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Independent Study Project

6 December 2013

The Visual Rhetoric, Design and Branding of Coca-Cola

In this ever-changing society, the most powerful and enduring brands are built from the heart. They are real and sustainable. Their foundations are stronger because they are built with the strength of the human spirit, not an ad campaign. The companies that are lasting are those that are authentic (Schultz).

In essence, this is what Coca-Cola is and has always been about. Coca-Cola is the brand that is your friend. It has been by your side for years at every party, dinner, and lunch. It has been there during those hot summer days, through all your family get-togethers and holidays, and even with us all at the Olympics. To Coke it doesn't matter what time of year it is, where you come from, what language you speak, or what the color of your skin is. Everyone is equal. Everyone deserves a Coke.

Through it all, Coca-Cola's branding, identity and messages have remained the same. They have always kept their signature red and white colors, trademark logo and swirled typeface. No matter what advertising campaign Coke employs at the time, their

common themes and values also never change. Coca-Cola is the drink for humanity—for the world. It is not an individual experience, but a communal one. Coca-Cola is about the human race, not the rat race. To Coke, we are not lab rats in an endless and pointless pursuit of their product. We are a community of people—sharing Coke together, caring for one another, and sharing smiles. With Coke, we share happiness.

Coca-Cola has history. It has core beliefs and values. It's reliable and consistent. That is what makes the brand successful. That's how Coca-Cola stands the test of time. Along with this, they continue this uniformity within every medium. Coke promotes their product the same to their business partners, employees, shareholders and corporate as they do to the public—i.e. you and me. This consistency of the brand is evident when studying the visual design and rhetorical techniques utilized by Coke across its multiple advertising outlets. This includes Coke's branding and logo, the rhetoric of Aristotle it employs, their annual reports, and their print and TV advertisements.

When approaching a brand, it is important to acknowledge who the brand is, what they are all about, who needs to know about their brand, who they are marketing to, how the consumer will find out about it, why do they care, and why should we, the consumers, care. Other great questions to ask evolve from The Brand Planning Cycle described in *The Importance of Being Branded*: "Where is the brand now?, How did they get here?, Where do they want to be?, and How will they get there?" By creating a brand that is "appropriate for the organization's unique mission, history, culture, values, and personality," Coca-Cola shows its self-awareness and proves its authenticity

(Wheeler 36). A great way to analyze this is to utilize Alina Wheeler's Branding Identity Model (Wheeler 36). This model has a top down approach that looks beneath the logo itself, down to the core of what the brand means to the company itself, in this case Coca-Cola.

There are five layers to this model:

"logo," "look and feel," "targeted messages," "core messages," and "we know who we are" (Wheeler 36).



While Coca-Cola's advertising and campaign slogans have changed over the years, the basic "logo" has remained

relatively the same since the brand's founding in 1892 (*Coca*). One of the most recognizable features of Coke's "look and feel" is its signature red and white color. The success of this color combination is evident in the popularization of and now common conception of Santa Claus. Coca-Cola established Santa's red and white suit in its holiday campaigns throughout the 1920s (*Coca*). The idea stuck and, since then, almost all modern images of Santa Claus have him in the Coke colors. Another aspect of their branding and logo is their signature swirled, cursive typeface. The cursive/linked letters and the small kerning space provide feelings of connectivity, which goes along with Coke's core messages of community and sharing. This also gives the logo a

handwritten look. This handwriting reminds the consumer of the writing used in personal notes, letters and wedding invitations. It bonds Coca-Cola's audience to the special moments in life, and the love and connection they have with their family and



friends. Other aspects of Coca-Cola's branding are its bottle and can shape, bottle cap, fizzy bubbles and circle logo. The circle logo is also indicative of a cyclical oneness present in their branding identity themes.

