



A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS FOUND ON A POSTER IN KITKAT INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang pentingnya komunikasi efektif dalam pertukaran informasi dan ide antar individu melalui tanda-tanda verbal dan visual. Pendekatan semiotika digunakan untuk menganalisis makna yang terkandung dalam poster Instagram KitKat. Teori Saussure (2011) dan Barthes (1977) digunakan untuk menganalisis tanda-tanda verbal dan visual pada poster. Tujuan dari analisis ini adalah untuk mengetahui apa itu tanda-tanda verbal dan visual dan mengungkap pesan-pesan kompleks di balik penampilan permukaannya, menyoroti bagaimana tanda-tanda digunakan untuk menyampaikan setiap makna. Tiga poster KitKat dari akun @kitkat dikaji, mengungkapkan strategi komunikasi merek yang dinamis. Analisis ini menunjukkan bagaimana tanda-tanda verbal seperti slogan dan nama merek berhubungan dengan tanda-tanda visual seperti gambar dan simbol untuk menciptakan narasi yang halus tentang poster-poster KitKat yang menyiratkan makna untuk selalu menikmati KitKat saat jam istirahat. Penelitian ini meningkatkan pemahaman tentang bagaimana merek menggunakan semiotika untuk membangun pesan yang kuat di berbagai dimensi komunikasi.

Kata kunci: komunikasi efektif, semiotika, poster Instagram KitKat, tanda verbal dan visual, pemahaman.

Abstract

This study discusses the importance of effective communication in exchanging information and ideas between individuals through verbal and visual signs. A semiotic approach is used to analyze the meaning contained in the Instagram KitKat poster. The theory of Saussure (2011) and Barthes (1977) was used to analyze the verbal and visual signs on the posters. The aim of this analysis is to understand what verbal and visual signs are and to uncover the complex messages behind their surface appearances, highlighting how signs are used to convey each meaning. Three KitKat posters from the @kitkat account were reviewed, revealing a dynamic brand communication strategy. This analysis shows how verbal signs such as slogans and brand names relate to visual signs such as images and symbols to create subtle narratives about KitKat posters that imply the meaning of always enjoying KitKat during break time. This research increases the understanding of how brands use semiotics to build strong messages across various dimensions of communication.

Keywords: effective communication, semiotics, Instagram KitKat posters, verbal and visual signs, understanding

INTRODUCTION

Semiotics is a branch of the study of language that studies how a sign, both verbal and visual, communicates meaning. According to Saussure (2011), semiotics is the study of signs and meanings within language and culture. The concept of semiotics has been widely applied to analyze various facets of human life, including artistic creations, media, advertising, and visual communication. According to Saussure (2011), semiotics is the study of signs in language and communication, and signs consist of two main components: "signifier" (meaning carrier) and "signified" (meaning). Within the semiotic analysis, these signs can take the form of symbols, images, texts, or other visual elements that encompass layers of

meaning open to interpretation by individuals. In practice, semiotics serves as a potent interpretive tool, assisting in uncovering the nuanced layers of meaning hidden beneath seemingly uncomplicated sign structures. By tracing the trajectories of these signs, semiotics enables us to better comprehend the intricate messages conveyed through diverse forms of visual communication and culture, as well as how these signs contribute to shaping collective perception and understanding. The "sign" is a central element in semiotic studies that underlies our understanding of the formation and exchange of meaning in communication. Saussure (2011), emphasized that the relationship between them is arbitrary and meaning is formed through differences between signs

According to Barthes (1977), signs in semiotics explore signs and how these signs influence the formation of meaning across various aspects of life. Besides the linguistic dimension, signs are also influenced by cultural context and individual experience, revealing the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions in their interpretation. Introducing the concept of signs allows for a deeper analysis of how messages are communicated, received, and deciphered in various forms of communication, forming the basis for a profound understanding of semiotics and the communication process at large. In conveying its meaning, signs are divided into two, namely visual and verbal signs. Verbal and visual signs are commonly found on posters. The poster itself is a medium for conveying messages through a combination of pictures, colors, and writing, Brockmann (1981). Posters are usually used to promote a particular product, event, or campaign. Verbal signs on posters include text such as headlines, slogans, or descriptions used to convey messages or information to readers. On the other hand, the visual signs in the poster include pictures, illustrations, graphics, or other visual elements that have a function to support or reinforce the message conveyed

One brand that actively uses posters as a marketing tool is KitKat. KitKat, which is a globally recognized brand of chocolate products, has an official account on Instagram to communicate with consumers and share product-related content. To influence consumer perceptions and build brand identity, KitKat produces a variety of visual content, including posters.

