

**REAL REVIEWS, REAL ROLES: A SEMIOTIC-FEMINIST ANALYSIS
OF FRIDA BABY'S NOSEFRIDA ADVERTISEMENT**

A Thesis

Submitted as Partial Fulfilment to the Requirements for Master Degree of English
Education Study Program



Written by :

Wahyuni Ikram

P2A421005

MASTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM

LANGUAGE AND ART DEPARTMENT

TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY

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LETTER OF APPROVAL

REAL REVIEWS, REAL ROLES: A SEMIOTIC-FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF FRIDA BABY'S NOSEFRIDA ADVERTISEMENT

Written by:

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LETTER OF RATIFICATION

This thesis entitled “*Real Reviews, Real Roles: A Semiotic-Feminist Analysis of Frida Baby’s NoseFrida Advertisement*”, written by Wahyuni Ikram (P2A421005), has been defended in front of the board of examiners on July 2nd, 2025 and was declared acceptable.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

The undersigned below,

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Hereby declares the originality of thesis; the writer has not presented anyone else's work to obtain the university degree nor has the writer presented anyone else's words, idea, or expression without acknowledgment. All quotation were cited and listed in the bibliography of the thesis. If in the future this thesis statement is proven false, the writer is willing to accept any sanction complying with the determined regulation or its consequences.

This statement was made fully with awareness and responsibility.

Jambi, July 7th, 2025

The writer,

Wahyuni Ikram
NIM. P2A421005

MOTTO

“Dear listeners who miss their old selves,

It’s not too late, that person is still inside you & when you’re ready, you can start to let them out again. The new you can be their guide & keep them safe so they don’t have to retreat again. It doesn’t matter what changed you, it matters that you’re wiser now & ready to try again. Change may be slow but it will be steady & every tiny step forward counts.”

— GeorginasJourney

Comment on the YouTube music video “Waitress” by Sara Bareilles

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to:

Everyone I love to bits

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim...

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala for His countless blessings and guidance that have enabled me to reach this stage. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad Shallallahu 'alaihi wasallam, the greatest inspiration for Muslim intellectuals throughout time.

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Wahyuni Ikram

NIM.P2A421005

ABSTRACT

Ikram, Wahyuni. 2025. Real Reviews, Real Roles: A Semiotic-Feminist Analysis of Frida Baby's NoseFrida Advertisemen. A thesis, Master of English Study Program. Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi in Academic Year 2024/2025. First supervisor: **Delita Sartika, S.S., M.ITS., Ph.D** and second supervisor **Failasofah, S.S., M.Pd., Ph.D.**

This thesis explores the intersection of gender, media, and consumer culture through a semiotic-feminist analysis of Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition, a contemporary parenting advertisement. Drawing from Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and feminist media critique, the study decodes the advertisement's visual and verbal signs at three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. It investigates how caregiving roles—particularly motherhood and fatherhood—are constructed, challenged, or reinforced within the 30-second ad. The analysis reveals that the advertisement employs emotional realism, humor, and raw depictions of parenting to subvert traditional portrayals of idealized, sanitized motherhood. At the same time, it presents more inclusive representations of paternal involvement and shared emotional labor. These findings suggest that the ad negotiates postfeminist sensibilities by blending authenticity with consumer appeal, thus promoting feminist agency and resistance while remaining embedded in brand culture. Ultimately, the study positions advertising not merely as a commercial tool, but as a cultural text that participates in the ideological shaping of gender roles in contemporary society.

Key words: *Semiotics, Feminist Media Studies, Advertising, Gender Representation, Roland Barthes, Postfeminism, Caregiving, Motherhood, Fatherhood, Media Authenticity.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Advertising is not merely a commercial endeavor; it is a cultural force that plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions, societal values, and personal identities. As Williamson (1978) notes, “advertising doesn’t sell products but sells values, images, and concepts of success and worth.” In the contemporary media landscape, advertisements have evolved into complex cultural texts that do more than persuade—they reflect and construct ideologies about gender, family, and social roles. This is particularly evident in advertisements related to parenting, where deeply entrenched gender norms are often portrayed, challenged, or reinforced. As contemporary audiences grow more media-literate and socially conscious, there is an increasing expectation for brands to reflect values such as authenticity, diversity, and responsibility (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Holt, 2004).

The ideological power of advertising is especially visible in areas that are closely connected to everyday life and personal identity—such as family, household labor, and caregiving. These areas may seem private, but they are actually shaped by broader social and cultural expectations. Angela McRobbie (2009) and Williamson (1978) explain that advertising does more than sell products—it also spreads ideas and beliefs by attaching them to everyday items. In the home, advertisements often promote traditional ideas about gender roles, especially when it comes to parenting. They tend to show idealized images of the “perfect mother” or the “responsible parent,” which reflect and reinforce dominant

social values. As Douglas and Michaels (2004) argue, these portrayals are not neutral—they support certain beliefs about what it means to be a woman, a mother, or a good caregiver. By connecting these ideals to ordinary products like baby care advertisements, it helps normalize unrealistic standards of parenting that are often shaped by gender and class. In this way, ads for baby care products don't just mirror society—they help shape it.

Historically, baby care advertisements have shown a perfect and ideal image of motherhood—where mothers are always clean, calm, and emotionally satisfied. These kinds of portrayals are often discussed in media and feminist studies because they don't reflect the real experiences of most mothers. Scholars like Hays (1996) as well as Douglas and Michaels (2004) argue that the media often shows motherhood as something that should be perfect, self-sacrificing, and emotionally rewarding all the time. Douglas and Michaels call this idea "new momism"—a belief that being a mother is the most important thing a woman can do, and that she should give all her time, energy, and emotions to her children, every day, without rest. They explain that this ideal puts a lot of pressure on women and creates standards that are impossible to meet. These polished, unrealistic images of motherhood hide the hard work, stress, and emotional challenges that come with parenting. Instead of helping, they support traditional gender roles that expect women to carry most of the responsibility for childcare.

In response to the long-standing portrayal of idealized motherhood in advertising, there has been a growing shift toward more authentic and diverse representations of parenting. Contemporary advertisements increasingly acknowledge the emotional labor, gender dynamics, and everyday realities of

family life. Gill (2007) identifies this shift as part of a “postfeminist sensibility,” where themes of empowerment and authenticity are often interwoven with, or complicated by, traditional gender norms. While this sensibility may obscure deeper structural inequalities, it also opens space for more layered and relatable portrayals of caregiving in the media.

Within this shifting media landscape, after conducting a search on YouTube and making preliminary observations, *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* emerged as a compelling example of how advertising negotiates cultural expectations around gender and parenting. The researcher found this ad interesting since it seems departs from conventional baby product marketing. It was noted that the textual and visual elements featured in the ad make it not only attention-grabbing but also rich in symbolic content. Its blending of real reviews with exaggerated scenes creates a fertile site for semiotic analysis.

The decision to analyze this advertisement is grounded in its relevance to evolving trends in media and its capacity to illustrate how gendered meanings are communicated through commercial texts. Following a preliminary review of 18 baby product advertisements available on YouTube—selected based on recency, Western origin, and thematic relevance to caregiving—the chosen advertisement stands out for its alignment with contemporary shifts in media representation and its suitability for semiotic interpretation. Through its use of informal narrative strategies and emotionally resonant imagery, the advertisement offers a site for examining how caregiving and gender roles are constructed within consumer culture. Its focus on maternal experience also intersects with key concerns in

feminist media discourse, positioning it as a relevant case for exploring how commercial messages participate in the circulation of ideological meaning.

As Williamson (1978) argues, advertisements function as ideological forms that organize meaning through signs, while Barthes' (1972) semiotic theory enables a deeper reading of how such meanings operate at denotative, connotative, and mythological levels. By selecting this advertisement, the study aims to investigate how visual and verbal elements work together to convey layered messages—some overt, others more implicit—concerning family, caregiving, and feminist discourse in contemporary consumer culture.

1.2 Research Questions

To provide a clear focus and direction for this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings presented in the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*?
2. How does the advertisement convey feminist messages through visual and verbal elements?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To describe the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings embedded in the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*, using a semiotic approach.

2. To describe how feminist messages are communicated through both the visual and verbal elements in the advertisement.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing field of feminist media studies by illustrating how semiotic analysis can uncover ideological shifts in contemporary advertising. For scholars, it offers an examples for analyzing visual texts through the lens of gender and cultural theory. For advertisers and content creators, it provides insights into how authentic storytelling and inclusive representations can build emotional resonance with audiences. More broadly, it encourages viewers to critically engage with media content and question the gendered narratives that shape societal norms and expectations around parenting.

In relation to the English Study Program, this study is expected to be beneficial in several ways. Firstly, it helps strengthen the theoretical foundation of English studies by integrating linguistic, visual, and cultural analysis within a multimodal framework. Secondly, it promotes interdisciplinary learning by demonstrating how concepts from semiotics, gender theory, and cultural studies can be meaningfully applied within English language and literature education. In practical terms, the study may support the development of learning materials that offer relevant and engaging content for classroom use—particularly in courses involving media analysis, gender studies, and critical thinking. Finally, it has the potential to enhance the program’s academic reputation by contributing to its research output through journal publications and broader scholarly engagement.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses exclusively on the advertisement Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition. It selects eight scenes for semiotic analysis, with attention to those that explicitly or implicitly express feminist values and challenge traditional representations of parenting. The analysis is limited to visual and verbal elements within the advertisement and does not include audience reception or marketing effectiveness.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Semiotic-Feminist Analysis: A critical methodological approach that synthesizes Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics with feminist media criticism to examine how signs and symbols within advertisements encode, reinforce, or challenge dominant gender ideologies. (Barthes, 1972; Gill, 2007).

Advertisement: A form of mediated communication intended to promote products, services, or ideas, which simultaneously operates as a cultural artifact that reflects, reproduces, and occasionally resists prevailing social norms, including those related to gender, class, and identity (Williamson, 1978; Goldman, 1992).

Feminist Message: An expressive element within media texts that articulates values aligned with feminist ideologies, including the promotion of gender equity, critique of patriarchal systems, and the empowerment of women and marginalized genders. Such messages can be conveyed explicitly or implicitly through narrative, imagery, or symbolism (Hooks, 1994; McRobbie, 2009).

Media Authenticity: The perceived sincerity, credibility, and relatability of media content, particularly in how truthfully it mirrors everyday experiences, emotions, and social realities. In feminist media studies, authenticity is often associated with resisting hyper-commercialized, idealized depictions and instead embracing the complexity of lived identities (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Gender Representation: The ways in which gender identities, roles, and relations are portrayed across media platforms, influencing how audiences understand and internalize cultural expectations. Representations may serve to perpetuate traditional stereotypes or disrupt them by offering more nuanced, progressive depictions (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002).

Feminist Agency: The representation of women and marginalized genders as active, self-determining subjects within media narratives, capable of making choices and expressing resistance within or against social constraints. It recognizes a spectrum of agency—from overt rebellion to subtle forms of negotiation, compliance, or redefinition of gender norms (Mahmood, 2005; Gill, 2008).

Feminist Resistance: Discursive or embodied strategies employed by individuals or collectives to challenge, subvert, or dismantle gendered oppression and patriarchal ideologies. In media contexts, resistance may be encoded through symbolic acts, narrative shifts, or visual subversion that question dominant norms and promote gender justice (De Lauretis, 1987; Hooks, 1994).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundation of Advertising

Advertising plays a central role in contemporary consumer culture—not merely as a commercial practice, but as a complex form of communication that shapes public consciousness. It does more than promote goods and services; it constructs narratives, shapes identities, and transmits ideological values. From a critical cultural perspective, advertising can be understood as a powerful discursive system that both reflects and influences how people think about themselves, their relationships, and their roles in society.

As Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (2005) argue, advertising must be viewed as a system of meaning. Rather than conveying neutral information, it presents symbolic content that associates products with specific values, lifestyles, and emotional states. For instance, parenting advertisements rarely focus solely on the functionality of a product. Instead, they often present an emotionally charged vision of caregiving that connects the product to ideals of love, responsibility, competence, and family success. These meanings are culturally constructed and context-dependent, yet they are often presented as natural or universal truths.

Goldman and Papson (1998) emphasize that advertising manufactures what Barthes (1972) would call “myths”—not falsehoods, but deeply embedded cultural narratives that normalize and reinforce dominant ideologies. Through visual storytelling, advertising often masks economic or gender-based inequalities behind feel-good representations of social life. In their view, ads function

ideologically by linking consumer goods to desires for belonging, success, beauty, and love. These links are not arbitrary; they draw upon familiar social symbols and tropes to create emotional resonance and a sense of personal relevance. This is especially visible in family-centered advertisements, which use imagery of domestic life to promote not only products but also idealized visions of parenting, gender roles, and emotional labor.

This ideological function becomes particularly significant when considering advertising's role in identity construction. Advertisements do not merely tell people what to buy—they tell people who they are or who they should be. As McCracken (1988) notes, advertising acts as a bridge between products and the cultural meanings attached to them, transferring symbolic value from the cultural world to the consumer's self-image. When a product like a baby care device is marketed as evidence of a “caring mother” or “involved father,” it contributes to shaping how individuals define good parenting and responsible gender behavior.

More recently, advertising has adapted to the expectations of increasingly media-literate and socially conscious audiences. This has led to a shift in style and tone, particularly in advertisements targeting women and families. As Gill (2007) points out, advertising now often adopts a postfeminist sensibility, blending themes of empowerment, emotional expression, and self-care with traditional ideas of femininity and domesticity. Advertisements may appear self-aware, humorous, and authentic—seemingly challenging traditional norms—while still reinforcing underlying gender expectations. In this sense, advertising has become a subtle but powerful site of ideological negotiation, where cultural assumptions

about parenting, gender, and identity are continuously constructed, contested, and repackaged for commercial consumption.

Furthermore, Banet-Weiser (2012) highlights the strategic use of “authenticity” as a branding tool in contemporary advertising. She argues that in a marketplace saturated with content, brands increasingly rely on emotional realism, personal storytelling, and everyday imperfections to foster trust and emotional engagement. Parenting product advertisements are a key example, as they often present chaotic homes, tired faces, and humorous moments as evidence of honesty and relatability. This move toward “realness” can be empowering, but it also opens new avenues for ideological influence, as these seemingly transparent depictions often mask complex social norms and expectations.