"The symbolic quality of "one" is wholeness and completion. Its shape is the circle" (Macnab 27). This geometric symbol design is "connected," conveying fundamental aspects of Coke within the circle, such as its colors and typeface logo; "continuous," with its ability to be flexible when used in all mediums and all scales of space; and "economical," meaning it is unique enough to not be confused with simplistic circles or other brands (Macnab 38). The circle is "all-inclusive," and "is the originating shape of "all is one"" (Macnab 42). Identifying this symbolic design within Coke's logo is important from a global branding standpoint because qualitative meanings of shapes and numbers are "familiar to us (all) regardless of language or culture" (Macnab 13). This again, plays into Coke's "connecting the world" agenda and their strategies of marketing to all people from every background and culture.

"Once the brand strategy is agreed, the next step is to communicate the agreed strategy to the target audience" (Fanning 89). Beneath the mere "look" of the logo and branding are the "targeted messages." These include any of the advertising campaign themes or slogans Coke has had throughout the years since its founding. Examples of these slogans included, "Ice Cold Sunshine" (1932), "Coca-Cola...Makes Good Things

Taste Better” (1956), “It’s the Real Thing” (1969), “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke” (1971), and “Open Happiness” (2010) (*Coca*). Coca-Cola has also had many ad campaigns over the years, such as summer Coke, Olympics Coke, polar bear Coke, holiday Coke, world peace Coke and Santa Coke. Coke’s slogans and campaigns feed their common concepts of happiness, hospitality, authenticity, and togetherness.

Underneath their specific “targeted messages” are their “core messages.” These are the central goals that Coca-Cola always tries to adhere to. Their main principles are to make sure Coke always feels “happy, fresh, and honest,” to create an iconic brand with “enduring values,” to provide a “360 brand experience” by identifying multiple audiences through varied platforms and disciplines, and lastly, gaining and fostering “meaningful and memorable consumer connections” (Wheeler 218).

At the foundation of the Coca-Cola logo and brand, is the “we know who we are” base of the model. Coca-Cola is an iconic brand that doesn’t try to be anything it’s not. They follow the “Principles of Iconic Brands” established by Turner Duckworth, an international brand design agency (Wheeler 218). Coke does this by showing confidence in its simplistic designs, such as its logo and typeface; it is “honest” and doesn’t make any outlandish promises (ex: “It’s the Real Thing” campaign); it always is “in tune with the current culture” and modifies itself to change with the times, all while keeping its classic brand; and it focuses a great deal on “attention to detail” within its advertisements (Wheeler 218). Brands and branding “represent the stories that people associate with the products and services that they buy; the more powerful the brand the more defined and distinctive the story and people choose brands because they like the

stories” (Fanning 288). Coke is a part of history and with every ad campaign tells a story. Because of all these attributes, Coca-Cola stays true to itself, and remains a strong and popular brand.

When investigating Coke’s rhetorical consistency with in its visual design and advertising techniques, Aristotle’s Rhetoric is another key aspect of the brand to focus on. Coke does not focus on any real logical arguments, or logos, in order to market their product. This is due to the fact that there really isn’t any logical reason to drink Coca-Cola. It is high-fructose corn syrup, sugar water that is actually terrible for you, health wise. One of the only known health benefits to Coke is that drinking the pop (...or soda or soda pop, depending on what region of the US you are from and what you call it) flat can be a remedy for an upset stomach. The real reasons many people drink Coke is because they find it refreshing and think it tastes good.

This is where pathos, or the emotional appeal, comes into play. “People makes decisions with their hearts as well as their heads” (Fanning 10). Coca-Cola uses many emotional tactics in order to sell their product. They rely on the nostalgia of their consumers’ relationship with the brand and convincing the audience that sharing a Coke is all you need to get buy in life. They have employed such promises as, Coke is your friend so why would you drink anything else, Coke is the only “real” or authentic choice (Coke v. Pepsi war), if you buy a Coke you buy happiness, drinking Coke promotes equality and world peace, if you buy a Coke you support the people who run Coke who care about the same things you do, buying a Coke buys good values, and Cokes buys holiday fun.

Coca-Cola also develops their historical and cultural relevance by using many character figures, or ethos. Some of their spokespeople include celebrities, musicians, their signature holiday polar bears and famous Olympians. Probably the most recognizable Coca-Cola figure is Santa Claus, which, as stated previously, was created by Coca-Cola in the 1920s and has now become the synonymous modern-day depiction of Santa that we know and love today.

