A Coke Is a Coke? Interpreting Social Media Anti-Brand Rhetoric and Resolution

E. Tacli Yazicioglu, Bogazici University, Turkey
Eser Borak, Bogazici University, Turkey

The study offers a rich non-Western context for theorizing about co-creation and the ideological role of social media for global brands. This paper is the result of a netnography of six social media communities in Turkey focusing on the Coca Cola brand. Our findings suggest that some local rituals integrate the brand with the traditions of the local culture. Each culture has its own way of dealing with such tensions by daily consumption experiences and rituals. Resolutions are not the province of those produce anti-Coke rhetoric, as Holt’s (2002) study of resistant brand activists suggests, but rather of the average consumer. Thus, this study offers insights on how local and global social media and online discussions co-create the meanings surrounding a brand. Global-local social media-based brand co-creation can be understood as an ideological element of consumption processes in people’s daily lives.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1012866/volumes/v40/NA-40

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
“A Coke is a Coke?” Interpreting Social Media Anti-Brand Rhetoric and Resolution
E. Taşç Yayacıoğlu, Bogazici University, Turkey
Eser Borak, Bogazici University, Turkey

ABSTRACT
The study offers a rich non-Western context for theorizing about co-creation and the ideological role of social media for global brands. This paper is the result of a netnography of six social media communities in Turkey focusing on the Coca Cola brand. Our findings suggest that some local rituals integrate the brand with the traditions of the local culture. Each culture has its own way of dealing with such tensions by daily consumption experiences and rituals. Resolutions are not the province of those produce anti-Coke rhetoric, as Holt’s (2002) study of resistant brand activists suggests, but rather of the average consumer. Thus, this study offers insights on how local and global social media and online discussions co-create the meanings surrounding a brand. Global-local social media-based brand co-creation can be understood as an ideological element of consumption processes in people’s daily lives.

INTRODUCTION
Social media and online communities have transformed the world of marketing as a source of ideas and insights for more than a decade. This transformation has also made the cultural contexts that influence the ideological and political sides of consumption more visible. Ideologies in consumer narratives trigger tensions and stand as both a threat and an information source for global brands that have to face varying cultural contexts. Ironically, global brands can both be a source of such tensions but also become successful at the same time, as with Thompson and Arsel’s (2004) study of Starbucks. Brand meaning is produced collectively. The brand value co-creation process is social and continuous, and is a highly dynamic and interactive process between the firm, the brand, the community and all stakeholders. Thus, consumer narratives from social media sources are useful data to study such processes. Despite the importance of the anti-branding, the literature does not offer us an adequate explanation about the role of the social media in how such contrasts and tensions are resolved in different cultural settings, and about how a brand still remains a global sweet heart. Coca Cola is one such context.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the ideological and cultural bases of how such tensions are resolved through the social media. To explore these issues, our research includes locating richly textured venues in the extensive user-generated content on the internet (Kozinets 2010).

Theoretical Foundations
Co-Creation and (Online) Brand Communities
Consumers are acting as creative agents in the co-production of value that alters our understanding of consumers as merely users of the value provided by firms or other organizations. Both the consumer and the producer as (operant) resource integrators co-create value (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Given this result, value depends on the context of complex and dynamic networks (Venkatesh, Pehalova, and Firat 2006) that comprise not only firms and customers but also the circumstances involving their communities and the other stakeholders (Merz, He, and Vargo 2009).

Others examine online communities under the contexts of collective consumer creativity because social interactions can trigger new interpretations that consumers cannot generate alone (Hargadon and Bechy 2006; Szmigin and Reppel 2004). Online collective creativity not only provides researchers a new field for understanding the social phenomena, but also adds an alternative, free resource that the industry can exploit (Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau 2008). This, in effect, realizes the value creation (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009). There are also ideologically oriented cultural exceptions that we explore in this study.

Coke as the Context
Coke has been chosen as the context as first it is a part of the daily lives both in the online and offline worlds, and second, it is among the few brands that promote the creativity motives in consumers (Ives 2004). Coca-Cola’s branding history also reflects the history of marketing (e.g., Hartley 1998). Hence the literature and marketplace myths (Thompson 2004) about Coke are relatively richer than any other global commodity (Ger and Belk 1996). As consumer cultures are continuing to evolve, the branding culture of Coke is a part of this evolution, giving it a value in marketing research in a variety of fields. The dynamism of Coke contains contrasts and contradictions; that is, it has held the top spot in the global rankings for each of the past nine years (Interbrand 2011).

