9 endorsed brand examples: How partnerships drive success

Category: Strategy
written by Stewart Hodgson | 25 April 2024

As companies grow, their branding strategies often evolve too. Some organizations launch new “sub-brands”, to help them connect with different audiences, launch new products, and explore various opportunities. However, the identity these organizations create for their “child brands” can vary.

As you’ll see from the endorsed brand examples we’ll cover below, some innovators choose to give their new brands their distinct image and personality, while also highlighting a connection to the parent brand.

This form of “brand architecture strategy” can be a great way for a new company to take advantage of the existing brand equity its parent organization has.

So, how exactly do endorsed brands work, when does this architecture make the most sense for evolving organizations, and what does endorsement look like?

I’ve scoured the web (and our own case studies here at Fabrik), to bring you this list of the best endorsed brand architecture examples, across the globe.



What is an endorsed brand in brand architecture?

Endorsed brands or endorsed “sub-brands”, are basically smaller entities belonging to a parent brand, that have their own identities, but share a clear link with the controlling organization.

These companies have a reputation, personality, and visual image entirely unique to them. However, they also highlight their relationship with a larger, more established company. Think of how Nestlé showcases its logo like a badge of honor on countless products.

The endorsed brand architecture is just one of the various ways companies can bridge the gaps between their assets, and manage a larger brand family. If you want to learn more about how each form of brand architecture works, you can check out our guide here.

Endorsed brand vs sub brand: What’s the difference?

So, how is an endorsed brand different from a sub-brand?

The core difference generally lies in the involvement of the parent company. Endorsed brands can receive support from a parent brand, they operate independently. They have their own unique selection of different products, their own go-to-market strategy, and their own marketing methods.

Where sub-brands are an extension of the parent company, offering sharing the same values and priorities, endorsed brands carve their own space in the market.

Companies can use these “children brands” as a way of strategically building out their portfolio, and reaching new audiences.

With sub-brands, there’s often a much bigger focus on the role of the parent brand in the organization.

An endorser brand might just add its name to a company’s products as a small “qualifier”, like the “Sony” part included on PlayStation boxes:



For a sub-brand, most companies will draw more attention to the parent organization on packaging, and in marketing assets. For example, the main thing that stands out on all of FedEx's logos for its sub-brands, is the "FedEx" name.



The benefits of the endorsed brand architecture

The right brand architecture for any company can vary depending on countless factors. With Fabrik, I've worked with countless companies using different brand architecture models, from the "umbrella brand" approach, to the "product brand" architecture.

Like any branding strategy, an endorsed brand architecture has its pros and cons. On the one hand, there's a risk that damage to the reputation of a parent or child brand could affect the rest of the connected companies.

We've all seen how Nestlé scandals have influenced the sales of all the various products offered by the wider Nestlé conglomeration.

On the other hand, endorsement branding can have a lot of advantages, such as:

The option to create a distinct identity

With the endorsed model, companies can create a strong brand personality, image, and identity for each of their sub-brands, making it easier to reach new audiences. Since each brand has its own distinct identity, it's possible to branch into new markets and explore different services.

Existing brand equity

Although each endorsed brand in your business will have a unique identity, it benefits from the "endorsement" of your larger parent company.

This means you can grow your company faster, because it will already have access to the equity and reputation you've developed for your larger company.

Reduced risk

Endorsed brands do face fewer risks than some sub-brands. There are cases when the actions of a “sibling brand” won’t necessarily influence the reputation of another organization in your company’s portfolio.

If someone has a bad experience with a PlayStation, they won’t always automatically avoid buying a TV or headphones from Sony.

9 amazing, endorsed brand examples

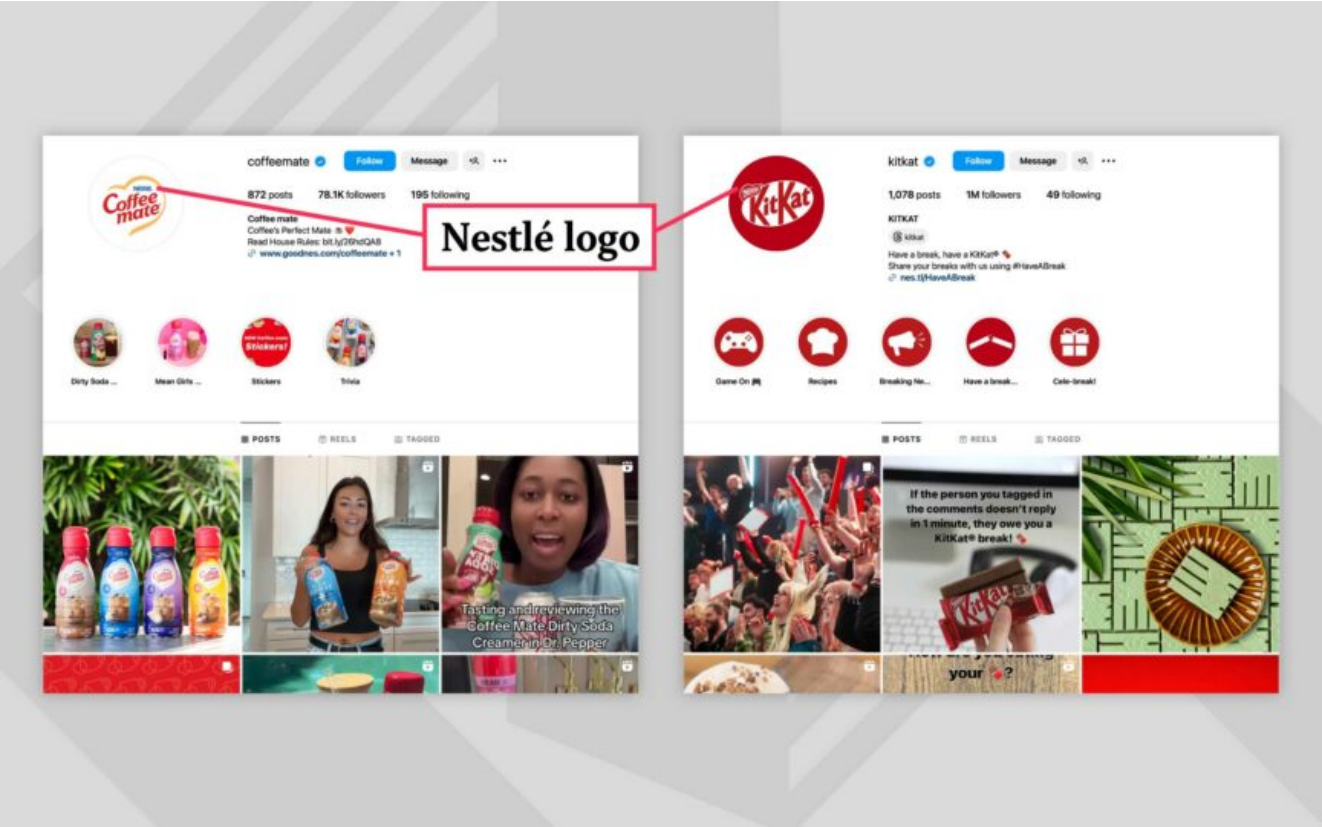
Now you know what an endorsed brand is, and how it works, let’s dive into some examples. There are actually more endorsed brand examples out there than you might realize, here are just some of my favorites, and an insight into what you can learn from them.



