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## **PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE COCA-COLA BRAND**

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, promotional campaigns are a crucial element of marketing strategies of companies that want to increase the popularity and sales of their products or services. The Coca-Cola company, which has been running successful advertising campaigns for many years now and has attracted several thousands customers, is a good example. The aim of the article is to analyze selected promotional campaigns of the Coca-Cola brand and to assess their impact on company perception.

### **1. The idea of company's promotional activities and the concepts of advertising campaign and brand image development**

The promotion of a company and its product is the element of the communication system between the company and its environment. Therefore, promotion can be treated as a kind of dialogue carried out through information and persuasion activities as well as feedback between the recipient and the sender of the message that aim at influencing current and potential buyers.<sup>1</sup>

Company's promotional activities may include advertising campaigns in traditional and digital media, participation in trade fairs and exhibitions, sponsoring events, organizing competitions, distributing samples or discount coupons, cooperating with influencers, etc.

Advertising campaign is a complex plan of marketing activities that aim at promoting a brand, product or service through focused and consistent communication with a group of selected recipients. Direct sales is not always the main goal of an advertising campaign but it is

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<sup>1</sup> J. Petrykowska, *Działania promocyjne realizowane przez przedsiębiorstwa produkcyjne - wyniki badania*, Problemy Zarządzania, Finansów i Marketingu nr 26, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego 2012, No. 712, [https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Problemy\\_Zarządzania\\_Finansow\\_i\\_Marketingu/Problemy\\_Zarządzania\\_Finansow\\_i\\_Marketingu-r2012-t26/Problemy\\_Zarządzania\\_Finansow\\_i\\_Marketingu-r2012-t26-s71-82/Problemy\\_Zarządzania\\_Finansow\\_i\\_Marketingu-r2012-t26-s71-82.pdf](https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Problemy_Zarządzania_Finansow_i_Marketingu/Problemy_Zarządzania_Finansow_i_Marketingu-r2012-t26/Problemy_Zarządzania_Finansow_i_Marketingu-r2012-t26-s71-82/Problemy_Zarządzania_Finansow_i_Marketingu-r2012-t26-s71-82.pdf), (Accessed: 17 May, 2023).

often intended to create an atmosphere favorable to future sales or to build long-term relationships with customers. It is often believed that the most important task of advertising is to attract attention. Therefore, it should be creative, interesting and distinctive from other advertising messages. It may be based on unique concepts, original ideas, humor, emotions and other elements that will draw attention and remain in the memory of recipients.

Advertising is understood as dissemination of information about products and services in order to influence the demand. In older literature on the subject, advertising was perceived as the activities of an organization that have impact on future buyers. In more recent studies, advertising is an effort to disseminate information and arouse interest.<sup>2</sup>

The classic marketing formula developed by McCarthy, the so-called 4P formula, consists of four elements: product, price, place and promotion. The goal of promotion is to influence the buyers of a given company's products through providing information that is intended to increase their awareness of the product and ultimately to create preferences on the market. It is worth noting that promotion uses various tools; the classic ones include sales promotion, advertising, personal sales and public relations.<sup>3</sup>

According to Ph. Kotler, the main theoretician of marketing, advertising is one of the tools used in marketing operations which is not necessarily the most important one. When planning advertising, it is important to choose the media to be used. In order to determine the most profitable means of communication for a given advertisement, various measures of the attractiveness of particular media are used. They include, for example, the estimated number of listeners to a radio station at a specific time, the average minute viewership of television or the sold circulation of a newspaper.<sup>4</sup>

Effective advertising campaigns bring several benefits to companies, including the increase in brand awareness, better communication with consumers, increasing or maintaining market share, introducing a new product/service and maintaining or gaining consumer loyalty.<sup>5</sup>

A brand can be defined as a set of properties (such as name, term, design symbol) created to distinguish the seller from its competitors on the market<sup>6</sup>. A brand is a key tool to create an

