

Self-made or selfie-made?

 By [Raleen Bagg](#)

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Late last year, Kylie Jenner marked a milestone moment for her business with a visit to a strip mall. For the past three years, her Kylie Cosmetics had only sold its makeup online and briefly in pop-up shops.

“ thank you [@Forbes](#) for this article and the recognition. I'm so blessed to do what i love everyday. [#KylieCosmetics](#) pic.twitter.com/CRBwBByk9— Kylie Jenner (@KylieJenner) [July 11, 2018](#) ”

After signing an exclusive distribution deal with Ulta, the beauty retailer, Kylie Cosmetics was rolling its \$29 lip kits – a matte liquid lipstick and matching lip liner – into Ulta’s 1,000-plus stores. And Jenner showed up to the Richmond Avenue Ulta in Houston to greet customers, sign autographs on lip kits and, of course, pose for selfies with her fans.

According to estimates, in the next six weeks, Kylie Cosmetics sold \$54.5m worth of products in Ulta. And it was all thanks to the power of social media. “I popped up at a few stores, I did my usual social media – I did what I usually do, and it just worked,” says Kylie.

Paying lip service

And it all started with Kylie’s lips. Before she released her first lip kit, people were so desperate for her pout, a viral challenge started where people would suction their lips into a small glass, causing them to swell.

It was dubbed the “Kylie Jenner Challenge” creating chaos on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook.

Her first lip kit sold out in less than a minute.

It erupted into a frenzy with people clambering to get hold of the kit, which just was a long-lasting matt colour and a matching liner pencil, which retailed at \$29. People were so desperate to get hold of one of the three shades which were initially released; they were forking out over \$300 for them on eBay.

From paying lip service, her business expanded into Kylie’s Cosmetics, founded in 2015, which includes an eye and face makeup range.

Authenticity

Partly fuelled by the Ulta expansion, Kylie Cosmetics' revenue climbed 9% last year to an estimated \$360m. With that kind of growth, and even using a conservative multiple from the booming makeup industry, *Forbes* estimates Jenner's company is worth at least \$900m. And she owns all of it. Add in the cash Jenner has already pulled from the profitable business and the 21-year-old is now a billionaire, with an estimated fortune of \$1bn.

She's the youngest-ever self-made billionaire, reaching a ten-figure fortune at a younger age than Mark Zuckerberg, who was 23 when he hit that mark.

'Authenticity', a word that changes meaning according to what it's reflecting, is the key to Kylie's business model; as well as that of contemporary commerce.

Biggest earner on Instagram

Kylie Jenner superseded her sister Kim Kardashian and singer Selena Gomez to become last year's biggest earner on Instagram, raking in \$1.3m per post.

Kylie's sponsored Instagram posts come across more like check-in and sharing of the latest must-have products and not overtly as ads. And young girls, who want to be just like Kylie, are seduced by the seeming authenticity.

Long before pouting at cell phone cameras was a thing, Kylie perfected eight rent selfie situations: in the bathroom; with her sisters; in her closet showing off her fashion style and her formidable collection of handbags; in the car batting her long lashes and flaunting her perfect pout, thanks, of course, to a lip kit from her line of cosmetics; with her BFFs; in a bikini showing how to take the perfect bikini selfie; and on Snapchat with a selfie featuring a heart effect from the app, resulting in her having she has the most subscribers than any other user.

All of which entrenched her ongoing stature as the Selfie-Made Queen of Social Media which, in turn, has resulted in her current reign as the youngest self-made billionaire.

ABOUT RALEEN BAGG

Freelance writer for any business or service which reveres gracious grammar, interesting ideas, and superb spelling. A wealth of experience in conceptualising and writing high-impact advertising campaigns across all media, original and effective social media content, and everything in between.

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