

Branding Strategies for Candy Products on Instagram: A Consumer Culture Analysis of “KIS MINT” through @kisduludong

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ABSTRACT

Kis Mint, traditionally known as a candy brand for children, aims to expand its market reach to teenagers and adults while maintaining a competitive position in the industry. With over 163 million users, Instagram serves as a strategic platform for branding and consumer engagement. This study examines Kis Mint's branding strategy on Instagram (@kisduludong) through the lens of consumer culture. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through unstructured interviews, participant observation, and digital document analysis. The findings reveal that Kis Mint employs three key branding strategies: (1) aligning its marketing with the lifestyles of teenagers and adults who carry candy as a daily necessity, (2) catering to diverse taste preferences by offering fresh and sweet flavours for teenagers and sour variations for adults mindful of sugar intake, and (3) utilizing individual packaging to maintain a mature appeal for adult consumers. Additionally, Kis Mint maximizes Instagram's features, particularly its feed, to highlight product benefits such as breath-freshening properties while fostering social interaction through interactive content like quizzes. These strategies collectively enhance Kis Mint's brand positioning and engagement on social media.

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INTRODUCTION

Meeting food needs is something that every human being must fulfil. It is done by consuming food every day. Food consists of protein, carbohydrates, fats, and other nutrients helpful in maintaining growth, vital processes, and adding energy. (Rogers, 2023). To achieve this goal, humans need a variety of foods ranging from staples such as rice and noodles to side dishes that are nutritious and have high fibre. This explanation differs from candy products, which have the main ingredient of sugar and contain various kinds of fruit juice, oil, and colouring. This led to candy's position as a side or snack food. It is difficult for candy to become the leading choice in Indonesian consumer culture, which follows the four healthy five perfect principles in every eating activity. Consumer culture is a way of life that focuses on buying and enjoying goods and services. It is a social practice driven by a desire for new experiences, technology, and novelty. (Featherstone, 2010). So, consumers consume products according to what other people want to see from them.

The image of candy products is closely related to children's consumers. Data from a journal entitled “Overview of Snack Consumption and Caries Status in Children aged 3-5 Years” shows that candy is the type of food children like to cause cavities. (Mamengko, W., Kawengian, S. E., & Siagian, 2016). This condition makes it difficult for candy products to reach a broader market among Indonesians. Because the existence of consumer culture is an essential indicator of how consumers perceive the products offered to them, candy products need a way to overcome this problem.

The method taken by candy manufacturers is *branding* their products. *Branding* is a brand activity that establishes a position as a unique and new product to create profits and achieve success. (Panwar, T., & Khan, 2020). It can be done

in many ways, from the composition of ingredients to the messaging of candy products to consumers. Manufacturers can also utilize the power of social media for *branding*. Moreover, social media is close to the community because many needs can be met, such as connecting with family and friends, finding information, finding out how to do things, and finding the latest ideas or inspiration. (Kemp, 2023).

Social media users in Indonesia amounted to 167 million people, or 64,3% of the country's total population in 2024 (Panggabean, 2024). In line with the growth of users, various types of social media are also present in Indonesian society. One of them is Instagram. Instagram users in Indonesia alone have reached 106.72 million in 2023. This number has increased by 4.9% from the previous year (Rizaty, 2023). This growth shows that the Indonesian people's enthusiasm for Instagram social media is high.

KIS MINT is one candy product that realizes this condition by opening an Instagram account with the username @KISduludong. It is a candy product from PT Mayora Indah Tbk. Uses the account to convey branding messages. Previously, KIS MINT used conventional media such as TV and radio for this and began to explore the digital world through mobile advertising. Mobile advertising is a variety of advertisements that appear on the user's cellphone or tablet in the form of SMS text, video, and banner ads on the website. (Adieb, 2021). Along with the increase in the medium for branding KIS MINT candy products, namely by using Instagram, of course, requires a different branding strategy than what has been applied (Sembiring et al., 2022). Branding is a symbolic interaction process using language, sound, movement, body, and visual forms. The main aim is to create meaning that can become the identity or image of the object to introduce itself to the public. Branding also includes consumers' ideas about the product and how consumers view the product. (Simabur, 2022).

