

**KITKAT'S CO-BRANDING STRATEGY AND MAINTAINING  
BRAND IDENTITY IN THE DYNAMIC FOOD INDUSTRY**

The image features a large, faint watermark of the Mahidol University logo in the background. The logo is circular, with a central emblem depicting a traditional Thai architectural structure (a stupa or chedi) surrounded by a decorative border. The text 'MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY' is written in Thai script around the inner edge of the circle, and 'MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY' is written in English around the outer edge.

**PATTRAWADEE KHONGCHAROEN**

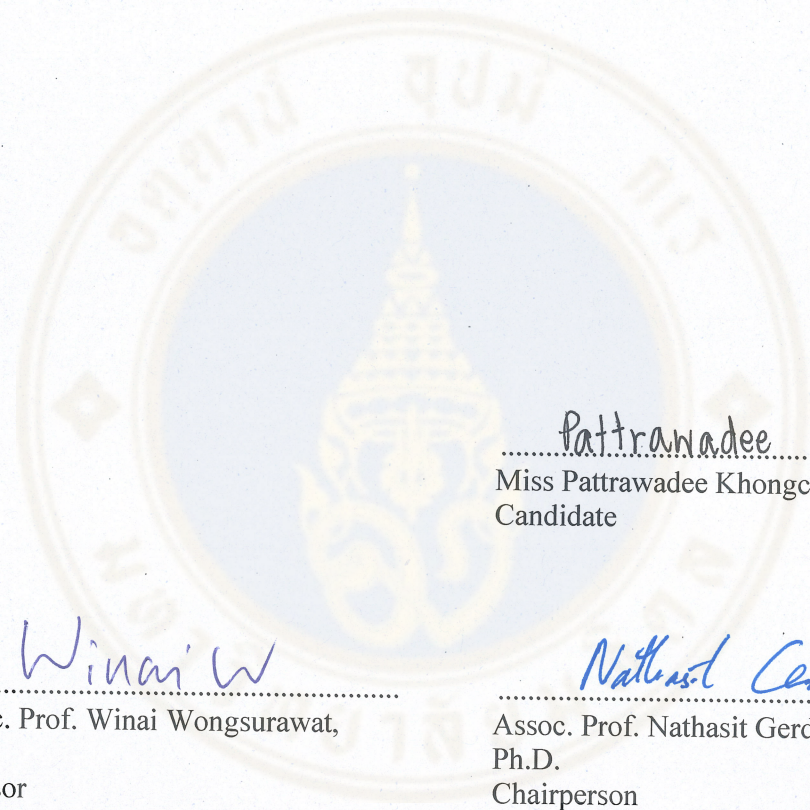
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## **KITKAT'S CO-BRANDING STRATEGY AND MAINTAINING BRAND IDENTITY IN THE DYNAMIC FOOD INDUSTRY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research sought to explore the mechanisms and strategies employed by KitKat in safeguarding its robust brand identity, primarily when engaged in co-branding ventures within the ever-evolving food industry.

The interview was developed to complete the research using an open-ended interview question with key stakeholders and a comprehensive analysis of the 'Made with KitKat' campaign; several determinants of KitKat's branding success were identified. At the end of the research, the result shows the three elements: 1. The consistent use of the brand's logo, messaging, and colors; 2. Consistent visual elements, engaging digital communication narratives; 3. Stringent quality control emerged as the primary pillar.

Several recommendations to the company to further amplify KitKat's brand resonance and recognition are put forth. Embracing partnerships across varied sectors like lifestyle and fashion, strengthening digital marketing and influencer collaborations, harnessing consumer data analytics, and focusing on in-store visibility and continuous product innovation are proposed. These strategies, when implemented, can enhance KitKat's brand identity, ensuring it remains a global favorite amidst shifting market dynamics.