In this study, the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* serves as a primary example of how modern advertising communicates through both emotional appeal and cultural messaging. Its use of raw, humorous, and unsanitized parenting imagery aligns with broader trends in advertising that aim to connect with consumers through sincerity and emotional truth. However, beneath this surface of authenticity lies a rich system of meaning that can be decoded through semiotic and feminist analysis.

This theoretical foundation situates advertising as a key site of cultural production—one that not only sells products but also sells values, identities, and myths. With this understanding in place, the following sections of this chapter will explore the semiotic theories of Roland Barthes, the contributions of feminist and

postfeminist media studies, and prior research on the representation of motherhood, fatherhood, and caregiving in visual media.

2.2 Semiotics and Roland Barthes' Theory

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols as they are used in communication, and it offers a critical tool for analyzing how meaning is constructed in media texts. One of the foundational theorists of semiotics, Roland Barthes, proposed a multi-layered model of signification that is especially useful in examining advertisements. According to Barthes (1972), signs operate at three levels: denotation (the literal, descriptive meaning), connotation (the cultural or emotional associations attached to a sign), and myth (the ideological meaning that is naturalized through repeated use). Myth, in Barthes' view, is particularly powerful because it disguises historical and cultural constructs as self-evident truths.

Barthes (1972) writes that myth “transforms history into nature” (p. 129), thereby allowing advertisements to present culturally specific ideologies—such as gender roles—as universally accepted or biologically inevitable. In the context of parenting advertisements, the use of warm tones, serene imagery, and smiling mothers may seem benign but actually communicates deep ideological assumptions about femininity, emotional labor, and domestic responsibility. Applying Barthes' framework to such imagery reveals how meaning is layered and ideologically charged, particularly when unpacking cultural assumptions about gender and caregiving.

Barthes' later works (1977) further developed the importance of image and narrative in the encoding of ideology. His concept of the "readerly" versus "writerly" text also becomes relevant here, as advertisements often function as "readerly" texts—closed in meaning and designed to be passively consumed. A semiotic analysis disrupts this passivity and invites critical engagement with the ideological structures embedded in visual media.

2.3 Feminist Media Studies and Representations of Gender

Feminist media studies critically interrogate how gender is represented across various platforms and how these representations shape societal understandings of identity, power, and culture. The portrayal of women in media has long been a central concern in feminist scholarship. Traditional depictions often reduce women to passive, emotional, and domestic roles, reinforcing patriarchal notions of femininity (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Chodorow, 1978).

In the realm of parenting advertisements, women are typically portrayed as inherently nurturing, joyful, and tireless. This idealized image contributes to what Douglas and Michaels (2004) term the "mommy myth"—a cultural construction that imposes impossible standards of motherhood. This myth suggests that good mothers are always fulfilled by their caregiving roles, never complain, and place their children's needs above all else. Such portrayals invisibilize the emotional labor and exhaustion that often accompany real-life parenting.

Feminist theorists argue that these idealizations not only marginalize alternative experiences of motherhood but also perpetuate the societal expectation that caregiving is a woman's responsibility. Hooks (2000), in her foundational

work *Feminism is for Everybody*, argues for a redefinition of caregiving that includes emotional honesty, shared responsibility, and mutual respect between genders. She emphasizes that feminism is not about reversing roles but transforming them: “To be feminist is to want for everyone, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination, and oppression” (p. 33).

Gill (2007) expands this critique by introducing the notion of a “postfeminist sensibility” in media culture. She argues that contemporary media frequently commodify feminist ideals, often presenting empowerment through consumption, self-expression, or emotional authenticity. While such portrayals may appear progressive, they often remain complicit in reinforcing old gender hierarchies under the guise of choice and individuality.

2.3.1 Feminist Agency in Media Representation

Feminist agency in media representation refers to the ways individuals, especially women, act with intention, negotiation, and subjectivity within the constraints of dominant social and cultural structures. While early feminist critiques often emphasized resistance as the primary form of agency, more recent scholarship highlights a broader spectrum of expressions—including compliance, adaptation, and self-cultivation—as meaningful forms of agentic behavior (Mahmood, 2005; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). In media contexts, agency does not always appear in oppositional terms; it can also be performed through subtle choices, emotional labor, and navigation of everyday contradictions.

Mahmood (2005), in her ethnographic study of Muslim women’s piety in Egypt, challenges Western liberal assumptions that equate agency exclusively

with resistance or emancipation. She argues that acts of modesty, prayer, or obedience may express ethical self-formation and conviction, rather than passivity. Similarly, in media representations, a woman who chooses traditional caregiving roles may be exercising agency not by rejecting cultural norms, but by finding value and empowerment within them. For example, television dramas or social media influencers who embrace domestic life and motherhood as aspirational choices may reflect this more relational and situated understanding of agency.

Within media, this complex form of agency often surfaces through emotional and symbolic performances. McRobbie (2009) identifies a “double entanglement” in postfeminist culture, where feminist discourses of empowerment are co-opted by consumerism and redeployed to reinforce traditional gender roles. For instance, advertisements for beauty products or cleaning supplies may depict women as independent, capable, and confident—yet still solely responsible for household labor and appearance. The figure of the modern “supermom,” who handles professional life, home care, and self-care with apparent ease, illustrates this managed and stylized form of feminine agency.

Gill (2007) expands this critique through her concept of the “postfeminist sensibility,” in which agency is performed through lifestyle choices, self-discipline, and consumption. Consider commercials that portray women choosing to breastfeed, meditate, or invest in self-improvement as expressions of empowerment. These choices may seem autonomous, but they often unfold within rigid boundaries shaped by market demands and gendered expectations. A mother portrayed selecting organic baby food or educational toys is framed as empowered

and responsible—but her agency remains tethered to ideals of maternal perfectionism.

Rottenberg (2014) describes how this “neoliberal feminism” rewards women who are emotionally resilient, self-regulating, and economically productive, while still prioritizing private, domestic life. For example, lifestyle blogs and branded parenting content frequently showcase mothers sharing their struggles in a polished, curated way—expressing vulnerability while still performing competence. The representation of agency here is highly mediated, signaling strength without subversion.

Yet feminist agency is not always assimilated by dominant norms. Butler (1997) reminds us that agency can emerge through subtle repetitions, resignifications, or recontextualizations of gendered behavior. In media, this may include portrayals of fathers taking parental leave or performing tasks like diaper changing and night feedings—not as comic relief but as emotionally meaningful contributions. Likewise, when a mother openly expresses burnout or questions traditional ideals of “having it all,” she may be asserting agency through honesty and refusal of scripted femininity.

Thus, feminist agency in media is not always about overt rebellion. It may be expressed through minor acts, contradictions, and ambiguities. Feminist media analysis must therefore examine how agency is presented, who is afforded it, and what ideological function it serves. Whether in reality TV, advertising, or scripted dramas, the portrayal of female subjectivity requires critical attention to the cultural and commercial frameworks that shape its visibility and meaning.

2.3.2 Feminist Resistance in Media Representation

Feminist resistance within media representation refers to the active disruption or subversion of dominant gender ideologies perpetuated through visual and narrative forms. Traditional advertising has often functioned as a vehicle for patriarchal norms—idealizing motherhood, marginalizing caregiving fathers, and portraying women as primarily emotional or domestic beings (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Gill, 2007). Feminist media scholars have long critiqued these tropes, advocating for counter-narratives that foreground female agency, intersectionality, and the complexities of lived experience (hooks, 2000; Ahmed, 2014).

Resistance in this context does not always take the form of overt protest; rather, it may be articulated through irony, parody, authenticity, or the re-signification of familiar symbols. As Barthes (1972) theorized, myth in media naturalizes ideology by disguising historical and cultural constructs as self-evident truths. Feminist resistance often entails demythologizing such signs—unpacking and challenging their connotative layers. For example, the image of a “perfect mother” surrounded by cleanliness and serenity can be decoded as a myth that enforces unrealistic standards of femininity and emotional labor. Through a semiotic lens, resistant media works to destabilize this myth by presenting alternative signs: mess, fatigue, shared parenting, or emotional ambivalence.

In contemporary brand culture, this resistance often operates within the contradictory space of postfeminism. Postfeminist media tends to incorporate feminist language—like empowerment and choice—while simultaneously

reaffirming consumerist or neoliberal values (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Resistance within such frameworks is nuanced. It may be visible in ads that center women's frustrations, bodily autonomy, or professional agency while still existing within commercial spaces. As Banet-Weiser (2012) argues, feminist resistance can be commodified, but it can also foster meaningful cultural shifts by normalizing emotional expression, bodily diversity, and shared domestic responsibility.

Campaigns like Dove's "Real Beauty," Nike's "Dream Crazier," and even parody-based formats such as The Breakthrough's satirical parenting PSAs, exemplify attempts to reframe the expectations of femininity and motherhood. These examples resist the polished myths of ideal womanhood by representing aging bodies, exhaustion, working mothers, and imperfect families—not as failures but as valid, empowered identities (Sutherland, 2010; Pelclová, 2023). Still, such portrayals walk a fine line between genuine critique and market-friendly feminism.

Feminist resistance in media thus engages in a dual negotiation: it contests dominant representations while operating within the broader structures of consumer capitalism. Through a semiotic-feminist framework, resistant texts can be analyzed for how they reshape the codes of gender performance and caregiving—whether by including nontraditional father figures, de-glamorizing motherhood, or challenging the narrative that caregiving is inherently feminine. In doing so, these texts offer moments of ideological disruption, making space for more equitable and authentic visions of identity, labor, and emotional life.

2.4 Postfeminism, Emotion, and Media Authenticity

Postfeminism is a complex and often contradictory cultural discourse that both incorporates and departs from second-wave feminist ideals. According to Gill (2007), postfeminism is marked by themes such as individualism, self-surveillance, and emotional expression. It often embraces feminist language—such as empowerment and choice—while depoliticizing its structural critiques. In advertising, this manifests in portrayals of women as strong, emotionally open, and independent, but always within a framework that celebrates personal agency over collective action.

Banet-Weiser (2012) introduces the concept of "authenticity" as a core feature of postfeminist brand culture. She observes that brands increasingly seek to build emotional connections with consumers through storytelling techniques that foreground sincerity, vulnerability, and realness. "Authenticity," she writes, "is both a cultural value and a branding strategy" (p. 5). This is particularly evident in parenting products, where companies aim to foster trust by depicting imperfect, emotionally expressive, and often humorous representations of family life.

Ahmed's (2014) work on the politics of emotion further contextualizes this trend. Ahmed argues that emotions are not private experiences but are shaped by and productive of cultural values. In advertising, the representation of emotions—such as maternal fatigue or paternal confusion—serves not only to elicit empathy but also to reinforce or challenge normative structures. Representations of raw emotions in parenting ads can thus be seen as acts of resistance, undermining the

sanitized, controlled images of parenthood that have dominated media for decades.

2.5 Traditional and Emerging Narratives of Gender Roles in Parenting

Traditional representations of parenting in media have been deeply gendered. Mothers are typically shown as the default caregivers, emotionally intuitive and domestically competent, while fathers are cast in secondary or comedic roles—well-meaning but inept (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2010). This reinforces a binary understanding of caregiving that privileges maternal labor and marginalizes paternal involvement.

However, evolving cultural expectations and the rise of more egalitarian discourses have led to a reimagining of fatherhood. Contemporary media increasingly feature men engaging in caregiving tasks, participating in emotional labor, and forming deep connections with their children. Warin (2017) describes this shift as part of a broader “gender flexible” parenting model that challenges rigid binaries and promotes shared responsibility.

In the context of advertisements like *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*, this shift is reflected in the portrayal of fathers as emotionally invested and physically involved in even the most unpleasant caregiving tasks. These depictions challenge longstanding patriarchal myths that equate masculinity with detachment or dominance, offering instead a vision of fatherhood grounded in care, vulnerability, and cooperation.

2.6 Brand Overview of Frida Baby

Frida Baby is a U.S.-based company that specializes in innovative baby care products designed to address the practical challenges of modern parenting. Founded in 2014 and headquartered in Miami, Florida, Frida Baby has established itself as a go-to brand for parents seeking functional, accessible, and straightforward parenting solutions (Frida, n.d.). The company's mission centers on preparing parents for the raw, unfiltered realities of caregiving through tools that simplify everyday struggles—offering relief in moments often glossed over by traditional baby brands.

Frida Baby gained early recognition with its flagship product, the NoseFrida—a Swedish-designed nasal aspirator originally developed by a pediatric ear, nose, and throat specialist. The product exemplifies the brand's utilitarian and honest approach to childcare: it is practical, minimally designed, and unapologetically direct in solving an unglamorous parenting problem (Frida, n.d.). From there, the company expanded its portfolio to over 100 products, including grooming kits, hygiene tools, and postpartum recovery items, all marketed as part of its mission to normalize the challenges of caregiving (Marketing Brew, 2024).

The brand's advertising philosophy is rooted in authenticity and emotional realism, often presenting chaotic or messy scenes of parenting with a candid and humorous tone. Frida Baby distances itself from aspirational lifestyle branding and instead embraces what it describes as “solution-based” branding—positioning itself as an ally to overwhelmed parents (Frida, n.d.). According to Hirschhorn,

the company's CEO, this focus on honesty stems from her own experience as a mother of four and a desire to shift cultural narratives around motherhood and domestic life (Epicurean Life, 2023).

Frida's content strategy reflects broader trends in contemporary advertising where authenticity becomes a brand asset. As Banet-Weiser (2012) notes, in the context of brand culture, "authenticity" operates not only as a value but as a marketing strategy—one that connects brands with audiences by embracing imperfection and emotional candor. This is exemplified in campaigns like Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition, which uses unfiltered testimonials, bodily fluids, and unscripted reactions to convey sincerity and relatability.

Moreover, Frida Baby's commitment to social impact and parent-to-parent dialogue is evident in its charitable partnerships and interactive online presence. The brand regularly contributes to maternal and infant health initiatives and engages with its audience through educational and humorous content across social media platforms (Marketing Brew, 2024).

In summary, Frida Baby's branding strategy offers a departure from sanitized ideals of parenthood. Instead, it constructs a brand identity grounded in functionality, realism, and feminist values of caregiving as shared, emotional labor. Through its tone, visuals, and product focus, Frida Baby becomes not only a commercial brand but also a cultural participant in reimagining modern parenthood.