There were several previous studies that related to this study. The first study focuses on analyzing the type of signs and meaning found in pictures related to COVID-19 posts by World Health Organization (WHO) on their Instagram account titled "Semiotics Analysis on World Health Organization Instagram Post," by Yanti, et al. (2023). Their study utilized the Semiotics theory proposed by Saussure (1959) to identify verbal signs and applied Barthes' theory (1964) to analyze their data source. The investigation aligned with the approach of this study, employing the same theoretical framework from these two experts to discern both verbal and visual signs within the images and their associated implications. The second study focused on analyzing and discussing the forms of visual aspects in Garuda Indonesia and Singapore Airlines advertisements in the form of videos, and the meaning of narrative based on verbal aspects in both advertisements. The article entitled "Verbal and Visual Signs On Airlines Advertisements: A Semiotic Study" by Kartika, et al. (2016). There were differences in the theory and data sources, but both studies fell within the same scope, namely semiotic analysis. Despite differences in data and theory, the two studies produced similar research results. They both highlighted how verbal signs, such as slogans and brand names, related to visual signs, like images and symbols, to create subtle narratives that aimed to attract consumer interest. The third study was entitled "A Semiotic Study on Verbal and Visual Signs Found in Revlon Cosmetics Advertisements," by Rika, et al. (2022). This study identified and analyzed the meanings of verbal and visual signs present in Revlon cosmetic advertisements. The analysis was based on Saussure's semiotic theory (cited in Chandler

2007), semiotics by Barthes (1977), and supported by color meaning theory by Cerrato (2012). Their research shared similarities in terms of the aim of the study and also some theories used by experts. Rika, Suastini, and Pratiwi's study employed advertisements as their data source and utilized three theories from semioticians in their analysis. In contrast, this study used posters as its data source and relied on two expert theories, namely Saussure (2011) and Barthes (1977), to analyze the similar purpose of the studies. The fourth study was entitled "Verbal and Visual Sign in Valentine's Day Edition Chocolate Advertisement" by Sudiartawan and Suastini (2023). Their study became the inspiration for this study for the way to analyze the data with the same theory from the expert which same with this study. The last study was done by Dewi, et al. (2022) entitled "The Verbal and Non-verbal Signs of "For Women by Women: IDÔLE Lancôme" Advertisement" which is still within the scope of semiotic analysis and is also a literacy that helps in writing this research.

This study employs a comprehensive semiotic analysis to investigate the intricate layers of meaning embedded within visual content on the KitKat Instagram account. The research aims to unravel the strategic deployment of semiotic elements in a specific post, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between verbal and nonverbal signs, color symbolism, and intertextual references. By delving into the KitKat phenomenon, this research seeks to uncover how visual communication on social media platforms constructs narratives that resonate with audiences and reflect brand identities.

METHOD

This study utilized a semiotic analysis approach to uncover the layers of meaning embedded in KitKat's Instagram posters by analyzing the verbal and visual signs. The observation method was used in collecting data. According to James M. Henslin (1985), observation is the process of direct observation of people, places, or events to collect data in a systematic way. The data obtained was the result of observations from the Instagram KitKat account, and several were selected, recorded, and then analyzed. According to William K. Powers (1973), the observation method is observing someone or something with the aim of gaining an understanding of the meaning of what is observed. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study with a specific focus on comprehending the significance encapsulated within a series of KitKat posters posted on the official Instagram account. according to Merriam (2009), a qualitative descriptive method is a method that describes a situation, phenomenon, or event by revealing details in a natural context. The method adopted encompassed semiotic analysis, drawing inspiration from Saussure's (2011) and Barthes's (1977) theories, to discuss the meaning embedded within the verbal and visual signs present on KitKat posters. The process of data analysis requires careful examination of posters to identify the implicit or underlying meaning. The denotative and connotative dimensions as well as the correlation between signs are also considered. Through the application of this analytical framework, this study aims to uncover not only the direct meaning but also the cultural and emotional associations evoked by these signs through both formal and informal explanatory processes.