**KEY WORDS: KITKAT/ CO-BRANDING/ BRAND IDENTITY/ FOOD INDUSTRY/  
BRAND CONSISTENCY**

24 pages

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In an ever-evolving culinary world, maintaining brand identity and leveraging effective co-branding strategies are of paramount importance for long-term success. KitKat, a globally recognized confectionery brand, has expertly navigated these waters, raising the question: What motivations underpin KitKat's co-branding strategy, and how does it ensure the brand's continued relevance in the dynamic food industry? To delve deeper into this inquiry, we turn to recent food industry data and trends, particularly the success of KitKat's co-branding initiatives. One of the pivotal insights that may have sparked KitKat's strategy comes from the 2023 Desserts Keynotes Report by Dataessential. It highlighted that a significant proportion of consumers enjoy limited-time or seasonal desserts (48%) and signature desserts from a specific restaurant (53%). The report further suggests that the appeal of classic, familiar dessert varieties remains high at 45%, with nostalgia playing a significant role in these preferences.

Motivated by these findings, KitKat launched the "Made with KitKat" co-branding initiative by collaborating with different companies to incorporate their famous chocolate wafer into various products. Brand collaboration has a multifaceted value proposition, especially within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. For businesses, it provides an avenue for cross-promotion and expansion into new markets. For consumers, it brings novelty and excitement, often instigating a sense of curiosity and a strong impulse to try these innovative products. "Made with KitKat" goes beyond slapping the KitKat brand on a partner's product. It aims to infuse the essence of KitKat – its texture, flavor, and emotions associated with its consumption – into an entirely new product or experience. This could be a new dessert at a famous bakery, a KitKat-flavored drink at a coffee shop, or even a KitKat-themed hotel suite.

This strategy, involving collaborations with various food and beverage outlets, ensured that KitKat's signature flavor was incorporated into innovative and unique dessert creations. Thus, KitKat combined the consumers' longing for novelty and

familiarity into a potent offering. However, why did this strategy prove so successful, and how did it help KitKat maintain its brand identity in an industry driven by innovation? The key lies in KitKat's understanding of the marketplace. For instance, they are creating an unforgettable consumer experience.

Additionally, they create a buzz in the marketplace, organically boosting the brand's visibility. Moreover, these collaborations also provide an element of exclusivity, which further enhances their appeal. Limited-time offers, or location-specific products generate a sense of urgency and exclusivity. Consumers are enticed to grab the opportunity while it lasts, hence driving sales and simultaneously solidifying the KitKat brand's position in their minds. Similarly, the rise of social media has led to an increase in the desire for "Instagrammable" desserts, with 38% of operators showing interest in such offerings. KitKat recognized this trend and used it to enhance its brand visibility online. Also, the return of out-of-home consumption post-COVID and the acceleration of food delivery services provided further opportunities for KitKat's co-branding strategy. The rise of small bakeries, cafes, and crepe shops, coupled with the fact that 74% of food operators believe in the importance of new food and beverage trends, pointed towards apparent market demand. By offering products like KitKat Spread in smaller, more manageable sizes, the company tapped into this trend and catered to the needs of these smaller businesses. A final consideration is the role of large-scale customers. Working with big fish customers like the MK Restaurant Group drives sales and significantly boosts brand awareness. Similarly, the resurgence of the hotel industry and the return of local events and tourism have opened new avenues for KitKat to expand its presence, particularly in breakfast and banquet menus.

In conclusion, the motivations behind KitKat's co-branding strategy are multi-faceted, driven by a deep understanding of evolving consumer preferences and industry trends. The successful implementation of these strategies raises crucial questions: In an era where novelty is king, how can they maintain their brand identity amidst constant change? These questions form the basis for further exploration into the world of co-branding and brand identity in the dynamic food industry.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Definition of Co-branding**

Co-branding is a marketing practice where two or more brands collaborate to create a product or service that carries the brand names of each partner. The research identifies the potential benefits of co-branding, such as resource sharing, targeting new customers, and entering new markets (Helmig et al., 2008). Moreover, in an article titled "When One Brand Is Not Enough," the Wall Street Journal discussed successful co-branding, such as the collaboration between Nike and Apple to create the Nike+ product line. This partnership allowed both brands to reach a larger audience and provided a unique product offering. Thus, co-branding can benefit both parties by sharing risks, increasing consumer value perception, gaining access to new markets, and boosting sales and profits. It is an overall strategy in today's interconnected business landscape.