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<sup>2</sup> K. Grzybczyk, *Prawo reklamy*, [https://books.google.pl/books?hl=pl&lr=lang\\_pl&id=8KNSAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=kampania+reklamowa&ots=ica\\_iwNNzi&sig=iIaoQHXYXoAwWdwvpQYpfSabn8NY&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.pl/books?hl=pl&lr=lang_pl&id=8KNSAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=kampania+reklamowa&ots=ica_iwNNzi&sig=iIaoQHXYXoAwWdwvpQYpfSabn8NY&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false) (Accessed: 2 July 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> M. Kaszelna, M. Błądek, *Kampania reklamowa*, [https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Kampania\\_reklamowa](https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Kampania_reklamowa) (Accessed: 8 May, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> M. Jędrzyk, *Co to jest kampania reklamowa?*, <https://ks.pl/sloownik/co-to-jest-kampania-reklamowa> (Accessed: 8 May, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> M. Brzozowska-Woś, *Media społecznościowe a wizerunek marki*, „Zarządzanie i Finanse” 2013, No. 11,

image and is perceived as a set of features that give functional benefits and added values to the product. A brand is not only just a designation but also an independent product whose value and potential can be assessed. A brand creates a positive reputation for a product, increases its attractiveness, provides a sense of security and high value for customers, and is distinguishable from competitors. It attracts customers, increases loyalty and demand, and brings benefits in the form of lower production and distribution costs. It plays an important role in the creation of goodwill. It is also a message created by the company and an opinion formed by customers on the basis of associations with a particular product. A brand attracts people and convinces them that a given product has certain features although this is not necessarily true.<sup>7</sup> A.K Pradeep distinguished three types of brands available on the market – new, everyday and luxurious ones.

The frequent aim of company's promotional activities is to build brand awareness or change its perception. Brand image is the images and thoughts existing in human consciousness which express information concerning a given brand and the receiver's attitude to it. Brand image is the combination of the personality and identity of a brand product, where:

- personality is the hidden, immaterial feature that is perceived by customers who unconsciously evaluate it on the basis of their feelings,
- identity is the external property (e.g. logo, colors) of a brand product.

The signals that are issued by a company (e.g. the brand's name, advertising, sponsorship) also contribute to the brand image.<sup>8</sup>

Brand image includes all signals that are issued by a company. They are, for example, the brand's name, logos, products, advertisements, sponsorships and many other. The final brand image is the result of the signal interpretation by recipients who give them significance and create ideas on the brand.

Brand image creation requires the understanding of how the brand is perceived by key stakeholders. For this purpose, it is worth conducting research and, on the basis of the results obtained, determining what elements should be changed. It is also crucial that regular analysis of the actions taken and the monitoring of their effects should be conducted. Actions that aim at the creation of a brand image include:

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[https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Wizerunek\\_marki](https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Wizerunek_marki), (Accessed: 1 March 2023).

<sup>7</sup> E. Skrzypek, F. Pinzaru, *Marka jako ważny element marketingu*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo-Humanistycznego w Siedlcach No. 114, pp.198 -199, <https://czasopisma.uph.edu.pl/znadministracja/article/view/420/360>, (Accessed: 29 June 2023).

<sup>8</sup> A. Telesz, *Wizerunek marki*, [https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Wizerunek\\_marki](https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Wizerunek_marki) (Accessed: 8 May, 2023).

- visual identification system – all elements that emphasize the individual character of the brand created by the company and constitute its hallmark,
- corporate social responsibility (including the support of local communities and the care for the natural environment)
- developing customer service standards,
- taking care for relations with the media and contractors,
- employer branding - all activities aimed at the creation of an attractive employer image among employees,
- taking care for the company's image on the Internet (including the company website, content marketing activities, monitoring comments about the company)

The company can effectively create its brand image and develop positive perception by its recipients by consistently implementing the above actions.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. Introduction to the analyzed example of the Coca-Cola brand**

The Coca-Cola company was established in 1892 in the USA. After over a hundred years, it still maintains a high position on the global market as one of the largest producers, distributors and sellers of non-alcoholic beverages. The brand is famous for its strong identity – people recognize it by its logo, color and packaging. The Coca-Cola company successfully advertised its image: it based its marketing on emotions, which made it possible to win customer loyalty.<sup>10</sup>

