylie Jenner Office Tour. These videos were selected because they were officially produced and disseminated through Jenner's verified YouTube channel, explicitly feature her self-representation as an entrepreneur and/or mother, and highlight branding elements related to beauty, luxury, and femininity. The total duration of the selected materials is approximately one minute and ten seconds for Kylie Baby, three minutes and eleven seconds for Kylie Lip Kit, and sixteen minutes and twenty seconds for the office tour vlog.

The selection of the 2016–2019 period is grounded in significant industrial and cultural developments that marked the formative phase of Jenner's brand consolidation. In 2016, Kylie Cosmetics was formally launched with the Lip Kit line, which rapidly gained commercial traction and established the foundation of her beauty enterprise. Between 2016 and 2019, the brand underwent substantial expansion, including product diversification, intensified digital marketing strategies, and major retail distribution partnerships, most notably with Ulta Beauty in 2018. By 2019, Kylie Cosmetics had achieved major financial valuation following the majority stake acquisition by Coty Inc., signaling its transition into a globally positioned corporate brand. This timeframe therefore represents a historically bounded period characterized by rapid growth, heightened media visibility, and intensified digital advertising practices, during which Jenner's promotional strategies were most instrumental in constructing and consolidating her brand identity within the digital beauty market.

The collected data were analyzed using Stuart Hall's representation theory and encoding/decoding framework, supported by Baudrillard's concept of simulacra to examine how meaning is constructed and interpreted in celebrity advertising. Hall's framework enables analysis of how Kylie Jenner's advertisements encode representations of femininity, luxury, empowerment, and motherhood through visual and narrative strategies, while the decoding dimension explores how audiences produce dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings based on their social positions (Stuart Hall, 2003). Baudrillard's notion of simulacra complements this approach by explaining how Jenner's digital persona operates as a hyperreal construction in which authenticity and commodification intersect (Baudrillard, 2020). The selected videos function as primary texts because they contain the symbolic elements through which these meanings are articulated, while purposely selected YouTube comments serve as supporting data that illustrate audience decoding practices. By distinguishing between textual analysis and reception evidence, the study integrates representation analysis with audience interpretation to reveal how Jenner's advertisements normalize neoliberal ideals of beauty, motherhood, and consumer identity in digital culture.

3. Result and Discussion

The strategic deployment of celebrity figures within the beauty industry constitutes a powerful mechanism of meaning production and cultural influence. Public figures such as Kylie Jenner

exemplify how personal image is transformed into a commercial and symbolic asset through advertising campaigns for product lines such as Kylie Lip Kit and Kylie Baby. These campaigns do not merely promote commodities; they embed layered cultural meanings that construct beauty as aspirational, attainable, and socially legitimized. Drawing on Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and his theory of representation, advertisements can be understood as sites where meaning is socially constructed through signs, images, and visual language (Stuart Hall, 2003). Visual elements, including color, composition, gesture, and setting, operate as communicative tools that mediate emotional engagement and shape ideological narratives beyond textual persuasion (Huss et al., 2017).

Within Hall's framework, encoding refers to the production of media content within specific socio-political contexts, while decoding emphasizes the audience's interpretative role. The reception of celebrity beauty advertisements is therefore not uniform; audiences may adopt dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings depending on their social and cultural positioning. As a result, representations of beauty function selectively rather than universally, reinforcing particular standards aligned with neoliberal values of self-branding, individual responsibility, and consumer success. By presenting beauty as a marker of self-worth and social mobility, such advertisements not only reflect celebrity identity but also discipline audience perceptions of the body and legitimacy within contemporary consumer culture.

Luxury as Neoliberal Sovereignty in Kylie Lip Kit

As shown in Fig. 1, the desert landscape functions as a symbolic arena of neoliberal sovereignty. The visual positioning of Kylie Jenner in a Rolls-Royce encodes autonomy, spatial dominance, and entrepreneurial control. Luxury is not merely aesthetic but moralized as deserved achievement. The composition naturalizes wealth as self-made success, obscuring structural privilege and reinforcing neoliberal femininity centered on visibility, consumption, and control.