Among global brands, Coke is always the subject of successful branding that creates emotional bonds even in the area of childhood memories (LaTour, LaTour, and Zinkhan 2009 and many others). It is also a symbol of globalization and Coca-Colanization (Askegaard and Csaba 2000), of consumer resistance and anti-consumption movements (Varman and Belk 2009; Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2007; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk 2009) and as one of the few demonizing agents of imperialism (Klein 1999). Coke can even encourage a rhetoric of the West versus Islam (Özkancı and Foster 2005; Sandıkçı and Ekici 2009) in non-Western contexts.

Schroder (2005) refers to one of Andy Warhol’s most famous quotes, “A Coke is a Coke. You can’t buy a better Coke,” and argues that it captures the core strategy of the world’s most successful brand – its distribution power, marketing activities and emotional bonds with the consumers. Indeed, Coca-Cola does not segment its market based on quality or price, but remains a psychological entity as much as a physical product; its brand equity goes beyond mere material ingredients. Miller (1998: 171) refers to an advertiser who claims, “I don’t think Coca-Cola projects. I think that Coca-Cola reflects” in the pursuit to explore the underlying corporate strategies for globalization. Yet the literature is relatively silent on how this reflection really takes place, that is, through the cultural elements of a global brand (Askegaard 2006) and the place of mass communication (Borak 1986) due to its wide segmentation.

RESEARCH METHOD
Netnography
This research deploys netnography as the method that enables us to examine the multifarious and multiplicative nature of consumer cultures through a sphere of networked communications that the internet illuminates (Kozinets 2002; 2006; 2010).

Data Collection
The data collection has taken place in six online communities and social media in Turkey. To start with, Eksisozluk (www.eksisozluk.com) is currently one of the biggest online communities in Turkey. Established in 1999, it is a collaborative hypertext dictionary on the web (i.e., a wiki) with over 220,000 members contributing to it. The dictionary attracted the most crowded online traffic in

Advances in Consumer Research
Volume 40, ©2012
Turkey a couple of years ago. Due to its vast public influence, new online dictionaries emerged, each of which generally represents an ideological group. Eksisozluk deliberately avoids being associated with any ideology, but rather defends the freedom of speech. Hence, the online community enables us to compare and contrast conflicting views in the same space. Despite competition, its online traffic currently ranks twenty-second in the country – even when Yahoo! (the twenty-fifth) is considered (alexa.com 2012). Unlike Wikipedia, eksisozluk is a de facto encyclopedia because each entry has to be written as a dictionary item that reflects subjective views containing experiences, rituals, discussions and critiques. They are like mini-blogs, but there are a hierarchy and collective norms in the group that make it one of a kind as compared to other global practices. That is, it does not belong to any online community categorizations in Western cultures (e.g., the classification of online communities by Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau 2008). From eksisozluk the study includes all 516 definitions of Coke, entered between 1999 and June 2011 and all 427 definitions of Rock’n Coke, a rock festival that has been organized by Coke since 2003. The number of entries shows the involvement of consumers with a topic (e.g., people, brands, political events). For example the number of entries for Pepsi is 181 and Nike is 202 since 2000 (publicly open statistics of www.eksisozluk.com by July 2011). Due to its both textual and contextual diversity when compared with other social media, eksisozluk represents the richest resource in our study.

The yahoogroup called Coca-Cola Collectors Club (which appears as Coca-Cola Koleksiyoncular Kulubu in Turkish) constitutes the second community in the study. The group was established in 2001. In this online community, there are 170 members with 4693 posts and 56 photographs about their experiences with Coke as the collectors. Like eksisozluk, this group represents the initial versions of the online communities in the sense that some of the members still use nicknames. The membership is restricted. Hence, the researchers had to disclose their identities and purposes due to the ethical issues involved.

The data collection have included four Facebook groups on Coke in Turkish. Turkey represents one of the most crowded Facebook countries in the world with more than thirty million users; this puts it in sixth place globally (socialbakers.com 2012). This popular social networking is also the second top website in the country (alexa.com 2012). Anybody can join and post these groups. The subgenres sometimes point to the degree of interaction among the group. But sometimes instead of a response, a new post is an answer.