FINDING

The data below was the result of an analysis that has been carried out by the author in looking for verbal and visual signs using the benchmark theory of Saussure (2011) and Barthes (1977). By finding 7 verbal signs and 6 visual signs from 3 KitKat posters taken from the Instagram account @kitkat.

Table 1. The result of Verbal and Visual signs found on the KitKat poster

POSTER	VERBAL SIGN	VISUAL SIGN
Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account September 11, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reminder HAVE A BREAK 2. Nestle 3. KitKat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The picture characteristic reminder on a cell phone that reads a reminder about break hours 2. The Picture of a hand holding a Nestle KitKat product
Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account November 16, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a break, have a KitKat 2. KitKat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The picture of a watch with a watch strap replaced with a KitKat and showing 3 past 25 minutes
Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account December 25, 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Merry Christmas 2. Have a break, have a KitKat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Christmas tree picture 2. The Image of some white snow 3. The Image of two hands holding a broken Nestle KitKat

KitKat poster on Instagram account @kitkat, covers different dates September 11, 2019; November 16, 2019; and December 25, 2021, revealing a dynamic brand communications strategy that evolves over time. These posters offer a compelling glimpse into how KitKat leverages visual and verbal cues to engage its audience while adapting to various contexts. Of the three posters, 7 data were found to be verbal signs and 6 other data were visual signs. The poster dated September 11, 2019, most likely aligns with the brand's message, which presumably features the iconic slogan "Have a break, have a KitKat" and uses familiar visual elements to evoke a sense of comfort and relaxation. As of November 16, 2019, the poster may reflect the shift of hours from work to break time, making use of associated symbols or colors. Which again contains the slogan "Have a break, have a KitKat". Moving forward to December 25, 2021, KitKat posters could celebrate the holiday spirit, perhaps integrating celebratory imagery such as snow or holiday-themed packaging and not forgetting their iconic slogan "Have a break, have a KitKat. The evolution of these posters offers insight into how KitKat adapts its semiotic communication to be receptive to audiences during certain periods, adapting to cultural nuances and capitalizing on the emotions associated with those times of the year through a variation of the verbal sign "Have a break, Have a KitKat" which has the message to always chose KitKat to accompany our break time. As well as a visual sign in the form of an image of a KitKat chocolate product that is always displayed on each of its posters, aiming to visualize the product and also attract consumer interest. KitKat effectively establishes relationships with its audience and maintains brand relevance in an ever-changing digital landscape.

DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings in the form of verbal and visual signs were explained based on their classification with the theory used to provide a clear understanding to the reader

Data 1



Figure 1. Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account September 11, 2019

Verbal sign



Figure1.1. "Merry Christmas"

The first sign is "Merry Christmas" which can be found in the figure of a broken KitKat. It can be mentioned as a verbal sign because of its existence in the form of a word that appears on broken KitKat. Based on the Oxford Dictionary, "Merry Christmas" is usually used at Christmas to say that you hope that somebody has a pleasant holiday. "Merry Christmas" is a familiar holiday greeting that operates as a "cultural sign" within Barthes' (1977) semiotic framework. It carries both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, it signifies a holiday wish for happiness during the Christmas season. Connotatively, it invokes cultural associations of joy, togetherness, and celebration during this festive time.

Figure 1.2. "Have a break, have a KitKat"

This second sign is "Have a break, have a KitKat". A variation of KitKat's iconic slogan



that aligns with Roland Barthes' (1977). Based on the Oxford Dictionary the word "Break" means to be damaged and separated into two or more parts, as a result of force. On the other hand based on the Oxford Dictionary, "Break" means to stop doing something for a while, especially when it is time to eat or have a drink. In this context, The slogan "Have a break, have a KitKat" operates as both a "denotation" by suggesting a pause with a KitKat, and by implying that taking a KitKat break is not just about chocolate, but about indulgence and relaxation. The repetition and cultural recognition of this slogan have transformed it into a symbolic expression of taking a moment of leisure.

