

Thesis Report 2020

Hajra Ashraf

F2016-110

#Like Consumerism by Celebrity Culture

Submitted in partial of the requirements for the degree of

SIDE

Bachelor of Design (B.Des.)

NOTES

In Visual Communication Design

At the Beaconhouse National University.

1: Yi-fu Tuan, a

human

geographer in

his

book **Topophil**

ia: A Study of

CONTENTS

Environmental
Perception,
Attitudes and
Values,
published in
1974.

Acknowledgment

2: An open
market area in
a city at the
junction of
two roads /
crossroads.

Chapter 1:

Keywords

Abstract

Passion

Design Statement

Target Audience

3: Inhabitants
of Lahore.

Chapter 2:

Research Question

Literature Review

Research Question Explained

References:

1: Kidambi,
Prashant
(2012)

Chapter 3:

Research Methodology

Data Source

'Nationalism
and the City in
Colonial India:
Bombay, c.

Chapter 4:

Medium of Presentation and Production

1890-1940',
Journal of
Urban History,
38(5), pp. 950-
967.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

Bibliography

Glossary

2: Blom-
Hansen,
Thomas &
Verkaaik,
Oscar (2009)
'Urban
charisma: On
Everyday
Mythologies in

the City',
Critique of
Anthropology
29(1), pp. 5-
26.

Acknowledgment

University life has a bitter-sweet way of teaching you about life & making you believe in yourself. For me, I've been lucky to have some amazing people around me during this adventure of a lifetime. I lost a friend who was the first one to trust me with this idea from the very beginning. Her words "You can only make anything worthy if it's what you truly believe in & if you trust yourself with it" - Rushaan, thank you for being there for me. I would like to acknowledge and thank Allah, and all the people who helped me and encouraged me day in and day out to make something I feel is one of my biggest accomplishments, my parents who always cherished the art I made, my family, my friends & specially Khansa. My amazing instructors, Sir Zain Naqvi, Ma'am Zainab Barlas, Sir Omair, Sir Aarish Sardar and Sir Ghulam Muhammad. Thank you for believing in me and mostly for struggling with me. The time spent at BNU has been the most memorable time of my life, one that will last in my memory till the end of my time. Godspeed.

Chapter 1

Keyword:

Visual Culture, Visual Communication Design, Visualizing The System, Social Interaction, Consumerism, Capitalism, Marketing, Social Behavior, Kardashians, Celebrity Culture, Influencers, Social Media, Products, Needs and Desire, Design Curation, Needs and Desires, Awareness, Panopticon, Surveillance Consumer Market, Corporate world,

Abstract

From the day we open our eyes in this world, our conditioning into becoming the 'Perfect human' begins. Society and its norms constantly shape us into the person we become, influencing not just our social choices but as well as personal choices. From the career path, we want to choose the kind of clothes we want to deck ourselves in, everything is affected by our surroundings. In my thesis, I am going to create a visualization of the whole system of consumerism that benefits from celebrity culture. My point is to show the people what goes on

behind the scenes and how unconsciously, we all fall prey to capitalistic values brought to us by our favorite reality shows. My focus will be on the most prevalent and popular reality show watched worldwide; Keeping up with the Kardashians. It isn't about wrong or right, but it's about who benefits from all of this? And it's the capitalist. By manipulating into thinking that we need certain products in our life, they sell us useless luxury items that you can do perfectly fine without. And these capitalists put celebrities at the frontlines to promote and sell their products through a certain routine.