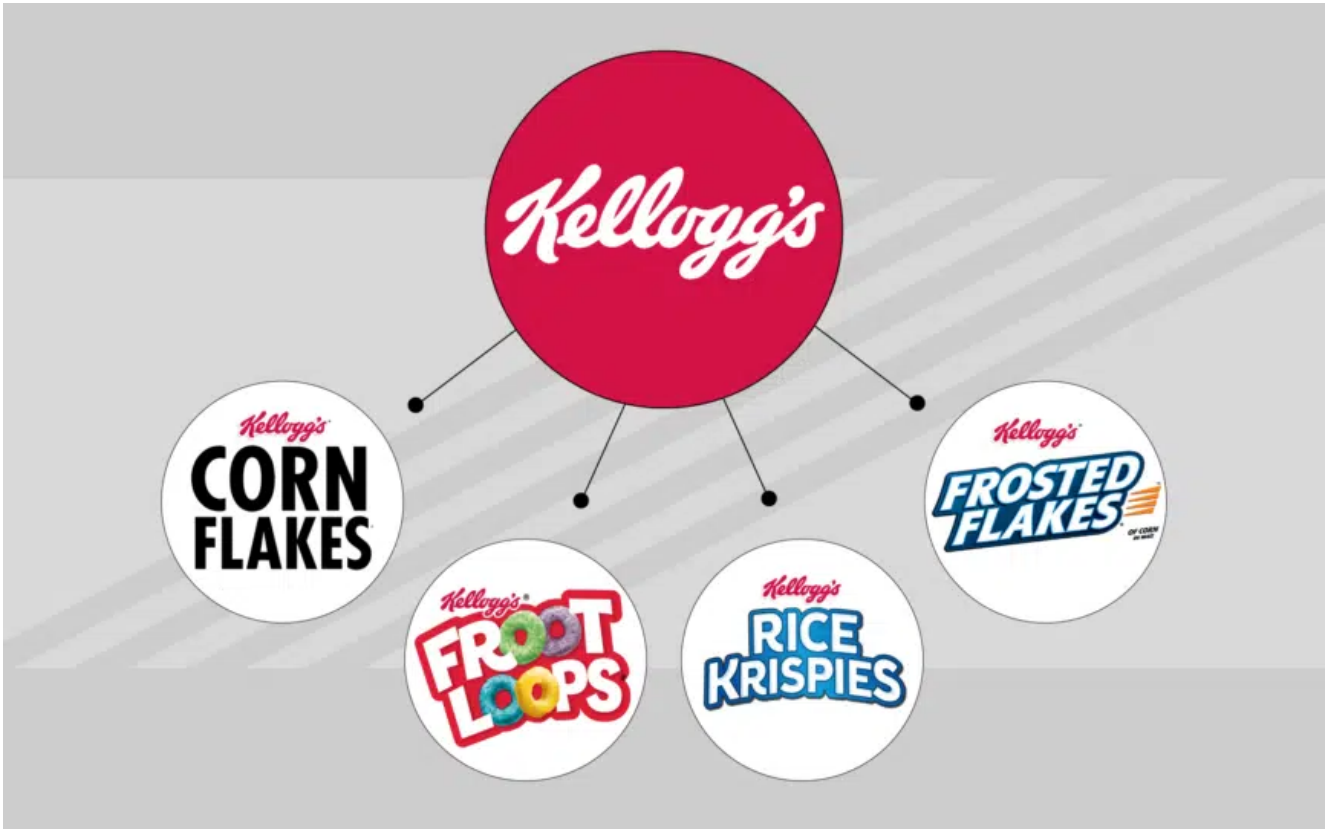
1. Nestlé

Love it or loathe it, Nestlé is one of the biggest companies in the world. Despite what you might think, it's not just responsible for a wide range of chocolate treats. Nestlé owns more than 2,000 brands in 186 countries, selling everything from baby food to ice cream.

Each brand owned by Nestlé has its own distinct identity. The logo and marketing materials used by KitKat are very different to those used by Coffee Mate, for instance. But you'll notice Nestlé is always present in the branding mix.



Using the endorsed brand architecture, Nestlé has been able to boost the visibility of its main brand, while extending into new markets. Plus, it ensures each new product "category" it experiments with doesn't dilute its overall brand image.



2. Kellogg’s

While Kellogg’s’ product range might not be as extensive as Nestle’s, the company is still an excellent example of how brand endorsement can work. Over the years, Kellogg’s has become one of the biggest competitors in the cereal industry.

One of the reasons for this is that it appeals to so many different markets, and types of consumer, with an endorsed brand strategy. Each cereal created by Kellogg’s has its own unique personality, from the fun, youth-focused branding of Froot Loops, to the more traditional identity of Corn Flakes.

This has allowed Kellogg’s to build a massive target audience, and diversify its brand portfolio, while still maintaining a significant presence in the average cereal aisle.