Visual sign



Figure 1.3. “The Christmas Tree”

The first sign is a Christmas tree, often associated with Christmas. Based on Oxford Dictionary “Christmas tree” can be said is tree or an artificial tree that looks similar, that people cover with decorations and colored lights and have in their homes or outside at



Christmas, or an artificial tree that looks similar, that people cover with decorations and colored lights and have in their homes or outside at Christmas. The tree that often used is the fir tree which functions as a "symbol" within Barthes' (1977) framework. The image resembles the actual tree, but it carries connotations beyond its physical appearance. Connotatively, the fir tree signifies Christmas, holiday spirit, and festive traditions. It's a cultural symbol that invokes emotions related to the holiday season.

Figure 1.4. “The White Snow”

The second sign is white snow also a "symbol" within Barthes' (1977) theory. Based on the Oxford Dictionary, Snow is a small soft white piece (called flakes) of frozen water falling from the sky in cold weather. Snow is often linked to Christmas and winter, and its presence signifies a cold and joyful atmosphere. Beyond the literal "denotation" of snow which support of the supporting idea from the Oxford Dictionary, its also carries connotations of holiday cheer, beauty, and a sense of wonder. The appearance of the white snows on the KitKat poster adds to the Christmas atmosphere attached to the poster. Indirectly build a Christmas feel that is full of joy, beauty, and a sense of wonder.



Figure 1.5. “Two Hands Holding a Broken Nestle KitKat”

This third visual sign is the two hands holding the broken Nestle KitKat and is the "iconic sign". The hand represents human interaction with the product, and the broken KitKat emphasizes the "breaking" aspect of the brand's slogan. Basically “Break” has two different meanings. Based on the Oxford Dictionary the word “Break” means to be damaged and separated into two or more parts, as a result of force. On the other hand, “Break” means to stop doing something for a while, especially when it is time to eat or have a drink. In this context, the broken KitKat emphasizes the meaning of enjoying the KitKat while the break that connected to the special event which is Christmas Day. This thing supported by the several images of a Christmas tree, white snow, and a background red which related to the

joy and happiness of Christmas Day. This image carries the "denotation" of broken KitKat and the "connotation" of fun, sharing, and the idea of a break. This aligns with the message that KitKat is also suitable for sharing during special moments with friends or family. The special event referred to in this poster for example "Christmas day" by breaking in half.

In conclusion, the KitKat Christmas advertisement strategically employs both verbal and visual signs to convey a holiday message. Through Roland Barthes' (1977) semiotic theory, we can appreciate how these signs communicate not only literal information but also cultural values, emotions, and associations related to Christmas and the KitKat brand. This analysis highlights the depth and complexity of meaning that can be conveyed through the interplay of linguistic and visual elements in advertising.

Data 2

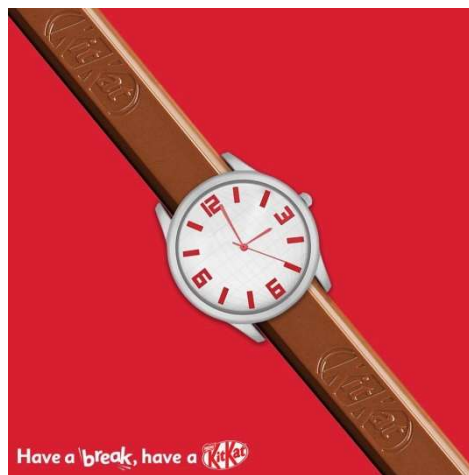


Figure 2. Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account November 16, 2019

Verbal sign



Figure 2.1. "Have a break, have a KitKat"

The first sign is "Have a break, have a KitKat", which can be found in the bottom left corner of the poster and operates as a slogan that encapsulates the essence of the KitKat brand. Based on the Oxford Dictionary, "Break" means to stop doing something for a while, especially when it is time to eat or have a drink. The surface meaning, or "denotation," is a simple suggestion to take a break and enjoy a KitKat. However, the connotative layer goes beyond this literal message. It symbolizes a moment of relaxation, indulgence, and escape from the daily routine. The repeated use of the phrase in various contexts has transformed it into a cultural symbol that connects the act of taking a break from consuming a KitKat, reinforcing the emotional experience associated with the brand.



