

Exploring the Long-Term Impact of Coca-Cola's Polar Bear Advertisements and the Evolution of Consumer Emotional Resonance

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Abstract:

Since its debut in 1993, Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement has become one of the brand's most iconic symbols, widely recognized and beloved by audiences around the world. This advertisement, featuring adorable polar bears and heartwarming themes of togetherness, family, and joy, has consistently resonated with consumers on an emotional level. Over time, the polar bear advertisement has not only maintained its emotional appeal but also played a key role in strengthening brand loyalty and expanding Coca-Cola's market share. Additionally, the advertisement has evolved to incorporate environmental messages and promote social responsibility, further enhancing its relevance in today's socially conscious marketplace. By leveraging these themes, Coca-Cola has successfully reinforced its brand image and leadership in the market. This paper explores the long-term impact of the polar bear advertisement through surveys, interviews, literature review, and social media analysis, offering valuable insights into the power of emotional advertising in building lasting consumer relationships and driving brand success.

Keywords: Coca-Cola; Polar Bear Advertisement; Emotional Resonance; Brand Loyalty; Nostalgia in Advertising.

1. Introduction

Since its first appearance in 1993, Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement has become a symbolic element of the brand. This advertisement, through warm family scenes, the human-like portrayal of polar

bears, and emotional themes closely tied to festive atmospheres, has deeply resonated with consumers worldwide [1]. Over time, rather than losing its influence, the polar bear advertisement has strengthened its role in brand building through multiple remakes and re-releases. This study aims to explore the long-

term impact of the polar bear advertisement, particularly how its emotional resonance with consumers has evolved over different periods and how this emotional connection has translated into brand loyalty and market advantages. In the field of advertising, emotional advertising is widely recognized as an effective tool for brand building [2]. Research indicates that emotional resonance can enhance consumers' identification with and loyalty to a brand [3]. However, most studies focus on the short-term effects of advertising, with less attention given to the long-term impact and the evolution of emotional resonance [4]. Additionally, nostalgic elements in emotional advertising have been shown to effectively enhance brand loyalty, but how to maintain this emotional connection over the long term remains a topic worth exploring. This study fills this research gap by providing empirical data on the long-term brand-building effects of emotional advertising through a detailed analysis of Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement. To better understand the emotional impact and brand effects of the long-term airing of the polar bear advertisement, this study focuses on three core aspects: First, it examines how the polar bear advertisement continuously evokes emotional resonance in consumers over the long term. Second, it explores the changes that have occurred in consumers' emotional responses to the polar bear advertisement over time. Lastly, it analyzes how the long-term airing of the advertisement has affected Coca-Cola's brand loyalty and market influence.

2. Methods

2.1 Survey Method

This research employs a survey methodology due to its effectiveness in gathering quantitative data on emotional responses from a large and diverse sample. Surveys are particularly suited to this research for several reasons. First, surveys offer an efficient way to collect data from many respondents within a relatively short timeframe. Given the need to evaluate the emotional impact of an advertisement that has been broadcast globally for decades, the survey method allows the study to efficiently gather data from different regions and demographic groups without requiring extensive face-to-face interactions. Secondly, the survey method aligns with the theoretical framework of emotional advertising, which often relies on quantitative measures of emotional responses to assess the effectiveness of advertisements. Theories on emotional resonance, brand loyalty, and consumer engagement suggest that emotions play a key role in brand-building. Surveys are an appropriate tool for operationalizing these theoretical concepts and translating them into measurable variables.

Finally, surveys provide empirical evidence to support or challenge existing theories about emotional advertising. In this study, the survey data will serve as a foundation for testing hypotheses about how Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement has fostered emotional connections with consumers and influenced brand loyalty over time. By using a structured survey, the research can systematically assess the long-term effectiveness of emotional advertising strategies and provide valuable empirical contributions to the literature.

2.2 Purpose of the Survey

The primary objective of this survey was to systematically measure consumer emotional responses to Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement, specifically how consumers of different ages, cultural backgrounds, and genders emotionally resonate with the advertisement. The survey aimed to quantify these emotional reactions and explore how they relate to brand perception, brand loyalty, and the advertisement's visual and emotional appeal. By conducting this survey, the study seeks to evaluate the long-term emotional impact of the advertisement and its role in sustaining Coca-Cola's brand loyalty and market performance.

2.3 Scientific Basis and Relevance of the Survey Questions

The survey questions were designed based on established theories of emotional advertising, particularly focusing on the role of emotional resonance in fostering brand loyalty. The survey focused on the following key areas. Firstly, respondents were asked to assess the intensity of emotional reactions elicited by the advertisement, such as feelings of warmth, friendship, and nostalgia. Secondly, the survey explored how emotional resonance with the advertisement influenced respondents' perception of the Coca-Cola brand and their long-term brand loyalty. Finally, the survey also measured respondents' reactions to the advertisement's visual creativity and emotional themes, especially in modern remakes.