2.7 Previous Studies

In addition to empirical analyses of advertising, several theoretical and critical studies have laid the groundwork for understanding how advertisements produce meaning, shape ideology, and reinforce or challenge gender norms. A foundational contribution in this field is *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising* by Goldman and Papson (1998). This theoretical study explores how advertisements function as narrative systems that link products with values, identities, and cultural desires. Using a semiotic and critical cultural approach, the authors argue that advertising operates as a form of storytelling, embedding commodities within emotional and ideological contexts. From their perspective, advertisements do not merely sell products but also lifestyles and moral values, particularly in emotionally intimate spheres such as parenting. This perspective aligns with the current thesis's approach of interpreting advertisements as cultural texts that influence public understandings of caregiving and gender roles.

Expanding on this view, Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (2005), in *Social Communication in Advertising*, similarly adopt semiotic and ideological analysis to examine how advertisements serve as systems of meaning that reflect and naturalize dominant ideologies. They contend that advertising supports cultural hegemony by embedding normative assumptions—especially those concerning gender and consumption—into everyday discourse. Their conceptualization of advertisements as cultural texts strengthens the semiotic methodology employed in this thesis and supports its feminist orientation by demonstrating how gendered hierarchies are often concealed behind normalized portrayals of family and parenting life.

Adding a more focused feminist lens, Douglas and Michaels (2004), in their influential book *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*, offer a critical examination of motherhood in American media. They introduce the concept of "new momism," a dominant cultural narrative that idealizes mothers as self-sacrificing, emotionally fulfilled, and wholly devoted to their children. While these portrayals may seem affirming, they ultimately reinforce the idea that motherhood is a woman's natural and most meaningful role. Their qualitative discourse analysis across various media formats, including advertising, informs the current thesis by providing a framework for understanding how even seemingly progressive portrayals can constrain women's agency.

Building on this feminist critique, Sutherland (2010), in her article "Mothering, Guilt and Shame in Contemporary Advertising," explores how media constructs guilt around maternal performance. Through critical discourse analysis, she finds that even portrayals of "imperfect" mothers often subtly uphold the same ideals they claim to challenge. This paradox creates a double bind that increases the emotional burden and anxiety experienced by mothers. Her insights are directly relevant to this thesis's focus on emotional tone and authenticity in advertising, particularly in assessing how progressive-seeming messages may still reproduce traditional gender expectations.

Further complicating this dynamic, Gill (2007), in *Gender and the Media*, investigates how feminist discourses—such as empowerment, choice, and authenticity—are frequently co-opted by neoliberal consumer values in contemporary advertising. Her hybrid methodological approach, blending

discourse analysis and media theory, reveals that while women may be portrayed as empowered individuals, they remain tethered to conventional domestic roles. Gill's findings offer a critical framework for analyzing how feminist messages can be diluted or commodified by advertising, a concern especially pertinent to the Frida Baby advertisement's fusion of emotional realism, humor, and product promotion.

In addition to representations of motherhood, the portrayal of fatherhood in advertising has also received scholarly attention. Pleck (2010) and Lamb (2010), through their work in fatherhood studies, propose the concept of "nurturant fathering," emphasizing fathers' emotional engagement and caregiving involvement. While not centered solely on advertising, their sociological analysis—drawing on content analysis and historical review—shows that media still frequently depicts fathers as peripheral or humorous figures. These insights inform this thesis's inquiry into whether Frida Baby offers a more balanced and emotionally engaged depiction of shared caregiving roles.

Building on this, Warin (2017), in her article "Fathers, Care, and Gender-Flexible Parenting," uses ethnographic and discourse analysis to introduce the term "gender-flexible parenting." She identifies a trend in media portrayals of involved fathers but warns that such representations often frame male caregiving as exceptional rather than normalized, thereby reinforcing maternal centrality. Her critique is instrumental for contextualizing how Frida Baby's depiction of fatherhood may go beyond mere comic relief to represent shared emotional labor.

Moreover, Banet-Weiser (2012), in her book *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*, shifts the discussion toward branding strategies, particularly the role of “authenticity” in advertising aimed at women and parents. She argues that emotional honesty—expressed through depictions of exhaustion, crying, or domestic chaos—is increasingly used to build consumer trust and relatability. However, this emotional realism often functions within the logic of consumer culture, promoting products as solutions to life’s challenges. Her insights are especially relevant to the *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* ad, which employs humor and vulnerability to foster brand connection while still advancing commercial goals.

A broader historical perspective is offered by Lynch (2005) in *Advertising Motherhood: Image, Ideology, and Consumption*, which analyzes magazine ads from 1950 to 1998. Lynch traces the ideological evolution of motherhood and identifies the rise of “intensive mothering”—a model that expects mothers to be emotionally devoted, financially committed, and expert-informed. Her research highlights how advertising has long played a key role in constructing cultural ideologies around maternal labor and gendered expectations, reinforcing many of the dynamics critiqued in this thesis.

Complementing Lynch’s historical perspective, Collier de Mendonça (2021) provides a cross-cultural lens in her study *Elastic Mothers at a Crossroad*, which combines semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis with qualitative research in Toronto and São Paulo. Her findings reveal that advertisements perpetuate conflicting ideals of motherhood, oscillating between calm, nurturing figures and the reality of overwhelmed, multitasking women. This tension between ideal and

lived experience echoes the emotional complexity explored in the Frida Baby ad and contributes to the thesis's interpretation of advertising as a mediator of maternal self-perception.

More regionally specific studies also contribute to this body of literature. For instance, Saraswati et al. (2021) conducted a semiotic analysis of the Indonesian Kecap ABC advertisement "Suami Sejati Hargai Istri," using Barthes' framework to reveal how visual and narrative elements communicate feminist messages by promoting male involvement in domestic life. Similarly, Sari and Ganiem (2021) examined the same brand's campaign through a gendered lens, identifying both the perpetuation and subversion of myths such as the "supermom" and equitable domestic partnerships. These studies underscore how visual signs in advertising can both challenge and reinforce patriarchal structures, offering valuable comparative context for interpreting Frida Baby's visual language.

Reinforcing this theme, Robinson and Hunter (2008), in their study *Is Mom Still Doing It All?*, analyzed 299 U.S. family magazine ads using Hochschild's typology of traditional, transitional, and egalitarian families. Despite demographic and cultural shifts, they find that advertising still predominantly depicts mothers as primary caregivers, thereby sustaining the "supermom" myth. This analysis further supports the current thesis's argument that advertising continues to project unrealistic standards of maternal competence and emotional labor.

A more recent study by Pelclová (2023) offers a focused comparison of two commercials—Huggies and Frida Mom—to explore how maternal identity is constructed through stance-taking. Her findings suggest that the Frida Mom commercial diverges from traditional portrayals by highlighting emotional struggles and mental health issues, aligning more closely with feminist ideals of vulnerability and authenticity. Her conclusions support the present thesis's argument that advertising can serve as a site of ideological negotiation and cultural change.

Finally, Ying (2023) contributes a global dimension with her analysis of Chinese maternal and child product ads using multimodal discourse analysis. She identifies the dominance of the "yummy mummy" figure—young, attractive, and middle-class—as a persistent ideal shaped by consumerism. While her study focuses on China, it reflects broader patterns in how maternal identity is constructed and commodified, lending international relevance to the issues examined in this thesis.

While existing literature has thoroughly explored how advertising shapes and reflects ideas about gender and culture—especially through semiotic, feminist, and cultural perspectives—this thesis builds on that foundation by combining Barthes' concept of myth with a postfeminist point of view. Scholars such as Goldman and Papsan (1998), Leiss et al. (2005), and Douglas and Michaels (2004) have shown that advertisements act as powerful cultural tools that often reinforce traditional roles, especially related to motherhood. Others, including Sutherland (2010), Gill (2007), and Banet-Weiser (2012), have examined how ads may appear empowering on the surface but still promote old-

fashioned expectations of women. Although these works offer valuable insights, there are still few studies that use both Barthes' three levels of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—and postfeminist critique to look closely at how caregiving is portrayed in a single advertisement.

While a substantial body of literature has examined the ideological role of advertising through either semiotic or feminist frameworks, few studies have integrated these approaches to explore how caregiving is represented in contemporary parenting advertisements. Existing research often focuses narrowly on motherhood, drawing attention to how advertising reinforces or complicates traditional gender roles. However, there remains a lack of analysis that combines Barthes' semiotic theory—particularly his concept of myth—with postfeminist critique to uncover the layered meanings within emotionally driven, commercially framed narratives. Moreover, representations of fatherhood and shared caregiving are often treated as secondary or overlooked altogether. This thesis addresses that gap by applying a hybrid semiotic-feminist framework to examine how gender roles, emotional labor, and authenticity are constructed in *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*, offering a more holistic and critical understanding of how contemporary advertisements participate in shaping cultural norms around parenting.

This thesis aims to fill that gap by using a blended semiotic and feminist approach to study *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*. It looks at how emotions, humor, and honesty are used in the ad to tell stories about gender and caregiving. Unlike many earlier studies that focus only on mothers, this research also considers how fathers are shown, using recent ideas about more

flexible parenting roles. By examining how the ad reflects and shapes ideas about emotional care, gender roles, and what it means to be a “real” parent, this study offers a deeper understanding of how modern messages about empowerment and choice are shaped within a consumer-driven culture. It treats the advertisement not just as media content, but as a cultural force that helps define social expectations.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method with a semiotic analysis approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In this context, the study seeks to interpret how feminist messages are represented in visual and verbal forms within the advertisement.

The semiotic approach is grounded in Roland Barthes' theory, which dissects signs into three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. As Barthes (1972) states, "myth is a type of speech... a system of communication," through which culture and ideology are naturalized in everyday texts such as advertisements. Thus, the study aims to uncover the ideological constructs embedded in the Frida Baby advertisement, especially those related to gender and parenting.

3.2 Data and Data Sources

The data in this research consists of visual and verbal elements extracted from the advertisement entitled "*Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*", which was published on the official YouTube channel of Frida Baby on May 12th, 2022. The video has a duration of 30 seconds. According to Creswell (2014), data are the raw materials collected from the world being studied, which may include words, images, or observations. Similarly, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) define data in qualitative research as detailed descriptions of

people, events, and interactions that support interpretive analysis. Based on these perspectives, the data in this study include visual imagery, screenshots, on-screen written reviews, dialogues, voice-over narration, and symbolic or non-verbal cues derived from the advertisement.

The term “data source” refers to the origin from which data is obtained. Arikunto (2010) states that data sources may include people, documents, or events, while Creswell (2012) adds that sources of data in qualitative research can consist of interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual materials. In accordance with these definitions, the data sources in this study consist of the YouTube video which is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gYsGGGWu5c>, academic books, journal articles, and credible online references related to semiotic theory—especially the works of Roland Barthes—feminist media criticism, advertising discourse, and the portrayal of parenting and motherhood in media. The analysis is conducted through a semiotic-feminist framework to uncover the underlying meanings and ideologies embedded in the advertisement.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

The data in this study were collected through observation and documentation, involving several systematic steps carried out by the researcher. First, the researcher repeatedly viewed the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* to closely examine and analyze the detailed elements present in each scene. As McKee (2003) notes, close reading in media analysis is crucial, as it allows the researcher to interpret media texts “as though

they were complex literary works,” thereby uncovering deeper cultural meanings embedded within. Following this, the researcher documented key scenes by capturing still images and compiling contextual notes to highlight significant visual and auditory elements. Each screenshot was carefully paired with its corresponding voice-over or on-screen text to preserve the integrity and meaning of the scene. Additionally, the researcher transcribed all verbal content—including spoken dialogue and on-screen text—to support the identification and analysis of verbal signs. Finally, the researcher selected eight representative scenes based on their relevance to the study’s objectives, with a particular focus on depictions of motherhood, fatherhood, and shared caregiving responsibilities. This systematic process provided a focused yet comprehensive foundation for the subsequent semiotic analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

In analyzing the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*, the researcher applied Roland Barthes’ semiotic model, which breaks down meaning into three interconnected levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. This framework guided the analytical process throughout the study. The researcher began by watching the advertisement repeatedly in order to become fully immersed in its visual and auditory elements. With each viewing, the researcher became increasingly attuned to subtle details—such as facial expressions, gestures, color schemes, spoken words, and background sounds—that might otherwise go unnoticed. Each of these elements was treated as a signifier and was interpreted based on its potential meanings, both literal and symbolic.

From this process, the researcher selected eight key scenes that most effectively represented the core themes of the advertisement—namely motherhood, fatherhood, and shared caregiving. The selection was guided by specific visual and narrative criteria, particularly the use of framing, composition, and dialogue, which, as noted by Monaco (2009) and McKee (2003), are essential elements in shaping meaning and guiding audience interpretation in audiovisual texts.

Framing refers to how subjects (such as parents or baby) are positioned and contained within the camera shot. Scenes were chosen where the framing emphasized emotional intimacy or caregiving dynamics—for example, close-up shots of a parent gently interacting with a baby, which help communicate warmth, tenderness, or vulnerability. Composition, in this context, relates to the arrangement of visual elements within the scene—such as the use of space, background details, lighting, and the presence or absence of certain characters or objects. Scenes with strong symbolic composition, like a mother holding a baby with cluttered household items in the background, were selected to reflect the complexities of domestic labor and maternal responsibility. Lastly, dialogue was a key factor, particularly where spoken lines or voice-over text revealed gendered assumptions or shared responsibilities between mothers and fathers. Dialogues that featured expressions of fatigue, humor, or partnership were prioritized for their relevance to feminist themes of caregiving, labor, and emotional expression.

These scenes were chosen for their richness in symbolic content and their potential to reflect or challenge dominant gender ideologies. In contrast, scenes that served a purely transitional or promotional function—such as branding

segments or product close-ups without human interaction—were deliberately excluded from the analysis. Specifically, the segment from second 24 to 30 of the advertisement was excluded, as it primarily features branding and product emphasis without meaningful human interaction or narrative development. These parts were deemed less relevant for a semiotic-feminist reading, as they lacked sufficient narrative or ideological depth to contribute meaningfully to the study's objectives.

After selecting eight key scenes that most effectively represented the themes of motherhood, fatherhood, and shared caregiving, the researcher analyzed each one using Barthes' three levels of meaning. At the denotative level, the focus was on the literal content of the scene—what was visually and audibly present. The connotative level involved exploring the emotional, cultural, or social associations connected to the signs. Finally, at the myth level, the researcher examined the ideological meanings embedded in the scenes—those that make cultural norms appear natural or taken for granted. As Barthes (1977) explains, “myth transforms history into nature,” a concept that was central to this analysis, as it allowed the researcher to uncover how certain gender ideologies were either reinforced or challenged through the advertisement.