Figure 2.2. "KitKat":

The second sign is “KitKat” on the watch strap. It can be mentioned as a verbal sign because of its form of word that emphasizes the figure of KitKat through a word. The brand name itself which embodies simplicity and directness. Within the semiotic framework, the brand name functions as both a "denotation" (the literal name of the product) and a "signifier" that carries certain connotations. Over time, the name "KitKat" has become associated with a quick, enjoyable snack that can be easily consumed during a break. The brevity of the name aligns with the idea of a short, satisfying pause. This is an example of how language can evoke both direct and layered meanings.

Visual sign



Figure 2.3. “The Watch with KitKat Strap”

The first sign is the watch with a KitKat strap. Within Barthes (1977) framework, this visual sign can be seen as an "icon," where the image (watch) resembles the real object (watch), although in a transformed way (KitKat strap). The substitution of the watch strap with a KitKat bar plays with the viewer's perception and creates a juxtaposition of time and indulgence. This can be interpreted as a representation of how taking a KitKat break becomes a way to enjoy moments of leisure during the day. On the other hand, by choosing a KitKat bar image that replaces the original watch straps, you could say KitKat's way of emphasizing even more to consumers that the product is tightly attached to the break time which is suitable for consuming KitKat.



Figure 2.4. "The Time Display"

The time "3 past 25 minutes" carries both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, it simply indicates a specific time. However, connotatively, it might hint at the idea that any time is a good time for a KitKat break. The unusual time displayed could also suggest that taking a break with KitKat can be a unique and enjoyable experience at any moment. In general, the time on the poster is the same as break time or rest hours from a job. This reinforces the purpose of KitKat which depicts that the rest time should be enjoyed by eating KitKat, which also has a KitKat bar image on the watch strap which adds to consumer interest in enjoying their rest time by eating KitKat.

The verbal and visual signs in the KitKat Instagram poster, analyzed through Barthes' (1977) semiotic theory, showcase how language, slogans, brand names, and visual imagery work together to convey both direct and layered meanings. The interplay between denotation and connotation, as well as the transformation of objects into symbols, exemplifies the effectiveness of semiotics in understanding the intricate communication strategies used in advertising and branding.

Data 3

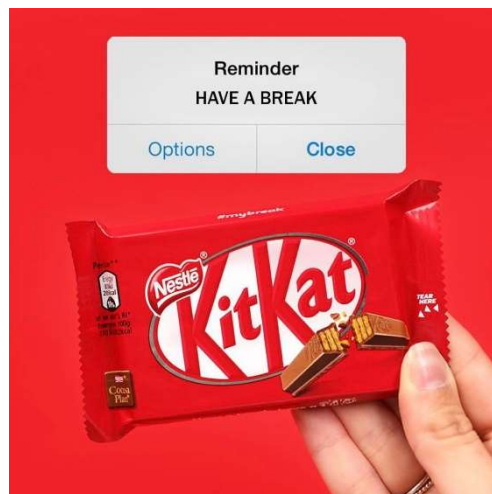


Figure 3. Kitkat poster @kitkat Instagram account December 25, 2021

Verbal Signs

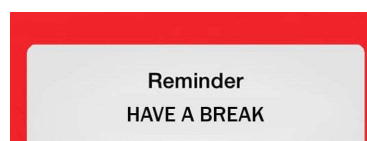


Figure 3.1. "Reminder HAVE A BREAK":

The first sign is "Reminder HAVE A BREAK" which is a directive that operates as a "commanding sign" within Barthes' (1977) semiotic framework. Based on the Oxford

Dictionary “Reminder” means something that makes you think about or remember somebody/something, that you have forgotten or would like to forget. In this context, KitKat conveys a direct message to the audience, instructing them to take a break. KitKat not only reminds us to take a break time but indirectly KitKat wants to emphasize that if you take a break, enjoy KitKat as a snack. This command is a "signifier" that signifies the idea of pausing from one's activities. In this context, "HAVE A BREAK" is an imperative phrase that implies relaxation and rejuvenation. Supported by the word "Reminder" adds an authoritative tone, emphasizing the importance of this action. This verbal sign holds both the literal instruction to pause and a connotative layer that implies taking a KitKat break, connecting the brand with relaxation and leisure.