Moreover, KIS MINT has completed work regarding its positioning as a mint candy in Indonesia. Positioning is an effort to instil critical benefits and differentiation in the minds of consumers. Thus, consumers choose these products for consumption. (Kotler, 2012). Based on the results obtained from the TOP BRAND AWARD, KIS MINT experienced a decline in positioning, which occurred from 2021 with a score of 23.9 to 2024 with a score of 18.3 in the Top Brand for Kids index and the Children's Food and Drink category. KIS MINT has been unable to shift its first position from other mint candy brands, which received a score of 30.5 in 2024(Award, 2024). Of course, this condition is not favourable for KIS MINT itself.

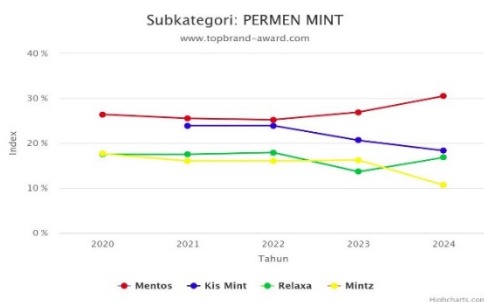


Figure 1. Result of Comparison Brand Award 2024 (Award, 2024) [source]

Seeing this condition, KIS MINT presents two different types of mint candy. Based on Instagram @kisduludong, there are two types of candy: Kis Mint and Kis Mint Himalaya Salt.



Figure 2. Two Types of Products of Kis Mint

Researcher Documentation (@pernahliatkomersil, 2022)

This article also departs from previous research. The first research is entitled "Tag a Person Who Loves Candy – Sociocultural Approach to Unhealthy Food Marketing to Adolescents in Social Media," written by Ulla-Maija Sutinen, Roosa Luukkonen, and Elina Närvänen in 2024. The results of this research focus on exploring how food products such as candy unhealthy marketing on social media, the role of social media influencers in promoting such products, and how teens engage with influencer content. This study emphasizes the need for regulations to protect adolescents from unhealthy food marketing. It suggests further research in different cultural contexts to understand the promotion of healthy lifestyles through social media. (Sutinen et al., 2024).

The second research is entitled "Colorful Candy, Teen Vibes and Cool Memes: Prevalence and Content of Instagram Posts Featuring Ultra-processed Products Targeted at Adolescents" by Gaston Ares, Florencia Alcaire, Vanessa Gugliucci, Leandro Machin, Carolina de Leon, Virginia Natero, Tobias Otterbring in 2023. Instagram posts were identified as being for teens consuming candy. Graphic design and teen language are the most common indicators of marketing targeted at teens, followed by explicit references to teens or young adults using memes. Posts targeted at teenagers primarily promoted snacks and food additives, including candy (Ares, 2023).

The third research, "Branding and Culture," was conducted by John Sinclair in 2011. Branding is intrinsically and at once an economic and cultural process. Branding endows goods and services with value, the value that corporations protect as their intellectual property, enabling brands to support share prices and be traded as assets in takeovers and mergers while serving to differentiate products competitively in the marketplace. However, this "brand value" depends on cultural perceptions of the meaning and worth of a brand. More than the unique image or positioning of a brand being maintained relative to others, such perceptions may involve consumers' expressive and emotional attachment, which may be widely shared. The question of branding creates a valuable vehicle for the contemporary re-evaluation of some defining concepts in political economy, notably use value, exchange value, the commodity, and commoditization, particularly in light of the more relational approach offered by the emergent field of cultural economy. (Sinclair, 2011).

Based on the explanation above, researchers are interested in examining how to analyze the branding strategy for KIS MINT candy through social media, Instagram @kisduludong, from a consumer culture perspective. This article uses data collection techniques in interviews with several informants who are consumers of KIS MINT candy and observations of the KIS MINT Instagram account @kisduludong. This article also uses a case study technique by looking at Instagram as a medium for branding KIS MINT candy products.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method. This method is for writing, namely, the need to get detailed answers about a topic. This is because the results of the qualitative explanation can be expressed in natural language by referring to cases chosen opportunistically. Qualitative research also uses small samples to focus on specific individuals, events, and contexts. This research uses case study analysis techniques. This is done because case studies involve detailed descriptions of the environment and individuals. This condition is followed by data analysis for the themes of the issues raised. (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research uses several data collection strategies: unstructured interviews, participant observation, and archives. Researchers combine various clues taken from different sources for a problem.