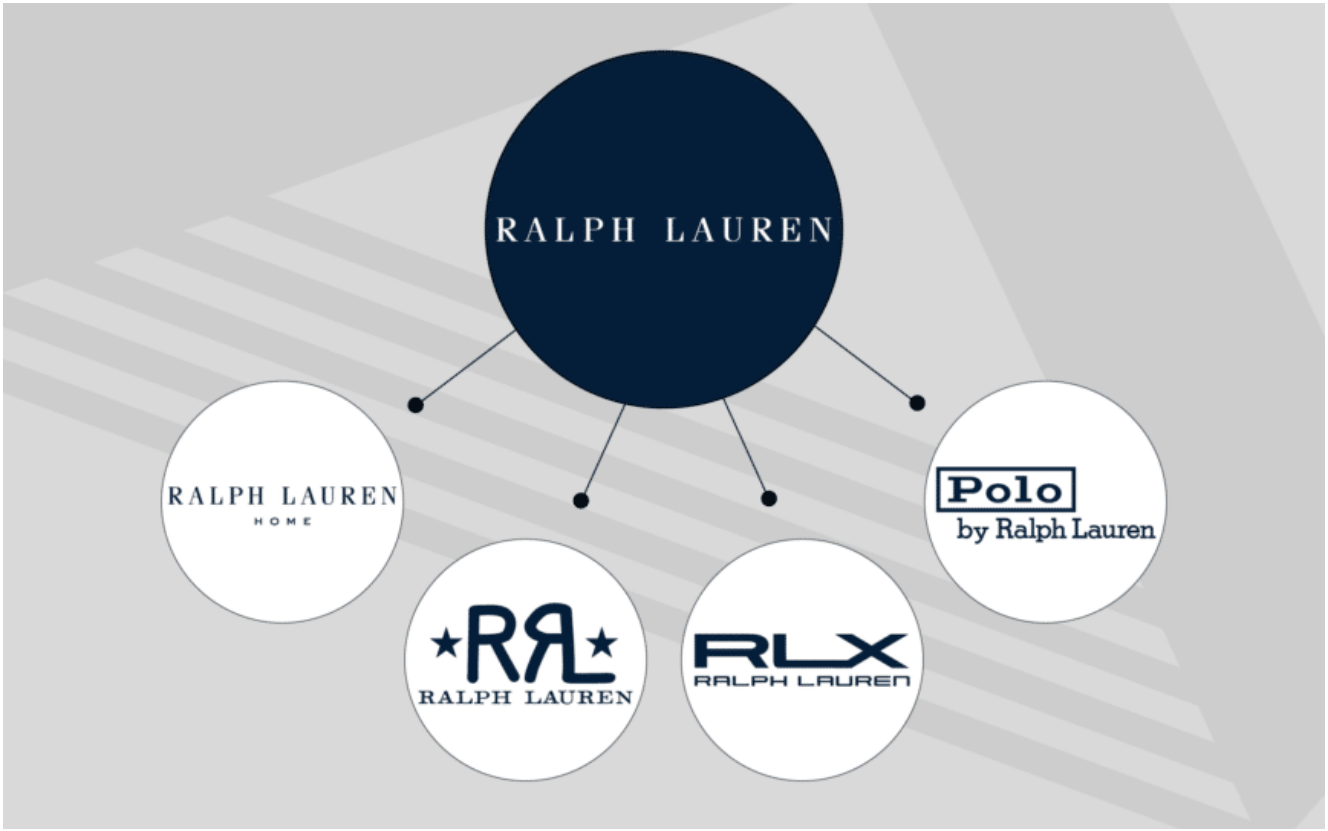


3. Marriott

Another excellent addition to my list of great endorsed brand examples, is Marriott. You probably know Marriott as one of the top hotel conglomerates in the world. Some of the company's brands follow a more traditional house of brands structure.

For instance, Marriot's "executive apartments" are really just an extension of the larger Marriot brand. However, other organizations have their own distinct identities and names. What connects all of these companies is the "Marriot" logo included on their banners.

This ensures each hotel, motel, and apartment collection can have their own personality and unique appeal, while also taking advantage of Marriot's powerful presence in the hospitality industry.