Figure 3.2. “Nestle” and “KitKat”:

The brand names “Nestle” and “KitKat” function as “proper names” and become a verbal sign. Within the semiotic framework, these names serve as “signifiers” that denote specific products and companies. However, they also carry connotations beyond their literal meanings. “Nestle” is associated with quality, trustworthiness, and a wide range of food products. “KitKat,” as discussed previously, carries connotations of a quick and enjoyable break. These proper names act as “relays,” transmitting both the companies’ reputations and the emotional values associated with the brands. On the other hand, the appearance of the product image along with the brand identity is intended to further pressure consumers to have confidence and trust in the quality, image, and taste image of Nestle KitKat.

Visual sign

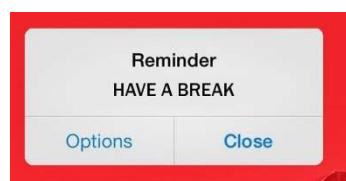


Figure 3.3. “The Reminder on a Cell Phone”

The first sign of a cell phone displaying a reminder about break hours is an “iconic sign” according to Barthes's (1977) theory. The image visually resembles the concept it represents the typical display of a reminder on a cell phone screen. Based on the Oxford Dictionary, “Reminder” means something that makes you think about or remember somebody or something, that you have forgotten or would like to forget. This visual sign functions as a “denotation” that directly communicates the idea of taking a break. Connotatively, this is in line with KitKat's reason for using a cellphone reminder image intended not only to explain the meaning of a reminder on a cellphone, but KitKat indirectly wants us to eat KitKat now because it's time to rest. Back to the previous explanation, in which KitKat emphasizes its consumers to always choose KitKat as a companion for rest hours.



Figure 3.4. "Hand Holding a Nestle KitKat"

The visual sign of a hand holding a Nestle KitKat product is also an "iconic sign." The image resembles the physical act of holding a KitKat, but it's also a representation of the larger concept of consumption and engagement. The "denotation" is the physical act of holding a product. The "connotation" extends to themes of interaction, enjoyment, and satisfaction. This image showcases human engagement with the product, making it relatable to the viewer.

The KitKat Instagram poster utilizes both verbal and visual signs strategically to convey messages and emotions to the audience. Through Barthes's (1977) semiotic theory, we can appreciate how these signs work on multiple levels directly conveying messages while also invoking cultural associations and emotional responses. The combination of verbal and visual signs allows for a richer and more engaging communication strategy in advertising and branding.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study, it can be concluded that verbal sign plays an important role in conveying messages. In this study, 7 signs were found in the form of verbal signs, and 6 signs were found in the form of visual signs. Verbal signs used by KitKat tend to prioritize connotative meanings in conveying verbal messages. This was shown by the use of the slogan "Have a break, Have a KitKat" which has the intention of always having KitKat ready to accompany every our rest time. The verbal signs are also supported by visual signs even when they are denotative or connotative. On the KitKat poster, it can also be concluded that the visual sign used tends to lead to an image of the KitKat product itself. The use of several visual signs that support everything related to break time.

In conclusion, the results of the discussion and analysis of each interactive verbal and visual sign are often used by KitKat to create a personal perspective or even make it easier for customers to understand the meaning behind the KitKat poster. For each sign analyzed and explained, it can be concluded that the meaning of each sign was connotative, in which the average meaning of each sign leads to a break time. The meaning that KitKat wants to convey in each of its posters is to always enjoy KitKat during break time. On the other hand, the purpose of the KitKat posters is to arouse consumer interest in paying attention to the posters, with the ultimate goal of stimulating consumer interest in buying Nestlé KitKat.

SUGGESTION

Based on the semiotic analysis that has been carried out on KitKat posters on Instagram, several suggestions can be taken to enrich the understanding and findings of this relevance. This finding is still very far from being perfect, so it is hoped that interested authors will explore more deeply to expand the analysis to More Posters: As a further step, it is recommended to expand the analysis to a larger number of KitKat posters. By observing variations in verbal and visual cues from different content, you can identify patterns that may

emerge in KitKat brand communication on the Instagram platform. This will provide more complete insight into how the brand has consistently used these signs to establish identity and communicate brand messages.

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