#### **2.2 Brand identity**

Brand identity is a critical aspect of marketing and business strategy. It represents how a business wants to be perceived in the market and by its customers, often manifested through visual and auditory elements such as logos, colors, sounds, and language. The definition of brand identity from the book "Building Strong Brands," describes brand identity as a unique set of brand associations that a brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations aim to differentiate a brand from its competition while signaling what the brand stands for. (Aaker, 1996). Besides that, the Journal of General Management notes that brand identity refers to the strategic positioning and personality of the brand, which helps shape the perceptions of various stakeholders and makes a brand unique (Balmer, 2008). Thus, in essence, brand identity is the aggregation of what a brand says (communication), how a brand performs

(product and service experiences), and how it visually presents itself, along with how these align with and fulfill the expectations set by the brand's strategic positioning.

### **2.3 Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty represents a consumer's preference for a particular brand, often manifested through repeated purchases despite the marketing pressure from competing brands. The article "Whence Consumer Loyalty?" published in the *Journal of Marketing* defines brand loyalty as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1999). However, brand loyalty reflects a customer's allegiance to a brand, which is significant to companies because it leads to repeat business, higher lifetime value for the customer, and positive word-of-mouth.

### **2.4 Brand value**

Brand value, sometimes referred to as brand equity, represents the worth of a brand in its entirety. It is a set of assets linked to the brand's name and symbol that adds (or subtracts) value to a product or service. The definitions of brand value from various research and news sources are in the book, "Managing Brand Equity," Aaker defines brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service. This value can be seen from both the firm's perspective (strategic value, extension opportunities, et cetera) and the customer's perspective (loyalty, awareness, et cetera) (Aaker, 1991). And (Keller, 1993). In the article "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity," published in the *Journal of Marketing*, Keller defines customer-based brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the brand's marketing. Essentially, if consumers react more positively to a product when the brand is known than when it is unknown, they have positive customer-based brand equity. Thus, brand value encapsulates the economic

benefits that a brand brings to a company. A substantial brand value can improve customer loyalty, market performance, and expansion opportunities.

## **2.5 Brand mission**

A brand or mission statement defines a company's purpose and outlines its primary objectives. It reflects the reason for a brand's existence and its underlying values. In article "Mission statements: selling corporate values to employees," published in Long Range Planning Journal, they describe a mission statement as a means to articulate the fundamental purpose of the organization, its values, and the prime stakeholders to whom it should be responsible (Klemm et al., 1991). Also, in the book "Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices," Peter Drucker highlights that an organization's mission is the basis for the priorities, strategies, plans, and work assignments. It is a clear and concise expression of what the organization is, what it does, and why it does it (Drucker, 1973). In conclusion, a brand mission is essential to create alignment within an organization and communicate to stakeholders, including customers, what the brand stands for and aims to achieve.

## **2.6 Uniqueness**

In a branding or business context, uniqueness is often about having a unique selling proposition (USP) - a factor that differentiates a product or service from its competitors. The definitions of uniqueness from various research and news sources, such as, (Kapferer, 2012) in his book "The New Strategic Brand Management," Kapferer suggests that uniqueness is the distinctive characteristics of a brand that set it apart from its competitors. It could be in its product features, customer service, brand values, or any aspect that others cannot easily replicate. In summary, uniqueness in a business context provides something distinctive and valuable that sets the brand apart from the competition. This could be a unique feature, an innovative approach, or brand value.

## 2.7 Instagrammable

Instagrammable is a relatively new term that emerged with the rise of the social media platform Instagram. It is often used to describe a place, thing, or concept that is visually appealing and worthy of being photographed and shared on Instagram. The definitions from various sources would be (Hu et al., 2014), in their research paper "What We Instagram: A First Analysis of Instagram Photo Content and User Types," indirectly define Instagrammable content as photographs or videos that are visually compelling, capture personal experiences or high aesthetic value that users want to share with their Instagram followers. In addition, the News BBC, in an article titled "How Instagram is changing travel," discusses the term Instagrammable, indicating it is a driving force for millennials who often choose travel destinations based on how well they will perform on social platforms like Instagram. However, in the research paper "Faces Engage Us: Photos with Faces Attract More Likes and Comments on Instagram," they point out that Instagrammable content often features human faces or everyday experiences presented in visually creative or aesthetically pleasing ways (Bakhshi et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in essence, the term "Instagrammable" represents a cultural shift where the aesthetic appeal and shareability of an experience, place, or object have taken on new importance in the age of social media.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to gather detailed insights into KitKat's co-branding strategy and its efforts to maintain brand identity in the ever-evolving food industry, a qualitative research approach has been deemed most appropriate. Unlike its quantitative counterpart, qualitative research does not rely on numerical data or statistical analysis. Instead, it explores the why and how of decision-making, not just what, where, and when. It provides insights into the problem and helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research.