Throughout the process, the researcher incorporated feminist media theory to deepen the analysis. Particular attention was given to Gill's (2007) notion of the postfeminist sensibility, which highlights the coexistence of feminist and anti-feminist ideas in contemporary media. According to Gill, postfeminist media often presents empowerment alongside the reinforcement of traditional roles—a contradiction that demands critical interpretation. Each scene was therefore

analyzed not only through a semiotic lens but also within the context of feminist discourse. This integrated approach enabled the researcher to investigate how the advertisement constructs messages around authenticity, gender roles, and caregiving, and how it contributes to broader ideological narratives in media culture.

3.5 Trustworthiness of the Research

In conducting this qualitative research, the researcher took deliberate steps to ensure its trustworthiness by following the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To achieve credibility, the researcher engaged deeply and consistently with the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*. This involved repeated viewings to fully absorb the nuances of both the visual and verbal content. Over time, this prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to notice subtle signs and interpret their layered meanings more accurately. To strengthen the interpretation, the researcher also consulted key feminist theoretical texts, creating a process of triangulation that anchored the analysis within a broader academic context. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, credibility in qualitative research is best attained when the researcher becomes thoroughly immersed in the data and maintains sustained analytical attention throughout the study.

To support transferability, the researcher presented rich and detailed descriptions of each analyzed scene. These descriptions included the visual compositions, character expressions, spoken dialogues, and the overall context of

the scenes. By offering such vivid accounts, the researcher provided readers with enough contextual information to assess whether the findings might apply to similar studies on advertising, gender representation, or media narratives.

Dependability was addressed by maintaining consistency throughout the research process. Each step—from data collection to interpretation—was carefully documented and guided by Barthes' (1972) semiotic framework. This methodological alignment ensured that the process could be followed and evaluated by future researchers, allowing them to replicate the study or assess its rigor with clarity and precision.

Finally, the researcher ensured confirmability by grounding all interpretations in direct textual and visual evidence from the advertisement, as well as in established feminist and semiotic theories. Efforts were made to minimize personal bias by allowing the data to speak through the lens of theory rather than personal opinion. As Patton (2002) notes, confirmability is achieved when findings are supported by clear, traceable links to both the data and the theoretical framework. In this study, the researcher consistently referred back to the advertisement's signs and symbols to support conclusions about gender roles and feminist meanings, ensuring that the analysis remained rooted in the material rather than influenced by subjective interpretation.

3.6 Researcher Bias

The researcher acknowledges that her academic background, personal experiences, and ideological inclinations—particularly an alignment with feminist perspectives—may influence the interpretation and analysis of the advertisement

under study. As this research employs a qualitative methodology, it is recognized that complete objectivity is neither attainable nor expected. Instead, the researcher embraces a reflexive approach, wherein personal biases are identified and critically examined throughout the research process.

To mitigate potential bias and ensure analytical rigor, this study is grounded in established theoretical frameworks, namely Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and feminist media criticism. These frameworks provide a systematic lens through which to interpret the signs and meanings embedded in the advertisement. Moreover, alternative interpretations are considered where relevant, in order to maintain analytical balance and avoid undue projection of subjective assumptions onto the data.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher analyzed selected scenes from the advertisement entitled *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition*, focusing specifically on scenes that convey feminist messages. Each scene is examined individually using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis framework, which involves identifying the signifier and the signified, followed by interpreting the scene through the three levels of meaning: denotative, connotative, and myth. The findings are then summarized descriptively to highlight the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings embedded in each scene. A total of eight scenes and sequences are selected for analysis, with a focus on those that visually and verbally support the presence of feminist messages. The following section presents the findings and the discussion of the semiotic analysis of the advertisement:

4.1 Findings

After viewing the advertisement multiple times in order to capture detailed elements of the scenes, matching screenshot with its corresponding voice-over and/or text, and transcribing on-screen texts and audio dialogues, eight representative scenes were selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives, especially those that showcase representations of motherhood, fatherhood, and shared caregiving. They are as followed:


4.1.1 Scene 1



In the first scene, there are several elements that can be identified and analyzed. These elements are presented as follows:

Time	0'0''
Visual	The screen displays the large text "Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews" over a soft blue-toned nursery background, featuring baby equipment and a blurred figure of a woman in the background.
Text elements on screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Frida Baby presents"- "Real Reviews"- ★★★★★ (five stars)- Simulated "Post a Review" button
Spoken text	"Frida present real review really written by real parents"

Based on the image and the elements contained within it, we can identify the components of the semiotic analysis, namely the signifier, the signified, the denotative meaning, the connotative meaning, and the myth. These components are as follows:

Signifier	Signified	
	Real parenting stories are the most trustworthy and emotionally meaningful source of truth in baby care.	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
The scene introduces the theme of real user testimonials	“Real Reviews” signals authenticity, with the five-star rating and review button encouraging trust and community, while the soft blue tones and realistic mother evoke sincerity and calm.	Real parents serve as the most valid source of judgment for baby products because their assessments are grounded in lived experience rather than brand promises, making their evaluations more trustworthy and relatable.

In the opening scene, the screen displays the large text “Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews” against a soft blue-toned nursery background. The setting includes various pieces of baby equipment and a blurred figure of a woman, likely a mother, subtly visible in the background. On-screen text elements such as “Frida Baby presents,” “Real Reviews,” a five-star rating (★★★★★), and a simulated “Post a Review” button immediately convey the premise of the advertisement. Literally, this frame serves to introduce the central theme of the video: real user testimonials about Frida Baby’s products, setting the tone for authenticity and relatability in the upcoming narrative.

The connotative elements in this scene work together to construct a deeper cultural and emotional message beyond the literal visuals. The phrase “Real Reviews” emphasizes honesty and authenticity, positioning the brand as

transparent and relatable, while simultaneously rejecting the notion of manipulative, overly polished advertising. The inclusion of a five-star rating symbolizes the highest standard of product quality and suggests widespread user satisfaction. The simulated “Post a Review” button serves as an invitation for audience engagement, reinforcing a sense of community and shared parenting experiences. The soft blue color palette according to color psychology research and experts such as Birren (1978) evokes feelings of calmness, safety, and trust—qualities that are particularly important in the design of baby-related products to promote a sense of comfort and reassurance. Additionally, the blurred silhouette of a mother and nursery scene provides contextual grounding, framing the advertisement as a reflection of real-life parenting moments. These elements together promote an image of Frida Baby as a trusted, community-centered brand rooted in emotional sincerity and parental support.

In Barthes’ (1972) framework, myth refers to cultural values or ideologies that become normalized and accepted as natural truths. Within this opening frame, several myths are conveyed that shape the ideological foundation of the advertisement. The scene presents the myth that real parents are the most valid judges of baby products, suggesting that authenticity and lived experience hold more weight than corporate promises. It reinforces the belief that product quality should be demonstrated through actual use rather than idealized portrayals. The inclusion of an open “Post a Review” button and the emphasis on five-star ratings suggest a myth of transparency—implying that a trustworthy brand is one that invites public scrutiny. Conversely, the ad rejects the traditional myth that advertisements must rely on polished actors or glamorous settings, and it

challenges the assumption that testimonials are inherently manipulative marketing tools.

As cultural theorist Gill (2007) notes, advertising has increasingly shifted toward strategies that prioritize authenticity and intimacy, reflecting broader cultural demands for “the real” in media representation. Similarly, Banet-Weiser (2012) argues that “authenticity” has become a powerful currency in brand culture, especially in industries targeting women and parents. This aligns with Frida Baby’s branding approach, which uses raw and relatable scenarios to foster emotional resonance and credibility. Ultimately, Frida Baby constructs a new myth: “honesty is the new marketing power.” Rather than dramatize or exaggerate, the brand communicates its message through the slogan of “real parents, real problems, real solutions.” As an introduction, this opening frame sets the tone for the entire ad, presenting it as intimate, credible, and intentionally anti-fake. It calls upon viewers to trust not in the perfection of advertising but in the authenticity of shared parenting experiences.

4.1.2 Scene 2



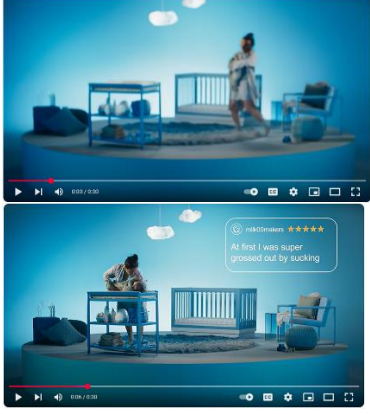


In the second scene, multiple key elements emerge that warrant close examination and interpretation. These components, which contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the scene, can be outlined as follows:

Time	0'3'' – 0'6''
Visual	In the scene, a mother gently holds her baby above a changing table. The dominant color scheme features pastel blue tones, which are further softened by gentle warm lighting. Surrounding them are several carefully placed objects: a baby crib, a chair, a small table, and whimsical decorative clouds hanging from the ceiling.
Text elements on screen	“At first I was super grossed out by sucking” – a user review from “milk00makers.”
Spoken text	“At first, I was super grossed out by sucking”

Drawing from the visual and contextual elements present in the image, we can identify the key components of semiotic analysis: the signifier, the signified,

the denotative meaning, the connotative meaning, and the underlying myth. These aspects are detailed as follows:

Signifier	Signified	
	Emotional and physical reality of motherhood particularly the solitary and sometimes unpleasant aspects that are rarely shown in idealized media portrayals.	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
A mother is seen holding her baby, moving from a chair toward a crib.	The image conveys that motherhood is not a pristine or aesthetically beautiful duty, but one filled with harsh realities. Despite this, it remains an act of love and strength.	The mother as the primary, empowered domestic caregiver—capable of managing unpleasant aspects of childcare. Also, realism functions as resistance against traditional depictions of women in advertising, who are typically idealized as flawless, cheerful, and tireless.

In this scene, the images above literally depict a nursery room designed with a minimalist aesthetic. The mother appears to be in the process of changing or cleaning the baby, displaying a focused and responsible expression.

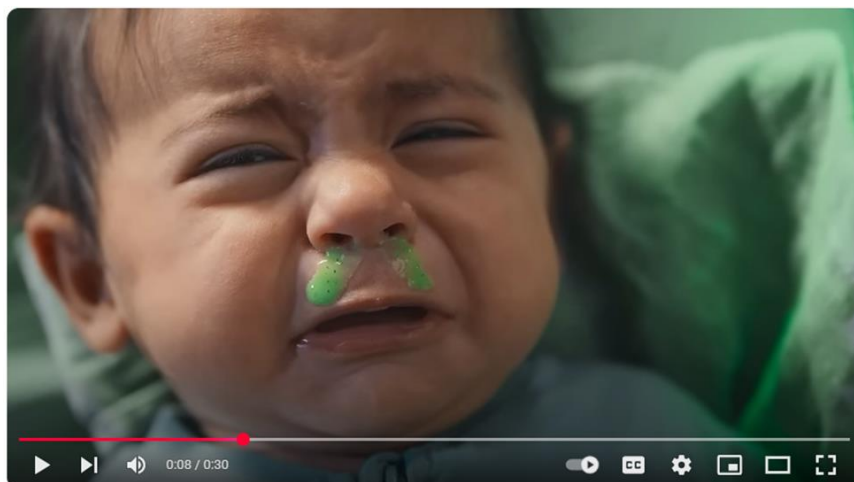
Connotatively, motherhood is redefined not as a pursuit of perfection, but as a role grounded in emotional and physical struggles. The image of the mother working alone at the beginning of the advertisement can be interpreted as a

representation of female independence or self-sufficiency. However, the absence of a male figure in this early moment also reinforces the idea that mothers are typically the first to notice signs of a child's discomfort and are expected to act immediately. This reflects what Chodorow (1978) describes as the "intensive mothering ideology," where women are socially conditioned to take primary responsibility for emotional and physical caregiving. The mother's facial expression underscores the realism of this role—showing visible exhaustion and vulnerability—thus rejecting the myth of the “perfect mother” often idealized in media. According to Douglas and Michaels (2004), the image of the flawless “new mom” is a cultural construct that places impossible standards on women, leading to guilt and emotional fatigue. In contrast, this advertisement challenges that ideal by portraying maternal labor as both messy and authentic. Moreover, the on-screen user review—“At first, I was super grossed out by sucking...”—reflects a raw honesty about the less glamorous aspects of caregiving. This moment aligns with Hooks' (2000) view that feminist approaches to motherhood must embrace truth-telling and reject sanitized, patriarchal narratives. By elevating the voice of an ordinary woman, the ad validates lived experience as a source of authority, echoing what Gill (2007) identifies as a shift in media toward “new femininities” that value emotional authenticity and resistance to traditional gender scripts.

Myths constructed in this scene include the portrayal of the mother as the primary, empowered domestic caregiver—someone capable of managing the most unpleasant aspects of childcare with competence and resolve. This depiction aligns with what Douglas and Michaels (2004) call the “new momism,” a cultural myth that both glorifies and burdens women with ideals of perfect, all-consuming

motherhood. However, this scene simultaneously resists that ideal through visual realism. Rather than presenting the mother as flawless, serene, and perpetually cheerful, she is shown as exhausted, unfiltered, and emotionally candid. This reflects a broader shift in advertising toward what Banet-Weiser (2012) terms “authentic brand culture,” where imperfection and emotional honesty are leveraged to build trust and relatability. Furthermore, by allowing the mother to express discomfort openly—both through facial expressions and through the text of the user review—the advertisement challenges gendered expectations that women should speak modestly or conceal unpleasant truths. As Gill (2007) observes, postfeminist media often reclaims emotional vulnerability as a source of strength rather than weakness. Thus, the scene functions as a counter-narrative to patriarchal media tropes and the myth of the idealized “supermom.” Instead of glamorized caregiving, it celebrates maternal authenticity as a form of everyday heroism, positioning real, imperfect labor as the foundation of feminist empowerment.