The first Facebook group in the study is one for Coca-Cola fans called Those Who Say That They Don’t Drink Any Other Cola But Coca-Cola (it appears as “Coca-Cola’dan Baska Kola Icmem Diyenler” in Turkish). The group was established in February 2008, and had 961 Coke fan members, 139 posts, 14 responses and 26 photos. The focus of this group (Facebook Coke Fans hereafter) is mainly socialization under the brand and to share their experiences. There are only a few negative remarks about Coke among the discussions. The group is open to the public and not moderated.

The second Facebook group is for Rock’n Coke (it appears this way in Turkish). It was established in April 2008 and it has 3937 members. The data contains 181 posts and 228 photographs from this group. The members are either the participants of previous Rock’n Coke festivals or those who plan to participate in that year’s festival. The discussion topics are mostly about the performing bands or camping area in the festival or the tickets for sale. It is not moderated. There are a few posts which criticize the festival.

The third Facebook group is Coke Collectors (it appears as: “Coca-Cola Koleksiyonculari” in Turkish). Established in October 2007, it had 89 members. The data contains 44 posts and 75 photographs from this group. This community counts as a subgroup of the yahoogroup because one finds the same people there who are members mainly for sharing, exchanging and trading the Coke collection items. The posts are generally either announcements of meeting dates and places or for exchanging and trading collectible items.

The fourth Facebook group -- Coca-Cola - Continue the Boycott (it appears as: “Coca-Cola Boykota Devam” in Turkish) -- is focused on anti-Islamic Coke boycott. The group started in February 2009. There are discussions regarding the unhealthiness and pro-military activities of Coke, but these are leitmotifs. The content of the discussions as well as its jargon describe the religiously oriented ideological standpoint of over 73,000 group members. The data contains 614 posts and 1835 responses to these entries from this group. As the Coke boycott represents only a logo to attract those with the same ideological tendencies and discourses, the discussions are mostly about tangential topics (e.g., radical religious propaganda). This group has shown how Coke, as a logo, can become instrumental in attracting many people and for providing condensed anti-Coke discourses in a non-Western context.

Analysis

The qualitative data analysis and interpretation that this study undertakes is in line with those that are adopted by the mainstream methods (Fischer and Ottes 2006; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner 2010). The data collection includes 6793 entries and posts that are coded and grouped in terms of consumption meanings, daily life events and co-creation as will be discussed in the findings. The researchers code the data into initial categories so as to analyze them for themes relevant to the research questions. In-person discussions by the researchers and reiteratively visiting the data enable the achievement of a grounded interpretation. Revisiting and comparing the data continuously through multiple rounds of analysis provide sufficient interpretive convergence. At this stage the researchers constantly check for the mismatching cases in the data. Due to the limitations of space in this article the contextual richness and originality of eksisozluk entries is used as the main source of the intra-thematically consistent excerpts.

FINDINGS

Coke not only satisfies the criteria of a brand community (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009) but beyond this provides an umbrella value universe of a commodity (Askegaard 2006) that collects alternative communities. The multi-dimensionality of Coke branding enables observation of such a strategically produced and disseminated commercial set of signs from different perspectives. The social media discourses revealed a number of both theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature that focus on the co-creation of meanings as will be discussed below.

Brand Meanings Causing Social Tensions: The Anti-Brand Rhetoric

In some parts of the world, non-western countries in particular, when there is a social movement against globalization and consumption Coke is among the first to provide the symbol for an attack (e.g., Varman and Belk 2009; Sandıkçı and Ekici 2009). In line with Klein’s arguments (1999) it is often described as an agent of globalization and imperialism that is anti-union and anti-labor. In Turkey, Coke is the main target of those who are radical Islamists, an uncommon theme in the western contexts. The activists often choose the brand (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk 2009) to attract anti-Coke community members who discuss various topics not necessarily under the heading of Coke. While including such data into the findings,
we were aware of the extreme emotions (Kozinets and Handelman 1998), that a brand triggers, particularly regarding anti-branding and addiction. Yet these play important roles in creating social tensions and in resolving them.