The research will employ a two-fold approach, interviewing two key groups: Brand Managers and Key Account Manager (sales personnel). Both groups offer unique perspectives and insights into the brand's strategy and its reception in the marketplace.

- **Brand Managers:** Brand Managers are the strategists behind the company's branding decisions. They can provide rich insights into the company's motivations for co-branding strategies and tactics to maintain brand identity. They can answer questions like "Why was a certain co-branding strategy adopted?" and "How does the brand maintain its identity while co-branding?"

- **Key Account Manager:** Key Account Manager holders, often in direct contact with consumers and clients, can offer valuable insights into how these strategies are received in the marketplace and the challenges faced in implementing them. They can address questions such as "How do customers perceive the co-branded products?" and "What are the impacts of these strategies on sales and customer relationships?"

Interviews will be conducted with both groups, employing a semi-structured format, where a set of predefined questions will be used as a guide. However, the discussion will be allowed to flow organically based on the interviewee's responses. This approach ensures that critical topics are covered while allowing for unexpected and valuable insights.

The primary objective of these interviews is to understand KitKat's co-branding strategy and its attempts to maintain brand identity directly from those who strategize and implement these initiatives. Ultimately, this research presents an educative and constructive analysis of KitKat's branding strategy. It will help to understand the intricacies of maintaining brand identity in a dynamic food industry, offering valuable insights for industry practitioners, researchers, and scholars.

### **Interviewee Selection Criteria & Research Question**

The selection of suitable interviewees is a crucial aspect of qualitative research. The goal is to ensure that the chosen participants possess rich and relevant insights into the research topic. The writer decided to interview two Brand Managers who are current for KitKat, have closely worked with the brand's strategic team, and have at least five years of experience working with the brand. This ensures they possess a deep and firsthand understanding of the brand's strategies. The writer tried to get a different idea perspective by choosing different geographical markets where KitKat operates to ensure the inclusion of diverse market dynamics and consumer behaviors in the study. Finally, the chosen Brand Managers are willing to participate, to engage in a thoughtful and open discussion about their work and experiences. They are also willing to have their responses used in the study (while maintaining confidentiality if requested).

The writer will first interview Mrs. T (pseudonym), the senior marketing manager who has worked with Nestle for four years, especially the KitKat brand. She controls KitKat's annual strategic and marketing plans for retail and food operators, conducts performance evaluations, offers regular feedback, and more. Mrs. T is a full-time, long-term employee who enjoys a warm and friendly relationship with the writer.

The second interviewee will be Ms. M (pseudonym), the senior Brand Manager who has worked with Nestle for two years, especially the KitKat brand in the food operator part. Ms. M is crucial to creating KitKat's co-branding strategy and choosing the partnership.

To uncover KitKat's co-branding strategies, the writer seeks to engage with Brand Managers who have been instrumental in driving these decisions. The following 13 research questions encourage an in-depth discussion about KitKat's co-branding strategy and its ability to maintain a strong brand identity.

1. How has the brand identity of KitKat evolved over the years, particularly with the introduction of co-branding initiatives?
2. Can you provide an example of a co-branding initiative that KitKat has been part of? What was the rationale behind it?
3. How are potential co-branding partners selected, and what factors are considered during this process?
4. How are co-branding initiatives evaluated for their impact on KitKat's brand identity and overall performance?
5. What challenges have been encountered during co-branding initiatives, and how were they addressed?
6. How do consumer insights factor into the decision to pursue a co-branding strategy?
7. How do you ensure the co-branding aligns with consumers' expectations and perceptions of KitKat?
8. Can you share an instance where a co-branding initiative greatly enhanced KitKat's visibility or market reach?
9. What role does co-branding play in KitKat's overall branding strategy?
10. Can you share an example where co-branding initiatives have positively affected KitKat's market standing or sales?
11. How are successful co-branding strategies integrated into KitKat's future marketing and branding plans?
12. What learnings or key takeaways have you derived from KitKat's co-branding initiatives?
13. In your opinion, how significant is co-branding in shaping the future trajectory of KitKat's brand identity?