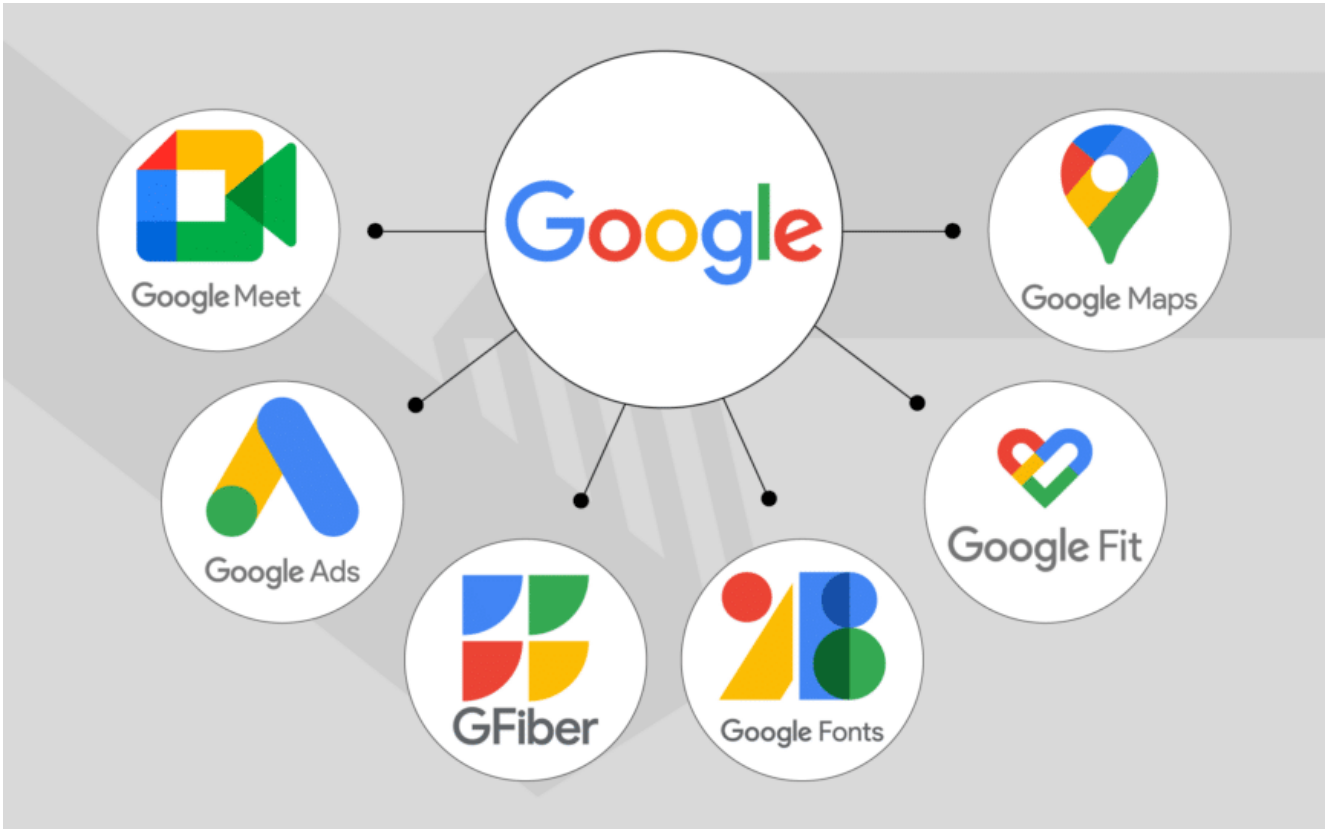


4. Ralph Lauren

Ralph Lauren isn't just a single clothing brand. It's actually a massive company, with a range of different "sub-brands" under its wing. There's the standard "Ralph Lauren" company you probably associate with high-quality fashion.

However, there are various other distinct brands in the collection too, such as "The Polo Bar", an American restaurant created by the famous fashion designer, as well as Polo Sport and Polo Golf.

All of these various brands have a direct tie to the Ralph Lauren name, but they ensure the company can branch out into different product categories. By building a range of sub-brands off its larger corporate brand, Ralph Lauren has earned a reputation as a leader in luxury, not just clothing.