As the data suggests, those who oppose Coke describe it as a company capable of doing anything to promote the product, from murder to animal testing. The evolving constellation of such negative connotations seems to materialize in an anti-Coke rhetoric that not only activists who are against globalization, but also by those who ideologically belong to radical religious groups utilize:

It is a company that sells sweetened water and makes millions of dollars by illegally treating workers in South America through anti-unionism and murderers. Because of this it is called “killer Coke” (www.killercoke.org). (tsan chan, posted on eksisozluk in 14.05. 2007)

The compulsion that Coke produces and the relevant health risks are among the favorite topics of the anti-Coke rhetoric as people often regard them as obvious facts that are not subject to discussion. Despite these, the pleasure it gives is also undeniable for many:

It is a shitty drink whose formula is kept secret…It gives pleasure to everybody. If you ask me, with every sip, I only feel sorry remembering that the son of the pharmacist who invented it died of a morphine overdose. (melyus, posted on eksisozluk in 14.11.2009)

In a country where the majority of the population consists of Muslims (Izbek-Bilgin 2008; Sandıkçı and Ekici 2009), wherever necessary the theme of Islam under the leitmotiv of military action is used in the anti-Coke rhetoric. The perception of a pro-Israel company automatically implies opposing Islam and consequently, the Muslims in the local culture. Specifically, in the religiously oriented Facebook Coke Boycott group, such themes constitute one of the major topics that excite the group members:

There cannot be anything dirtier. I got a friend who tells us not to drink it as they put cockroaches in it. The real purpose of my not drinking it is because of my Palestinian sisters. (Guhu, posted in Facebook Coke Boycott group in 28.08. 2009)

[Response] Oh, I don’t believe that. Look at what we are drinking. Thank you very much for this information. (Filiz, posted in Facebook Coke Boycott group in 29.08. 2009)

The anti-Coke discourses contain comments on how the company is anti-union and anti-labor and against cultural values (i.e., including both local culture and rock culture). The narratives reveal the negative connotations with corporate communications like the sponsorship of a rock festival:

[Rock’n Coke] is a festival where we see that the bands performing have nothing to do with rock. It is the organization that makes me furious because it qualifies rock’n roll as something governed by a power like Coca-Cola, like some cheap simulations. (kuyku, posted on eksisozluk in 06.07.2003)

Brand Meanings Potentially Resolving Social Tensions
The use of positive word-of-mouth techniques (Keller 1993) builds up brands by also providing a trustworthy resource for consumers. Yet it is rather difficult to capture all such processes due to the complexities of data collection in real-life settings. By using netnography as the methodology we have been able to observe these almost in vivo, yet in a condensed way.

This positive aspect is apparent in a number of discourse schemes that resolve the tensions from the anti-Coke rhetoric. First, some of them prefer to exemplify both the global and local corporate success and some act sarcastically on such negative claims so as to disparage the anti-Coke rhetoric. It seems that the corporate success is sufficient to prove that pro-religious discourses opposing Coke are wrong and to resolve tensions (Kozinets and Handelman 1998):

I got a few words for those idiots who believe Coca-Cola is pro-Israel: Do you think the company is as stupid as you are?…Are those managers who are graduates of Harvard, Wharton as dumb as you are?… (vito Genovese, posted on eksisozluk in 03.01.2009)

Pointing to the company’s employment rates, particularly in a country where unemployment represents a major social issue, also helps counter the anti-labor claims. Highly involved Coke fans focus on their personal experiences and tastes:

When I look at these [anti-Coke] photos, I understand how ignorant a people we are once again. Just imagine how many people are being employed by them you idiots. If Coca-Cola offers you a job, you’ll run to it. (yener, posted in Facebook Coke Fans in March 8, 2009)

Addictiveness is almost the only common theme that both Coke fans and adversaries accept. Interestingly, Coke fans convert this compulsion into a positive dependency, and the enjoyment of the consumption experience seems to override all other issues:

Its only competitor is tap water. (jacqueline wilson, posted on eksisozluk in 31.10.2005)

Let me also ask you. Have you ever seen anybody who got sick because of Coke???? Sugar, salt, fat, cigarettes, alcohol etc. etc. You must know lots of people who got sick because of these. I have always drunk it. I’ll make my son drink it too. (Bernev, posted on Facebook Coke Fans in April 3, 2008)