The basic assumptions of the Coca-Cola company image which constitute the pillars of building its brand are:

- continuance of the cult product – the Coca-Cola company consistently maintains the high quality of its carbonated beverage, which helps build customer trust and loyalty,
- creating emotional experience – the main idea of the Coca-Cola brand, which has remained unchanged for many years, is based on sharing joy with others. The company focuses on creating positive and emotional experiences that are intended to create bonds and strong relationships with its customers. Examples include Xmas advertising campaigns, which promote such values as joy, sense of community, and family traditions,

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<sup>9</sup> <https://efl.pl/pl/biznes-i-ty/artykuly/kreowanie-wizerunku-firmy-od-czego-zaczac> (Accessed: 1 March 2023).

<sup>10</sup> *The Coca-Cola Company*, <https://www.coca-cola.pl/poznaj-nas-lepiej/historia/historia-reklamy-coca-cola> (Accessed: 9 May 2023).

- market presence and global reach – Coca-Cola is present on many markets worldwide, which allows it to build product recognition and availability for customers on various continents,
- strong social involvement – the company is involved in various social initiatives, such as environmental protection, healthy lifestyle and supporting local communities. This helps build the company's image as a responsible and socially engaged partner,
- innovations and development – the company constantly introduces new products, flavors and packaging to meet changing consumer preferences and maintain its position on the market of carbonated beverages.<sup>11</sup>

For years, the Coca-Cola company has been conducting several long-term advertising campaigns aimed at building brand recognition on the market. Each campaign was or is large, recognizable and using various channels to reach a wide audience. The following recent campaigns can serve as examples:

- Open Happiness (started in 2009) – this campaign refers to joy: a key value of the Coca-Cola brand. The main message emphasizes the emotions that accompany opening a drink and are associated with a moment of joy and pleasant refreshment. The campaign uses emotional TV commercials showing people from different cultures and of different age groups who enjoy drinking Coca-Cola,
- Taste the Feeling (started in 2017) – the campaign focused on the authentic taste of Coca-Cola and its influence on emotions and moments in life. The campaign used various media, including TV, printed advertisements, social media and outdoor advertising. It concentrated on emotions and moments with Coca-Cola.<sup>12</sup>
- Recipe for Magic (started in 2017) – the campaign is focused on creating magic and special moments through experiences associated with Coca-Cola. It uses various communication channels, such as TV, online advertising, social media and outdoor advertising. It concentrates on exploring different flavors of Coca-Cola and encourages to discover new sensations.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A. Zarkoon, *9 strategii marketingowych Coca-Coli Prowadzących do Osiągnięcia Globalnego Sukcesu*, <https://squeezegrowth.com/pl/coca-cola-marketing-strategy/> (Accessed 10 May 2023).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.coca-cola.pl/poznaj-nas-lepiej/nasze-dzialania/taste-the-feeling-nowa-globalna-kampania-dla-wszystkich-marek-coca-cola> (Accessed: 10 May 2023).

<sup>13</sup> J. Hamdan, *Coca-Cola: „Przepis na magię”*, <https://handelextra.pl/artykuly/263014,coca-cola-przepis-na-magie> (Accessed: 10 May 2023).

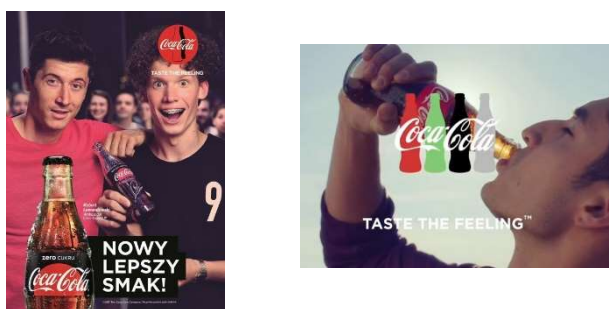


### 3. Examples of selected activities and advertising campaigns of the Coca-Cola brand

#### 3.1. Commercials on TV

Coca-Cola often launches advertising campaigns based on positive emotions which help gain customer loyalty. The campaigns are related to strengthening social bonds and usually show people close to each other: a family or a group of friends who enjoy themselves drinking the famous drink. The intended message to consumers is that Coca-Cola is a drink that brings people together and helps create positive memories. The people in the advertisements are smiling; they are positive people who are having a good time which puts the recipients in a positive mood. Coca-Cola advertising campaigns are known worldwide and they usually attract attention due to their creativity and positive message. The examples of the Coca-Cola brand advertisements are given in photo 1.

