

GÉRALDINE MICHEL & REINE WILLING

# THE ART OF SUCCESSFUL BRAND COLLABORATIONS

Partnerships with Artists, Designers, Museums,  
Territories, Sports, Celebrities, Science,  
Good Causes...and More

ROUTLEDGE



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DESIGNERS, MUSEUMS,  
TERRITORIES, SPORTS,  
CELEBRITIES, SCIENCE, GOOD  
CAUSES ... AND MORE

Géraldine Michel and Reine Willing

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# THE ART OF SUCCESSFUL BRAND COLLABORATIONS

**B**rand collaborations are widely considered the art of the perfect match. This book is a guide to understanding the process of brand collaborations and explains the key factors of success to build specific forms of collaborations between diverse partners. *The Art of Successful Brand Collaborations* gives tangible examples of partnerships between various kinds of internationally renowned artists, celebrities, brands and companies such as Coca-Cola, Louis Vuitton, Puma, David Beckham and Pharrell Williams.

In this vivid study, the academic and practitioner author team outline deep knowledge about the advantages and economic benefits of this marketing strategy. This includes additional meaning, improvement of the brand image, attracting new customers within different target groups and the development of the brand in new markets.

Filled with interviews from practitioners and vital academic and professional insights, this book is an essential guide for brand managers, professors and students to better understand and implement successfully the process of brand collaborations.

**Géraldine Michel** is Professor in Marketing at the Sorbonne Business School, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in France where she is Director of the Chair “Brands & Values” and Director of the research laboratory. She studies particularly the role of brands for consumers and employees based on social psychology and psychology. She is the author of four books on brand management and she has published in several academic journals. She lectures worldwide in countries such as France, China and Vietnam. And she has consulting engagements with companies on issues of brand development.

**Reine Willing** is the founder and CEO of 19-03, a global but niche consulting agency specializing in creating high quality partnerships between major brands and artists, celebrities, NGOs, good causes and foundations, alongside handling co-branding requests for limited editions, capsule collections and licensing deals. Based in Paris, she is highly involved in brand activism through partnerships and good cause marketing. An alumni of the Sorbonne University’s Marketing Masters programme, she is currently also educating others about brand partnerships through lectures in various universities.

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# Introduction

In the quest for innovation and the search for new relationships with consumers, companies are moving into brand collaborations and longterm or short-term partnerships for an ephemeral collection and different forms of brand collaboration are increasing. The union strengthens both partners, so  $1 + 1 > 2$ , and nothing seems to be stopping this interest in joining together brands, creators, artists, celebrities, NGOs, cultural institutions and territories, etc.

Until now, the term “co-branding” has often been associated with the launch of new products, or limited edition collections, launched in the world of fashion (H&M & Balmain, Adidas Stella McCartney) or cars (BMW & Louis Vuitton). Brand partnerships today are multiform – they can be envisaged with a variety of partners (brands, artists, territories, museums, etc.) and generate different kinds of creations (product, communication, events, experience, etc.). In this book we want to go beyond the idea of co-branding and show that, today, brand collaboration is a strategy that goes beyond the product and can give meaning to employees, consumers and citizens, involving both collaborations with retailers, NGOs, territories and also collaborations with celebrities that are associated with values or even social causes. In this sense, Nike’s partnership with Colin Kaepernick, an American football player excluded from the National Football League and criticized by Donald Trump, is emblematic of a brand collaboration which goes beyond the co-branded product and that enters the social and political spheres.

In this book, taking into account the evolution of companies’ practices, we consider brand collaborations as any type of partnership between a brand and a partner, aimed at a specific target. Like any union, with or without predecessors, brand collaborations can give birth to a new product but can also, rather than launching a new product, create a new event, a unique experience, a common advertising campaign, or may represent a sharing of the distribution network, etc. There are many types of partnerships; the difference between brand collaborations, and the classic “customersupplier” or “joint-venture” partnerships, lies in the communication action set up, internally or externally, by the brands and their partners to show the interest in, and the uniqueness of, the collaboration. What we do together we could never have created if we had stayed alone. Brand collaboration is the art of partnership and the creation of something new. Knowing how to collaborate, combine, and enrich oneself with other worlds reflects a certain openness, a dynamism, a renewal that is positively valued by society today.