Coke fans explicitly explain that they see Coke as a traditional/local soft drink by illustrating the consumption of it by the elderly and the poor segment of the society such as the construction workers. The local culture emphasizes the family values such as loyalty and respect for elderly people (Kağıtçağ 1996). The poorer segment legitimizes the overall Coke experience because it does not constitute a consumption pattern that is privileged (like a luxury product), but rather is one that is accessible and democratized. It is the common people’s drink:

It is the official soft drink of construction workers. (orion ares, posted on eksisozluk in 23.01.2010)

It is a soft drink that elderly people like my grandmother call ‘black’. They call Fanta ‘yellow’. (acme, posted on eksisozluk in 28.01.2010)

Despite the emergence of such local values that reinforce and legitimate Coke’s presence, Coke fans also note how the global positioning of the brand seems to strengthen that of the local market.
Hence, both the global and local histories focus on the distinctiveness of the brand over time. Not only John Pemberton the founder, but also the first contractor of the Coca-Cola brand in Turkey are well-known within the brand community in Turkey. This retelling of history (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) completes the overall experience as it connects the Coke fans to both global and local brand cultures and their legacies:

Its history is like this: In 1886, the pharmacist John Styth Pemberton starts selling a french coca wine he discovered with the slogan “the best tonic for the brain.” (infe, posted on eksisozluk in 13.01.2003)

It is a drink that first entered Turkey from the Incirlik base [a US military base]. At that time Kadir Has [a publicly known wealthy man] is a young guy and lives in Adana… Our young Kadir meets Coca-Cola there and buys cases to store at home… (allyoop, posted on eksisozluk in 11.11.2007)

Apparently, the mediation and developing use of commercial texts (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) and the advertisement of the products (i.e., brands, bottles, tastes, etc) and their rituals (McCinnick 1987; Özkân and Foster 2005) play a part in transmitting such values of Coke branding. This will be further discussed in the next section.

Rituals, Collecting and Advertising: The Daily Co-creative Media of a Global Brand

Consumers can create possession rituals to relocate the brand in their daily lives (Rook 1985); to start collecting (Pearce 1999; Belk 2006) and even to create ads for the brand they are strongly attached to (Muñiz and Schau 2007). In other words they can act independently of marketers and advertisers. Among global brands, Coke stands at the center of such richly varied consumption experiences.

The role of advertising in the context of consumption puts it at the disposal of modern culture as an area of play, experimentation and innovation with which to fashion new cultural meanings. Consumers examine advertisements searching out meanings to use in their construction of new versions of the self, of the family, of a community (McCinnick 1987). They even try to fill in the lack of advertising of a discontinued brand with the documents they write as Muñiz and Schau (2007) explore.

Other corporate communication schemes can work in line with that of advertising. McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) show that participation in brandfests can lead to significant increases in feelings of integration into brand communities and to positive feelings about the brand and product category. Indeed, the opportunity to watch world-famous bands’ performances enhanced Rock’n Coke’s welcome. Despite the tensions coming from the ideological anti-Coke rhetoric that refuses to identify rock with Coke, there are people who enjoyed the festival experience and think that it has even criticized the system:

It was a wonderful festival… I wished some of them [performing bands] would stay longer… We had fun. Let those who weren’t able to come feel sad about it. (angelic purple, posted on eksisozluk in 08.09.2003)

It is a festival that criticizes the existing system under the umbrella of Coca-Cola. (gothic evil, posted on eksisozluk in 29.11.2007)

Apparently, the community members created a variety of rituals such as exploring old and new ads, and collecting and sharing them with friends. These went beyond what the corporation had actually displayed and/or suggested. Despite a few studies (e.g., Mick and Buhl 1992; Muñiz and Schau 2007; Kozinets et al 2010) co-creative meanings involving advertising still expect different cases to fully capture the processes. Among the data sets, eksisozluk specifically showed how Coke fans share their consumption related rituals, even by referring to Milan Kundera:

Coca-Cola Manifesto: …You shouldn’t consume it light unless you are obese. It has to be drunk cold as ice. It is never the same when you drink those kept 3-5 minutes in the fridge… You should never drink Coke with a standard straw. Wide straws are acceptable. The burning potential of carbon dioxide can decrease… It has to be consumed very quickly. It’s not Turkish coffee. (alha, posted on eksisozluk in 19.03.2006)