In the recent advent of social media, these 'surroundings' affecting our behavior have expanded to a global scale. Sitting on my sofa in Pakistan, I have access to a kaleidoscope of ideas that swell my creativity. Building on this global network, the recent phenomenon of celebrity culture and endorsing has the world in a swirl. A common way celebrities flaunt a certain type of lifestyle is through the dawn of reality shows. By displaying their entire life publicly, these celebrities make you dream and yearn for this glamorous life that is made to look so effortlessly chic and accessible. You unconsciously start to adopt these ideas. Who hasn't thought about renovating their house in entirely white after a tour of Kim Kardashian's house? Forget interior designing, the Kardashians have completely revamped the fashion industry. It's all about flaunting the curves now where once it was all about slim fit bodies. This isn't just a casually spreading influence because people love the Kardashians; a lot of planning and strategizing goes into all of this. It's a whole propaganda of sorts. The Kardashians have a team of strategizing, marketing geeks who decide when,

how and what information/gossip/rumor to release. It's all about impacting consumer behavior through manipulative tactics. The reality show subtly promotes certain products and lifestyles. And we, the fans, end up unconsciously altering our own choices to a certain extent under the influence. Even if we refuse to, slowly as society evolves in accordance with these trends, so does our behavior. Hence we have seen an escalated demand for lip fillers, implants, liquid lip contour kits, ombre hair, etc. These are just to name a few things. The list is endless.

Passion

The Kardashians family has always inspired me, when I started my thesis I started with Edward Bernays and the word '*Propaganda*'. I started my research around these topics, but at a point it became dull and boring and I always wanted my thesis to be a little exciting, engaging and something that isn't that complex. I wanted to turn the complicated topic into something that was easy to understand for the general audience. Moving forwards, I researched a bit more about propaganda, found out a lot of the history, not just the history of the word itself but interesting facts and ways it was used in the ancient civilizations and their governing system, from Nazi Government to American Propaganda. But the most fascinating thing I found out was the celebrity endorsements and advertising strategies that they were mostly made with propaganda and manipulation with the human sentiments, an amazing mind game if you want to say. The whole PR campaign and the Celebrity Endorsements done by Edward Bernays, that is "a form of brand or advertising

campaign that involves a well know person using their fame to help promote a product or service.”, was something that quickly got my interest and it clicked, it reminded me of the Kardashian family who have been doing this from the start. The family has built a multibillion empire from just using propaganda, or Public relations as they say it in the American language. From selling an all skin color foundation to the trending shapewear, they know what to give to the audience. And it's just not the products that we talk about when and how to stay in the limelight, when to break the news and get the attention. Don't you all happen to interact with them via social media, hate them or love them, they do pop up Because they know how it's done and you have to give them the credit for it, because that's some talent. The family knows how to market and most importantly they know the audience. I admire them and love the work they produce and this was something that I was always interested in and tadaa it goes with the whole propaganda and the whole capitalist system.

Design Statement

The whole system of capitalism and consumerism is a system of benefiting, to gain some profit. The Kardashians are just one part of it, many more layers open when you research about the whole system. The most important thing is to be aware of the kind of product you are consuming and how it's manufactured and what the strategic planning is going behind it. in my design work I'll be showing the whole system and whoever is advancing from it and how it works. You would see different countries that are involved in this, many masterminds that plan and strategies the whole plan before presenting it to us. The project “#Likes”

will be depicted by a series of illustrations that are inspired by the pop culture art style. I really enjoyed looking at Richard Hamilton's work, although it was more picture manipulation. I tried making my work a bit cartoonish and exaggerated to show how this system has so many details and elements to it and missing those elements will not prove my point. To support my illustration, I decided to create an infinity animation and to do that I had it in my mind to make sure all the layers were connected somehow.

For me it is important to convey the message of consumerism to the people. We live in a world where celebrities have more power than any other person, they have the power to communicate, to get to our sentiments, to make sure they sell their lifestyle to us, and in reality, all of us are a victim of it. People due to social media and advancement in electronic media are getting slightly aware but remember even with that they get manipulated, they are given limited information and when that happens it is important to question and observe the whole system. It is very important to keep an open mind to the things around you to be cautious. While doing my research there were points which were really hard to understand and they are designed that way so that the reader gets confused so it was important for me to not make my audience confused and to present them with a clearer understanding of the whole consumer system.