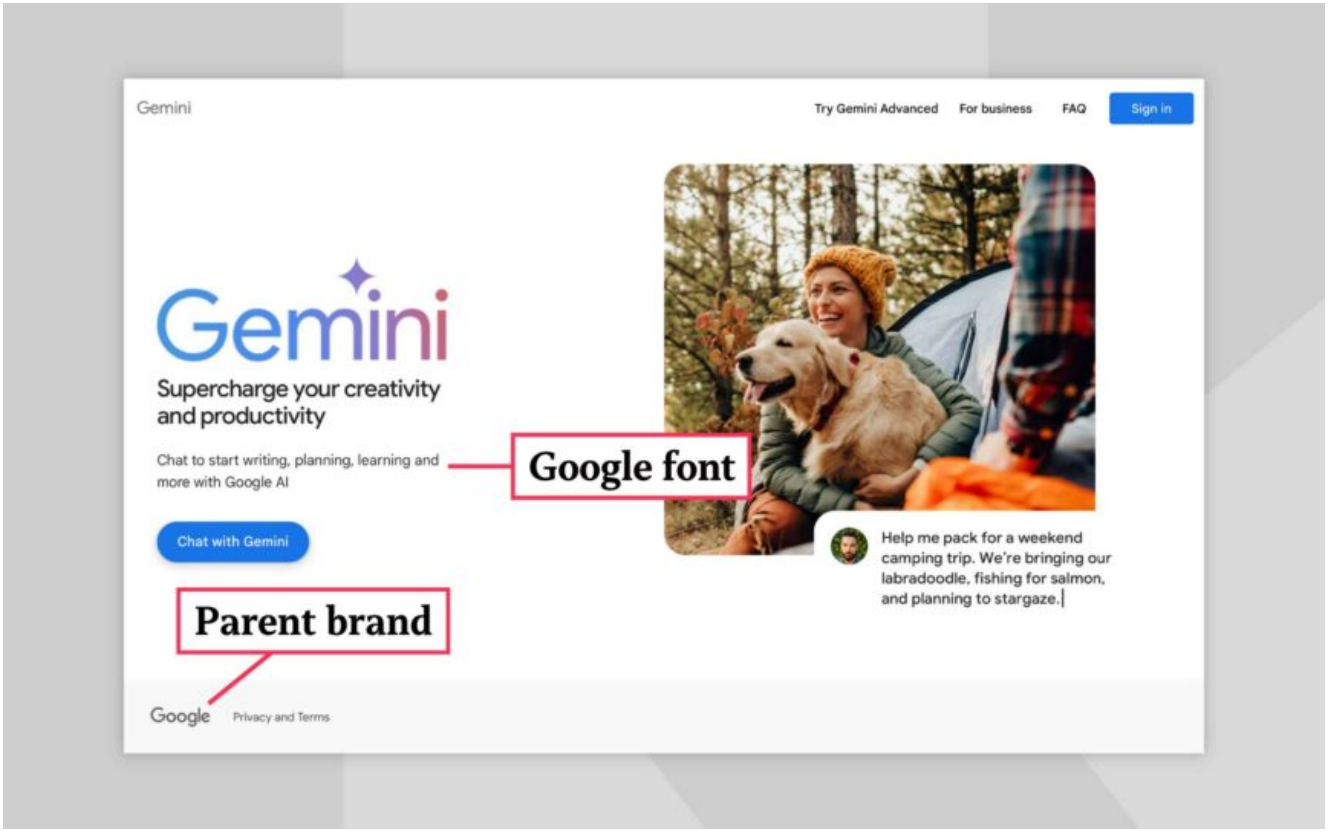


5. Google

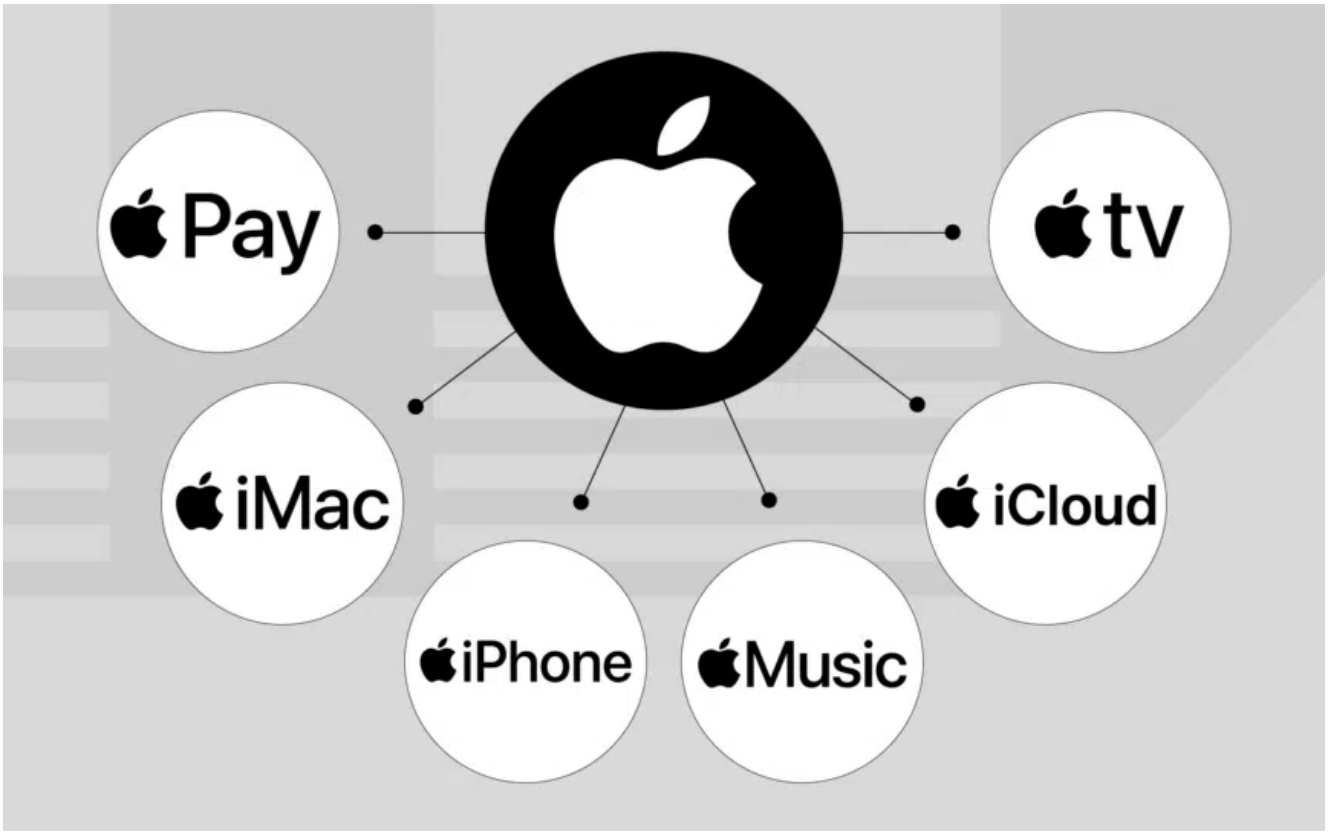
Google is a company I frequently see being overlooked on other lists of endorsed brand examples. I think the main reason for this is that the company takes such a diverse approach to creating its brand extensions, and sub-brands.

Some of the different brands in Google's collection don't feature any reference to the parent company at all. For instance, you won't see the brand name "Google", or the Google logo on distinct brands like YouTube, and Android, even though they belong to the same group.

However, there are certain smaller brands in Google's portfolio that do use the endorsing brand strategy. For instance, Google's Gemini large language model tools feature Google's branding, albeit, in a pretty limited capacity.



Google also adds its branding to a range of products. The “Chromecast” devices you get for TV streaming come with the classic “G” of the Google logo embedded into them, just to remind you which parent company you’re dealing with.