The subject of this research is the Kis Mint candy product Instagram @kisduludong. Meanwhile, the object of study is the branding strategy seen from the consumer culture perspective of Kis Mint candy products. From the explanation above, the unstructured interview technique is the choice for the writer to collect data because statements from informants using a question method adapted to environmental conditions can answer how the phenomenon occurs. Apart from that, observation techniques were also used to collect data related to this paper. Observation activities can give researchers a broad picture of the themes and problems being studied. (Crowther & Lauesen, 2017).

Researchers also collected data by taking notes directly regarding the informants in this paper. So, data validity is easier to do because researchers make observations and see directly what the current situation is. This is because informants'

documents related to this article are data uploaded to their respective Instagram account pages. These documents can become data that strengthens writing because they are stable, rich, and appropriate to the context. It can open up opportunities for researchers to expand their knowledge of the themes and problems being researched. (Creswell, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The author selected informants and conducted in-depth interviews according to the problem formulation previously explained. The following is a table of informant profiles:

Name of Informant	A	B	C	D	E
Age	16	19	23	30	18
Domicile	Tulungagung	Surabaya	Bandung	Malang	Surabaya
Frequency of Purchase of KIS MINT Candy	Once a month	Once a month	Two times a week	Three times a week	Every two months
Frequency of Consumption of KIS MINT Candy	Everyday	Once every three days	Everyday	Work Day	Once every three days

Table 1. List of Informant Researcher, 2024 [source]

Based on the informant data above, it can be seen that KIS MINT candy has consumers in different age segments. There are two age groups of KIS MINT candy consumers: teenagers (16-23 years) and adults (30 years). These two age groups have different consumer cultures.

Lifestyle lived by the Teenage and Adult Age Groups

Lifestyle is a consumption pattern that reflects an individual's choices regarding spending money and time. In general, lifestyle can be interpreted as how people spend their time (activities), what people consider important in the environment (interests), and what people think about themselves and the world around them (opinions). Internal factors influencing lifestyle are attitudes, experiences and observations, personality, self-concept, motives, and perceptions. Then, the external factors are the reference group, social class, social position, and culture. Lifestyle also reflects a person's or group's identity. (Følstad, A., & Kvale, 2018).

The lifestyle of teenagers and adults is accustomed to carrying candy every day. Teenagers and adults are attached to candy and have it in their bags when going anywhere, especially at school and on campus. They even feel uncomfortable if they do not bring candy.

“...bring candy everywhere, especially to school...” (interviewed Rahma, 8 March 2024)

“Because I always have candy in my bag, so that is enough candy.” (interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

Consumers also regularly buy whole grains or one pack in supermarkets once a week or once a month when travelling because they cannot predict how much they will eat in one meal.

“...I buy a pack of Kiss at Indomaret and two or three packs of Mentos Marbel Choco.... on my way home to Tulungagung, I buy a pack of Kiss, so it is delicious if I am in the mood and want to eat a lot...”

(Interviewed Kayla, 8 March 2024)

“...But when I go to look at candy, I buy it when I go for a walk... at least once a week when I go to Indomaret...” (Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

Candy has become part of the lifestyle that teenagers and adults carry daily. In general, lifestyle is defined as how people spend their time (activity), what people consider important in the environment (interest), and what people think about themselves and the world around them (opinion) (Følstad, A., & Kvale, 2018).

Teenagers and adults spend their time in places of education such as schools, universities, and work (activities). They

consume candy to stay focused on carrying out activities for a long (interest). Besides that, because of its hard texture, teenagers and adults use candy as a mood board when doing hobbies, doing assignments, and after eating (opinion).

“...At school, it is easy to get sleepy because school is from six in the morning until three in the afternoon, not to mention if there are activities and others, so I need candy...when doing assignments, if it is already close to bedtime, I have to do as much as I can while eating candy....” (Interviewed Rahma, 8 March 2024)

“...Usually, after eating, you have to eat something hard - hard like candy or ice cubes ... if not during class while absorbing knowledge from the lecturer ... so that you can not be idle mouth.” (Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

The teenage and adult age groups' lifestyles are related to brand attitudes. Brand attitudes are evaluations made by consumers of a brand, which include consumers' beliefs about a product or service. It relates to how consumers think the brand has specific attributes or benefits. (Jokinen, 2016). Teenagers and adults feel that KIS MINT candy has benefits that support daily activities.