Target Audience

My thesis is about the whole system of consumerism and capitalism, so it involves the influencer, bloggers, celebrities, social media users, people who get

to interact through these celebrities or products, the corporate world, so my target audience cannot be limited to one, whoever is interested to know about these celebrities and how the system works are who this project will be interesting to look at. Even while mentioning the bloggers and influencers I have to be aware that these individuals have a larger audience they are catering to, so it involves them too. The system of consumerism is all around us, in every form. A person who can't buy an original Gucci belt will go and buy a fake one, and that will benefit different kinds of markets. Consumerism is fed into us now, we need to understand that it's not going anywhere and it will never disappear. What we need to do is be aware of the kind of products we buy and understand that, is it our need or a desire? and maybe limit our luxuries.

Chapter 2

Research Question:

After researching my topic a few questions came into my mind: do we know the difference between needs and desires? How has celebrity culture erased the difference between needs and desire? How did our luxuries become our desires? Why do we follow these celebrities so religiously? Are we actually aware of the whole system of consumerism? How is the whole system of consumerism working?

Literature Review

Michael Foucault - the famous French Philosopher once said - "Power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives." Hence, as perceived, there are different layers to everything in the world. When you open one layer you will find many more layers beneath it, and if you dig deeper you will discover more and more things. The question then arises of what and how much we know about these layers and will we ever stop learning about them? I started my work from the basis of the word "propaganda" - which means to manipulate information for a political cause or awareness. Propaganda is an overall permeating influence and is something we see around us all the time in the

shape of advertisements, media and several other campaigns. This word has a lot of different meanings and you can use it in different ways. The popular culture makes sure that the people are entangled in a profound regime of mind control, more often than not, humans find it easy, and more convenient to nurture in a social domain where power of those with a rather STRONG voice reigns supreme. This power can shape the human mind and consciousness in unusual ways, also producing a psychological reality that influences the people, thus intensifying the power exercise, leaving the minds of the people even more and more controllable. Edward Bernays, the father of public relations and

someone who has done a lot for American society and politics says that “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ...We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of”.

Bernays portrayed how people consume the products that they don't really need, by just playing with their unconscious desires and making the masses believe that it's important for them. His most infamous campaign was breaking the taboo on ladies smoking by convincing them that cigarettes were an image of power and freedom. However, Bernays was persuaded this was something other than a method for selling purchaser products. It was another political thought of how to control the majority. By fulfilling the internal silly wants that his Uncle Sigmund Freud had distinguished. As Noam Chomsky - the famous political activist and American Philosopher said; “Either you repeat the same conventional doctrines everybody is saying, or else you say something true, and it will sound like it's from Neptune.” So another question rises - Who do we choose to be? Someone different and creative or someone who is just like the others?

The Kardashians life is one of the best case studies to look at to understand the whole “How to market your life” agenda. I personally have watched every episode of their show and have frequently been following their social media

accounts. The show gives in more than a glimpse of their personal life, you can see what they eat, the products they are wearing, and yes they are placed there for promoting the particular brand. The Kardashians have wisely used all the other social media power to grow their empire. They know people crave them and they know the best way to give in what people need is through presenting it as an authentic lifestyle. Their show presents their lifestyle as a most normal family household, they cook, they have fights, they fight over sharing clothes, they have breakups and relationship problems, and that's something that gives the viewer a sense of relatability towards them. But here's what we have to understand is, it's similar to Michael Foucault "Panopticon", it's a surveillance method, we see them being surveilled all the time but in reality, they're looking at us, they are looking at our interest, what do the ratings say, what is the internet saying, and using that, they plan a whole episode. Yes, that's also their real life but we need to understand it's being done in a way that it has an element of what people want because if they don't do that they don't get the ratings and people's interest and if you don't get that you don't get an empire. Foucault promotes the idea that 'power is everywhere' and he makes us believe that power is diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed. He believes that each society has its regime of truth, and he uses the term 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, understanding and 'truth' - and that is how the Kardashians use their power to control our minds.