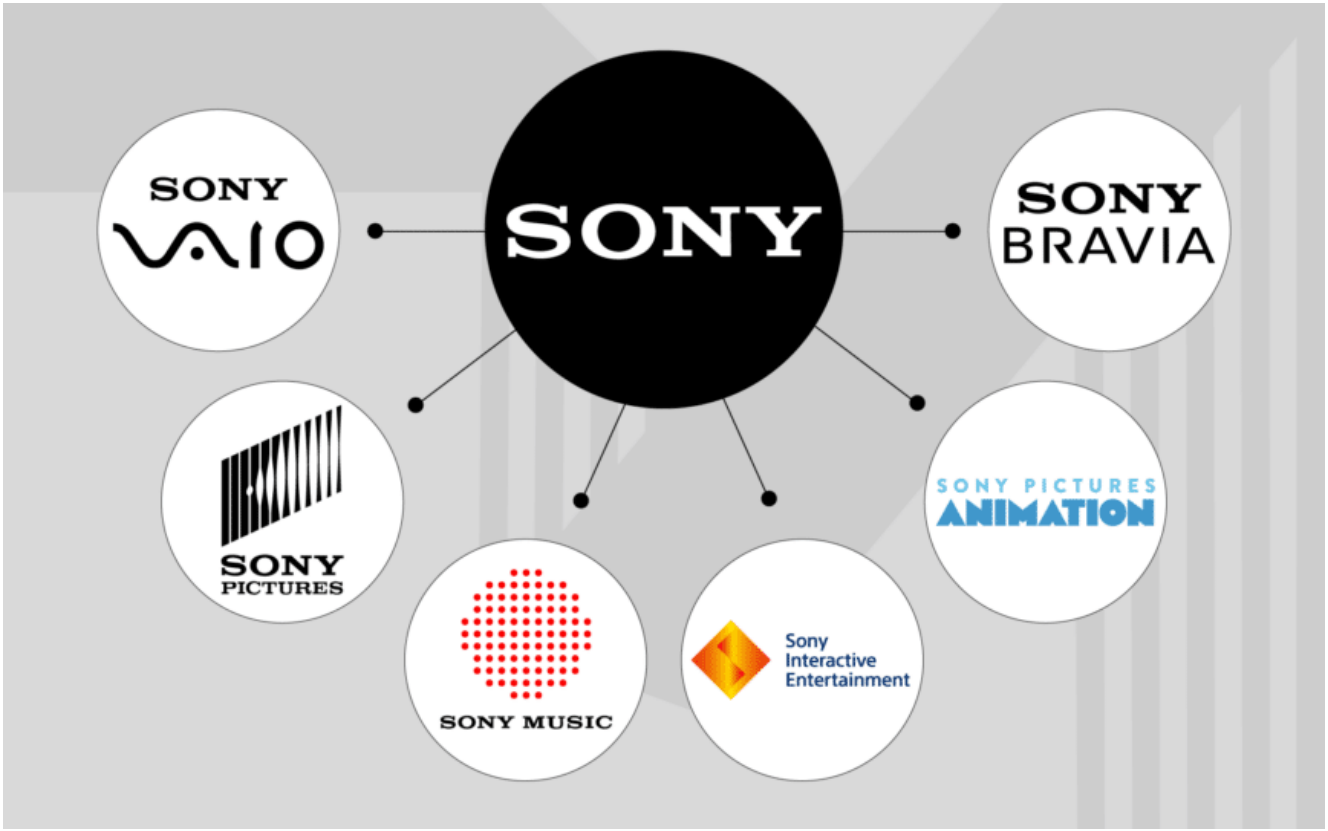
6. Apple

Like Google, Apple uses a hybrid model with its branding, combining different types of brand architecture into one unique strategy. You might not even be aware of all the different companies Apple actually owns.

Did you know Apple owns Beats Electronics, PrimeSense, and Shazam? However there are plenty of products and "sub-brands" in Apple's collection that use the brand endorsement strategy. Mac, the computer-focused strand of the business, uses the Apple logo, and branding.

The same goes for the iPhone, Apple Watch, Apple TV, and Apple Pay. Apple's structure is a little closer to the "house of brands" model, however, as each distinct company labelled with the Apple logo tends to have a similar vision and values to the parent brand.

Notably, however, the target audience of each company is slightly different, ensuring Apple can cement its position as a leader in the technology space, not just in the smartphone landscape.

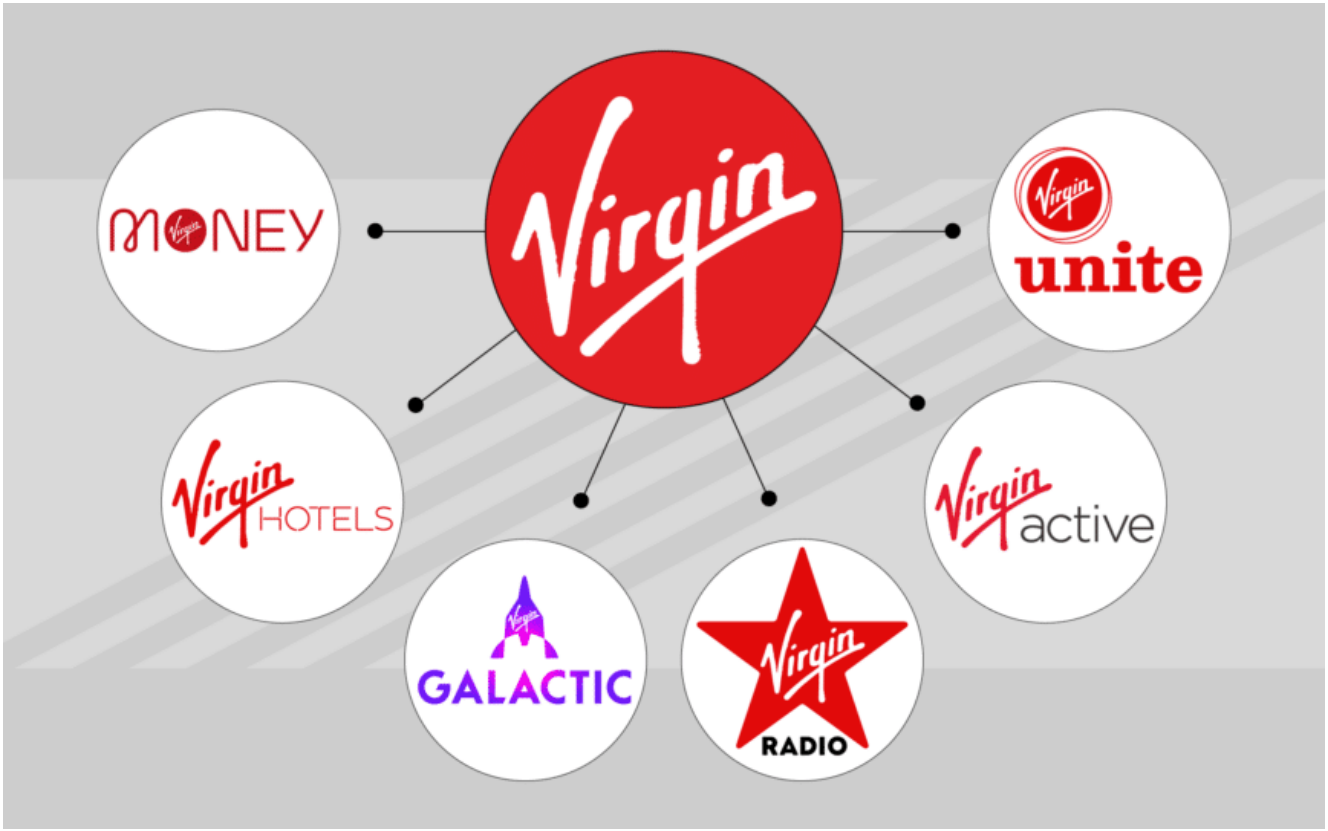


7. Sony

I mentioned Sony above, but it's one of my favorite endorsed brand examples. Sony isn't always extremely obvious about its position as an "endorsing" brand with its various sub companies. The Sony Playstation logo doesn't include any reference to "Sony" directly.

However, you can see Sony's involvement in the packaging it uses for its products, and its marketing strategies. Some of Sony's sub-brands are a little more obviously connected to the main, original brand, such as Sony Pictures, and Sony Music.

Others have a very distinct identity, like Vaio, Walkman, and Luma. Like the other endorsed brand architecture examples I've mentioned here, Sony's approach ensures it can have a significant presence in the technology landscape, without focusing too heavily on a single niche.