This explanation is based on consumer culture, which states that the expansion of capitalist commodity production has led to the massive accumulation of culture in consumer goods and consumption shopping places (Featherstone, 2010). Every age group, both teenagers and adults, perceived the benefits of KIS MINT candies by not giving the impression of being different from the children who also consumed candies. Thus, it shows how consumers use objects to create community ties or distinctions as a point of interest for teenagers and adults.

Consumer Tastes of Teenage and Adult Age Group.

Ads displayed on Instagram by KIS MINT are packaged according to the age group of teenagers and adults. Advertising aims to convey messages to consumers targeted by the product. The message contained therein displays the brand image. Brand image is how a group of consumers perceive a product or brand. The image of a product or brand is formed by various brand associations that consumers develop. Attributes are features that consumers think a product or service has. One type of attribute is not directly related to the product's function. There are two aspects of this: (1) consumer image, i.e., what type of people use the product or service; (2) usage image, i.e., where and in what situations the product or service is used. (Jokinen, 2016). KIS MINT candy implements both aspects through its flavour variants and packaging form.

For the teenage age group, KIS MINT provides four flavours: grape, apple mint, cherry, and barley, with a mint sensation. The variety of flavours of sweet and fresh fruit makes them interested in consuming KIS MINT candy.

“...I prefer the ingredients and the flavour. If it does not taste good, I will not repurchase it. It is sweet and chewy. Kis Mint..” (Interviewed Kayla, 8 March 2024)

“yes... just fresh and sweet - sweet like Kis...” (Interviewed Rahma, 8 March 2024)

Meanwhile, the adult age group chose fresh and sour flavours with a mint sensation for KIS MINT HIMALAYA SALT candies, such as lime and peppermint.

“...I consume it. I like the taste of freshness because I am an easily nauseated child...he said candy contains much sugar, so I choose KIS MINT HIMALAYA SALT because it is low sugar, so I want it to be delicious and not feel guilty after eating....” (Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

The primary consideration for the adult group in choosing this variant is because they are already aware of the health of the body, which is influenced by what is consumed. Thus, KIS MINT candy uses consumer images to determine the flavour variants presented. In addition, the teenage and adult age groups consider the form of candy packaging when consuming the product. KIS MINT candy packs its products individually and allows them to be consumed without being seen by others. It is different from other brands that package their products as lollipops.

“Weirdly, teenagers eat lollipops because I do not eat ...” (Interviewed Kayla, 8 March 2024)

“Used to love finger candy - fingers... it is not funny if you go to work eating candy like that..”
(Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

It relates to the beliefs embedded in the minds of the adolescent and adult age groups. The lollipop shape indicates the age of children where consumers feel they are no longer in that group. Therefore, the attitude shown by consumers towards the lollipop shape is more towards rejection.

The packaging used by KIS MINT candy displays information about the product and differentiates itself from other brands. KIS MINT candy is a medium for motivating and romantic words. For teenage groups, the use of romantic words can be the subject of jokes and games when gathering, as well as anti-bad breath, claims to increase self-confidence, especially when meeting with the opposite sex.

“...If a Kis is easy to get, the words behind it are a joke; for example, I got the one that says, "Will you marry me?" it must be a joke, like friends saying, "Who is that from?" For example, after eating, it makes your mouth smell. Eat kisses to make it smell good and get rid of bad breath..” **(Interviewed Kayla, 8 March 2024)**

Thus, KIS MINT candy applies the image of use when consumers consume the product by presenting a form that is easy to carry anywhere and suitable for their age.



Figure 3. Flavour Variations of Kis Mint and Kis Mint Himalaya Salt
Researcher Documentation, 2024 (Kis, 2024) [source]

The above explanation is based on the premise of consumer culture. Namely, there is a problem of emotional pleasure for consumption, dreams, and desires manifested in consumer cultural Tamil and specific places of consumption that variously give rise to direct physical pleasure. (Featherstone, 2010). The consumer culture of the teenage and adult age groups makes them have different tastes because they consider the existing brand image, including the choice of KIS MINT candy products they consume.