For the second group, the interviewee has three years of experience as a Key Account Manager responsible for the KitKat brand. This ensures that the interviewee is well-versed in managing critical client relationships, has a deep understanding of the business environment, and has firsthand knowledge and practical experience regarding the topic of investigation. Moreover, it has to possess a thorough understanding of co-branding strategies, either through direct involvement or through an account that has undergone co-branding efforts. Also, clear understanding of brand identity, including

how it influences the development and implementation of branding strategies, especially in co-branding. Lastly, the interviewee is willing to share their experiences, insights, and professional understanding without violating any contractual or professional confidentiality clauses.

Thus, the writer chose Mrs. A (pseudonym), a Key Account Manager who used to be Channel & Customer Development Manager and is an expert in customer and consumer needs and trends in the market. Moreover, she is responsible for building sales to grow and maintain sales and collaborating with marketing teams to provide extra customer support. She has worked with Nestle in various brands for roughly more than ten years and has been associated with the operator food part for over four years.

The following 13 research questions encourage an in-depth discussion about KitKat's co-branding strategy and its ability to maintain a strong brand identity.

1. Can you describe your role as a Key Account Manager in developing or managing co-branding strategies?
2. In your experience, what are the main objectives of KitKat's co-branding strategies?
3. Can you share an example of a successful co-branding initiative that KitKat has undertaken and why you consider it successful?
4. Can you describe any challenges KitKat faced while co-branding and how these were overcome?
5. What factors do you believe contribute to the success of a co-branding strategy?
6. How important are co-branding strategies in KitKat's overall brand positioning, and why?
7. Can you share your experience about how consumer feedback or market trends influence KitKat's co-branding initiatives?
8. How does KitKat measure the success of its co-branding strategies?
9. How has the food industry's dynamic nature influenced KitKat's co-branding approach?
10. How does co-branding affect the relationship dynamics between KitKat?
11. Can you share any lessons KitKat has learned from previous co-branding efforts?



12. What role does digital marketing play in promoting co-branded products or campaigns?

13. Looking towards the future, how do you see co-branding strategies evolving in the food industry, particularly for brands like KitKat?

The writer was interviewed at the interviewees' office (The Offices at Central World) during 8-9 June 2023. The length of the interview is approximately 45 minutes per interviewee.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDING ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 The Story**

"Made with KitKat" is an exceptional case study in brand marketing that illustrates how an iconic brand can revitalize its market presence and deepen consumer engagement over an extended period. The campaign, launched by the Swiss multinational food and beverage conglomerate Nestlé, has not only reinforced KitKat's position in the confectionery industry but has also demonstrated a successful long-term strategy that spans several years. The writer will show examples of the "Made with KitKat" campaign, focusing on the project's significant achievements over 2-3 years.

Ms. M said that "one of the most successful projects involving the collaboration of KitKat with food operators under the "Made with KitKat" banner is the partnership with Japan's Tokyo Banana in 2017". Tokyo Banana, the popular souvenir sweet of Tokyo, is a banana-shaped sponge cake with banana custard cream. The result was the KitKat Tokyo Banana flavor, an exquisite blend of KitKat's creamy chocolate and Tokyo Banana's rich banana custard cream. The launch of KitKat Tokyo Banana was a significant event in Japan and garnered attention from tourists and locals alike. The collaboration capitalized on the individual strengths of both brands - KitKat's global recognition and Tokyo Banana's local popularity - creating a unique product that appealed to a broad consumer base. The product was initially sold exclusively at Tokyo Station, adding to its allure and making it a sought-after item for tourists. Owing to its immense success, the product was not just a one-time launch but continued to be popular and available for several years. It has since been sold in other locations. It has seen new versions such as the "KitKat Mini Tokyo Banana 'Gold Banana'" launched in 2020, featuring banana dark chocolate with a hint of rum aroma. The partnership with Tokyo Banana is a prime example of a successful long-term project under the "Made with KitKat" campaign involving collaboration with a food operator. It leveraged the power

of co-branding to deliver a product that resonated with consumers and strengthened the KitKat brand in the Japanese market.