Another area to consider is how Coca-Cola promotes itself to its shareholders, donors, corporate and employees through its annual reports. “The most effective brand communications often manage to reflect the social conditions, preoccupations and mores of the time” (Fanning 41). These reports tend to shape and evolve with the times while still remaining the same Coke everyone knows and loves. By analyzing the logical fallacies of the report slogans and the visual design of these documents, one can better assess how Coca-Cola utilizes annual reports to persuade this particular audience and stay consistent to their core branding messages.

The year 2008 was one of optimism. More specifically, “Hope and Change.” The battle cry was “Yes We Can!,” as the political tides of yet another election year rolled in. It was not only exciting for America, but the historic moment of the first African American U.S. president was jubilantly celebrated in countries around the world. This was also a year of global togetherness and happiness at the Beijing Olympics. Coke’s slogan for their 2008 report was “Buy. Drink. Smile.” Buying happiness in a Coke was not a new concept. This slogan is not only indicative of a common thread among all Coke advertisements, but it also fit the perspective of the time. This slogan plays on the idea

that all you have to do to be happy, and smile, is buy and drink a Coke. That having a Coke leads to happiness. The logical fallacies used here are over-simplification, an argument that leaves out relevant information; slippery slope, the assumption that if one thing happens it will be a downward spiral and lead to others; and false cause, the idea that because this two events can happen one after the other that they are somehow linked.

Along with the report's slogan, the visual design arguments help to capture the happy and hopeful message of Coke and the time period. "Z" pattern page designs make the report easier to read, and the many horizontal and vertical lines encapsulate both the strength and power of Coke and the world, and also the widespread, expansiveness of the brand, respectively. The use of s-curves, diminished perspective, and the Gestalt principles of rhythm and many show the fast paced nature of our world and the growth of the products. By picturing the people and products in this way, it gives the feeling that their product is larger than life and it fills the entire world. Also, the report uses the law of segregation to separate the focal points, people and products, from the background, making them stand out. This contributes to the idea that Coke products and the people who drink them stand out and are unique.

Other important aspects to the report are the photographs of the represented participants and their eye-lines. Many of the photos are close-up, frontal shots of the RPs while they are holding or drinking the Coke product. This gives the reader a feeling of intimacy with others, supporting Coke's all-inclusive, "drink for the human race" message. Also, the photos are taken from medium and low angles, putting you, the

audience, at an equivalent level as the other consumer or below the consumer with the Coke product, giving the RP superiority because they have the product and you do not. One of the interesting parts about the photos is the eye-lines of the RPs. Those photographed were either looking at the Coke product itself, looking away and up to the sky, or had their eyes closed while drinking the product. The eye-lines toward the products obviously guided the audience's line of vision to look at what the RP was glancing at. By including eye-lines that are looking away from the camera and into the sky, it gives power to the RP, i.e. the consumer, while they are with their Coke. A final subtle meaning is displayed through the people with their eyes closed while drinking the product. This correlates with their "drink and be happy" message. We as humans associate closing our eyes with eating something really good, blowing out birthday candles, kissing, or drinking and quenching our thirst. In seeing the participants with their eyes closed while drinking, it makes the audience think they are in a happy, blissful state with the Coke product.

Coca-Cola uses different colors and semiotics to add to the playfulness of their branding. Instead of using bars for their bar graphs they use different sized Coke bottles, thereby ingratiating more of their branding into the report. This report also uses a lot of rainbow colors to fit the colorful, "happiness" theme that is present within the report.