Fig. 1. Scene from Kylie Lip Kit advertisement showing Jenner driving a Rolls-Royce in a desert landscape.

The advertisement constructs meaning through a structured visual semiotics that aligns with Stuart Hall's theory of representation, wherein imagery operates as an active site of cultural meaning production rather than mere depiction. Kylie Jenner is positioned within a vast desert landscape while driving a luxury Rolls-Royce, a juxtaposition that symbolically intensifies themes of exclusivity, mobility, and elite autonomy. The spatial emptiness of the desert functions as a semiotic contrast that isolates Kylie as a singular and dominant subject, reinforcing a discourse of

individual power detached from ordinary social environments. The Rolls-Royce serves as a culturally legible signifier of inherited prestige and hyper-wealth, embedding her persona within a broader symbolic economy of luxury. Accompanied by a rhythmic hip-hop soundtrack historically associated with performative status and urban authority the advertisement encodes a multilayered narrative of dominance and ascendancy. From Hall's encoding perspective, these visual and sonic elements collectively construct Kylie not merely as a celebrity figure but as a hegemonic symbol of aspirational power (Stuart Hall, 2003). The narrative implication that she is en route to retrieve her associates further consolidates her position as the central agent of action, reinforcing a mythologized identity grounded in leadership, influence, and symbolic control.

Kylie consistently composed facial expression operates as a representational code that signifies emotional sovereignty and psychological control. Rather than functioning as a passive aesthetic feature, her relaxed demeanor encodes a culturally intelligible sign of authority and self-possession. Through Hall's framework, meaning is generated through audience decoding within dominant cultural schemas that associate composure with competence and power (Clarke, 2018; S Hall, 2024). Her sustained calmness produces a visual rhetoric of emotional discipline, suggesting mastery over both environment and circumstance. This performative stillness situates Kylie within a discourse of contemporary post feminine strength, wherein authority is articulated through controlled restraint rather than overt assertiveness. Consequently, her expression becomes a symbolic articulation of resilience and self-regulation, reinforcing a culturally legible identity grounded in poise, professionalism, and elite composure (S Hall et al., 2024).

The makeup functions as a visual signifying practice that reflects evolving cultural codes of femininity within contemporary beauty discourse. While employing a relatively restrained chromatic palette, the look strategically emphasizes contrast, contour, and precision, producing a bold and hyper-defined aesthetic, from a Stuart Hall's perspective, this styling encodes femininity as a culturally constructed identity rather than an essentialized attribute (S Hall, 2023). The sharp contours matte textures, and pronounced lip and eye definition operate as semiotic markers of heightened visibility and self-authorship, signaling a departure from earlier beauty norms centered on softness and naturalism. This aesthetic shift reflects broader ideological transitions toward assertive femininity, wherein self-stylization becomes a medium for empowerment and identity negotiation. In this context, Kylie's makeup transcends cosmetic functionality and operates as a symbolic site of meaning production, embodying contemporary ideals of autonomy, control, and hyper-visible modern femininity.

Commodification of Rebellion

As illustrated in Fig. 2, the mugshot-style arrangement appropriates the visual grammar of criminal documentation. However, rather than critiquing authority, the advertisement aestheticizes transgression. Rebellion is detached from institutional power and reconfigured as fashionable branding. This transformation reflects a postmodern logic in which resistance is commodified and neutralized within consumer capitalism (Edwards, 2013).

The mugshot sequence functions as a strategic appropriation of disciplinary visual culture that converts a historically coercive apparatus into a spectacle of neoliberal self-fashioning. Rather than simply reversing the affective codes of vulnerability associated with institutional photography, the advertisement reconstitutes the mugshot as a site where power is not resisted but aesthetically internalized. The women's composed expressions signal an alignment with the logic of self-surveillance characteristic of contemporary digital culture, in which subjects willingly perform legibility, composure, and desirability under the gaze (Rafika & Fikrani, 2024). This transformation

reflects a shift from external disciplinary control to internalized regulation, where the appearance of autonomy masks the reproduction of normative standards of femininity, beauty, and emotional restraint. The imagery therefore encodes not liberation from surveillance but the normalization of being constantly seen, evaluated, and consumed.