Maximize the Use of Available Instagram Features

Undeniably, the human age is unique in various ways, including seeking information and communicating. The teenage and adult age groups are individuals who are familiar with technology, including social media. Communication and getting information are also done using social media. Seeing this condition, KIS MINT Candy also uses an Instagram account.

Instagram is a popular social media platform in Indonesia. Instagram of KIS MINT candy with the account name @kisduludong aims to provide information about the product to its consumers. It aligns with using Instagram to send information to the audience expected to become consumers. (Zulaikha, Ihda. Nuryanti. Istiyanto, 2022). It can be seen from the KIS MINT candy Instagram feeds page arrangement. Feeds is a term that refers to Instagram features that contain user profile pages containing profile photos, bios, links for links, story highlights, and uploaded photos and videos. (Metricool, 2023). Thus, KIS MINT candy utilizes Instagram to convey messages that are suitable for teenagers and adults.



Figure 4. Feeds Instagram @kisduludong

Researcher Documentation, 2024 (Kis, 2024) [source]

The selection of the background colour of KIS MINT candies constantly adapts to the flavour variants displayed. The display is also coupled with the presence of Quby animated characters who show a variety of expressions. It is related to the nature of expressive adolescents expressing feelings. KIS MINT candy utilizes this condition by displaying the Quby character on the packaging. It makes KIS MINT candy a favourite snack for the teenage age group because they feel there is something related to them.

“... favourite snack, delicious, soft, chewy - chewy, cute, various flavours...” (Interviewed Andini, 2 March 2024)

“....It such a funny shape (Kis Candy)...” (Interviewed Rahma, 8 March 2024)

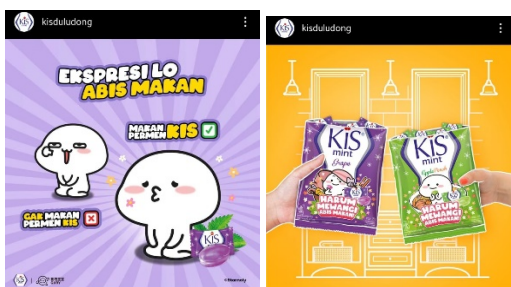


Figure 5. Quby Character on Kis Mint Candy Packaging

Researcher Documentation, 2024 (Kis, 2024) [source]

Meanwhile, KIS MINT HIMALAYA SALT candy displays the daily activities of adult groups, such as working and gathering with friends. The appearance of uploads related to KIS MINT HIMALAYA SALT is also adjusted to the colour of the flavour variant of the product. Thus, the consistency and function elements of the Instagram posts can attract the adult age group to consume candy.

“...Usually, after eating, I have to eat something hard - like candy or ice cubes...otherwise, when I am in class while absorbing knowledge from the lecturer, I cannot let my mouth be idle..” (Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)



Figure 6. Adult Age Group Activity while Enjoying Kis Mint Himalaya Salt Candy
Researcher Documentation, 2024 (Kis, 2024) [source]

Using colours to make a difference among KIS Candy products, animated characters, and individual activities through Instagram Story becomes part of the brand's visual identity. A brand's visual identity aims to communicate product features, benefits, brand personality, and brand value in the eyes of consumers. Consumers can derive associations about a brand from the visual appearance of a product. The visual appearance of a product is a powerful tool for creating brand loyalty. Visual identification of a brand is essential for brand identification and brand communication. (Mirzai et al., 2016).

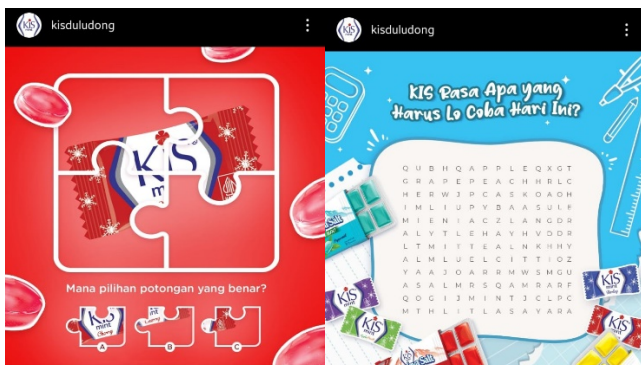


Figure 7. Quiz to Create Social Interaction
Researcher Documentation, 2024 (Kis, 2024)