4.1.3 Scene 3



In the third scene, various elements can be observed and examined. These components are outlined as follows:"

Time	0'7'' – 0'8''
Visual	The image features a close-up of a baby's face with two streams of green mucus coming out of its nostrils. The baby's eyes are squinted, and its mouth is wide open in a cry. The background is softly lit and has a greenish hue.
Text elements on screen	-
Spoken text	"nose"

In the third scene, several important elements appear that deserve careful observation and analysis. These aspects, which shape the scene's overall message and effect, are detailed below:

Signifier	Signified	
	The raw, unfiltered reality of infant care specifically the physical discomfort of a sick baby and the urgency of parental response.	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
A close-up of a crying baby's face, showing two streams of green mucus coming out of its nostrils.	This image subverts the polished aesthetic often found in parenting advertisements. Instead of an idealized, soft-focus baby, we see raw bodily fluids and intense emotion. These visual elements disrupt the idealized portrayal of caregiving by	Women are active agents, capable of confronting extreme and uncomfortable situations for their children. The image also challenges the sanitized aesthetic of motherhood, where babies and mothers are expected to appear

	exposing audiences to the raw and chaotic realities of maternal labor.	perpetually clean and pleasant.
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This image presents a close-up of a crying baby's face, with two streams of green mucus visibly coming out of the nostrils. The baby's expression reflects extreme discomfort—eyes tightly shut and mouth wide open in a loud cry. This image pops while the audio says “snot out of my kid’s nose” in order to strengthen the focus of the audiences into it. The background features soft lighting with a greenish hue. Denotatively, this image portrays the harsh reality of a baby suffering from a cold. The discomfort is depicted clearly and unapologetically, highlighting a situation rarely shown in mainstream advertising.

This image subverts the polished and idealized aesthetic commonly found in parenting advertisements. Instead of presenting a soft-focus, sanitized image of motherhood, the depiction of visible green mucus offers extreme visual honesty, rejecting the notion of perfect, sanitized portrayals of maternal care. The loudly crying baby further humanizes the infant, drawing attention to the emotional and physical demands mothers face on a daily basis. The dramatic close-up intensifies the viewer's discomfort while simultaneously evoking empathy and admiration for maternal resilience. These visual choices reflect a feminist critique by challenging mainstream representations of motherhood that often erase the messy, exhausting, and emotionally raw aspects of caregiving. As Tyler (2009) explains in her discussion of abjection, these elements confront audiences with the visceral and unsettling reality of maternal labor, rejecting the sanitized and romanticized imagery typically associated with care work. Additionally, the unapologetic

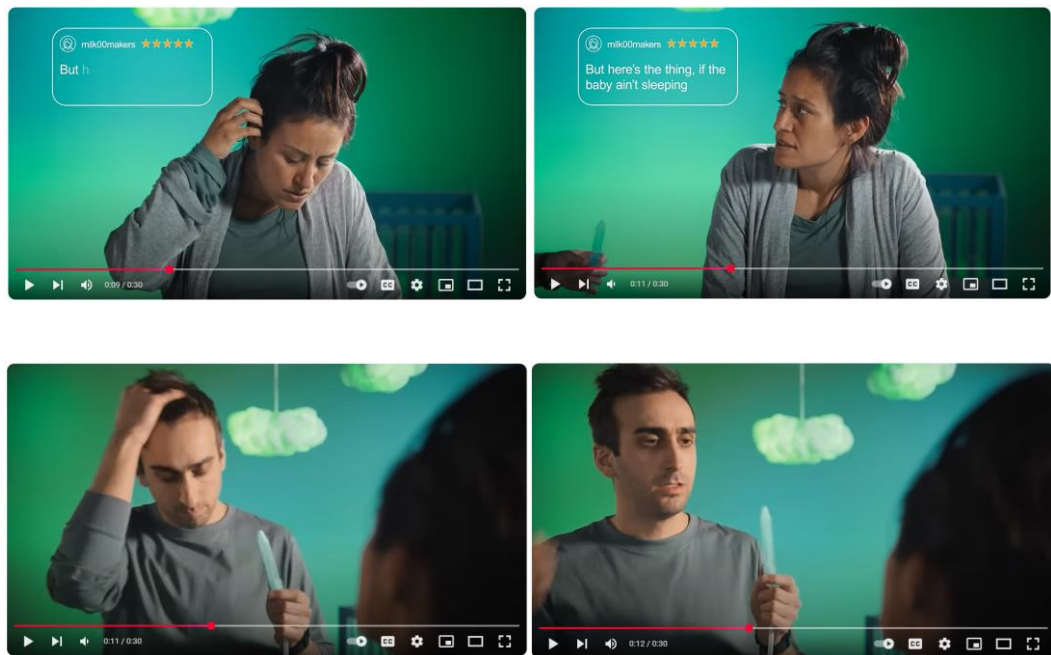
portrayal of mucus and crying contests the dominant cultural expectation that women must maintain cleanliness, composure, and control, even in moments of care. This supports Douglas' (1966) theory that cultural definitions of "uncleanliness" are often rooted in deep-seated anxieties surrounding the female body and caregiving roles. By foregrounding these "unpleasant" aspects, the advertisement disrupts normative ideals and invites a more honest, embodied understanding of maternal experience.

The portrayal in this scene resists the dominant media narrative that mothers and their children must always appear spotless, graceful, and emotionally controlled. It challenges several entrenched cultural myths: that mothers should be perpetually presentable and gentle, that babies in advertising must conform to an idealized standard of cuteness and cleanliness, and that caregiving is an inherently beautiful and effortless act. These myths align with what Douglas and Michaels (2004) term the "new momism"—an ideology that pressures women to embrace intensive, joyful motherhood while masking the real physical and emotional toll of caregiving. Instead, the advertisement disrupts this framework by dismantling the image of the "graceful mother with the adorable baby" and replacing it with a more radical figure: the warrior mother. This figure confronts the biological messiness, emotional exhaustion, and physical demands of motherhood with a sense of purpose and unapologetic strength.

As Barthes (1977) argues, myth operates by transforming culturally constructed meanings into naturalized truths. In this context, the sanitized, aestheticized image of mother-child perfection becomes a myth that obscures the labor and discomfort involved in caregiving. The advertisement resists this

process by making the invisible visible—by showing mucus, mess, and maternal exhaustion, it deconstructs the illusion of caregiving as effortless and instead frames it as a form of labor that is both real and worthy of recognition. This reframing echoes Ahmed’s (2014) notion that emotions and bodily expressions are political—they reveal the material realities of lived experience and push back against sanitized cultural expectations. Here, maternal authenticity is not a failure of grace but a marker of resilience and feminist agency.

4.1.4 Scene 4




The fourth scene contains a number of identifiable elements that can be analyzed in detail. These elements are listed below:

Time	0'6'' – 0'13''
Visual	A mother with loosely tied hair, dressed in casual homewear, touches her hair in one hand and a man stands in a nursery touching his hair while holding a NoseFrida device.

Text elements on screen	“But here’s the thing: if the baby ain’t sleeping...”
Spoken text	“But here’s the thing: if the baby ain’t sleeping, ain’t nobody sleeping.”

The forth scene presents a number of significant elements that invite thorough analysis and interpretation. The following outlines these components that contribute to the scene’s meaning and impact.

Signifier	Signified	
	<p>The shared emotional and mental burden of parenting, highlighting the stress, confusion, and teamwork required in caring for a baby especially when dealing with illness.</p>	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
Top Left : A tired-looking mother, hair loosely tied, is touching her hair near the ear in one hand. A customer review appears: “But here’s the	<p>This image resists idealized portrayals of motherhood by highlighting emotional labor. It reflects a postfeminist</p>	<p>Mothers are allowed to feel exhaustion, doubt, and still be strong. Fatigue is not a weakness but a sign of bravery and</p>

<p>thing...”.</p> <p>Top Right : The mother looks to the right. A customer review continues to appear: “if the baby ain’t sleeping...”.</p> <p>Bottom Left: A man touches his head on the top with a confused or slightly uncomfortable expression while the background voice continues to appear : “ain’t nobody sleeping”.</p> <p>Bottom Right: The man looks the mother while holding the NoseFrida product.</p>	<p>media sensibility where female emotion is no longer hidden or sanitized but presented as a valid and powerful form of truth (Gill, 2007; Ahmed, 2014). Meanwhile, in this context, the man’s gesture may signal detachment or lack of deep understanding of the product or caregiving experience. Unlike the earlier scene with the woman who displayed clear emotional fatigue, the man’s gesture feels casual, almost performative. The aspirator is being held loosely—as if he is unsure of its significance or function.</p>	<p>endurance in caregiving. In addition, the man’s nonchalant expression and uncertain gesture reflect a broader social myth where fathers or male figures are often depicted as inexperienced or detached in the face of parenting duties—especially those requiring emotional or physical effort. However, within the ironic tone of the Frida Baby ad, this portrayal actually challenges the myth by highlighting the absurdity of how emotionally removed and under-informed male figures often are in caregiving conversations.</p>
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Denotatively, the first two images portray a mother in a moment of pause—likely after tending to her child—offering a glimpse into the everyday emotional reality of motherhood. Meanwhile, the other two pictures depict a man standing in a teal-colored nursery set. He is holding a nasal aspirator (specifically a NoseFrida) and is seen running his hand through his hair. His facial expression appears confused, blank, or mildly concerned, indicating a moment of uncertainty or hesitation in the context presented.

Connotatively, the visual elements in the Frida Baby advertisement collectively resist idealized portrayals of motherhood by emphasizing emotional

labor and raw, lived experience. The gesture of placing a hand on the head symbolizes mental exhaustion, stress, or reflection, directly challenging the myth of the “supermom” who is always in control (Ahmed, 2014). This is further emphasized through the depiction of messy hair and casual attire, which defies conventional beauty standards often imposed on mothers by media, presenting instead a more honest and unfiltered image of motherhood (Gill, 2007). The inclusion of on-screen review text validates the personal voice and experience of the mother, giving authority to everyday realities over institutional expertise. This shift is a feminist move that centers lived maternal experience as credible and meaningful (Gill, 2007). Additionally, the use of a teal-green background conveys a nuanced emotional state—balancing fatigue and calm—thus symbolizing the internal struggle mothers often face, while also hinting at resilience. Overall, this image reflects a postfeminist media sensibility, where female emotion is no longer hidden or sanitized but rather presented as a valid and powerful form of truth (Gill, 2007; Ahmed, 2014).

Meanwhile, the two other images convey symbolic meanings about masculinity, emotional distance, and discomfort in caregiving roles, particularly within the domestic and parental sphere. The man's gesture of running his hand through his hair (left image) commonly signifies confusion, hesitation, or stress, suggesting that he feels overwhelmed or out of place. This aligns with Ahmed's (2014) view that such gestures symbolize mental exhaustion or reflection, rejecting the idealized image of a parent—particularly a father figure—who is always in control. Meanwhile, his blank and mildly concerned facial expression (right image) implies emotional disconnection, suggesting a struggle to engage

meaningfully with the caregiving context. The teal-green background further emphasizes the caregiving setting, symbolizing both fatigue and serenity, a duality that Gill (2007) identifies as reflective of the emotional labor involved in parenthood. This scene places a male figure—traditionally not associated with such emotional expression—within a feminized space, thus subverting normative gender expectations in parenting.

The background voice line, "*If the baby ain't sleeping... ain't nobody sleeping,*" which appears just before and while the two images of the man spotlighted, carries strong connotative and symbolic meaning—particularly in the context of caregiving roles and household dynamics.

Literally, the phrase means that when the baby is not sleeping, no one in the household—whether it be the mother, father, or other family members—can sleep either. This line underscores the reality that a baby's needs dominate the rhythm of the parents' lives. However, within the visual context of the confused and awkward-looking man in the images, the phrase takes on an ironic tone: although responsibility is supposedly collective ("nobody sleeping"), in social reality, the greatest burden often falls on the mother. As Gill (2007) notes, media representations often elevate the lived emotional experience of mothers, reinforcing the idea that women remain the central figures in caregiving.

In the satirical tone of the *Frida Baby* advertisement, the phrase also mocks the myth that everyone in the household "struggles" equally when the baby cries. In truth, as the visuals suggest, the man appears unprepared, uncomfortable, and emotionally disengaged, as shown through his hair-touching gesture and

blank expression. This reflects Barthes' (1972) theory of *myth*—where cultural ideologies are disguised as natural behaviors. The visual contrast between a passive male figure and the verbal call for collective struggle exposes how gender roles are not equally distributed, despite appearing to be so.

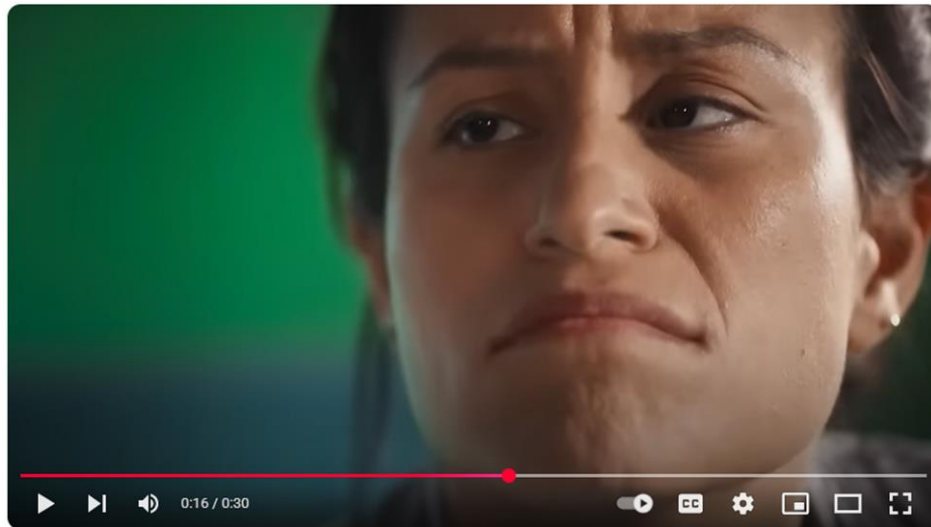
The phrase indirectly demands the active participation of all caregivers. However, the man's distant expression and uncertainty about what to do reflect how men are still often positioned—or position themselves—as passive observers in parenting. According to Warin (2017), while discourses of involved fatherhood have gained visibility, they often remain superficial and performative, lacking deep emotional or practical engagement. Barthes would describe this as a contradiction between the *signifier* (gesture, facial expression) and the *signified* (social meaning or cultural value), which reveals the hidden ideological structures behind what appears ordinary.

In conclusion, the phrase "*If the baby ain't sleeping, ain't nobody sleeping*" carries layers of irony and social critique. While it explicitly expresses a collective sense of exhaustion, it implicitly—through the image of a passive and confused male figure—questions how “collective” caregiving responsibilities truly are in modern parenting culture. As Ahmed (2014) points out, emotional labor and exhaustion are frequently feminized and made invisible when experienced by women, while men's discomfort is often centered and acknowledged, revealing a persistent gender asymmetry in emotional expectations.