8. Virgin

Some brand experts will argue that the Virgin brand architecture takes more of a “branded house” approach, rather than using the endorsed brands model. That does make sense to a degree, as all of Virgin’s solutions definitely feature the “Virgin” name and logo pretty heavily.

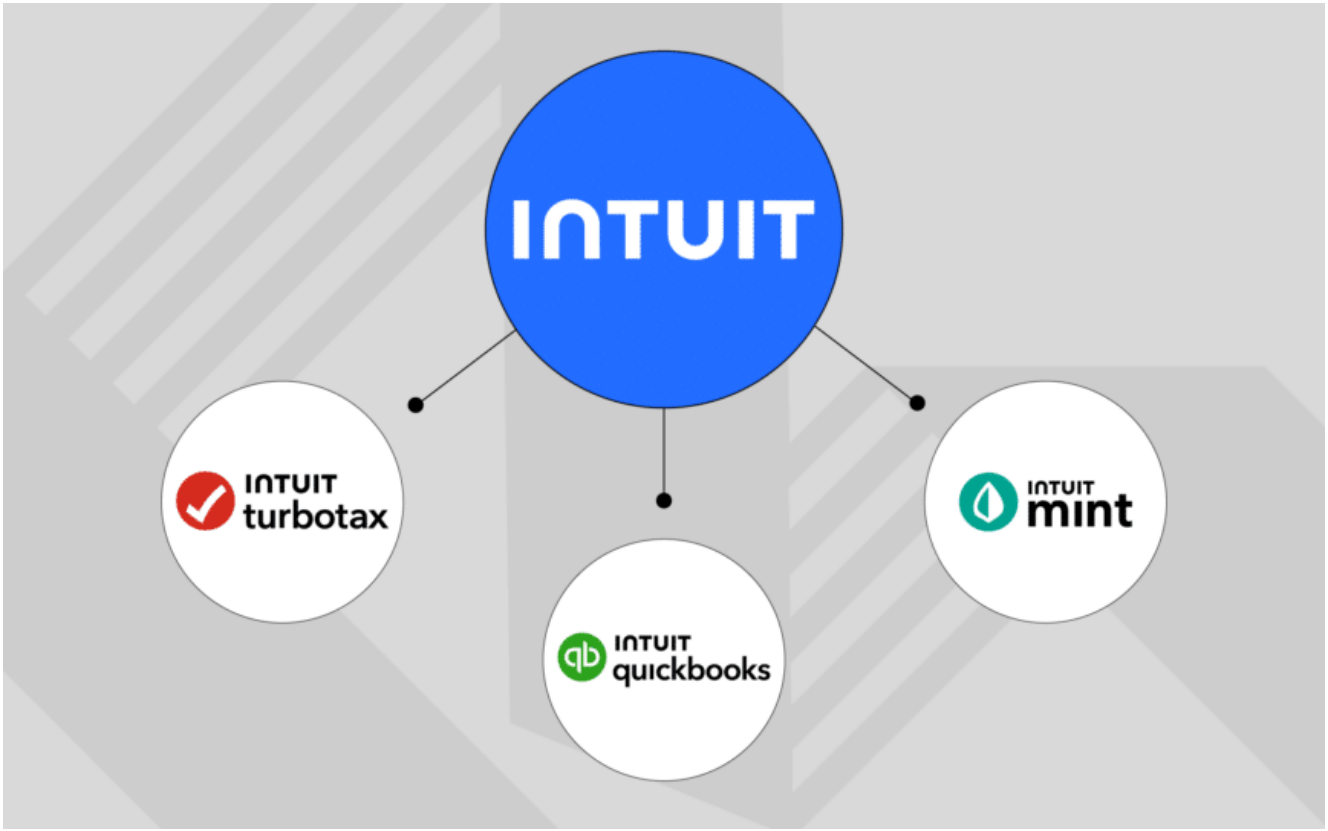
However, it’s worth noting that many of Virgin’s separate brands do still have their own identity, image, and target audience. The brand image for Virgin Money, for example, is very different to the one used for Virgin Media.

Some companies in the organization’s portfolio even have their own distinct brand colors, like Virgin Atlantic.



Although most of the colors and brand elements used in Virgin's sub-brands are consistent, the company takes a unique approach to targeting different market segments with each brand.

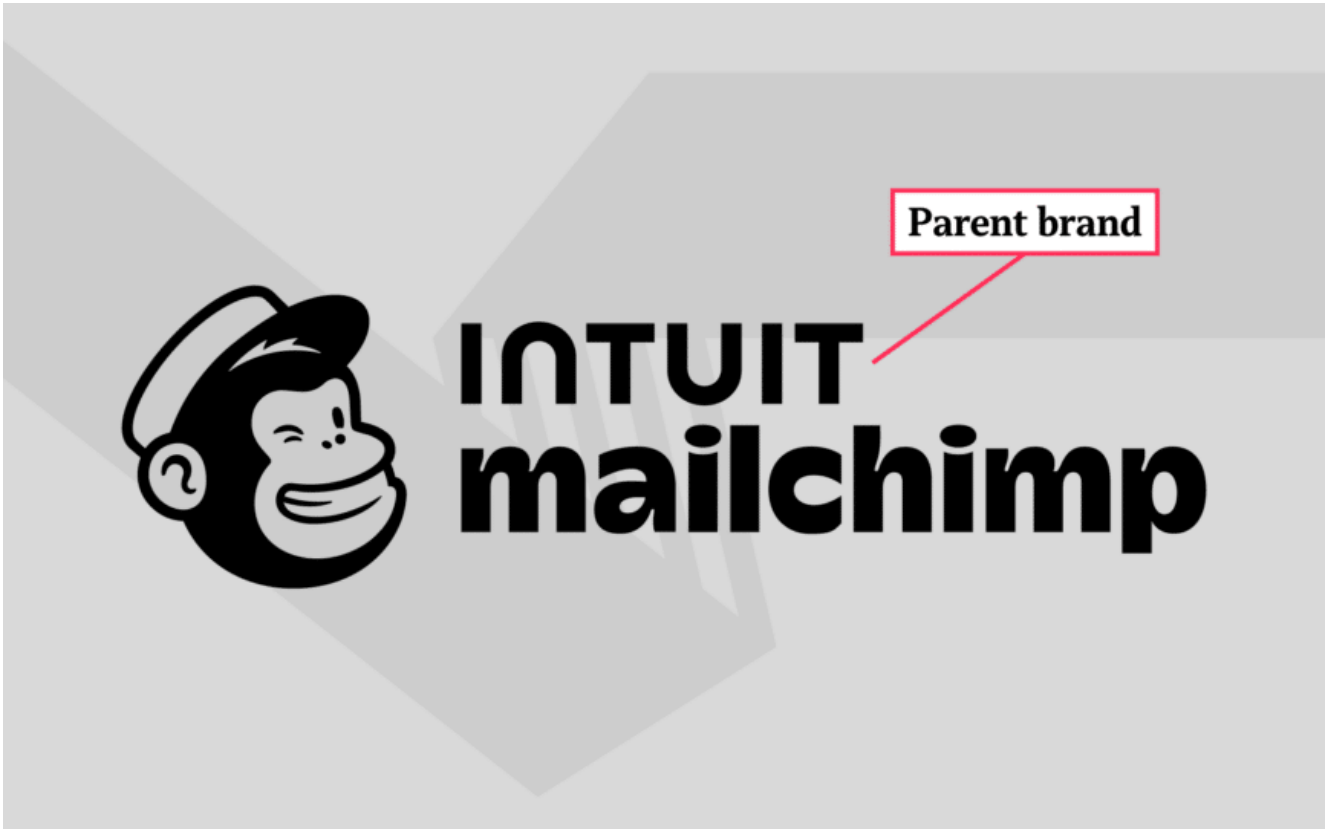
Each organization also has its own unique brand promise and mission. Virgin Money wants to make managing your finances simple, while Virgin Atlantic wants to help people explore the world.