But, the real question stands as to how we make use of the power and knowledge that we are getting. When certain people control knowledge and power, oppression becomes a high possibility. We are somehow unaware as to how to resolve the conflicts within ourselves and how to manage the power and knowledge bestowed upon us. Hence, we let it leave a negative impact on us. We consider ourselves weak enough to wage our own battles and develop some strategies to help us retain a semblance of individual freedom and privacy. The unseen power that controls us from afar is too strong for us to handle and so we continue to adapt to the submissive and monitored society. Propaganda plays a major role in shaping the consumer's behavior and lifestyle pattern as that is what propaganda does, to manipulate and control the public's mind which is where consumerist propaganda comes in. In my work I am showing the whole loop, where it starts and where it repeats again. These visuals show the Kardashian sisters sitting and that they are being documented and when the circle moves out the paparazzi is shown taking pictures that we see on social media. This was executed in an illustrative format, as well as a gif. We followers just see them all dressed up in their Balmain outfits or with their Birkin bags, but there's a whole team that plans every move they do because they know that their 110 million followers (including haters) are watching. In the next stage, I'm showing people looking at them on social media and trying to adapt and follow their lifestyle and trends. However, it doesn't end there, just like the panopticon system where the guards have an undercover eye on the prisoners, where their moves and behaviors are deeply observed creating a controlled environment.

We are in the system as well where our likes and dislikes are constantly observed, who we search about and what we talk about in our messages, everything is monitored. With that, surveys are done to see the current trends and human interest. The corporate world looks at those trends and tries to improve their advertisement or product according to that, something that will benefit them in the long run and something that is going to attract our minds, sometimes, not neglecting the negativity and toxicity. They choose their ambassadors like that too, whoever is in the limelight gets the ambassadorship. It doesn't end there, the companies look at countries that benefit their product and that could provide good material, thus increasing trading that helps that countries' economic growth.

It's an entire onion-layered system and what I'm trying to do is visualize the system and trying to make it look less complicated and easier for the layman to understand all these layers and how we are just becoming addicted to consumer culture and in the process, actually forgetting the difference between need and desire. Once we start going down the rabbit hole it is difficult to identify how far one has fallen and it is for that reason that my project works on illuminating the nuances between the various layers.

We have seen a lot of influencers and celebrities over the years promoting or endorsing products to their followers, that's because they have been heavily paid and been sponsored by getting a car, house or a big ambassadorship

contract that has a lot of perks to it. The main reason why these celebrities are chosen is because they are in the eye of the public, they have been chosen by the public, liked and loved. They have ways to contact their audience through sentiments, emotion and something fan big time relate to them. Here are a few more examples around the similar topic of how the corporate world uses celebrities and famous influencers to markets their products. An article by the InfluencerMarketingHub, they write “Nike is the world’s leader in manufacturing and supplying athletic wear and sports equipment. And in 2017 alone, they generated more than \$34 billion globally. But they’re not just one of the leading brands in the world; they’re also among the top users of influencer marketing. The brand has worked with both celebrities and social influencers for several campaigns to promote their products. When the brand wanted to promote its new Air Vapormax series, they decided to team up with the popular YouTube channel “What’s Inside?” The channel is run by a father-son duo, and is famous for cutting up everyday objects to showcase what’s inside. The duo has been able to garner almost 6 million subscriptions for their two channels.” So here we can understand that big companies like Nike’s also need to promote their brands through the influencers, people who the audience trusts and connect to, to believe in the product. But sometimes the honest review disclaimer can or most likely can be paid. And there we like it and we buy it.

Celebrity culture is something that isn’t new, it’s the entertainment industry that has started to grow rapidly, by making it look really glamorous and fascinating. Andy Warhol once said ‘In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15

minutes', the 15 minutes of fame idea has come to reality these days, with everyone trying to copy their favorite celebrity or it to introduce something new through their social media account. Now everyone has a platform, everyone wants to be famous, to grab the attention. It's mostly because of the celebrity culture, we see our idols, we see how they have become so rich by being famous that we want to achieve that. We go through a lot of reality shows, magazines, websites, gossip sites, social media accounts just to take a glimpse of these celebrities' lifestyles and that itself has a total of 3 billion annual revenues.