By 2009, much of the election excitement had worn off as the effects of the stock market plummet and the burst of the housing bubble both set in. The crisis took a nosedive and unemployment rates grew. With the world in the global recession of 2009,

also known as “The Great Recession,” 2009 became a challenging year for economies across the world. The recession was clearly felt by Coca-Cola seeing as its annual report for this year contained an economic-growth theme. Also, they stuck to their classic look and used their long-standing history to remind customers that their business hasn’t failed yet, and they won’t now. The slogan for 2009 was “A Growing World of Refreshment.” This gives the idea that Coke and its products are always expanding and doing well in the world of refreshment and also implies a double meaning that Coke IS the world of refreshment. The logical fallacy used in the two connotations of the word is equivocation. Other logical fallacies used are the bandwagon technique, the concept that everyone in the whole world is drinking Coke and you should too; and false dilemma, that there are only two options, Coke v. the rest of the refreshment world.

The visual arguments utilized in the 2009 report build the economic-growth theme even one step further. This report utilizes lots of geometric shapes and balanced asymmetry to create harmony within the pages. This calming visual effect on the eye creates peace and visual rest necessary in a tragically fluctuating economy. The use of shapes and also maps creates stability for the reader in the then chaotic world/economy of the times. Structure, strength and solidity are also exemplified in the use of the law of simplicity and the law of closure, both utilizing the iconic glass Coke bottles. This assertion of power through visual design is best displayed in the opening photograph used for the report, a close-up shot of a glass bottle of Coke. The photo cuts off on the top and bottom and has a strong vertical line; this makes the growth of Coca-Cola as a company, look seemingly endless. The simplicity of the shot, and texture of the bubbly

drink and cold, wet glass bottle remind the audience that through everything, the classic Coke you know and love will stay the same.

The 2009 annual report was very textually and statistically heavy, possibly due to the economic shift and Coca-Cola's need to promote their successful business. The photographs of RPs were few and far between. But, the participants that were shown were shot at a medium, equivalent, angle. The eye-lines, again, mostly have the RPs looking up to signify power in the consumer. One of the photos was interesting, though. It pictured all of the RPs looking at one participant in particular who was in the middle of drinking a classic Coke, while the other RPs were holding Coke-owned products. It seems as if this is a nod to the original, classic Coke, showing that in this economy Coke doesn't fail.

This tip of the hat to classic, nostalgic Coke during hard times doesn't stop there. It also permeates the semiotics and colors. This is demonstrated by the color focus upon red and white in the 2009 report and the use of coke bottles in graphs and measuring progress.

2010 was not only the start of a new decade, but also a tumultuous year for our world. Several natural disasters struck, including two of the worst earthquakes recorded in history located in both Haiti and Chile. The world began to take more of a look at sustainability and global environmental issues. Even the world's leaders spent a great deal of time at the 2010 G-20 Summit in Seoul discussing sustainable and balanced global growth, which basically sums up the theme of Coca-Cola's 2010 annual report. The slogan for the year's report is "Advancing Our Global Momentum." This shows the

continuous growing “momentum” of Coke across the globe. Again, Coke shows that it is not an exclusive group. You don’t need a membership; anyone across the globe can join and enjoy a Coke. This is why the 2010 slogan is a prime example of the bandwagon logical fallacy.

Global momentum and environmental issues continue to be the focus in the visual design arguments. 2010 is the first annual report to have a horizontal page orientation, feeding the idea of expanding and growing outward. This is also demonstrated best in the design elements on the first page of the report. The bottles of Coke from around the world are aligned horizontally and linearly, creating distance and a seemingly endless line of Coke bottles, which are reflective of the global growth of the company. Maps and geometric shapes showcase once again the stability of Coke in the world. Another nice touch is the abstracted shape of the Coke bottle cap utilized to highlight important pull quotes of information. The shape is uniquely Coke and makes the report more whimsical-looking, while also reminding audiences of classic Coke.

The photography to text ratio is completely the opposite from the 2009 report. In the 2010 report photographs begin to take over most of the report. Instead of full uninterrupted columns of text and stats, whole pages are dedicated to photographs with important text that they have artfully overlaid within geometric shapes. The participants in the photos represent multiple races. Many of these shots are taken from low angles and have the RPs focusing their eye-line toward the product. This gives the RPs from around the world a superior power to you—the reader. It, once again, reinforces the Coke product the focal point.