In a broader feminist reading, this depiction critiques societal myths of male detachment or incompetence in caregiving. By ironically highlighting the

father's discomfort, the advertisement challenges traditional gender roles and supports what Gill (2007) describes as a postfeminist sensibility, where emotional expression, even when messy or awkward, becomes a valid form of truth.


4.1.5 Scene 5



Several distinct elements are present in the fifth scene, each of which can be examined for further analysis. The following outlines these elements:

Time	0'13'' – 0'16''
Visual	The image shows a close-up of an adult woman's face with a serious and determined expression. Her brows are furrowed and her lips are firmly closed. The background features a teal-blue tone with natural lighting.
Text elements on screen	-
Spoken text	"Don't think about it, just do it."

In the fifth scene, various notable elements arise that require detailed examination and interpretation. These components, which help convey the scene's overall significance, are summarized as follows:

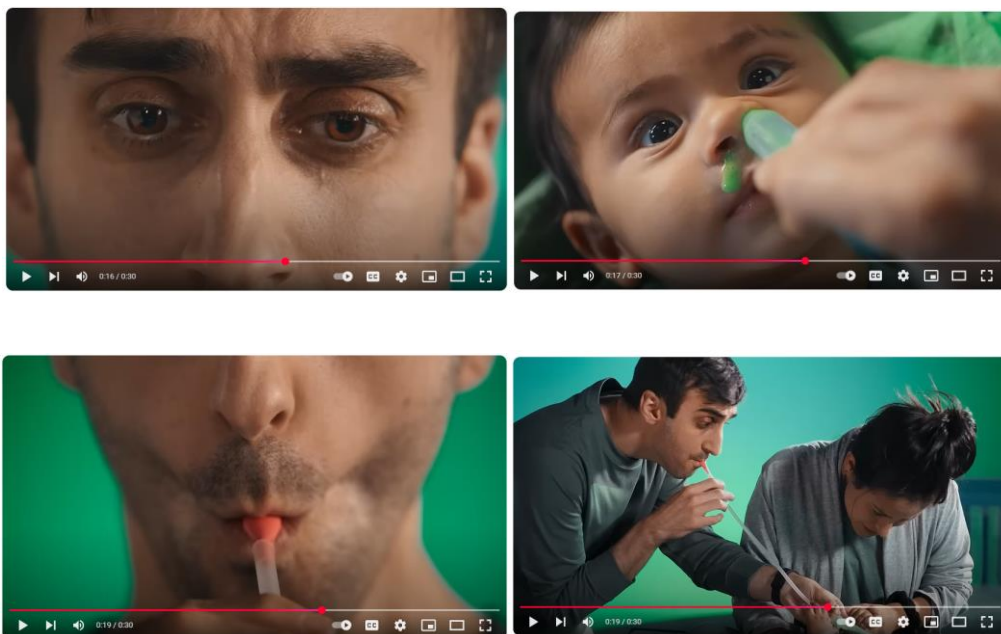
Signifier	Signified	
	The maternal authority and emotional strength that a mother can have in moments of parental urgency. Mothers often take on the role of the pragmatic leader (focuses on practical solutions and actions rather than ideals or theories).	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
Close-up of an adult woman's (mother's) face with a serious and determined expression.	This depiction resists idealized portrayals of maternal patience and gentleness. Instead, it frames the mother as empowered, rational, and solution-focused. It echoes a feminist approach that centers on visible strength and resilience in the maternal role (Gill, 2007).	Women are capable leaders and decision-makers in the domestic realm. Moreover, addressing the messy aspects of parenting is not shameful but heroic. Finally, feminism can manifest through everyday actions and emotional labor, not just through vocal protest.

The visual shows a close-up of mother's face, marked by a serious and determined expression. Accompanied by the voice-over text, "Don't think about it, just do it," and set against a teal-blue background with natural lighting, the image emphasizes urgency and decisiveness. Her facial features—furrowed brows and firmly closed lips—suggest assertiveness and mental resolve. Denotatively, this moment captures a mother mentally preparing to take action, likely to use the nasal aspirator on her baby. Her expression signals that in moments of caregiving—particularly when removing mucus—there is no room for hesitation; instinct and decisiveness must take precedence over contemplation.

The close-up of the mother's face in this scene highlights her emotional strength and focus, creating space for female subjectivity and agency. Her serious and determined look conveys courage and a readiness to face discomfort for the

well-being of her child. The accompanying phrase, “just do it,” echoes Nike’s well-known slogan, as the response over the “blank husband” prior, symbolizing action, decisiveness, and empowerment (Goldman & Papson, 1998). Delivered in a firm and commanding tone, the message rejects common stereotypes of women as hesitant or overly emotional, instead portraying her as a confident decision-maker (Gill, 2007). Connotatively, the advertisement redefines the maternal figure not as passive or burdened, but as rational, empowered, and solution-oriented. It promotes a vision of “empowered motherhood”—a feminist interpretation that resists the traditional, sacrificial ideal of mothers and instead embraces women as bold, capable agents in the domestic realm. Gill (2007) notes that this shift reflects a broader “postfeminist sensibility,” where strength and femininity coexist in media portrayals of women. Likewise, Douglas and Michaels (2004) argue that such depictions challenge the enduring “Mommy Myth,” which idealizes mothers as soft, endlessly nurturing, and always cheerful.

4.1.6 Scene 6

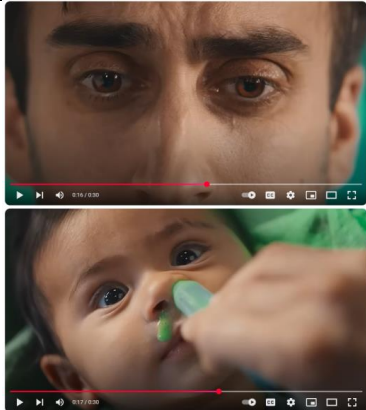



The sixth scene reveals a range of elements that are subject to analysis.

These elements are described as follows:

Time	0'16'' – 0'19''
Visual	Close-up of the father's face, eyes wide open, expression frozen or bewildered, continued with a baby lies calmly, with a peaceful expression. A man's (father's) hand holds a mucus suction tool (NoseFrida) and gently approaches the baby's nose, which still shows visible green mucus. The scene then showed a close-up of the lower face of the father. His lips are attached to a red suction tube from the NoseFrida device. His cheeks appear drawn inward, indicating strong suction. Lastly, it showed the image of the father which is sucking mucus through a transparent tube connected to a baby's nose, while the mother gently holds the baby's hands.
Text elements on screen	-
Spoken text	-

The sixth scene features several prominent elements that merit careful analysis and interpretation. These components, which play a crucial role in shaping the scene's meaning, can be summarized as follows:

Signifier	Signified
	Parental cooperation and shared responsibility.

		
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
The Father's reaction to the command of the mother.	This visual reinforces the subversion of traditional gender roles. The father, traditionally viewed as the family decision-maker, is portrayed here as responding to the mother's directive. This symbolizes a reversed power dynamic and aligns with contemporary feminist narratives that advocate for shared domestic leadership .	Women possess valid authority in parenting—not merely as caregivers, but as decision-makers. Men can appear uncertain or depend on their partners without their masculinity being diminished. Domestic power can be negotiated, and women may lead within the family space.

The scene of close-up of the father's face, eyes wide open, expression frozen or bewildered portrays the father in a state of stillness, seemingly processing a command or directive given by the mother with no verbal response. The top-right image depicts a baby with a nasal aspirator inserted into their nostril, capturing a vulnerable moment that highlights the often overlooked, practical realities of childcare. This intimate scene transitions into the bottom-left image, which features a close-up of a man actively sucking through the NoseFrida device.

Connotatively, the silent and reflective expression seen in the father's demeanor symbolizes vulnerability or hesitation, portraying him as emotionally passive. The visual emphasis on his eyes suggests internal cognitive processing—

perhaps uncertainty, discomfort, or even a form of submission. Within the context of the mother issuing a clear command, this scene marks a notable reversal of traditional authority structures: the mother leads while the father follows. This depiction challenges conventional gender norms and reinforces a narrative where leadership within the household is no longer exclusively male. This imagery subverts traditional gender roles. The father, often cast as the dominant decision-maker in patriarchal structures, is shown here yielding to the mother's directive, illustrating a reversed power dynamic. This aligns with contemporary feminist discourse that advocates for shared leadership in domestic life. The scene conveys a reimagined narrative of parenting through the myths it presents and rejects. It upholds the belief that women possess legitimate authority in parenting, not solely as caregivers but as confident decision-makers. Simultaneously, it promotes the idea that men can express uncertainty or rely on their partners without their masculinity being diminished. This reframes domestic power as something negotiable, where women may take the lead within the family dynamic. In contrast, the scene rejects long-standing myths that fathers must always be in control, that masculinity is incompatible with submission or emotional vulnerability, and that leadership in the household is the exclusive domain of men.

From a mythological perspective, the advertisement constructs a transformative narrative in which masculinity is no longer defined by dominance, but by emotional presence, care, and cooperation. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic lens, this becomes a modern "myth" of domestic egalitarianism—where collaborative parenting and fluid gender roles are normalized. In the segment between seconds 16 and 18, the father's passive demeanor gradually shifts into an

act of intimate caregiving, culminating in his direct involvement in using the NoseFrida device. This moment is not portrayed as weakness, but as a powerful symbol of love, responsibility, and shared labor. The father's participation in a task often feminized in traditional discourse—sucking mucus from a baby's nose—becomes a Barthesian signifier of a redefined masculinity.

Rather than representing the father as a distant, disengaged figure, the ad positions him as nurturing and emotionally invested, aligning with feminist ideals of shared domestic roles. This imagery challenges patriarchal myths by illustrating that care work is not inherently feminine and that men are capable of emotional depth within family life. As Hooks (2000) argues, feminism does not only aim to empower women but also seeks to liberate men from the restrictive norms of traditional masculinity, allowing them to express vulnerability and affection without fear of emasculation. Similarly, Gill (2007) emphasizes that media plays a central role in shaping societal perceptions of gender, and the portrayal of engaged, caregiving fathers helps destabilize long-standing ideologies surrounding male detachment in parenting.

Ultimately, this scene marks the culmination of the father's symbolic transformation—from hesitance to emotionally engaged action. What might seem like a simple gesture becomes, under Barthes' (1972) framework, a mythic reconfiguration of fatherhood: one that embraces caregiving as a strength, not a deviation from masculinity. The advertisement therefore not only promotes a product but also subtly advocates for a more egalitarian and emotionally connected model of modern parenting.

4.1.7 Scene 7




In the seventh scene, a variety of components can be observed and explored through analysis. The details of these elements are as follows

Time	0'20'' – 0'21''
Visual	The father is holding the mouthpiece of the NoseFrida suction device, and the mother is looking at the tube filled with green mucus. Both have strong facial expressions, showing disgust, surprise, and disbelief. The background is bright blue with decorative clouds, resembling a baby's nursery.

Text elements on screen	-
Spoken text	“Oh my ...”

Within the seventh scene, a variety of essential elements come into focus, each inviting detailed analysis and interpretation. These elements are presented as follows:

Signifier	Signified	
	<p>The emotional and physical reality of co-parenting, where both parents share not only responsibilities but also the uncomfortable, messy aspects of childcare.</p>	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
<p>The father is sucking mucus through a transparent tube connected to a baby's nose, while a woman (mother) gently holds the baby's hands. The scene continues with the strong facial expressions: disgust, surprise, and disbelief after they see the tube which is full of mucus.</p>	<p>This image communicates the ideal of a modern family, where caregiving is shared and gender roles are flexible. Affection is reciprocal, and responsibilities are jointly accepted. The parents act as a unified front in supporting their child. In addition, the expression of both mother and father after they see the tube implies that parenting is not always beautiful or idealized—it also involves confronting unpleasant realities out of love.</p>	<p>Parenting is teamwork: both father and mother share not only domestic space but emotional labor and physical caregiving. There must be equality in caregiving. Baby care is not the domain of women alone—it is a shared responsibility. The modern father is emotionally and physically involved in childcare. The other myth constructed is parenting can be an emotional journey which is not always</p>

		beautiful, but deeply meaningful. Genuine parents accept all aspects of their child, even the unpleasant ones since emotional closeness is forged through shared extreme experiences, even disgusting ones.
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The visual sequence shows a father actively using the NoseFrida suction device to remove mucus from his baby's nose, while the mother gently holds the baby's hands to comfort and steady the child. Set against a plain blue background, the focus remains solely on the intimate caregiving interaction, emphasizing the shared parental role in addressing the baby's discomfort. In a subsequent scene, the father is seen holding the mouthpiece of the device while the mother holds the tube containing visible green mucus. Both parents display vivid facial expressions—disgust, surprise, and disbelief—capturing the raw, unfiltered emotions of handling a messy but necessary task. The background shifts to a bright blue setting adorned with decorative clouds, evoking the warmth and innocence of a baby's nursery. Taken together, these visuals denotatively present a moment of cooperative caregiving, where both parents are physically and emotionally engaged in managing an unpleasant yet crucial aspect of parenting.

The visual depiction of the father using a nasal suction device to remove mucus from the baby symbolizes active paternal care and the courage to face discomfort for the well-being of the child. Meanwhile, the mother calmly holding the baby represents emotional warmth, protection, and nurturing support. The balanced composition of the scene visually conveys gender equality and a

harmonious division of parenting roles. Their coordinated, neutral clothing suggests a unified and egalitarian family unit, where responsibilities are shared without reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. This image communicates the ideal of a modern family—one in which caregiving is collaborative, gender roles are flexible, and affection is mutual. According to Pleck (2010), modern fatherhood has shifted toward “nurturant fathering,” where emotional and practical involvement are essential. Lamb (2010) also emphasizes that the quality of co-parenting significantly affects child well-being and reflects evolving norms surrounding gender and parenting.