After a football game, the unbearable happiness of sharing the 2.5lt version with my friends, that’s enough for me. (hmm, posted on eksisozluk in 12.02.2002 00:31)

Advertising emerges as a medium for displaying their creativity as well as resistance and the will to become self-appointed promoters of the brand (Muñiz and Schau 2007). The community members open-heartedly share their experiences without minding about the exploitation of their views by corporate marketing or advertising agencies. Eksisozluk acts as an open forum that offers everybody access for reading its content that sometimes offer suggestions to Coke:

The jingle was great. The film was taken with the correct visual planning. The success of the creative team is so obvious. When I see such work, I’d like to be a part of these campaigns. Although we weren’t in the creative team, this work is highly admirable. (sir erdoquan, posted on eksisozluk in 01.09.2006)

In addition to daily life themes, collection rituals also emerge as a way to express not only people’s attachment to the brand, but also as a way to become a part of the brand (Belk 1995). Forming a community to exchange and share the Coke collectibles manifests an alternative ritual for co-creation specifically in mundane consumption (e.g., Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009). As Danet and Katriel (1994) suggest, if the Coca-Cola collector concentrates on bottles, for example, a collector will want exemplars of all the shapes and colors produced by different factories and in different countries, etc. Collectors socialize among themselves and mostly exchange their duplicate materials, but the real challenge for them is catching the limited promotional material. Some of the collectors are highly involved with dressing or painting (e.g., knitted or dazzling) the cans and bottles and uploading to the website in both yahoogroup and Facebook. These all leverage emotional attachments towards the brand and customer-firm interaction. Thus semiotic analysis can support the existence of the collection rituals that point to different forms of consumption:

Friends, how many of you were able to collect the new bottle? And would you please tell me how many of them are in the market now? I was able to obtain only 4 varieties and I know that there is the 5th. (sinem, posted on Facebook Coke Collectors in 21.01.2008)
Given all the rituals and experiences, the cultural facet explored by this study reveals the meanings inherent in consumers’ daily lives related to Coke, in particular the desire to co-create it better.

Ice-cold Cokes were drunk through the glasses with the Coke logo. Can you get how such stuff is like luxury for a student house dear uncle Muhtar Kent [the global CEO of Coca-Cola Company who is Turkish]... Would they know the newly met girlfriend can be made happy by taking out a polar teddy bear with a scarf from under the table and saying “I got a gift for you Mualla. Close your eyes” after the meal and that makes you her lover boy? How would you know these Uncle Muhtar Kent? Have you ever had a girlfriend who cried after receiving a ridiculous polar teddy bear? (nouma21, posted on eksisozluk in 11.08.2009)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this netnography group brand meanings into three broad themes within the context described as above. First are the negative connotations of brand meanings that create tensions. Second are the positive connotations of brand meanings that have the potential to resolve such tensions. Third are a host of co-created meanings that symbolize openness, transformation, and change. Negative connotations materialize into an anti-brand rhetoric ideologically positioned against globalization and related to radical Islam. These radical Islamic discourses contain the most radical form of opposition to Coke’s meanings. In the anti-brand communities, unrelated topics are used by participants to instrumentalize Coke in order to support their views. We found two core meanings in the anti-Coke online communities: anti-branding and addiction. These core meanings play important roles in creating social tensions and also in resolving them.

The study offers a valuable non-Western context for theorizing about co-creation and the role of the social media. Local and non-Western cultural contexts may deserve separate scrutiny despite the fact that the subject of study is a leading global brand with uniform global positioning. Coke’s brand community reveals practices with intrathematically consistent discursive elements. Some local rituals integrate the brand with the traditions of the local culture. Interestingly, environmentalism did not emerge among the anti-branding resolutions are not the province of those produce anti-Coke rhetoric, as Holt’s (2002) study of resistant brand activists suggests, but rather of the average consumer.

Finally, our study shows how branding evolves as cultures and marketing evolve. At a time when the literature points to the developments of social media collaborative co-creation, new research that studies the interaction of local and global meanings in these contexts offers potentially novel insights into these processes of marketing reception and the dynamic nature of brand ideology and sustainability.

A Coke is never a Coke, but an evolving product of its time and its relationship with consumers.

REFERENCES