9. Intuit

Finally, Intuit is a leading technology and software company, with a bunch of different smaller brands under its belt.

You’re probably most familiar with QuickBooks, the tax software offered by Intuit, but the company is also responsible for Mint, the personal finance service, and Mailchimp, the email marketing platform.



Intuit also owns Credit Karma, and the TurboTax accounting platform. Most of the sub-brands owned by Intuit highlight the parent company's logo in their own brand marks. However, every individual company has its own unique personality, messaging strategy, and target audience.

Like the other endorsed brand examples I've mentioned here, Intuit's strategy has allowed it to create a comprehensive portfolio of brands, that all benefit from the larger company's existing reputation.

Plus, this approach means Intuit hasn't been limited to simply serving companies in search of tax and accounting tools. It's begun to branch out into different areas of the software market, giving it an opportunity to increase its revenue substantially over the years.

Tips for mastering the endorsed

brand architecture

Hopefully, the endorsed brand examples above have given you an insight into just how valuable this architectural model can be. However, it’s worth noting that the endorsed brand strategy won’t work for everyone.

Whenever we work with a company here at Fabrik to build their ideal architecture, we take numerous factors into account to prepare them for success.

Here are some of my top tips to help you master your endorsed brand architecture strategy:

Focus on the parent brand first

To build an effective brand architecture with any model, you first need a strong parent brand. The better the reputation of your larger parent company, the more your sub-brands will benefit from its reputation.

Make sure you have a clear strategy for building and promoting your “main brand”.

Give each brand a distinct identity

A core part of the endorsed brand model is ensuring each of your sub brands have their own identity. They need a unique visual identity, personality, and messaging strategy, tailored to their intended target audience.

Clearly communicate the endorsement

Make sure it’s easy for your customers to identify the connection between your sub-brands and your parent brand. You can add your logo or name to product packaging, and even use similar colors across multiple companies.

Monitor brand reputation

Keep a close eye on the reputation of each of your sub-brands,

to ensure that a problem for one company doesn’t cause issues for the rest of your organizations. Take a consistent approach to engaging and retaining your customers.

Allow for flexibility

If one of your sub-brands starts to evolve, offering a wider portfolio of products, or gaining a reputation of its own, consider allowing it to spin out as an individual brand.

Alternatively, you could consider removing your endorsement from various companies that threaten to have a negative impact on your brand equity.

The most important tip of all, is to seek help from a brand expert. Working with a brand strategist, or brand consultant, like Fabrik, can give you the expertise and insights you need to choose and implement the perfect architecture.

We work with companies to identify their target audience, their goals for growth, and their position in the market, so they can choose the architecture that makes the most sense for them.

Learning from the top endorsed brands

As you can see from the endorsed brand examples I’ve covered above, the endorsement branding model can be an excellent strategy for some companies. It’s a great way to expand your reach to new markets, and explore new product offerings, without diluting your parent brand.

Plus, it gives you an opportunity to build new organizations while leveraging the reputation and equity you’ve already developed for your main company. However, like any branding strategy, the “endorsement architecture” needs to be implemented with care.

If you're struggling to build the perfect architecture for your evolving company, contact Fabrik today to see how we can help.

FAQs

What is an endorsed brand in marketing?

Endorsed brands, or endorsed sub-brands are the smaller brands in a company's portfolio that share a strong connection to their parent brand but have their own unique identity.

They build their own reputation, sell unique products, and target a distinct target audience, but still benefit from the reputation and equity of an existing company.

Is Apple an endorsed brand?

Apple is one example of a company that uses the brand endorsement model, although it's sometimes seen as more of a "branded house" company. Apple adds its logo and various branding elements to a selection of sub-brands and products, such as the iPhone and Mac collections.

What are the benefits of endorsement branding?

Endorsement branding allows companies to create distinct sub-brands or organizations with their own unique identities and logos, so they can reach new customers and markets.

However, at the same time, these companies retain a connection to their parent brand, helping them to rapidly earn the trust of customers, based on the larger organization's reputation.

What are some popular endorsed brand architecture examples?

Just some companies that use the endorsed brand architecture include Nestlé, Marriot Hotels, Sony, Intuit, and Virgin. Any company with sub-brands that have their own audience or

distinct identity but share branding elements of the parent brand can be classed as an endorsed brand.

How can an endorsed brand benefit a parent brand?

An endorsed brand allows companies to branch out into new product categories and markets. Additionally, the right marketing strategies for a sub-brand can increase awareness of a parent company, and help to improve that organization’s reputation.