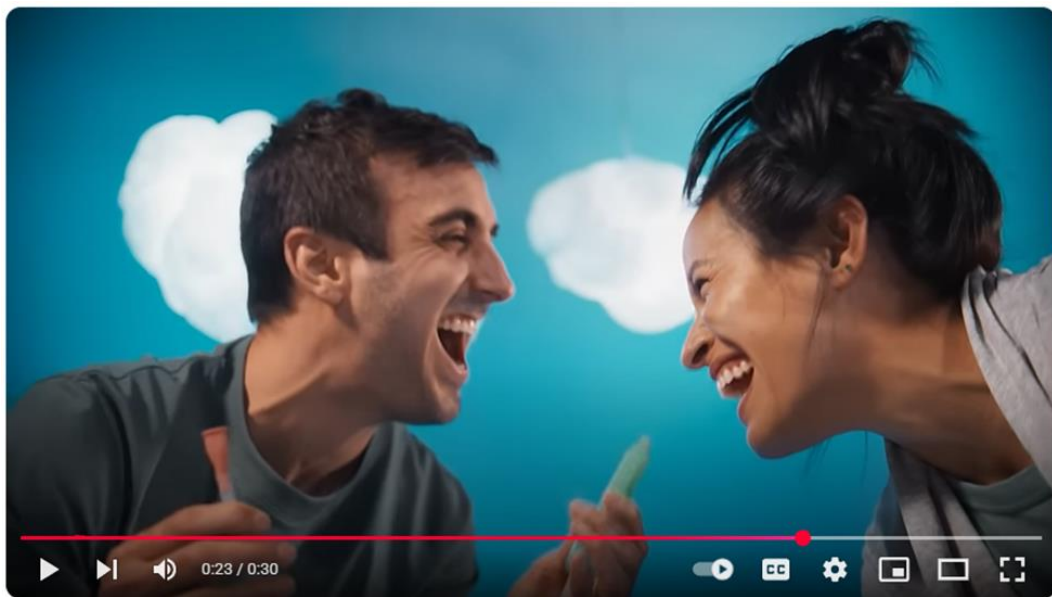
In the following scene, both parents’ expressions—a mix of disgust and amusement—symbolize emotional sacrifice in caregiving: an unpleasant task carried out in the name of love. The mucus-filled suction tube becomes a tangible symbol of “dirt” as a representation of labor and parental devotion. The emotional interaction between the couple reveals a kind of intimacy that is forged through shared, challenging parenting experiences. The bright blue background decorated with clouds evokes the tenderness and warmth of an infant’s world. This imagery implies that parenting is not always idealized or aesthetically pleasing—it often requires confronting messy realities out of love and responsibility. This aligns with Pleck’s (2010) perspective that both parents should be emotionally and actively involved in caregiving roles. As Gill (2007) notes, media representations play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of gender roles, particularly in how fatherhood is portrayed in family-oriented advertising.

This visual sequence presents a powerful reconstruction of modern parenting myths by conveying the idea that caregiving is a shared, egalitarian responsibility. It affirms that both father and mother participate equally not only in physical tasks but also in emotional labor. The image promotes the notion that parenting is a collaborative endeavor, with the modern father portrayed as emotionally and physically engaged—actively challenging traditional expectations that mothers are the default caregivers and that men play only symbolic or passive roles. Furthermore, it rejects outdated myths that men avoid unpleasant or “dirty” caregiving duties, instead presenting masculinity as compatible with empathy, nurturing, and cooperation. As Hooks (2000) asserts, feminism is not solely about liberating women but also about freeing men to embrace caregiving roles without fear of emasculation. Similarly, Gill (2007) emphasizes that media plays a critical role in constructing and negotiating gender ideologies, and this advertisement participates in that cultural shift by normalizing male involvement in childcare.

Additionally, the scene reinforces the myth that parenting is an emotional journey—often messy and far from idealized, but profoundly meaningful. It asserts that true parental love involves accepting every aspect of a child, including the difficult and unpleasant ones. The emotional closeness between parents is shown to be forged through shared extreme caregiving experiences, even those that involve disgust or physical mess. In doing so, the advertisement rejects the polished ideal of “clean” parenting, where caregivers must always appear composed, tidy, and aesthetically pleasing. It challenges the assumption that only mothers can handle the bodily messes of children, offering instead a more

authentic portrayal of caregiving rooted in shared love and sacrifice. This aligns again with Hooks (2000), who advocates for feminist parenting practices that encourage equitable participation between genders. Ultimately, the advertisement constructs a new myth—one where love, intimacy, and equality define modern parenthood.


4.1.8 Scene 8



A number of key elements can be identified in the eighth scene, each offering material for analysis. These elements are as follows:

Time	0'21''-0'25''
Visual	The father and mother are laughing while looking at each other. The father is holding the suction end of the NoseFrida. The background is light blue with cloud decorations, creating a nursery-like setting.
Text elements on screen	-
Spoken text	“Oh my God” (the continuation of the previous scene)

The eighth scene contains several important features that warrant close scrutiny and interpretation. These key components can be outlined as follows:

Signifier	Signified	
	Authentic parenting is not perfect but it is full of love and humor.	
Denotative	Connotative	Myth
The father and mother laugh heartily while looking at each other. The father is still holding the suction end of the NoseFrida and the tube filled with mucus.	This moment captures a transformation—from initial disgust to action, surprise, and finally, laughter. It represents how emotionally taxing experiences in parenting can turn into joyful, bonding moments.	Joy in parenting often comes from overcoming challenges together. Moreover, laughter is a valid and healthy part of modern parenting. Both parents, regardless of gender, are emotionally invested and supportive.

This image represents the emotional climax of the advertisement. It shows that parenting is about being willing to confront the unpleasant for the sake of love and well-being. By visualizing mucus explicitly and the honest reactions of the parents, the advertisement communicates that real love is visible in actions—not just idealized gestures.

In this visual scene, the father and mother are seen laughing heartily while looking at each other, capturing a moment of shared humor and emotional connection. The father continues to hold the suction end of the NoseFrida device and the tube now filled with mucus. Set against a light blue background decorated with clouds, the setting maintains a soft, nursery-like atmosphere that reinforces

the context of caregiving. Denotatively, the image depicts a successful moment following an unpleasant but necessary task—clearing the baby’s nasal congestion. The act is complete, and what remains between the parents is a sense of relief, satisfaction, and mutual amusement, highlighting the emotional intimacy and bonding that can emerge from even the messiest aspects of parenting.

This visual scene carries rich connotative meanings that reflect the emotional dynamics of parenting. The shared laughter between the parents symbolizes an emotional release and a deepened bond after managing a stressful task together. The tool, still visibly filled with mucus, highlights the raw and honest nature of parenting—there is no effort to sanitize or conceal the messiness of caregiving. Their eye contact reflects emotional solidarity and a sense of equality in their co-parenting roles, while the soft blue tones and cloud motifs in the background convey a sense of peace, warmth, and resolution following the small but meaningful “battle” of caring for their child. Connotatively, the moment illustrates a full emotional arc: from initial disgust to determined action, then surprise, and ultimately shared joy. As Sutherland (2010) notes, shared humor in parenting not only reduces stress but also strengthens family bonds, making this scene a powerful representation of resilience and love in everyday caregiving.

This scene conveys several powerful myths about contemporary parenting. It suggests that joy often emerges not from perfection, but from overcoming challenges together. Laughter is presented as a valid and healthy part of the parenting experience, and both parents—regardless of gender—are shown as emotionally invested, supportive, and fully engaged. At the same time, the visual

rejects outdated myths that parenting must always be clean, graceful, or perfectly controlled. It challenges the stereotype that fathers are incapable of managing unpleasant caregiving tasks and dispels the notion that family harmony is only possible when everything appears flawless. Connotatively, this scene breaks down rigid ideals of orderly parenting and replaces them with a more human portrayal rooted in shared responsibility, imperfection, and emotional authenticity. It celebrates humor and vulnerability as strengths within family life. As Sutherland (2010) explains, humor can play a crucial role in family bonding and resilience, helping to “normalize the messy and chaotic elements of caregiving.” Furthermore, Hooks (2000) emphasizes that feminist parenting should embrace emotional openness and shared labor, allowing both parents to fully engage without fear of judgment or diminished masculinity. As the emotional resolution of the advertisement, this moment of shared laughter symbolizes the absurd, unpredictable beauty of parenting. More than just promoting a nasal aspirator, Frida Baby offers a redefined vision of parenthood—one grounded in honesty, collaboration, and joy.

4.2 Discussion

The advertisement Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition operates as a complex cultural text that both reflects and challenges dominant ideologies surrounding gender, caregiving, and parental identity. Using Barthes’ semiotic framework, this analysis reveals how the ad deconstructs traditional myths of motherhood and fatherhood while advancing feminist critiques of media representation. It foregrounds caregiving as a shared, emotionally demanding, and

embodied practice, resisting idealized portrayals of domestic life and celebrating imperfection, equality, and emotional honesty.

4.2.1 Realism and Emotional Authenticity as Feminist Resistance

The Frida Baby advertisement *Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* disrupts dominant media portrayals of motherhood by embracing unfiltered realism and emotional authenticity, thereby enacting a compelling form of feminist resistance. Rather than conforming to idealized images of maternal perfection—commonly symbolized by the “yummy mummy” archetype that dominates global advertising (Ying, 2023)—the advertisement centers the messy, emotional, and labor-intensive reality of parenting. In doing so, it rejects what Barthes (1972) conceptualizes as myth—the transformation of historical or cultural constructs into self-evident, natural truths. In this case, the myth of the effortlessly composed, ever-smiling mother is dismantled. Instead of celebrating idealized maternal calm, the ad features visible exhaustion, emotional vulnerability, and physically unpleasant tasks, such as using a nasal aspirator to remove mucus from a distressed infant. These scenes, captured with intimate camera angles and raw expressions, resist the sanitized imagery of caregiving and affirm a more truthful representation of maternal experience.

This visual and emotional candor aligns with Ahmed’s (2014) theory of affective labor, which positions emotions not as internal or individual but as cultural practices embedded in systems of gendered expectation. Caregiving, especially mothering, requires ongoing emotional management—soothing distress, projecting calm, absorbing chaos—which is rarely acknowledged as

“work” in media or public discourse. By visualizing the bodily and emotional toll of caregiving, the advertisement restores visibility to this often-erased labor. It invites viewers not to idealize parenting but to witness it in its full emotional range—fatigue, frustration, care, and resilience. In this way, the advertisement interrupts what Lynch (2005) refers to as “aestheticized motherhood”—the persistent commercial trope where maternal performance is defined by grace, composure, and sacrificial perfection.

This representational shift also resists the historical narrative that mothers should silently bear the weight of emotional labor without complaint or recognition. Robinson and Hunter (2008), in their study of family magazine advertisements, demonstrate how even contemporary portrayals often maintain the expectation that mothers manage the family, maintain emotional stability, and do so invisibly. In contrast, the Frida Baby ad subverts this by offering emotional exposure without shame. The depiction of tired, frustrated, or grossed-out parents does not ask viewers to laugh at or pity them but rather to empathize. It legitimizes these emotions not as signs of failure but as natural—and even commendable—features of caregiving.

Gill’s (2007) critique of postfeminist media culture is also relevant here. She describes how advertising co-opts “authenticity” and “empowerment” as marketable traits, often reinforcing normative femininity under the guise of individuality. In many such campaigns, messiness is aestheticized, vulnerability is choreographed, and “realness” is reduced to branding. The Frida Baby ad resists this co-optation by refusing to stylize its subjects. The lighting is not flattering,

the scenes are not glamorous, and the emotions are not restrained. This authenticity does not feel rehearsed; it feels lived.

Moreover, the use of multimodal elements—tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and bodily presence—functions as a critical strategy for feminist communication. As Pelclová (2023) notes in her analysis of maternal stance-taking in advertising, these semiotic cues contribute to the construction of a maternal identity that is complex and situated. In the Frida Baby ad, we see parents grimacing, sighing, laughing nervously, and reacting in real time to a chaotic situation. These expressions disrupt the norm of maternal calmness and fatherly detachment, replacing them with a shared humanity that blurs rigid gender expectations.

This strategy of visual and emotional realism is not merely a stylistic departure—it is ideological. Hooks (2000) emphasizes that feminist resistance begins with the truthful articulation of women's experiences, particularly those rendered invisible by dominant cultural narratives. The advertisement aligns with this principle by placing the messiness of motherhood front and center. It resists the commodification of maternal sacrifice and reframes caregiving not as martyrdom, but as a daily negotiation of love, exhaustion, and practical necessity. It recognizes that feminist resistance does not always manifest as overt rebellion—it can also take shape in the refusal to perform perfection, in the validation of emotional labor, and in the redefinition of strength.

In doing so, the ad also extends a subtle invitation to viewers—particularly mothers—to embrace their own imperfections without guilt or apology. By

rejecting the glossy spectacle of idealized motherhood, it opens space for alternative maternal identities grounded in authenticity, agency, and mutual support. It shows that caregiving, in all its messiness, is not a sign of personal inadequacy but a shared human reality deserving of empathy and respect. As such, the Frida Baby advertisement becomes more than a commercial message—it acts as a cultural text that challenges dominant myths and offers a feminist reimagination of parenting as both labor and love.

4.2.2 Maternal Leadership as Feminist Agency

The Frida Baby advertisement presents a compelling portrayal of maternal leadership that functions as an expression of feminist agency. This is especially evident in the moment when the mother says, “Don’t think about it, just do it,” using firm tone, body language, and facial expression to convey decisiveness and control. Her presence in this moment subverts the dominant media trope of the mother as soft, indecisive, or emotionally overwhelmed. Instead, she is depicted as clear-headed, assertive, and in command—traits that have historically been coded as masculine and thus rarely associated with caregiving roles.

This portrayal aligns closely with O’Reilly’s (2010) theory of “empowered mothering,” which reframes motherhood not as passive self-sacrifice but as a site of strength, autonomy, and resistance. Empowered mothers, as O’Reilly argues, are those who define their caregiving roles on their own terms, often challenging cultural expectations and gender norms. In this advertisement, the mother embodies these qualities through her practical action and emotional clarity. She

does not wait for advice or approval; she initiates the caregiving task herself, leading not just through love but through tactical decision-making under pressure.

Such representation also counters the foundational critiques made by feminist theorists like Firestone (1970) and Rich (1976), who saw traditional domestic roles as mechanisms of patriarchal control that restricted women's autonomy. While these critiques exposed how motherhood had been used to enforce submission, the mother in this ad reclaims the domestic space as one of power. She is not defined solely by nurturing or sentimentality, but by her ability to act with urgency, intelligence, and physical resolve—challenging the binary that separates caregiving from leadership.

However, it is important to acknowledge that media portrayals of motherhood, even when updated, often continue to circulate the same ideological core. As Lynch (2005) demonstrates in her long-term study of maternal imagery in advertising, the expectation that mothers should be self-sacrificing, emotionally composed, and appearance-conscious remains deeply entrenched, regardless of visual style or narrative tone. Against this backdrop, the Frida Baby advertisement offers an alternative model of motherhood that does not rely on grace, perfection, or cheerfulness. The mother looks tired, serious, and focused—yet she does not collapse under pressure. Her authority is grounded not in sentiment but in action.