The semiotics of using Coke bottles and bottle caps for graphs and text outlining was nothing new in this report, but the interesting shift was the color palette. Coke used the traditional red and white, but also added green. Green is obviously the color of eco-friendly, sustainability. We've all heard the slogan, "Go Green," and with the attention of the world during this time period being upon saving the Earth, it was pertinent that Coke utilize green and leaves to showcase recyclability of their product.

2011 displays yet another shift in Coke's annual report. Not only does the report gain a more modern and interactive, 21st century interface, but this year was the company's 125th anniversary of its founding. This report becomes a historical celebration of Coke. Their 2011 slogan, "Passionately Refreshing a Thirsty World," harkens back to the slogans of Coke when it originated, all discussing how refreshing the product is. They are demonstrating their continued passion for the product, and allude to the idea that the world would go thirsty or be a desert without Coke. Coke products are made out to be the brand of the world—nothing is bigger or better. Everyone drinking Coke globally is not only one of their core messages, but this theme of the 2011 report supports the logical fallacies of jumping on the bandwagon, and hasty/sweeping generalizations, that Coke is simply the best, but they don't give legitimate reasons why.

Visual arguments for the 2011 report validate their anniversary celebration theme. Principles of many and rhythm, used within the photography, remind the reader of the fast-paced modern world we live in. All the pages are extremely balanced, either symmetrically or asymmetrically; they contain dozens of stabilizing geometric shapes, to

highlight the text; and provide colorful maps of the world. It is especially important to focus on the cover art, which looks down upon a busy city, and at the center is a 125th anniversary Coca-Cola banner complete with its branding features. All of these aspects within the report suggest to the audience that Coke creates harmony in our world—their permanence exists because it is a strong and classic brand.

Almost all of the 2011 report is photographs. This is the first instance where we see photographs within geometric shapes overlaying the photographic pages. Some unique parts to the photography used in 2011 are the angles. High angles are used to look down at the employees. Medium and low angles are used to look at the consumer RPs head on or up to them. This is the first time a report contains photos that don't create equality among employees and consumers. Coke seems to make a subtle message with this visual decision. By making the employees inferior to not only the reader, but also the consumer RPs, they give power to the people in this anniversary issue. Coke pulls the focus away from them, and tells the audience that the customers and regular people are what brought them to this point and made the brand what it is.

Growing popularity of social media and the dawn of a high tech age comes to a head in the 2012 annual report. As things like Twitter and Facebook and instant-social-media-gratification have become more prevalent in our society, so has the influence of this next generation. People's attention spans are shortening, and many are used to reading text in 140 characters rather than an entire novel. Young hipsters began a movement of taking Instagram photos with an old timey filter, wearing "old school" style

clothing, and using record players. The quest for what is retro and hipster had become more of the norm.

Coca-Cola touches on this young market demographic and the signs of the time through their 2012 annual report slogan. They demonstrate the logical fallacies of the bandwagon and equivocation, or double meaning, with the line "Share a Coke and Share the Value." This demonstrates, once again, the core messages of sharing Coke with humanity, while also appealing to the young "connected" teens and adults. The slogan gives two meanings in the sense that you not only share a good financial value, which is important when displaying this youthful, most likely broke, demographic, but also when you share a Coke you share the company's values. Not only that but you share with others the value of a moment or an experience. In this high-tech, fleeting and fast-paced world, many young people are seeking out the values of older generations and things of the past. Coke is promising a stop-and-smell-the-roses appreciation of the value of life with this message.

Design takes on another personality within this year's report as it tries to convey a sense of the modern age. Social media statistics become a part of the annual reports for first time. The visual arguments utilized involve expression through flow, movement and eye-lines. Eye-lines are especially important in this report. Quite a few of the people photographed aren't even looking at the camera or the product, but look as if they are glancing quickly to the side, or at their phone, and they are in the middle of walking/running. This mirrors current society, its on-the-go attitude, and social media addiction. The cover photo is the most engaging of most typical report photos. There is

a pairing of two people, one looking at the Coke in their hand, and the other at the camera. The girl demands the readers' attention and then the eye is pulled to the focus of the boy linked to her, and down to the product, again reinforcing togetherness with others and the product. Also, this is the first report that uses lots of different, bold-looking typefaces. Much of the large written text has a wispy, handwritten effect. It definitely harkens to the original, typeface—cursive writing brand logo. It is a modern take on the classic font, and the handwritten effect reminds audiences of letters and invitations once again.