We as followers have become obsessed with our favorite celebrities that we idolize them. Sometimes it becomes so crazy that we even stalk them. Kylie Jenner's stalker once sent her 300 boxes of Krispy Kream just because she once shared that on the reality show. Some people even try to look like them, a report that was gathered from The American Society of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgery shows an estimate of 33,00 to 65,000 people go through cosmetic surgeries annually just to look like a certain celebrity. This obviously helps the whole plastic surgery industry but what is sad that people have become so insecure about themselves that they want to achieve something that is not even real.

Mad Men is a show that is about America in the 1960s. The show is about leading men from the advertisement agencies. It shows the American society during the 60s, the rapidly changing social norms and fashions. The show provides us with the information that was occurring in the advertisement and consumer culture at that time. In the beginning of the season we can see how the main lead, Don Draper makes a plan about how to increase the sales of cigarettes. The client

approaches him and talks about how health issues are a barrier in their consumption of cigarettes. Here what Don does is that he comes up with the idea that cigarettes are 'toasted', to talk about the making process of cigarettes rather than the health effects of them. It benefits them as it changes the topic to the making process, although every company does the same toasted process but here what they were doing is making the people believe that their company is different and trick people to consume their product. In the show they talk about various advertising techniques and how to make the best of the product to make it consume.

Many pop culture artists such as Andy Warhol, Hel Heffner and Richard Hamilton, have talked about the consumer culture in their artwork. Hel Hefner in his recent work talks about the celebrity or the popular people and how they are feeding people with their biases and their own perceptives and make the people consume that. In his work many celebrities from Kim Kardashian, Miley Cyrus and even Donald Trump have been a part of his work. The work talks about how we the public like to idolize these people that we consume whatever they give us. Andy Warhol's work about the Cans and the massive silkscreens of Marilyn Monroe talk about the consumption of the American society, he talks about consumerism as evil but he also says that he's a part of it. We have to understand that we have been plagued by consumerism and it's a part of us. All in all, the world functioning under one large, broader system, yet being divided, is a profound crisis, and sometimes incomprehensible for the human mind. The power politics played in the world today has had such a powerful impact on the

general population that it has started to control how humans walk and talk. "The one who controls your mind, controls the world."

Research Question Explained

With the massive advancement of social media, celebrity culture and industrialization, we are aware of a wide range of products as well as access to obtaining them. Take a shampoo for example; even though the basic formula of shampoos is more or less the same, we go for the expensive ones because it just smells better or because our favorite celebrity uses it. So by using the certain brand, we create a psychological association with the said celebrity in question. With the wide range and the bombardment of ads all the time on our social media and television we tend to have a lot of options and if you have the money you can avail those options. This erases the difference between our needs and desires. Every minor detail, difference, becomes our need. The desire for a better smelling shampoo slowly becomes a need as we adopt it as part of our lifestyle.

Chapter 3

As children growing up, we always tend to idolize someone we know personally. We want to dress up like them, be like them, talk like them etc. usually this person is a mentor, teacher, family member, or even an animated cartoon character we come to love. Growing up in this age, this is usually replaced by celebrities and influences. We think of them as superior to us; with greater knowledge on certain topics. As humans we adopt the environment and behavior of the individual we idolize. This changes our perception on things and our worldview starts to align with said celebrity/influencer unconsciously. This is how celebrity culture works, we follow at first, we experiment with what they do and then we want it, we think of it as a need. And with that I want to analyze the thought process that goes into manufacturing these products and then look at how it's brought to our doors. Basically, I will be looking at how the celebrity culture is induced with capitalism to influence our spending patterns.