These questions were developed based on existing literature in advertising and brand research, referencing theoretical models of emotional resonance and brand loyalty. This ensures that the survey is scientifically grounded and capable of reliably measuring the variables of interest.

2.4 Justification for Choosing the Survey Method

The survey method was chosen because it allows for the efficient collection of data from a large and diverse sample, facilitating the quantification of emotional impacts across different demographic groups. This method

is particularly useful for capturing immediate emotional responses, which are central to understanding the long-term emotional resonance of the advertisement and its impact on brand loyalty. Additionally, the survey enables cross-generational comparisons of emotional reactions, offering insights into how the advertisement's emotional appeal evolves over time.

2.5 Alignment with Theoretical Framework

The use of surveys in this study aligns with the theoretical framework of emotional advertising, which emphasizes the importance of quantifying emotional responses and their impact on consumer behavior. Emotional advertising theory suggests that advertisements that evoke strong emotional reactions can significantly influence brand loyalty and long-term consumer engagement. By systematically gathering data on these emotional responses, the survey provides empirical evidence to test and expand these theoretical propositions. Furthermore, the survey allows for the exploration of how emotional resonance evolves over time, addressing a gap in the literature on the long-term effects of emotional advertising. The survey data will be analyzed alongside qualitative interview data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement has maintained its emotional relevance and brand impact over multiple decades.

3. Result

3.1 Research Purpose

The questionnaire was designed to systematically collect data on consumer emotional responses to Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement. The primary goal of the questionnaire was to assess how the advertisement evokes emotional reactions such as warmth, nostalgia, and friendship across different demographic groups. Additionally, it aimed to measure how these emotional responses impact brand perception and loyalty. These insights are critical for understanding the long-term emotional resonance of the advertisement and its effect on Coca-Cola's brand identity and market performance [5].

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The design of the questionnaire followed established guidelines for emotional advertising research.

3.2.1 Content Validity

The questionnaire items were derived from relevant literature on emotional resonance in advertising. Emotional responses such as warmth, nostalgia, and the feeling of friendship were identified as key emotional triggers in pri-

or studies. To ensure content validity, these elements were incorporated into the survey questions.

3.2.2 Question Structure

The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were used to gather quantitative data that could be statistically analyzed. These questions were primarily based on respondents indicated the intensity of their emotional responses, as well as their perceptions of the brand and loyalty. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their personal experiences with the advertisement, giving qualitative depth to the quantitative findings.

3.2.3 Demographic Information

The questionnaire also collected demographic data (age, gender, and education level) to analyze how emotional responses varied across different groups. This helps to understand whether age or education level influences emotional resonance with the advertisement.

3.2.4 Pilot Testing and Final Distribution

A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the questions. After necessary adjustments, the final questionnaire was distributed online and offline, collecting 300 valid responses with an 85% response rate.

3.3 Respondent Selection

The sample size for the study was 300 respondents. The selection of participants followed a random sampling method, ensuring diversity and representativeness across different demographic groups [6]. The participants were divided into four age groups (18-25, 26-40, 41-60, 60+), and both genders were equally represented. Additionally, the educational background of the participants ranged from high school graduates to individuals with master's degrees or higher, ensuring that the responses were reflective of a broad spectrum of the population.

3.4 Questionnaire Distribution

The questionnaire was distributed both online and offline to reach a wide range of participants. Online distribution was facilitated through email and social media platforms, while paper-based questionnaires were distributed in public spaces such as universities [7]. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before they filled out the survey. Anonymity was ensured to encourage honest and accurate responses [8].

3.5 Sample Demographic Breakdown

The following Table 1 shows the demographic distribution

of the 300 respondents based on age, gender, and education level

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

Demographic Category	Subcategory	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	90	30%
	26-40	100	33.33%
	41-60	70	23.33%
	60+	40	13.33%
Gender	Male	160	53.33%
	Female	140	46.67%
Educational Level	High School	50	16.67%
	Bachelor's Degree	130	43.33%
	Master's Degree or Higher	120	40%

3.6 Interpretation of Table 1

3.6.1 Age Distribution

The respondents were distributed across four major age groups. The largest group (33.33%) was in the 26-40 age range, followed closely by the 18-25 group (30%). The remaining respondents were in the 41-60 (23.33%) and 60+ (13.33%) age groups. This distribution allows for cross-generational analysis, providing insights into how different generations emotionally connect with Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement. For example, older respondents (41+) might display stronger feelings of nostalgia, while younger respondents (18-25) could show a preference for modern visual elements.