A unique aspect to the 2012 photography used in this annual report is that and the photos have no tiny text covering over parts of it, much of the text is shoved down in the user interface, and all of the RPs pictured are young adults or teens. Many have phone in their hand, have their attention turned, or look like they are moving in some fashion. There is even a shot of dangling feet with two people holding the products. Combined with the low and medium shots, these photos give the report velocity and power in the modern age.

Finally, the colors and semiotics have come back in a full circle moment. Coke uses glass bottle shapes to represent statistical data, and emphasis is put on multi-colors. This goes along with the youthful “colorful” generation theme Coke tries to relate to in this report. Social media icons also play a larger role in the report.

“Branding is about shifting perception” (Wheeler 163). Coca-Cola does any excellent job with shifting their advertising focus and demographics, without compromising the core beliefs and messages or their classic product and branding.

Just as the annual reports changed their focus with what was the focal point of the time, so have the every day advertisements to the public. The heart of Coca-Cola and their greatest form of persuasion is through TV and print adverts to people all over the world. Coke remains true to itself, but makes sure it is always relevant and current with the times.

Two of the most famous Coca-Cola advertisements were the “It’s the Real Thing” campaign (1969) and the “I’d Like To Buy the World a Coke” campaign (1971). Both of these advertisements came out in the midst of the Vietnam War. Coke was able to remove itself from its rich, corporate image and relate to the hippie generation, who were all about realism, peace, love, and freedom.

The “It’s the Real Thing” print advertisements of the day were very visually persuasive. Their posters utilized a “Z” pattern design, which created flow between the slogan and photo. Also, their close-up, textured shot of the Coke drink gives an air of simplicity in the photo that shows Coke doesn’t need trickery of the eye



or a fancy advertising concept. The Coke you see is the Coke you get. This enhances their “real slogan.” Another visually appealing element was the use of many in the

photograph at the bottom. It reinforces the idea of togetherness present in Coke's core messages and the hippie time period. Coke used Aristotle's pathos, or emotions, of people during wartime to their advantage. Those working in government and who worked in corporate settings were not trusted. They were thought to be part of "the man"—they were adult stiffs who started the war and sent their friends and them overseas to fight a war they didn't support. Coke played to this with its "real slogan." They wanted the youth to see them as their real friend, not some "phony." It was a good slogan because of its use of logical fallacies. Coke applies an oversimplification technique, by saying it's the real thing, but never explaining why; and also, uses "argument by slogan," which is based off the idea that a slogan sounds so good and is written so matter-of-factly that it must be true.

The second part of this advertisement was the "I'd Like To Buy The World A Coke" campaign, which also brought back the "It's the Real Thing" slogan from a few years prior. The idea that buying the world a Coke creates "peace" and "perfect harmony" utilizes several logical fallacies, including slippery slope and false cause, terms described earlier in this report, and non sequitar, meaning a conclusion statement that does not follow the premises, i.e. buying a Coke product will probably not change the world. This commercial showed establishing shots and close-ups of rows and rows of people,



utilizing linear perspective. The many principle was definitely in play as the camera panned through what seems like crowds of people of all different races and cultures joining together to sing about sharing Coke and sharing world peace and happiness, in