Fig. 2. Mugshot-style visual composition in Kylie Lip Kit advertisement.

From Stuart Hall's representational perspective, this reconfiguration illustrates how dominant cultural signs can be rearticulated to serve new ideological functions within consumer capitalism. The encoded composure detaches the mugshot from its juridical indexicality and repositions it within a postfeminist discourse of empowered femininity (S Hall, 2018), where rebellion is expressed through stylized self-presentation rather than structural opposition. What appears as transgression is therefore a managed simulation of deviance that remains fully compatible with neoliberal values of self-branding and individual agency. The imagery produces a symbolic logic in which resistance is aestheticized, privatized, and depoliticized, converting a historically coercive apparatus into a fashionable sign of desirability. In this sense, the advertisement does not challenge institutional power but neutralizes it by translating surveillance into consumable visual pleasure.

Moreover, the calm facial expressions function as a visual grammar of postfeminist empowerment that equates emotional control with strength and self-mastery. By refusing visible distress, the women embody a model of femininity that privileges composure, resilience, and aesthetic perfection even within a context symbolically associated with punishment. This representation aligns with neoliberal discourses that frame empowerment as a matter of individual attitude rather than structural transformation. The absence of fear or vulnerability does not dismantle the logic of criminalization but reframes it as a stage for demonstrating personal sovereignty. In this sense, the imagery participates in the depoliticization of both surveillance and gendered power, transforming systemic domination into a narrative of individual triumph.

The sequence also operates as a simulacral reconstruction of criminal imagery, where the sign of punishment circulates independently of its original referent. The mugshot no longer points to actual deviance but to a hyperreal performance of rebellion designed for visual consumption. This detachment allows the advertisement to mobilize the symbolic capital of transgression while remaining fully embedded in corporate branding. The result is a paradoxical aesthetic in which authority and defiance coexist without contradiction, producing what can be understood as commodified dissent, a form of rebellion that ultimately reinforces the structures it appears to challenge.

In decoding, the ideological ambivalence of this representation becomes particularly significant. Audiences may interpret the imagery as empowering precisely because it offers the illusion of control over stigmatized narratives, yet this sense of empowerment is contingent upon participation in consumer culture. Dominant readings celebrate the reclaiming of criminal imagery as a sign of confidence, negotiated readings recognize the tension between empowerment and commodification, and oppositional readings expose the sequence as a depoliticized spectacle that trivializes the realities of surveillance and punishment. This multiplicity of interpretations underscores Hall's assertion that meaning is produced through struggle rather than fixed transmission. Ultimately, the mugshot sequence exemplifies how contemporary celebrity advertising transforms symbols of discipline into aesthetic commodities, producing subjects who perceive themselves as autonomous while remaining deeply embedded in neoliberal regimes of visibility, consumption, and self-regulation.

Audience Decoding of Luxury Branding

As seen in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 present selected YouTube comments that demonstrate dominant and negotiated readings. Several comments celebrate aesthetic sophistication, reinforcing the encoded aspirational subject position. These dominant readings normalize luxury spectacle. Negotiated responses acknowledge artificiality while maintaining admiration. The limited presence of oppositional readings indicates the normalization of neoliberal consumer ideology in digital culture.



Fig. 3. Selected YouTube comment reflecting dominant reading of luxury branding.

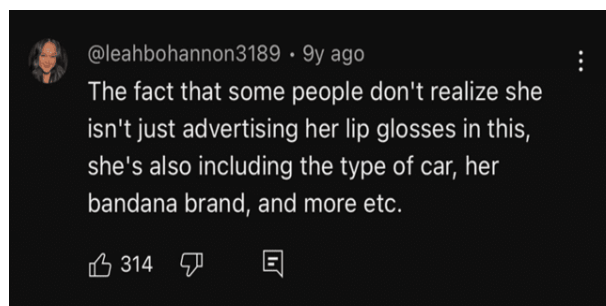


Fig. 4. Selected YouTube comment reflecting dominant reading of luxury branding.