Methodology

My sources for this project have been confined to secondary research online as well as looking at popular film media including TV series, movies and documentaries. For the purpose of understanding the role-played by film media, I have looked at TV series like Mad Men and movies such as Battle of Algiers, Battle of Potemkin, as well as different documentary such as Like Ways of Seeing by John Berger, Century of Self by Adam Curtis, The Manufacturing Consent and The Power of Nightmares. Further solidifying my thesis are online articles that

discuss in depth the extent to which celebrity culture is molding spending patterns of young minds.

I initially started by keeping the focus on the different types of propagandas such as bandwagon propaganda, testimonial propaganda and transfer propaganda. All these techniques have been used in the past, from the time of the ancient Greeks to the Hitler era. Looking closely at war movies such as Battle of Potemkin you can see with the food riot how one soldier makes all the other soldiers realize that the lower rank soldiers aren't treated that well. Battle of Algeria is another example of how we are shown only one viewpoint and draw conclusions based on that. For the longest time, movies have been the best tool to manipulate a person or a whole larger audience. With these movies celebrities have also been given similar power and control to make the people jump on the bandwagon. Noam Chomsky in Manufacturing Consent talks about how the government from all these years has been doing nothing but manipulating the public's minds. He talks about how the powerful are using the power to control the mass media and polluting people's minds with the information they want them to hear. In the BBC documentary Century of Self Adam Curtis talks about how over the years the big cooperates and the politicians have used Freud's theories to control and manipulate the masses in order to sell their ideas or products, to benefit themselves. The business and political world has been using these psychological techniques for years to make their product and speeches pleasing so that the consumers and voters buy it.

These speeches and products are created to fulfil the desire of the public. The desire that are manipulated in the minds of the public.

Chapter 4

Medium of Presentation

The first stage of my project talks about the panoptical view of the consumerist system. I've learned how the Kardashian family is being watched, observed through their reality show by millions of people, but in reality they are watching us. The way prisoners are being watched in the prison of the panopticon system. I've soon two views, one of them seeing us in which they see us as a project through which they will sell their products. They make sure they put the spotlight on us buying, making us feel special, by putting our sentiments in. The other part was the way we see them, through their show, on the streets, being photographed and being publicized on social media.



Moving on to my projects next stage with the feedback I received, I had to make something that was bigger than the family, bigger than the celebrity. The whole system of consumerism. Celebrities aren't just the ones that make the product, somehow the idea can be theirs, but to strategize that's someone else doing it. A lot of people are involved in this system, the corporate world, influencers, the social media managers, different countries all of them are part of the beneficial system. So with taking all these parts of the system I created my visuals. The visual was in a circular form because I wanted to show that it's all coming back to where it starts, it's going in a loop