This reframing suggests that maternal power and feminist ideals are not contradictory, but complementary. The ad implies that caregiving can be a site of feminist agency when it includes leadership, autonomy, and embodied strength. A mother can be emotionally responsive and intellectually strategic; she can nurture

without being reduced to softness. In foregrounding this complexity, the advertisement contributes to a reimagining of motherhood as an empowered, multidimensional identity that deserves not only affection, but cultural and ideological respect.

4.2.3 Fathers and the Reconfiguration of Masculinity

In the Frida Baby advertisement, the father's emotional journey reflects a redefinition of modern masculinity and shared caregiving, challenging traditional stereotypes. From the beginning, the father is shown as hesitant and visibly uncomfortable with the act of using the NoseFrida—a caregiving task that is both physically awkward and emotionally intimate. Yet, instead of remaining passive or withdrawing, he adapts and ultimately engages in the caregiving process. This transformation from reluctant observer to active participant demonstrates a crucial shift in how fatherhood is portrayed in media.

This narrative directly counters the longstanding stereotype of fathers as emotionally distant or inept in caregiving, a trope frequently used in advertising to generate humor or reinforce male detachment from domestic life (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). Instead of conforming to this outdated pattern, the advertisement allows space for the father to learn and grow. He is not mocked or marginalized, but supported by the mother's leadership and portrayed as capable of nurturing—a quality traditionally reserved for maternal figures. In this way, the ad reframes caregiving not as gender-specific, but as a human responsibility.

This representation aligns with broader cultural calls for relational masculinity—a form of manhood based on empathy, connection, and vulnerability

rather than dominance or stoicism. Hooks (2004) has argued that patriarchal masculinity limits men's emotional expression and reinforces harmful power dynamics; instead, she promotes a model that centers emotional openness and shared care. The father in this ad exemplifies such a model. He listens, learns, and participates without needing to assert control, and in doing so, he offers an alternative vision of fatherhood rooted in mutual support.

Moreover, this depiction reflects a shift in media representations of gender roles in parenting. As Sari and Ganiem (2021) discuss, recent advertising constructs new myths of equality, portraying domestic labor as a shared endeavor. In the ad, the mother leads confidently, and the father follows without resistance or fragility. Their dynamic feels cooperative, not hierarchical, emphasizing equality rather than traditional authority. This balance redefines parenting as a shared emotional and physical task, resisting rigid binaries of maternal softness and paternal detachment.

Collier de Mendonça's (2012) cross-cultural study further contextualizes this shift, showing that mothers in both Brazil and Canada often feel overburdened by unequal divisions of domestic labor. The Frida Baby ad responds to such frustrations not with utopian imagery, but through realistic storytelling. The father is not valorized as extraordinary; he is simply present, involved, and responsive. His caregiving is normalized, not dramatized—a quiet but impactful act of feminist progress.

Finally, this refusal to fetishize male involvement marks an important cultural critique. Many advertisements reward fathers with exaggerated praise for

performing basic parenting tasks. This reinforces unequal standards, where women's work is expected and invisible, while men's contributions are spotlighted and celebrated. The Frida Baby ad rejects this imbalance. The father is not shown as a "hero," but as a co-parent—equal, essential, and emotionally engaged. This subtle but meaningful revision of fatherhood adds depth to the advertisement's feminist messaging and contributes to a more equitable vision of caregiving.

4.2.4 Shared Emotional Labor and Humor in Parenting

In the Frida Baby advertisement, humor becomes a narrative device that supports emotional realism and challenges stereotypical portrayals of parenting. Unlike typical advertisements that use humor to make light of domestic chaos—often at the expense of fathers—this ad employs humor to portray shared vulnerability and connection. Rather than serving as comic relief or a distraction, the humor here emerges from genuine moments of discomfort and intimacy, making the caregiving experience feel authentic and emotionally resonant.

One notable example appears when the parents recoil in disgust after seeing the mucus extracted from their baby's nose, only to laugh together moments later. This blend of revulsion and amusement—familiar to many parents—illustrates what Hochschild (1983) defines as emotional labor: the management of feelings to meet social expectations. In this context, both parents are shown actively processing stress, discomfort, and emotional tension—not separately, but as a team. Their shared reaction is not merely comedic; it becomes

a form of coping, bonding, and mutual support. Rather than isolating emotional work to the mother, the ad reframes it as a relational, shared responsibility.

This portrayal stands in contrast to conventional representations where mothers are composed and competent, and fathers are distant or buffoonish. Instead, the Frida Baby advertisement challenges such tropes by portraying both parents as equally engaged, emotionally expressive, and invested in their caregiving roles. The ad avoids trivializing paternal involvement or valorizing maternal endurance; it shows caregiving as a collaborative, emotionally complex act, grounded in equality and mutual effort.

This egalitarian framing aligns with Ahmed's (2014) argument that emotions are not purely personal experiences but are culturally shaped and politically significant. In the advertisement, the visible, shared emotional response challenges the cultural assumption that caregiving—and the emotions that accompany it—is inherently feminine. It questions who is allowed to express disgust, frustration, and joy in caregiving contexts and asserts that emotional labor is not the exclusive burden of mothers, but a shared human experience.

Furthermore, as Pelclová (2023) suggests through her work on multimodal stance-taking, nonverbal cues—such as facial expressions, gestures, and vocal tone—are powerful tools for shaping meaning. In this advertisement, the parents' physical reactions and shared laughter become part of the narrative strategy. Their unscripted gestures, tired expressions, and synchronized responses construct a visual and emotional message: that caregiving is messy, challenging, and communal—but also rewarding and deeply human.

In sum, the ad redefines caregiving by rejecting perfection and embracing shared emotional reality. Humor is not used to minimize hardship or reinforce gender roles, but to connect, validate, and affirm the messy truth of parenting. Through this, the advertisement supports a feminist message that caregiving is not a gendered obligation but a collective act of emotional strength, resilience, and authenticity.

4.2.5 Verbal Elements and Feminist Messaging

The verbal language in the Frida Baby advertisement plays a crucial role in constructing ideological meaning, offering not only information but also layered feminist and cultural commentary. A phrase like “If the baby ain’t sleeping, ain’t nobody sleeping” does more than reflect parental exhaustion—it implicitly critiques the glorification of maternal sacrifice and highlights the absence of shared responsibility in traditional caregiving norms. This line functions simultaneously as a literal truth and a subversion of the idealized image of tireless, self-sacrificing mothers long embedded in advertising.

Unlike conventional parenting ads that adopt an expert or authoritative tone, Frida Baby uses colloquial and emotionally resonant language that reflects the messiness and humor of real parenting experiences. This shift aligns with what Pelclová (2023) terms the “voice of lived experience,” a narrative strategy that values authenticity over institutional authority. By allowing parents to speak in their own voice—with stress, laughter, and frustration—the ad resists dominant media conventions that often mask caregiving behind polished speech and curated wisdom.

From a semiotic perspective, Barthes (1972) reminds us that myth operates by making historically contingent ideas appear natural and inevitable. The advertisement disrupts this process by denaturalizing traditional parenting myths. Instead of reinforcing the myth of the flawless “supermom” or the emotionally distant father, it constructs new symbolic associations around caregiving as communal, emotionally complex, and inherently political. It shows that caregiving is not about individual heroism but about shared emotional labor and everyday resilience.

This subversion of dominant mythologies is further enriched by the advertisement’s broader representational strategy. Its casual, sincere tone and refusal to universalize maternal experience reflect a politics of care—one that is grounded in truthfulness rather than aspiration. As Barthes’ theory of myth suggests, when these ideological structures are made visible rather than masked, they become open to contestation. In this sense, the ad becomes a space where alternative narratives of caregiving can emerge—ones based on vulnerability, cooperation, and mutual emotional investment.

Supported by scholars such as Lynch (2005), Ahmed (2014), Hooks (2000), and Hays (1996), this reading positions the Frida Baby ad as more than a commercial; it is a site of cultural critique. It challenges neoliberal norms that individualize parenting burdens and invites viewers to see caregiving as a relational, emotional, and shared practice. In doing so, it speaks not only to what parenting is, but to what it could be.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the semiotic analysis of the advertisement *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* using Roland Barthes' theory of denotation, connotation, and myth, several key conclusions emerge. Firstly, the ad conveys a subtle yet powerful feminist message by challenging traditional gender roles in parenting. The mother is depicted as a pragmatic leader—firm, confident, and solution-oriented—while the father initially appears hesitant and unsure. However, as the narrative unfolds, his role becomes equally involved, signaling a shift toward shared parenting responsibilities and constructing a modern myth in which caregiving is no longer the sole domain of mothers, but a joint endeavor.

Secondly, the ad employs exaggerated visuals, such as thick green snot and exhausted facial expressions, to inject realism and honesty into its portrayal of motherhood. These raw depictions humorously reject the myth of “perfect” parenting, instead celebrating the messy, emotional, and often difficult reality of caregiving.

Furthermore, the NoseFrida product itself becomes a symbol of parental love and sacrifice. Despite its unpleasantness, its use signifies a parent's willingness to endure discomfort for their child's wellbeing. The father's journey from reluctance to full participation reinforces the idea that caregiving is an act of love that transcends gender.

Lastly, the strategic use of humor throughout the advertisement serves to normalize taboo aspects of parenting that are rarely shown in traditional media. By embracing and laughing at the less glamorous parts of child-rearing, the ad dismantles idealized portrayals and offers a more relatable, human view of family life. Collectively, these elements construct a new myth of parenting—one rooted in equality, imperfection, honesty, and love.

5.2 Suggestion

To begin with, for advertisers, it is suggested that parenting product campaigns continue to embrace realistic portrayals of family life. By depicting shared parental responsibilities and challenging outdated gender roles, brands have the opportunity to emotionally connect with diverse and modern audiences who value authenticity and inclusivity in family dynamics.

Furthermore, for media and cultural researchers, this study opens up the potential to explore how advertisements like *Frida Baby Presents Real Reviews: NoseFrida Edition* contribute to reshaping cultural narratives surrounding gender and parenting. In this regard, semiotic analysis offers a valuable lens to uncover how media can communicate ideological shifts, including feminist messages within domestic spaces.

In addition, for parents and society at large, there is a growing need to recognize and support the practice of shared parenting, where both mothers and fathers take equal roles in caregiving. Notably, this advertisement serves as a reminder that open conversations, mutual support, and humor around the realities

of parenting can normalize emotional vulnerability and foster stronger family bonds.

Lastly, for students, this research illustrates how Roland Barthes' theory can be effectively applied to analyze modern visual texts, including advertisements. Therefore, students are encouraged to further investigate how contemporary media and digital storytelling can carry nuanced yet impactful social messages through signs and myths embedded in everyday content.

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APENDIXES

1. Scene Screenshot

Scene	Timestamp	Screenshot
1	0:0	<div></div> <p>Image1. Introduction</p>
2	0:3 – 0:6	<div></div> <p>Image 2. Real motherhood: The honest beginning</p>

3	0:7 – 0:8	 <p data-bbox="746 678 1238 719">Image 3. The crying baby with mucus</p>
4	0:6 – 0:13	

		  <p>Image 4. Contemplative fatigue parents</p>
5	0:13 – 0:16	 <p>Imag 5. The pragmatic leader</p>


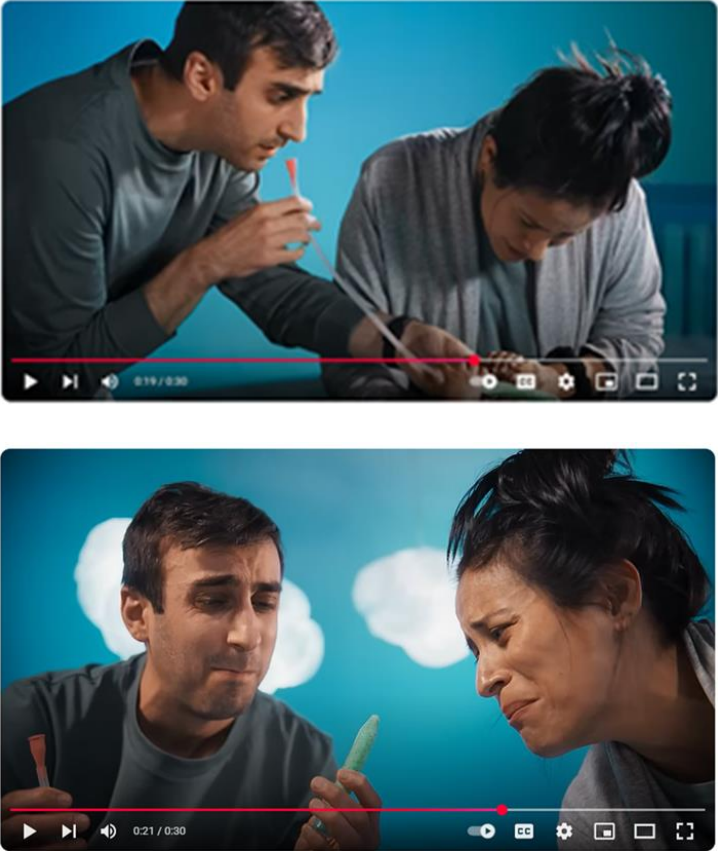

6	0:16 – 0:19	 <p>The image consists of four stacked video frames. The first frame is a close-up of a man's face, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The second frame shows a close-up of a child's nose with a green gel being applied. The third frame shows a man using a red-tipped device in his mouth. The fourth frame shows a man and a child both using the device, with the man holding the child's head.</p>
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Image 6. The father takes action: NoseFrida in use

7	0:20 – 0:21	 <p data-bbox="746 1122 1238 1160">Image 7. Shared sacrifice in parenting</p>
8	0:21 – 0:25	 <p data-bbox="756 1615 1228 1653">Image 8. Parental laughter and relief</p>

2. Verbal Transcript

No.	Timestamp	Speaker	Spoken text
1.	0:0 – 0:3	Voice-over	“Frida present real reviews really written by real parents”
2.	0:4 – 0:8	Voice-over	“At first, I was super grossed out by sucking snot out of my kid’s nose”.
3.	0:9 – 0:13	Voice-over	“But here’s the thing, if the baby ain’t sleeping, ain’t no body sleeping.”
4.	0:8 – 0:16	Female actress (mother)	“Don’t think about it, just do it”.
5.	0:20 – 0:24	Female actress (mother) and male actor (father)	“Oh my God. Hahaha”.
6.	0:25- 0:30	Voice-over	“I don’t know what people did before this. Hey Frida, take all my money.”