The comment by @cantrelaterellate6185 can be interpreted not simply as an expression of admiration but as evidence of how the advertisement encodes a paradoxical ideological formation in which excess and instability are reconciled through the figure of the celebrity. Rather than

functioning merely as satire, the Lip Kit advertisement mobilizes luxury symbols, Rolls-Royce vehicles, designer accessories, and hyper-curated styling, as signifiers of sovereign individuality within an environment marked by desolation. This juxtaposition produces what can be read as a neoliberal fantasy of invulnerability: wealth and composure appear capable of neutralizing social disorder and existential uncertainty. In this sense, the desert setting does not symbolize emptiness but rather operates as a stage upon which hyper-visibility and consumption assert dominance over scarcity. The symbolic meaning of the scene thus lies in its ideological reconfiguration of crisis into spectacle, where resilience is aestheticized and detached from structural realities.

From a representational perspective, the advertisement converts lifestyle into a moral narrative of self-mastery (Adinda & Filosa, 2022). Luxury is framed not as inherited privilege but as evidence of personal discipline and entrepreneurial agency, thereby erasing the socio-economic infrastructures that enable such accumulation. The viewer's recognition of the advertisement's satirical tone reveals an awareness of this contradiction; however, the continued fascination expressed in the comment demonstrates how irony itself becomes a mechanism of ideological reinforcement (Kang et al., 2020). The advertisement invites audiences to perceive the spectacle as exaggerated while simultaneously sustaining its desirability, producing what may be understood as a postmodern mode of persuasion in which critique and consumption coexist. Consequently, the symbolic function of the advertisement is not to sell a cosmetic product but to normalize a subject position in which emotional composure, aesthetic perfection, and conspicuous consumption are construed as survival strategies within a chaotic world (Goethals et al., 2022).

A similar ideological operation is evident in the commentary by @leahbohannon3189, which identifies the advertisement as promoting a lifestyle rather than a product. This observation underscores how the Lip Kit campaign operates through the commodification of social identity, embedding the cosmetic item within a network of signs associated with prestige, exclusivity, and mobility. Through Stuart Hall's framework, these signs function as encoded meanings that articulate beauty with class aspiration, transforming consumption into a mechanism of symbolic upward mobility. The advertisement thus constructs a consumer imaginary in which purchasing the product is framed as a means of accessing celebrity proximity and social legitimacy. In doing so, it reproduces a neoliberal ideology that equates personal worth with market participation, positioning the individual body as a site of investment and display.

Crucially, the comment's suggestion that audiences may be unaware of this process points to the operation of ideological naturalization. By presenting luxury as aesthetic background rather than as a contested social condition, the advertisement conceals the structural inequalities underpinning celebrity wealth. The lifestyle narrative appears as a universal aspiration rather than as a class-specific reality, thereby transforming privilege into a normative horizon of desire. This mechanism aligns with Hall's notion that representation works by making particular meanings appear common-sense. The Lip Kit advertisement therefore functions as a cultural text that disciplines viewers into perceiving beauty and luxury as mutually constitutive, encouraging identification with an elite subject position that remains materially inaccessible to most audiences.

The Kylie Baby advertisement intensifies this ideological work by shifting the terrain from consumer identity to maternal subjectivity. Through soft lighting, pastel chromatics, and carefully choreographed intimacy, the advertisement encodes motherhood as a state of emotional equilibrium and aesthetic harmony. Within Hall's encoding/decoding model, this representation constructs an ideal maternal figure who embodies both nurturing care and controlled selfhood, aligning with postfeminist discourses that reconcile domesticity with individual autonomy. The symbolic meaning of calmness is particularly significant, as it reframes motherhood as a domain of

affective management rather than labor, thereby obscuring the structural conditions, economic precarity, gendered expectations, and unequal caregiving responsibilities, that shape maternal experience.

The potential for dominant decoding arises from the advertisement's reliance on universally legible symbols of innocence and safety, which encourage viewers to accept the representation as a normative template for "good" motherhood. However, this normalization operates as a disciplinary mechanism that subtly regulates feminine identity. By presenting consumption, through branded baby products and curated domestic spaces, as the pathway to maternal competence, the advertisement integrates motherhood into the logic of market solutions. In this context, the maternal subject is interpellated as both caregiver and consumer, responsible for achieving emotional stability through purchasing power. The ideological implication is that personal fulfillment and familial well-being are attainable primarily through participation in consumer culture (S Hall et al., 2024; Ilie, 2021).