Another excellent example of a successful collaboration between KitKat and a food operator under the "Made with KitKat" initiative is the partnership with the famous U.S. ice cream chain Cold Stone Creamery in 2020. They recognized the widespread love for ice cream and the classic taste of KitKat. KitKat and Cold Stone Creamery teamed up to create a unique ice cream flavor, KitKat Ice Cream. This unique flavor combined Cold Stone Creamery's premium ice cream with KitKat's iconic crispy wafer and smooth chocolate, offering consumers a refreshing and indulgent treat. In addition to the KitKat Ice Cream, the collaboration also saw the creation of the "KitKat Ice Cream Cake." This innovative dessert featured layers of KitKat Ice Cream, chocolate ice cream, and red velvet cake, all covered with fluffy white frosting and pieces of crisp KitKat. The KitKat and Cold Stone Creamery collaboration garnered significant attention and was met with positive reviews. Introducing the new products added a novel dimension to both brands, creating an intriguing fusion of the crunchy texture of KitKat and the creamy smoothness of Cold Stone Creamery's ice cream. Over the next couple of years, the partnership continued to be a success, with the KitKat Ice Cream and KitKat Ice Cream Cake becoming popular among customers. The collaboration provided a unique and enjoyable dessert experience and allowed KitKat to extend its brand identity and reach in the American market. This partnership demonstrates the potential of collaborating with food operators in the "Made with KitKat" campaign. By combining strengths, KitKat and Cold Stone Creamery could innovate and offer something uniquely appealing to their consumer base, reaffirming the power of strategic co-branding.

These successful collaborations under the "Made with KitKat" campaign underscore co-branding's power to maintain brand identity and customer engagement in the food industry. By partnering with local food operators and creating products that cater to local tastes, KitKat has strengthened its global brand identity and entrenched its position in different markets worldwide. This essay will delve deeper into these co-branding strategies and their role in preserving brand identity in the dynamic food industry.

## 4.2 Analysis

The writer has analyzed and structured the subject matter to highlight the critical success factors contributing to KitKat's ability to maintain its brand identity within the dynamic food industry, as discussed following.

### 4.2.1 Endorsement Seal



**Figure 4.1** The example of Endorsement Seal

The visual elements of a brand form the bedrock of its identity, and the consistency of these elements is vital for maintaining recognition and recall among consumers. This is especially crucial when engaging in co-branding initiatives, as the brand's identity may be overshadowed or diluted. For KitKat, it refers to how the brand ensures its recognizable markers - such as its color scheme, logo, and typeface - remain present and noticeable in all co-branding ventures. This allows KitKat to reinforce its image and values while benefiting from the partnered brand's visibility and appeal. The two interviewees mentioned that “partners must follow these guidelines when communicating our brands in their menus and point of sales materials” using the “MADE WITH” seal. The Endorsement Seal has been created to ensure a significant visual marker. Its purpose is to communicate to consumers that the product they are considering is crafted using KitKat and, consequently, aligns with KitKat's commitment to quality, flavor, and satisfaction. This seal consistently ensures KitKat's visibility, enhancing brand recall and strengthening the brand association by having a ‘Made with’



message, landmark, brand color background, and white border. Moreover, the minimum size of the seal would be a width of 1.5 cm and a font size of 5.25pt.

The “Made with” Endorsement Seal KitKat uses is integral to its co-branding efforts. The universality of the term “Made with” signifies that the product contains KitKat, highlighting a partnership while maintaining KitKat’s strong brand identity. Since it is crucial to maintaining brand consistency, it is mandatory that this message appears on all co-branded products and not be altered. The consistency extends to the font used; Univers Bold is a robust, transparent typeface that remains legible even in small sizes. It is essential because it ensures the message is visible and easily recognized, regardless of where it appears or how small. Additionally, when the message is translated into other languages, the translations must retain the same meaning to ensure the brand message stays intact across different regions and languages. This helps to provide a uniform global brand image, enabling customers to identify and connect with the brand, regardless of their geographical location or native language.