70" by 70" flex print/ digital

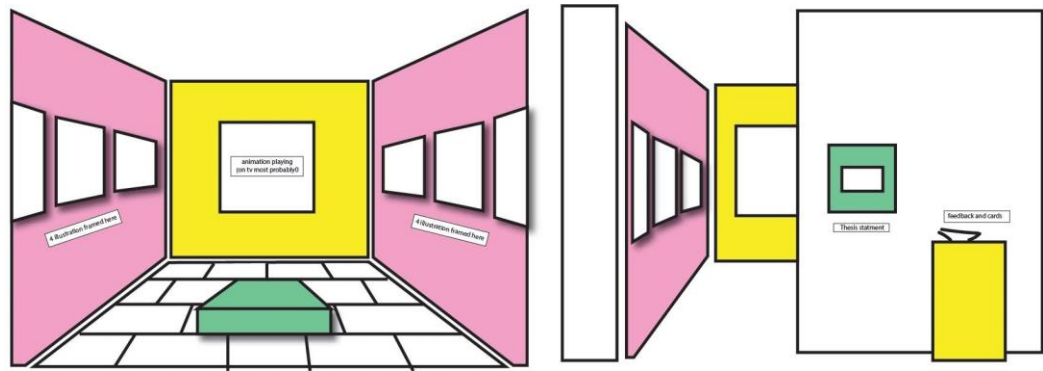
drawing

Utilizing my best skills of illustration and character designing I made my thesis in the form of eight detailed illustrations. Each illustration has all the elements of the particular stage I'm talking about. For example, layer one talks about the first stage we see, the celebrity, here I'm showing the Kardashian set. A glimpse of their reality show. They showed setting and you can see each and every element present there has a purpose to serve. The products on the center table are the products they mostly talk about of their show. They don't need a massive advertisement, they have a show that people watch all around the world, and it works. I've shown the cameraman recording them, branded clothes they put on the rack and you can see their kids as well. The image style wasn't inspired by the Family but the image execution was. Each and every image has a different stage to it, a different thing it says so making it look all the same could have

made it boring to look at. The one thing that I made sure to look the same was the background, the characters, the colors and the art style.

In the next part of my execution I had to assemble all the images, to make it look like a single system. So to do that I made a video. The video style was the 'zoom out 'infinity video, it was also inspired from the optical illusion. I wanted to make something that gives a sense of connectivity.

The initial execution idea was to create a space inspired from my illustration, with similar colors and props. In that space I would have my eight 30" by 30" inches framed prints along with my zoom out animation. The reason why I wanted to show a zoom out animation was because firstly it depicted the idea very well and secondly it was important to make the layers feel connected. As I said before just like peeling an onion. The animation is played in a loop because it's a continuous system that's going on. The idea of my display was to put up large frames in a room which had enough walking space. I thought of the room to have pink and yellow walls with a checkered floor. That inspiration came from the pop culture museum, Candytopia Museum in Los Angeles. I also wanted my room to look something similar to my illustrations.

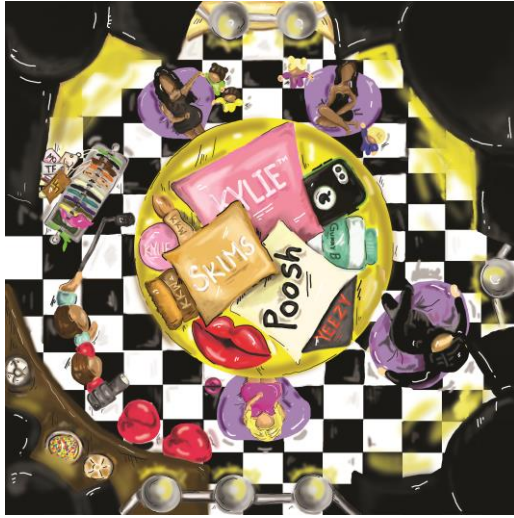


Chapter 5

The main purpose of my project is to portray how the global celebrity culture impacts us. It shines light on our increasingly materialistic lifestyles and who really benefits from it. The project is about understanding the system of capitalism, which has given birth to the present day consumerism. The project aims at aiding people in understanding the different layers of consumerism and how it's being used to gain or benefit from us. The best way to deal with this is to question yourself when buying certain products. Why do you need to buy the expensive shampoo? Will it really improve the health of your hair? Or does the brand name just make you feel good? Or is it because your favorite celebrity is endorsing it or using it? The key is to be smart in your consumption.

The ideal way to reach a greater audience for my project would be for the project to be displayed in a museum or a digital platform for easy access. And with my project I do want to convey my message to every person. Observing the

current situation of COVID-19, I do believe that it gives us a great chance to display our thesis virtually, so that its safer for people to access it.





Conclusion

This project has allowed me to learn and understand the world we live in in a different light. It has allowed me to look at things from different perspectives and has made me aware of the effort put into advertising and marketing. It has also made me look at how these corporates play with our sentiments to create a demand for their products. All in all, this has made me more critical of social media, celebrity culture and the more recent phenomenon of social media influencers.