a time of continued war. The end shot even

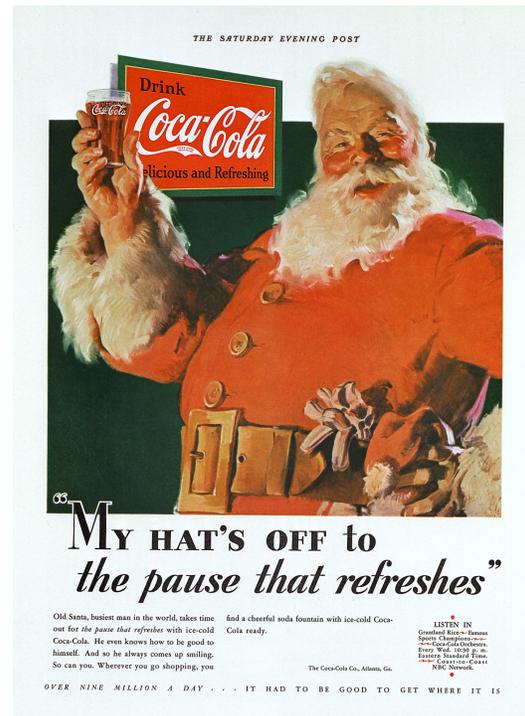


showcases the people in a “V” for victory formation, reflective of the desire to finish the war and to just have harmony in the world. The multicultural commercial with its themes of peace convinced the audience through Aristotle’s rhetoric, by utilizing ethos and pathos. The characters in the

commercial were dressed in traditional garb of their individual countries and encouraged a global end to violence and fighting. Pathos applied to the sensibilities of those at the time. The war had gone on for twelve years already, and wouldn’t end for another four. People needed a commercial to give them hope in a time of combat and depression.

Another one of the most famous Coke advertisements is “Santa Coke.” As established earlier in this paper Coca-Cola invented the famous red and white suit, based off of their colors, in the 1920s that we now associate with our modern-day images of Santa. Coke has had many Santa Coke advertisements, many with Santa enjoying a refreshing Coke instead of milk and cookies. These advertisements are a prime example of Aristotle’s ethos because they use the character of Santa to sell the product.

This particular Santa Coke advertisement is rather unique in that Santa’s hat is off. Normally, he’s drinking Coke in a hurry, on the go. But, in this he takes his hat off to “pause” and “refresh.” This plays into Aristotle’s pathos because it not only relates to the emotions of nostalgia and childhood with St. Nick, but it also brings in the core messages of happiness, bliss and stopping-to-smell-the-roses that Coke is so found of using. This ad also employs many visually appealing aspects, such as the “Z” pattern of



reading, which lends a focus to the drink, the slogan and Santa, himself; the direct forward eye-line of Santa toward the audience, demanding their attention; and the low-ish angle looking a bit upwards to Santa, giving the man with the product the power and also playing along with Santa’s superiority—“he knows if you’ve been bad or good...”



Coca-Cola has had many joyous ad campaigns for the holidays, including Santa, holiday togetherness, and even having fun with the Thanksgiving Day parade floats in one ad, where they fight over a Coca-Cola bottle float. But, no holiday campaign is more endearing than

the Coke polar bears. This ad has always pulled on the heartstrings of many, appealing to both ethos and pathos in Aristotle's rhetoric. The polar bear characters have become iconic and no one can resist loving these adorable bears. It also reminds the audience subtly to protect our globe and help the world so that the polar bears are safe, the humanity core message shining through once again.

Some visual elements that help in persuasion, are the personification of the bears, enjoying a Coke as a person would; the eye-lines of these adorable creatures, demanding your attention; and also the balance and symmetry displayed in the number of bears—the rule of thirds, to be exact.

Coke has also played a large role in politics and election time. The company has



had many political connections over the years.

In this particular advertisement, Coke pulls the

focus away from corporate structures and

lobbyists issues and relate to people on a

personal level. They use the ethos of Uncle Sam

as “the man” that citizens need to face. Not only

do they utilize this character, the play on the

emotions of those voting, making them feel like

they are waging a war with their government on

certain issues and politicians, and the only weapon they need to face their enemy is a

Coke. It is interesting to think of the logical fallacies used—non sequitur and false

cause. A Coke won't solve any problems. It won't change who is elected into office, and no matter how much you drink or buy it won't pass or fail a tax levy.