Besides that, brand colors are essential in creating and maintaining brand recognition. KitKat’s iconic red, Pantone 186 C (in CMYK values: 10/100/90/0), is immediately recognizable to consumers worldwide and strongly associated with the brand. This specific red is used consistently across KitKat’s branding materials, including its logo, packaging, and advertisements. The Endorsement Seal used by KitKat for co-branded products comes in two versions: First, primary, and recommended seals. These full-color seals should always be used when the production process allows. Full-color seals featuring the recognizable KitKat red aid in immediate brand recognition and creates a visual connection between the co-branded product and KitKat. Second, exceptions. These single-color seals are only used when the color process is restricted, such as when printing on a cardboard outer. Even in such instances, the seal’s design maintains the visual connection to KitKat. The border on the Endorsement Seal is another critical visual element. It has been used to enhance the standout when applied to various backgrounds and is mandatory. This ensures the seal and, by extension, the KitKat branding remains prominent and visible no matter where it has applied. KitKat consistently and prominently displays its brand identity through these stringent guidelines regarding the Endorsement Seal, helping maintain its strong recognition and reputation.

### 4.2.2 Communication

In the age of digitalization, online platforms play an essential role in communicating a brand's identity and enhancing its visibility. For a global brand like KitKat, while engaging in co-branding, maintaining a consistent communication strategy and showcasing appealing artwork online are crucial. The interviewees said platforms like social media and websites allow KitKat to interact directly with consumers. This engagement allows KitKat to foster a deeper customer relationship while ensuring the brand message remains consistent. KitKat, in its co-branding endeavors, actively engages with customers on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The brand maintains its playful and innovative image while integrating a high standard of flavors; for instance, during the collaboration with 'After You,' the partner's Facebook and Instagram accounts shared posts and stories featuring the new co-branded desserts. They showcased delicious and 'Instagrammable' images of the desserts made with KitKat and often used captions that resonated with the brand's fun and innovative image. These posts were shared with hashtags like #MadeWithKitKat or #AfteryouKitKat, effectively creating a buzz online as they got 1.3K likes, 288 comments, and 255 shares. Moreover, all those comments are aligned with "appetizing," "worth trying," or "let eat together," and tagging their friends.



**Figure 4.2 An online post of seasonal menus of After You x KitKat**

While maintaining global brand standards, KitKat artfully incorporates local cultural elements into its artwork to perfectly resonate with the Thai audience and present its core value and mission. A core value of KitKat's centered around providing consumers with a break, encapsulated in its iconic slogan, "Have a break, have a KitKat." This message is consistently reflected in the artwork used in their co-branding efforts in Thailand. For instance, during the co-branding campaign with 'After You Dessert Café,' the artwork on social media showed images of people enjoying a KitKat-flavored dessert, conveying the idea of a sweet, enjoyable break. Furthermore, show a mission to create more than just a chocolate wafer; it is about forging memorable experiences. This principle is demonstrated in their collaborations with local brands, where the creative visuals showcase novel and exciting methods of indulging in KitKat. An example is their partnership with the renowned coffeehouse chain, 'Gloria Jean's Coffees' from the United States. The promotional visuals for this collaboration, primarily displayed online, highlighted the enticing blend of KitKat's chocolaty delight with the sophisticated taste profiles of Gloria Jean's Coffees Chillers. This strategic partnership drew attention and bolstered KitKat's mission of crafting distinctive, memorable experiences.



**Figure 4.3** An online post of seasonal menus of Tiger Sugar x KitKat

Furthermore, KitKat masterfully integrates elements of local cultures into its visuals to sustain its brand identity, in sync with its mission to harmonize local preferences with its global brand ethos. An instance of this can be seen in their collaboration with 'Tiger Sugar,' a famous beverage brand from Taiwan. Introducing a co-branded bubble tea featuring KitKat shows its flexibility in adapting to the unique Taiwanese food and beverage culture. Much like their activities during local festivals, this example demonstrates KitKat's deep respect and understanding of diverse cultures. It's not just about providing a chocolate wafer but about embracing and celebrating global diversity while staying true to its core brand values, which is integral to their core values and mission. Thus, consistent with KitKat's community engagement and inclusivity values, the brand uses interactive graphics, contests, and user-generated content on its online platforms. For instance, during the 'Made with KitKat' campaign, KitKat encouraged users to share their unique creations using the KitKat product, displaying the resulting images on their platforms. This shows KitKat's commitment to its community and reinforces the brand's core value of making every break better.

In conclusion, the strategic use of artwork online allows KitKat to maintain its brand identity during co-branding initiatives. KitKat engages consumers and creates a lasting brand impression by ensuring brand consistency and culturally relevant and visually compelling artwork.