This is done through social media, which creates interaction between Kis Mint candy and Instagram users. Focused social interaction requires conversation partners to recognize each other as unique individuals. This condition gives rise to directed communication. Directed communication is relationships between relational partners, more often among close friends, associated with greater bond strength over time and motivated by the desire to maintain it. Example: comments and wall posts/feeds (Hall, 2018). Therefore, Kis Mint Candy maximizes the use of the feeds feature by uploading content that creates social interaction on Instagram.

This relates to organizing each content element uploaded to the @kisduludong Instagram account by considering the segmentation owned by the product. Segmentation identifies specific groups of people to determine potential consumers with the same attributes. The same habits in the group determine the similarities. (Andaleeb, n.d.). KIS MINT candy targets individuals who are active in daily activities and need something extra that can be consumed directly, especially after the main meal. The goal is to eliminate bad breath from leftover food.

“...If you want to chew - chew, for example, after eating that makes your mouth smell, eat Kiss so that it smells good to eliminate bad breath, or if you want or are sad, you can eat much candy...” (Interviewed Kayla, 8 March 2024)

“...Because I always have candy in my bag, so it is just candy..” (Interviewed Tiyak, 5 March 2024)

Therefore, KIS MINT candy pack content is uploaded on Instagram feeds according to the message it wants to convey to its consumers. The posts also emphasize the practicality that consumers get when consuming KIS MINT candy. The

various benefits obtained can be seen easily on the Instagram feeds of KIS MINT candies. Thus, Instagram functions as a digital catalogue. It serves to display the various benefits of KIS MINT candy. Consumers can also easily see the history and what is being done by KIS MINT candy. (Hayati & Saraswati, 2023).

Unfortunately, the KIS MINT candy Instagram account does not yet use the blue tick facility. The blue tick is a sign of a 'real' account after being submitted and checked by the platform management team to guarantee the authenticity of an account. This condition makes the blue tick a signifier representing the account status as authentic and complex to obtain (Yanto & Hikmah, 2023). The blue tick is usually used by accounts of public figures, public organizations, and companies to prove the authenticity of the account. So, the KIS MINT candy Instagram account needs to get the blue tick to increase public trust in the products offered, especially for teenage and adult consumers.

The explanation above is based on the premise of consumer culture: satisfaction derived from objects related to access to objects that are socially structured in a predetermined event in which satisfaction and status depend on the designation and maintenance of differences in inflationary conditions. (Featherstone, 2010). KIS MINT candy focuses on the perception of the target audience. This is because KIS MINT Candy wants to build a beautiful brand. (Stratten, S., & Stratten, 2019). This condition is carried out by avoiding the "kids" mentality in candy products among teenage and adult consumers through Instagram. Instagram is familiar to teenagers and adults because of its ease of access. It makes Instagram a favourable medium for KIS MINT candy to gain satisfaction from teenage and adult consumers, and they can consider consuming KIS MINT candy because it is far from children's image.

CONCLUSION

The branding strategy of KIS MINT on Instagram effectively targets teenagers and adults by aligning with their lifestyles, taste preferences, and digital habits. By associating candy consumption with daily routines, Kis Mint reinforces its relevance for both age groups. Its diverse flavour offerings cater to different preferences, with sweeter options for teenagers and sour variants with added Himalayan salt for health-conscious adults. The brand also strategically utilizes individual packaging to maintain a mature appeal. Furthermore, Kis Mint maximizes Instagram's features, particularly its feed, to engage users through interactive content such as quizzes while emphasizing product benefits like breath-freshening properties.

Despite these strategic efforts, this study is limited to Kis Mint's branding approach on Instagram, making its findings less generalizable to other platforms or brands. Additionally, the study relies on qualitative methods without direct consumer insights from surveys or focus groups, and it does not measure brand performance in terms of engagement or sales. Furthermore, while Kis Mint's posts highlight the importance of copywriting, this study does not explore its full impact. Future research could address these gaps by incorporating quantitative analysis, exploring branding strategies across multiple social media platforms, and assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing through consumer feedback and sales performance.

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