The negotiated audience response discussed above illustrates how viewers may partially recognize this ideological construction while remaining effectively invested in its appeal. Such ambivalence demonstrates the resilience of hegemonic representations in contemporary advertising. Awareness of commodification does not necessarily produce resistance; instead, it often coexists with continued desire, indicating that ideology operates through consent rather than deception. The advertisement's symbolic power therefore lies in its capacity to transform critique into engagement, incorporating reflexive spectators into the circulation of its meanings.

Ultimately, these responses reveal that the advertisements function as apparatuses of neoliberal subject formation. They do not merely represent beauty, luxury, or motherhood but actively produce normative frameworks through which femininity is understood and performed. Empowerment is re-coded as aesthetic self-regulation, resilience as composure, and care as consumption. Through this process, the advertisements contribute to the broader cultural logic of digital capitalism, in which identity itself becomes a project of continuous branding. The symbolic meaning of Kylie Jenner's campaigns thus resides in their ability to align personal aspiration with market imperatives, rendering consumer participation as both a moral duty and a form of self-realization.

Constructing Idealized Motherhood in Kylie Baby

As depicted in Fig. 5, pastel tones, coordinated outfits, and elevated spatial framing construct serene and effortless motherhood. Motherhood is represented as emotionally composed and aesthetically harmonious, omitting structural realities such as labor and inequality. This representation aligns with postfeminist sensibility, where empowerment is expressed through lifestyle management and aesthetic self-regulation.

The visual interaction between Kylie Jenner and her daughter operates less as a representation of lived motherhood than as an ideological construction of maternal legitimacy within neoliberal consumer culture. Rather than depicting caregiving labor, dependency, or the material realities of childcare, the advertisement substitutes these dimensions with choreographed proximity and controlled affect, thereby redefining motherhood as a visual condition rather than a social practice. Within Stuart Hall's framework, this scene exemplifies how representation does not mirror reality but actively produces meaning through selective coding. The sustained physical closeness between mother and child functions as a signifier that naturalizes emotional availability while simultaneously erasing the structural conditions that sustain maternal care, such as domestic labor, class privilege, and support systems. Intimacy is therefore rearticulated as an aesthetic surface,

visible, consumable, and detached from the invisible work traditionally associated with motherhood.



Fig. 5. Ferris wheel scene portraying idealized maternal intimacy in Kylie Baby advertisement.

This visual grammar of attachment transforms relational intimacy into a symbolic resource that can be mobilized for brand authentication. The synchronization of gestures and bodily alignment does not merely communicate affection but performs a controlled image of maternal harmony consistent with postfeminist ideology, in which emotional fulfillment is framed as the outcome of individual lifestyle management rather than collective or structural support. In this sense, the child's presence functions as a semiotic guarantor that legitimizes Jenner's dual identity as entrepreneur and mother, resolving potential ideological tensions between capitalist productivity and maternal devotion. Motherhood becomes not a constraint on neoliberal selfhood but a complementary extension of it, reinforcing the notion that successful femininity entails the ability to seamlessly integrate care, consumption, and self-branding.

At a deeper ideological level, the advertisement participates in what can be understood as the depoliticization of motherhood, transforming a historically contested social role into a depersonalized lifestyle aesthetic. By foregrounding serenity, control, and visual harmony, the scene suppresses the ambivalence, exhaustion, and vulnerability that characterize many maternal experiences. This selective visibility produces what Hall describes as the naturalization of ideology: motherhood appears inherently graceful and emotionally fulfilling, thereby masking the socio-economic inequalities that structure maternal life across class and racial lines. The representation thus operates as a disciplinary image, subtly regulating audience expectations by presenting maternal competence as a function of consumption, self-regulation, and aesthetic coherence (Stuart Hall, 2003; Kurniawati, 2021).