## WHY HAVE WE WRITTEN THIS BOOK?

Given the extended role of brand collaborations and the increasingly strategic function of partnership departments in most companies, several questions emerge: What is the added value of a brand

collaboration for consumers and clients? What are the benefits and risks of brand collaborations? Are they win-win situations or do they bring more benefits to one of the partners? To address these questions, it is important to consider the place of brand collaborations at the heart of brand management. Building a strong brand means building a brand that makes sense to both employees and consumers<sup>1</sup>. How do brand collaborations influence this construction of brand identity? To answer this question, this book is born from the pedagogical desire to better understand brand collaboration strategies and from the idea of making the essential tools for its implementation accessible. Our goal is to show that brand collaborations go beyond partnerships to produce a new product or to develop a new advertising campaign for a limited period – brand collaboration represents a new philosophy for companies and brand management. Brand collaborations draw a new space of freedom where everything is made possible for brands with a “let’s go spirit.” Brand collaboration is also about successes, difficulties, problems, and failures. We have written this book to allow companies to share their experiences. Their stories, the backgrounds of their brand collaborations, provide an authentic picture for the readers. Finally, this book is also an encounter between the CEO of a renowned partnership agency and an acclaimed Professor of Marketing, both passionate about brand collaborations. Their partnership is perfectly encapsulated in this book.

## WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

**T**his book is dedicated to multiple targets: companies, students, and a wider audience.

**For managers**, this book provides a complete view of brand collaboration strategies. Because brand collaborations are growing in many companies and in different industries, and because little is known about its strategy, it is important to provide an in-depth vision to help companies and all types of organizations in the art of partnerships. This book provides companies with a multifaceted approach to brand collaboration that will enable them to set up relevant brand collaborations, developing their brands. By the end of this book, brand managers will be able to understand how brand collaborations create value for not just for the consumer, but also the company, and they will master the key strategies necessary to succeed. In particular, the last chapter will become an operational guide for all professionals wishing to set up a brand collaboration.

**For students**, this book provides a complete and accessible vision of brand collaboration strategies. Students will find in this book practical and original knowledge to better understand why and how to carry out brand collaborations, integrated into strategic brand management. Students will find many examples, in a wide variety of

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Michel, G. (2017). *Au Coeur de la Marque, les Clés du Management de la Marque*, 3rd edition. Malakoff: Dunod.

sectors, allowing them to assimilate this new knowledge as much as possible.

**For a wider audience**, this book is very accessible. It allows consumers to understand how brand collaborations are implemented by brands. Consumers' and managers' testimonials unveil the background to the brand collaborations proliferating on supermarket shelves, in department stores, in the industry, and throughout the service sector. Illustrated with more than 60 images, this book allows readers to discover, or rediscover, particular brand collaborations. It can be easily read, following the images and the managers' and consumers' testimonies.

## HOW IS THIS BOOK ORGANIZED?

In order to have a better understanding of brand collaboration, this book follows a managerial approach. Highlighting current and new knowledge about brand collaborations, the two parts capture the essence and the main levers of this strategy and show how to define brand collaboration. In order to present original knowledge about brand collaboration, this book is based on three main principles:

- New knowledge diffusion: Presenting an original approach to brand collaboration.
- Pedagogy: Developing a co-branding guide for managers.
- Diversity: Analyzing brands in different sectors; for example, Business to Consumer or Business to Business.

This book, organized in two parts, shares a new vision of brand collaboration.

**Part I**, "A complete view of brand collaboration," focuses on presenting the different possible partners in brand collaborations and identifies the different creations made possible by the marriage between brands and these different partners. This first part is organized around seven chapters highlighting different kinds of collaborations and integrating testimonies from top managers in different industries. The 16 interviews unveil the background to various brand collaborations and tell unique stories about successful and less successful encounters. These testimonies help identify new trends in brand collaborations – more focused on co-construction and suggesting a 360° management of brand collaboration. Supported by multiple examples and consumer stories, this part shows how brand collaboration creates values internally and externally and reveals that beyond the launching of new products, brand collaborations also create unique experiences and emotional energy, and enlarge the commitment of brands in social and environmental concerns.

**Part II**, "Key strategies and methods for successful brand collaborations," presents the fundamental tools of brand management, such as brand identity, brand image, and the brand's legitimacy principle. A good knowledge of these tools is essential to carry out a brand collaboration. In a second step, this part shows that beyond the usual levers of a brand collaboration – organized around

the notions of consistency, complementarity, unexpected marriage and added value for consumers – brand collaborations need new keys to succeed. Indeed, if a brand collaboration is at the heart of the brand management, it needs to take into account new specific levers (from product to values, from short-term to long-term, from storytelling to story-doing, etc.) to ensure a successful marriage and also to create value for both partners and consumers. This last part also contains an implementation guide, presenting the different steps essential to the realization of a brand collaboration. Starting with the choice of the partner and signature of the contract, through the negotiation between the partners and ending with the analysis of the brand collaboration's impact, this part will become the reference guide for all professionals who plan to start a brand collaboration. Happy reading!!!

Géraldine Michel

Professor, IAE Paris-Sorbonne, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne,  
Director of the Chair "Brands & Values" Paris, France.

and Reine Willing

Founder, Agency 19-03, specialized in Partnerships, Co-brandings,  
Celebrity Endorsements, Limited Editions, Sponsorships, Good Cause and  
Brand Activism collaborations, based Paris, France and Miami, USA.