**Photo 1. Examples of the Coca-Cola brand advertisements**



Source: <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/robert-lewandowski-w-reklamie-coca-coli-zero-sluszny-wybor-marketera-czy-marketingowa-rysa-na-wizerunku-sportowca-opinie> (Accessed: 16 May 2023); <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/coca-cola-o-zmianie-hasla-na-taste-the-feeling-szczescie-naduzywane-w-reklamach> (Accessed: 16 May 2023).

#### 3.2. Sweepstakes with prizes codes under the caps

Coca-Cola regularly organizes sweepstakes with prizes that consumers can win by entering codes from Coca-Cola bottle caps on the company's official website. The sweepstakes usually coincide with special occasions, for example Xmas. The prizes to win vary and include tickets to sports events, shopping vouchers and frequently also cash. The sweepstakes are popular with consumers and attract media attention, which results in increasing the brand awareness and product sales.

### 3.3. Coca-Cola Xmas Truck Tour

The marketing and promotional strategy of the Coca-Cola brand is based on organizing various events and advertising activities that aim to attract the attention of potential customers and increase product sales. The annual Xmas truck tour is one of the most characteristic elements of the brand promotional strategy that has been drawing the attention of millions of people worldwide for many years.

The Xmas tour of the Coca-Cola brand involves travelling through various cities and towns in specially decorated trucks with the characteristic Coca-Cola logo and the figure of Santa Claus (Photo 2).

Photo 2. Coca-Cola Xmas truck



Source: [https://www.biznesistyl.pl/lifestyle/po-godzinach/21113\\_.html](https://www.biznesistyl.pl/lifestyle/po-godzinach/21113_.html) (Accessed: 16 May 2023).

During the tour, the trucks stop at specially prepared sites, where various attractions take place, such as artistic performances, fireworks displays and product tastings.

This form of promotion helps reach potential customers directly and build a positive image of the brand which is associated with the magic time of Xmas and pleasant moments with family and friends.

### 3.4. Cans and bottles with names – the *Share a Coke* campaign

Promotional activities in the *Share a Coke* campaign were based on personalizing Coca-Cola products by placing names and popular phrases on them. The objective of the campaign was to attract customers by addressing them in a more personal way and to encourage them to share the product with their loved ones.

During the *Share a Coke* campaign involved releasing bottles and cans with prints of various names and terms such as *friend* or *family*. Customers had the opportunity to purchase a

product with the name of the person they wanted to give it to or with their own name, which added a personal touch to the gift (Photo 3).

**Photo 3. Coca-Cola cans and a bottle with names**



Source: <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/podziel-sie-radoscia-polskie-imiona-i-ksywki-na-opakowaniach-coca-coli-wideo> (Accessed: 16 May 2023).

*Share a Coke* campaign was very successful and attracted the attention of hundreds of thousands of customers worldwide, which resulted in an increase in sales of Coca-Cola products. Moreover, it was launched in different countries with the consideration of local traditions and culture, which increased its effectiveness.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.5. Promotion in social media**

The promotion of the Coca-Cola brand in social media aims to increase awareness brand and engage customers by using the channels on which they actively spend time.

Within this strategy, Coca-Cola runs campaigns on various social platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, which present interesting content related to the brand and Coca-Cola products. The campaigns are often based on creative and interactive forms, including competitions, challenges and hashtags, which encourage engagement and sharing the contents with other users.