For me, I have always been a fan of The Kardashians. The drama, the glamour and the absolute care-free attitude; lounging by the pool eating salads all day have all just always seemed like the ideal life. They can be very annoying but they are also very entertaining. The subtleness and confidence with which they

sell products or ideas about life is nothing short of genius. My favorite part about the research on the Kardashians was to track down their evolution; how they have emerged as a global phenomenon defining everything from looks, fashion choices to lifestyle choices. Through the years they have built an empire from scratch only using the powerful tool of marketing and visual communication.

While marveling at the genius strategies used by this family, I also got to see a different side to things. Despite the hard work they put in and the life they show us on camera, these celebrities aren't as free and in control of their life as we think they are. They are constantly endorsed and supported by media agencies. These agencies control and monitor their every single move. So the project not only talks about how we are slaves to consumerism, but how these celebrities are slaves to these agencies who in return are slaves to capitalistic ideals. It all comes back in a full circle. We buy because we are made to think that we need that certain thing and they sell because they need to benefit from it.

My learning at BNU hasn't just been confined to the field of Visual Communication and Design, it is more than that. We aren't just taught to stay in a bubble of your own particular field but to learn from all different departments, to go out and explore what other departments have to offer. This has allowed me to think critically and to question the conventional ideas. I have become more aware of my surroundings and have been able to question things rather than accepting the societal norms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY -

Winchester, Donald. "The Propagandizing of Propaganda." *Vision*,
www.vision.org/philosophy-ideas-propaganda-and-manipulation-2799.

"Art and Propaganda." *Obo*,
www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920105/obo-9780199920105-0110.xml

Consumer Decision-Making Styles: A Multi-Country Investigation by Steven
Lyonski and Srini Durvasula

14ideas. "The Future of Celebrity Endorsement." *Medium*, Medium, 19 Apr.
2019, [medium.com/@14ideas/the-future-of-celebrity-endorsement-
c04bcbaceb45](https://medium.com/@14ideas/the-future-of-celebrity-endorsement-c04bcbaceb45)

"3 Things the Kardashians Taught Me About Building a Branding Empire."
Brandfolder, 29 July 2016, [brandfolder.com/blog/3-things-the-kardashians-
taught-me-about-building-a-branding-empire-2](https://brandfolder.com/blog/3-things-the-kardashians-taught-me-about-building-a-branding-empire-2)

Patel, Sujana. "Kim Kardashian! 4 Marketing Lessons You Can Learn From the
Ubiquitous Reality TV Star." *Entrepreneur*, 21 Aug. 2017,
www.entrepreneur.com/article/298532

Hess, Amanda. "Celebrity Culture Is Burning." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 30 Mar. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/arts/virus-celebrities.htm

Business Radio. "Celebrity Culture: Why Fame Is Big Business." *Knowledge@Wharton*, knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/celebrity-culture-big-business/

GLOSSARY –

Bloggers: a person who regularly writes material for a blog

Consumerism: the protection or promotion of the interests of consumers

Capitalism: an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state

Celebrity culture: Celebrity culture is a high-volume perpetuation of celebrities' personal lives on a global scale. It is inherently tied to consumer interests where celebrities transform their fame to become product brands.

Endorsement: the action of endorsing someone or something

Glamourized: make (something) seem glamorous or desirable, especially spuriously so.

Influencers: An influencer is someone in your niche or industry with sway over your target audience. Influencers have specialized knowledge, authority or insight into a specific subject. Their pre-existing presence in a niche makes them a useful launching pad for brands in search of credibility.

Manipulation: the action of manipulating something in a skillful manner.

Popular culture: culture based on the tastes of ordinary people rather than an educated elite.

Propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.

Psychoanalysis: a system of psychological theory and therapy which aims to treat mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind by techniques such as dream interpretation and free association.

Panopticon: The panopticon is a disciplinary concept brought to life in the form of a central observation tower placed within a circle of prison cells. From the tower, a guard can see every cell and inmate but the inmates can't see into the tower. Prisoners will never know whether or not they are being watched