Furthermore, the scene converts maternal intimacy into symbolic capital that enhances the brand's moral legitimacy. In contrast to overt luxury imagery, which signals economic power, the maternal imagery signals emotional authenticity, allowing the brand to appear caring, nurturing, and ethically grounded. This strategic mobilization of care aligns with contemporary influencer economies, where authenticity itself becomes a commodity. The child's presence therefore functions not only as an affective element but as a mechanism of ideological laundering, softening the commercial intent of the advertisement by embedding it within a narrative of familial love. In

this sense, the advertisement exemplifies how neoliberal capitalism absorbs traditionally non-market values, such as care, intimacy, and attachment, and rearticulates them as marketable aesthetics.

From an encoding/decoding perspective, the scene encodes a dominant reading in which maternal intimacy appears authentic, effortless, and universally attainable, thereby aligning with aspirational narratives of “having it all.” However, a negotiated reading may recognize the affective appeal while remaining aware that such intimacy is mediated through aesthetic staging and economic privilege. An oppositional reading, conversely, would interpret the aestheticization of closeness as an ideological displacement that converts motherhood into symbolic capital, obscuring inequalities that shape real maternal experiences. Ultimately, the advertisement does not simply depict intimacy but redefines it as a commodified sign of authenticity, illustrating Hall’s argument that representation is a site where ideology becomes pleasurable, desirable, and difficult to contest because it is experienced as common sense rather than constructed meaning.

Autonomy within Maternal Branding

As seen in Fig. 6, foregrounds maternal autonomy through dreamlike visual composition. While relational intimacy is emphasized earlier, this scene highlights individual transcendence. Motherhood is framed as compatible with entrepreneurial expansion, reinforcing neoliberal femininity that merges emotional devotion with productivity.



Fig. 6. Ethereal cloud and swing scene symbolizing maternal autonomy in Kylie Baby advertisement.

The sequence depicting Kylie alone within a pastel, cloud-like environment does not merely aestheticize solitude but functions as an ideological reconfiguration of maternal subjectivity within neoliberal consumer culture. Rather than presenting motherhood as relational labor grounded in caregiving practices, the scene abstracts maternal identity into a depoliticized visual state defined by serenity, self-possession, and aesthetic control. In Stuart Hall’s terms, representation here operates through selection and exclusion: the material conditions of motherhood, exhaustion, dependency, and unequal labor, are systematically erased, allowing autonomy to be rearticulated as a visual performance rather than a socio-economic reality (S Hall, 2024). The absence of the child is therefore not a neutral compositional choice but a strategic displacement that relocates motherhood from the domain of social reproduction to that of individualized self-fashioning. This shift aligns with postfeminist ideology, which frames empowerment as the capacity to maintain personal identity and desirability within motherhood, thereby reconciling reproductive labor with neoliberal demands for productivity and self-branding (Clarke, 2018).

Kylie's restrained facial expression functions as a regulatory sign that disciplines the meaning of autonomy into a culturally acceptable form of femininity. Instead of signaling liberation or rupture, her composure encodes independence as emotionally contained and non-threatening, consistent with postfeminist norms that reward women for demonstrating self-control rather than dissent. Through Hall's concept of articulation, this affective restraint links maternal identity to a discourse of psychological resilience that individualizes responsibility while obscuring structural support systems. Autonomy becomes legible not as freedom from normative expectations but as the ability to internalize and manage them gracefully. The scene thus produces what can be understood as a "domesticated autonomy," in which independence is permissible only insofar as it remains aesthetically pleasing and compatible with traditional gender codes. By recoding pleasure as introspective calm rather than outward assertion, the advertisement neutralizes the disruptive potential of maternal independence and repositions it as a refined lifestyle attribute.

The pastel color scheme operates as a symbolic technology that naturalizes this ideological transformation by embedding autonomy within a feminized visual register. Colors culturally associated with innocence, care, and childhood do not simply soften the composition; they function as ideological buffers that prevent the scene from appearing as a rejection of maternal duty. In Hall's framework, color acts as a signifier that anchors floating meanings, guiding interpretation toward harmony rather than contradiction. The chromatic softness therefore performs a reconciliatory function, visually resolving the tension between individuality and caregiving by presenting them as mutually reinforcing rather than structurally conflicting. This aesthetic strategy exemplifies how consumer media transforms potentially contentious social realities into emotionally coherent images that are easily consumable. Autonomy is thus depoliticized and rebranded as an extension of maternal tenderness, reinforcing the postfeminist narrative that women can "have it all" without confronting systemic constraints.