Coca-Cola also co-operates with influencers, both on global and local level. The cooperation involves the engagement of influencers to promote the brand and products on their social media accounts. In Poland, Coca-Cola cooperated with Kasia Tusk, who runs a popular fashion and life-style blog. Thanks to such activities, Coca-Cola gains the opportunity to reach a wide audience, especially younger people who frequently use social media. The cooperation with influencers also gives the chance to build a positive brand image by associating it with

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<sup>14</sup> *Genialny pomysł Coca-Coli. Chwył marketingowy, który pokochali klienci*, <https://finanse.wp.pl/genialny-pomysl-coca-coli-chwył-marketingowy-ktory-pokochali-klienci-6114850629679233a> (Accessed: 17 May 2023).



popular people<sup>15</sup>; the customers could buy cans or bottles with images of the Polish most popular influencers (Photo 4).

**Photo 4. Coca-Cola cans with images of Polish influencers .**



Source: <https://marketingprzykawie.pl/espresso/gwiazdy-internetu-na-puszkach-coca-coli-wideo/gwiazdy-internetu-na-puszkach-coca-coli-wideo-2/> (Accessed: 16 May 2023).

### **3.6. Music festivals in the largest Polish cities**

The promotional strategy of the Coca-Cola brand involving the organization of music festivals in the largest Polish cities aims to engage consumers by developing unique events during which this brand plays a key role. These festivals, which usually take place in summer, are a perfect opportunity to increase brand awareness and promote new products as well as to enable interaction with consumers and build a positive brand image.

The organization of music festivals by Coca-Cola is usually connected with introducing new products or limited editions that are available only during a given festival. Moreover, Coca-Cola offers several interactive attractions such as stands with games and activities which are popular with younger consumers.<sup>16</sup>

Music festivals organized by Coca-Cola are not only an excellent opportunity to promote the brand, but also to establish relationships with consumers. The company is trying to create a unique experience that will be associated with the Coca-Cola brand and will stay with consumers for a long time. An example of such a festival is the Coca-Cola Music Experience, which is organized annually in Warsaw and attracts thousand of young music fans from all over Poland. In addition to performances of well-known artists, the winners of different Coca-Cola promotional campaigns take part in various competitions and attractions organized during the event.

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<sup>15</sup> *Najlepszy influencer marketing, Coca-Cola pokazała jak to się powinno robić*, <https://publicrelations.pl/najlepszy-influencer-marketing-coca-cola-pokazala-jak-to-sie-powinno-robic/> (Accessed: 9 May 2023).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.coca-cola.pl/baw-sie-dobrze/wydarzenia/Startuje-Coke-SSSummer-Music-Tour-2019-czas-na-wielkie-granie> (Accessed: 9 May 2023).

## Conclusions

Coca-Cola is one of the most recognizable and iconic products in the world. Through The company maintains its position on the market through marketing and promotional strategies which attract new customers and increase the loyalty of the existing ones. The article presents examples of various promotional campaigns, such as *Share a Coke*, Xmas trucks, promotions on social media and music festivals, all of which contributed to the Coca-Cola brand success.

Nowadays, in the era of social media, social media channels and cooperation with influencers play an increasingly significant role in marketing strategies. Therefore, in order to maintain further development of the Coca-Cola brand, it will be important to adapt to the constantly changing trends and continuously improve its marketing strategies. The modern market requires constant changes and new ideas. Coca-Cola shows that it is able to meet these challenges, remaining one of the leaders in the carbonated beverage market. The examples of promotional campaigns that are presented in the article show that the company's innovative approach to marketing and promotion contributed to its success and maintaining its position in the market.

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### ***Abstract***

Promotional campaigns are a crucial element of marketing strategies of companies that want to increase the popularity and sales of their products or services. Brand image development is an important aspect of promotional activities. The Coca-Cola company has been conducting regular promotional activities to develop the perception of the brand on the market. The aim of the article is to analyze selected promotional campaigns of the Coca-Cola company and assess their impact on the perception of the Coca-Cola brand.

### ***Key words***

Advertising, advertising campaign, brand, brand image, Coca-Cola.