#### **4.2.3 Quality Control**

When KitKat engages in co-branding efforts, one of the primary ways it preserves its brand identity is by intertwining rigorous quality control with innovative product development. Quality control measures are crucial in ensuring the KitKat brand's reputation for high-quality products is maintained in each co-branded item. When collaborating with local dessert operators, KitKat insists that its ingredients constitute at least 20% of the recipe. This means that the signature taste and quality of KitKat chocolate must be evident in each co-branded dessert, ensuring that consumers can identify and enjoy the familiar KitKat flavor they know and love. Each proposed dessert then goes through a stringent approval process, where samples are sent to a panel that includes members from the Marketing team, Quality Assurance (QA) team, and KitKat's expert chef. This group evaluates each dessert based on its taste, consistency,

and presentation, ensuring it meets the high standards KitKat's global reputation is built on. Interviewees said, in collaboration with the United States's famous donuts, 'Krispy Kreme,' KitKat's quality control measures were strictly implemented. The dessert was improved and developed many times to ensure that it had to be tasted, evaluated, and approved by the quality control panel before it was allowed to be sold, ensuring that the quality associated with the KitKat brand remained intact.





## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the success of KitKat's co-branding efforts, as illustrated by the popularity of 'Made with KitKat' desserts and highlighted in Datassential's Desserts Keynotes Report 2023, is a testament to a carefully executed strategy. It involves maintaining a solid and consistent brand identity while also catering to the evolving demands of the market. Key factors contributing to this success include consistent visual elements, compelling brand storytelling, clear and engaging communication, and a solid commitment to quality control and product innovation. KitKat's logo, messaging, font, and brand colors are consistently used in all co-branded products and promotional materials. The brand's core values, and mission are effectively communicated and amplified through the art and narrative showcased on online platforms and locally vibrant collaborations. The rigor in quality control ensures that the superior taste and quality associated with KitKat remain unmistakable in each co-branded dessert, thereby strengthening the trust and loyalty of consumers. Simultaneously, the innovative dessert creations blend the familiar KitKat taste with novel flavors and presentations and keep consumers engaged and excited. Together, these factors ensure that KitKat's brand identity remains strong and distinctive even as it ventures into exciting new collaborations and expands its offerings. They help boost the brand's visibility and consumer appeal and reinforce the core attributes and values that make KitKat a beloved brand worldwide. By skillfully balancing consistency and innovation, KitKat continues to delight consumers and stay ahead in a competitive market landscape.

Even though KitKat had successfully leveraged co-branding strategies and retained its distinct brand identity in the dynamic food industry. Through innovative partnerships and a consistent consumer-centric approach, KitKat has elevated its global presence, providing a testament to the brand's resilience and adaptability. However, it is noteworthy that not all collaborations have reached the desired level of recognition.

Thus, the writer aims to propose recommendations to optimize KitKat's co-branding strategy and further bolster its brand identity.

KitKat has numerous opportunities to augment its recognition and impact by identifying new co-branding alliances that align with its core values and brand identity. Diversifying partnerships across lifestyle, fashion, or beverage sectors can extend KitKat's demographic reach and foster wider recognition. In today's digital era, strengthening online marketing efforts is essential. KitKat can significantly enhance brand awareness and recognition by amplifying its social media campaigns and working with influencers to highlight co-branded products. Leveraging digital platforms also allows for dynamic, real-time feedback and consumer engagement, which is vital in any contemporary marketing strategy.

Furthermore, effectively utilizing consumer data analytics can provide a rich understanding of consumer preferences. Tailoring co-branding strategies based on this information could result in more resonant, engaging products and campaigns, optimizing the reach of the co-branded products. Co-branded events that spotlight joint products, including product launches, tastings, or interactive pop-up experiences, can generate buzz and interest, propelling the recognition of these collaborations. Increasing in-store visibility through point-of-sale materials, displays, and unique promotional content can draw attention and drive consumer interest. These physical touchpoints remain significant even in an increasingly digital world.

Additionally, continuous education of the sales team regarding the co-branded products ensures that the benefits and unique selling points are effectively communicated to retailers and consumers. This internal awareness is as critical as external marketing strategies. Finally, in the ever-changing food industry, continuous innovation is paramount. Exploring novel co-branding opportunities, flavors, and concepts can keep the KitKat brand fresh and exciting in the consumer's mind.

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