From an encoding–decoding perspective, the scene invites differentiated readings that reveal the ideological work performed by its visual coherence. A dominant reading accepts the representation as an aspirational model of balanced motherhood, interpreting tranquility as evidence that personal fulfillment and maternal responsibility can coexist seamlessly. Negotiated readings may acknowledge the scene's artificiality while still embracing its affective appeal, demonstrating how ideological messages are often internalized even when recognized as constructed. An oppositional reading, however, exposes the representation as a form of symbolic containment that converts the structural contradictions of motherhood under neoliberalism into a fantasy of effortless harmony. Such readings highlight the extent to which the advertisement operates as a mechanism of ideological smoothing, transforming social tensions into aesthetic surfaces that conceal relations of power. In this sense, the image exemplifies Hall's assertion that representation is not a mirror of reality but a constitutive practice that organizes how reality can be imagined and experienced.

Taken together, the sequence reveals how contemporary celebrity advertising redefines maternal identity as a form of curated selfhood compatible with entrepreneurial visibility and consumer participation. Motherhood becomes less a social role than a symbolic resource for brand differentiation, while autonomy is reframed as a purchasable lifestyle rather than a structural condition. By aestheticizing independence within a maternal framework, the advertisement produces a neoliberal maternal ideal that simultaneously promises empowerment and enforces normative femininity. The scene therefore illustrates how postfeminist media culture manages the contradiction between care and selfhood not by resolving it materially, but by translating it into a visually pleasing illusion of equilibrium.

Audience Reception of Kylie Baby

As seen in Fig. 7, illustrate audience responses that largely reflect dominant readings. Comments praising aesthetic beauty and emotional warmth demonstrate the internalization of the encoded maternal ideal. The absence of structural critique suggests that the advertisement successfully normalizes consumer-based motherhood within digital celebrity culture.

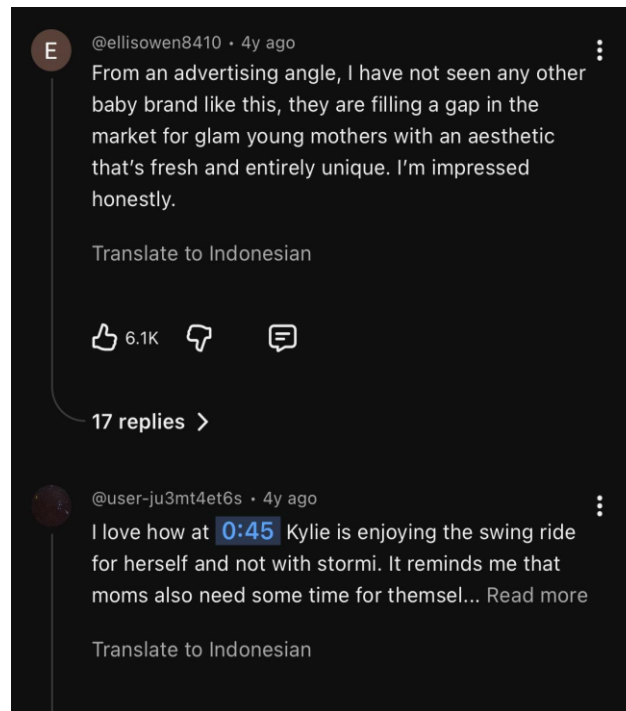


Fig. 7. YouTube comment praising aesthetic quality and highlighting emotional and cinematic appeal of Kylie Baby advertisement.

The first comment frames the brand from an advertising perspective, positioning it as innovative and gap-filling for “glam young mothers.” The commenter encodes the brand as fresh, unique, and strategically differentiated within the baby product market. This reading aligns with what Stuart Hall describes as a dominant-hegemonic decoding, where the audience accepts the intended promotional message and reproduces the ideology embedded in the branding namely, that motherhood can be glamorous, aesthetic, and commercially empowering.