3.6.2 Gender Distribution

The survey achieved a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 53.33% male and 46.67% female respondents. This balance is important for examining potential gender differences in emotional responses and brand loyalty, as prior research indicates that emotional advertising can resonate differently across genders [9, 10].

3.6.3 Educational Level

The educational background of respondents was diverse, with 16.67% holding a high school diploma, 43.33% possessing a bachelor's degree, and 40% having completed a master's degree or higher. This diversity ensures that the study captures the perspectives of individuals with different levels of education, which may influence their emotional and cognitive reactions to the advertisement.

3.7 Data Analysis

The demographic data shown in Table 1 were analyzed alongside emotional response data to investigate trends across various groups. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the emotional resonance (e.g., warmth, nostalgia) and its impact on brand perception and loyalty. Cross-tabulation helped to explore relationships between demographic variables and emotional responses, such as how age or education level correlates with feelings of nostalgia or brand loyalty [11].

4. Discussion

The survey results reveal that Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement continues to evoke strong emotional resonance across various demographic groups. Based on the demographic breakdown of respondents (Table 1), 75% of all respondents reported that the advertisement evoked emotional resonance, particularly feelings of warmth and friendship. The distribution of this emotional resonance varies across age groups, with 80% of respondents aged 41-60 and 85% of those aged 60+ reporting strong emotional connections. This suggests that older generations, who have likely been exposed to the advertisement for a longer period, associate it with nostalgic memories, reinforcing their emotional attachment to the brand [12]. In contrast, younger respondents, aged 18-25, showed lower but still significant emotional engagement, with 60% reporting emotional resonance. This lower figure may be explained by their different generational experiences with Coca-Cola's branding. Despite this, the advertisement's emotional appeal remains effective, even

among younger generations, as 50% of respondents in this age group indicated high brand loyalty, demonstrating the broad impact of the polar bear campaign across age demographics.

4.1 Nostalgia and Cross-Generational Appeal

Nostalgic emotions were particularly pronounced among older respondents. As noted, 70% of those aged 41-60 and 80% of respondents aged 60+ associated the advertisement with childhood memories and earlier stages of their lives. This aligns with established theories in advertising, where nostalgic content can deepen emotional connections and strengthen brand loyalty [13, 14]. Younger respondents, however, were more drawn to the visual creativity and technological updates in newer remakes of the advertisement, with 60% of the 18-25 age group expressing interest in these elements rather than nostalgia itself.

4.2 Gender Differences

The gender distribution (53.33% male and 46.67% female) showed only minor variations in emotional responses. However, it is worth noting that male respondents exhibited slightly stronger brand loyalty, with 70% of them indicating high loyalty compared to 60% of female respondents. Both groups, however, reported similar levels of emotional resonance, further supporting the conclusion that the polar bear advertisement's appeal transcends gender differences.

4.3 Educational Level and Brand Perception

Educational background also played a role in shaping emotional responses and perceptions of the advertisement. Respondents with a high school education (16.67%) tended to exhibit a more straightforward emotional connection with the advertisement, primarily driven by its nostalgic elements. Meanwhile, those with higher educational levels (43.33% with a bachelor's degree and 40% with a master's degree or higher) were more likely to critically evaluate the advertisement's environmental messages and creative direction. These respondents expressed a blend of emotional engagement and a deeper appreciation for the advertisement's alignment with social responsibility themes [15].

4.4 Long-Term Impact on Brand Loyalty

Overall, the data suggest that emotional resonance with the polar bear advertisement has had a lasting impact on brand loyalty. Among respondents aged 41-60, 70% reported high loyalty to Coca-Cola, and this figure rose to 80% among those aged 60+. Younger respondents, while less influenced by nostalgia, still showed significant brand

loyalty, with 50% of those aged 18-25 indicating high loyalty, likely due to the advertisement's visual appeal and creativity.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Coca-Cola's polar bear advertisement has successfully maintained emotional resonance over the long term, positively influencing brand loyalty and market share. By leveraging heartwarming themes and nostalgic imagery, the advertisement has forged a strong emotional connection with consumers, making it an iconic symbol of the brand. The integration of environmental themes has further strengthened Coca-Cola's market position and public image. These findings offer valuable insights for marketers and branding professionals seeking to understand the long-term effects of emotional advertising. The research highlights strategies to foster lasting emotional connections, build brand loyalty, and incorporate social responsibility in meaningful ways. For organizations aiming to engage multiple generations, this study provides guidance on balancing nostalgic elements with modern creative approaches. Expanding this research to diverse cultural contexts and exploring the role of evolving technologies could deepen the understanding of emotional advertising's long-term impact, especially on younger, digitally engaged audiences.

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