The second comment focuses on a specific visual moment in which Kylie is shown enjoying a swing ride alone. The viewer interprets this as a reminder that mothers need personal time. Here the decoding process emphasizes maternal individuality rather than self-centeredness. Through Hall’s framework, this also reflects a dominant or slightly negotiated reading, the audience embraces the encoded representation of modern motherhood as balanced between caregiving and self-care, while subtly reinterpreting it as emotional validation for mothers.

Both comments demonstrate how audiences actively decode media texts based on cultural assumptions about femininity, motherhood, and consumer identity. In Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model, meaning is not fixed by the producer but constructed in the interaction between text and audience. In this case, viewers reproduce the preferred meaning of the brand glamorous, modern, and empowering motherhood thereby reinforcing the ideological framework embedded in the media representation.

Theoretically, this analysis underscores the transformation of Hall’s encoding-decoding model within the context of platform capitalism and celebrity entrepreneurship. Unlike the institutional

media environment in which Hall formulated his theory, contemporary advertising operates through personalized branding that blurs the boundaries between individual identity and corporate communication (S Hall, 2024). Encoding is no longer solely the product of media institutions but is increasingly mediated through the persona of the celebrity entrepreneur, whose authenticity becomes a strategic asset in ideological production (Hall, 2003). The convergence of personal narrative, aesthetic lifestyle, and commodity promotion illustrates how meaning-making processes in digital culture are embedded within circuits of visibility and algorithmic amplification.

By situating these findings within the dynamics of femininity and influencer-driven consumer culture, the study demonstrates that representation theory remains critically relevant for analyzing contemporary advertising practices. However, it also suggests the need to reconceptualize encoding as a hybrid process shaped by celebrity self-branding, affective economies, and participatory audience engagement. In this environment, ideological meanings are not imposed unilaterally but circulate through interactive networks where admiration, aspiration, and identification sustain the symbolic power of luxury branding. The advertisements therefore exemplify how digital celebrity culture reconfigures representation into a form of soft governance, guiding audiences toward consumerist subjectivities while appearing to offer empowerment and personal expression.

4. Conclusion

Kylie Jenner's advertising narratives reveal how contemporary digital media operates as a site of ideological production rather than mere commercial communication. Applying Stuart Hall's representation and encoding-decoding framework, this study demonstrates that her branding constructs a tightly interwoven discourse of femininity, consumer identity, and neoliberal individualism, in which beauty is positioned as empowerment achieved through consumption. Purchasing is reframed as both self-expression and self-regulation, embedding consumer practices within the moral language of autonomy and personal transformation. By fusing personal, entrepreneurial, and maternal identities, Jenner's advertisements collapse the distinction between authenticity and commodification, transforming lived experience into an aspirational symbolic economy. In this configuration, luxury, motherhood, and success function as visual myths that normalize visibility, perfection, and productivity as defining attributes of contemporary womanhood. These representations signal a broader transformation in the politics of female identity under digital capitalism, where the boundary between private self and marketable persona becomes increasingly indistinct. The resulting simulacrum of authenticity invites differential decoding: dominant readings embrace the imagery as aspirational, while negotiated and oppositional readings expose tensions within the hegemonic discourse of beauty and success.

Jenner's branding thus exemplifies how empowerment is simultaneously enabled and constrained by the logics of consumption, producing subjectivities oriented toward continuous self-optimization and public visibility. At the same time, the study's limited focus on a single celebrity case and selected audience responses underscores the need for caution in generalizing these findings across diverse cultural contexts and media ecosystems. Theoretically, this research extends Hall's model into platform-based consumer culture, where encoding is increasingly shaped by influencer economies, algorithmic visibility, and celebrity self-branding rather than traditional media institutions. It highlights how digital advertising functions as a form of soft governance that organizes aspiration, desire, and identity through aesthetic experience. Future research should therefore investigate cross-platform branding, transnational reception, and algorithmic mediation to better understand how representation operates within evolving configurations of power in

digital society. Such inquiry is crucial for critically examining how contemporary media continues to normalize commodified empowerment and reshape the politics of gender, visibility, and identity in the neoliberal era.

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