The visual arguments presented in this advertisement include, again, "Z" pattern designs, which aids in flow; a high angle, demonstrating this idea of bearing down on the task a hand, i.e. voting; and uses vertical and diagonal lines in the bottle and pencil, showcasing power in the Coke and the activity of voting.

Coke and the season of summer have always been close buddies. Coke is cold and refreshing, and the brand utilizes this to their advantage to market to beachgoers and sunbathers alike. Coke's fizzy drink, reflective of the froth and foam of the tide, is established in advertisements as a must-have item when heading to the beach.

In this advertisement, Coke "Opens Summer," as a part of their "Open Happiness" campaign. The slogan takes on the logical fallacy of equivocation as it



carries two meanings. The first references the idea that you should open a bottle of Coke now that it is summer; the second meaning conveys that summer does not officially open until you have had a

Coke. There is an emotional appeal rendered in the happy feelings associated with summer and summer fun. The classic red color is also important to note, reminding the audience of classic, nostalgic Coke and its presence in their life throughout the seasons.

These ideas are furthered through the design in this ad's "V" for victory shaped camping tent; the "rolling out the red carpet" feel of the tent; and the Gestalt Law of Segregation used to separate the tent from the background, giving it more emphasis.

Probably Coke's biggest involvement originates in its sponsorship and partnering with the Olympics. Every couple of years when those colored rings appear on our TV screens once more, Coke puts out a slew of new advertisements. It's a good move for them to always support and sponsor the Olympics. The Olympics have always been about Global togetherness. No matter what countries are in a feud, the Olympics are a time for everyone to come together in the spirit of the games. Coca-Cola's core messages have always been about humanity, the human race and togetherness, so it fits well with the purpose of the Olympics.

In the ad displayed, Coke, similar to its ads for summer, used its "Open Happiness" campaign for the Olympics. This "Open the Games" slogan demonstrates equivocation in its double meaning that Coke will be there for the



open of the games and also the concept that the games don't start until Coke is there. Coke always has ethos in its Olympics ads, using famous athletes, like in this advertisement.

The visual aesthetics in play with this print are the use of USA red, white and blue (red and white Coke colors); texture in the snow, to showcase the winter games;

and the eye-lines looking away and up into the distance, signifying power to the players and the Olympics themselves.



Coke has also tried its hand at eco-friendly products and advertising. One such example was a Brazil specific product, a Coke bottle completely made of ice that melted as you drink it. The idea and ad appealed to the

emotions of the audience, to being environmentally conscious and helping to saving the entire world. The ad displayed a frosty, textured bottle (with the same look and brand logo of a regular Coke bottle) in the sand clearly shown, with the background hazy and blurred, like summer.

A final important advertising campaign to recognize is the newest, “Open Happiness.” This campaign, started just in the past few years, strikes a cord with the core ideals and values of classic Coke. Again, there is no logical cause to drink Coke, and the fallacies to sell this assume that by merely drinking a Coke will bring you happiness, demonstrating false cause and slippery slope. But,



the ad appeals to the emotional pathos of every person. This ad is especially important in the past few years because of the widespread economical downfall. Many people have turned to the simple things in life to find happiness in these changing, and sometimes challenging times. The rainbow colors used also could lend to the support of

LGBTQ rights in recent years, with the legalization of gay marriage in some states. Coke is nodding to equality with all of their customers. They are showing that they accept anyone—no matter what color of the rainbow you are. Visually, there are S-curves and geometric shapes that give the ad life and motion. The Law of Closure is utilized with the sun and Coke bottle, making them seem larger than life. This happiness, togetherness, and bubbly spirit are the essence of what Coke really is. This modern day campaign creates a full circle moment with the founding beliefs and values of Coke's origins.

Coke's greatest advertising successes cannot be discussed without also mentioning Coca-Cola's greatest failure: NEW COKE. Introduced in 1985, New Coke was produced as a way to compete with the, then, hip and youthful Pepsi. Coke changed everything about itself and went against its core branding and messages.

They changed the actual taste of the product and deviated from its signature typeface and look. In fact the end product had a Pepsi-like taste and the lettering on the can looked like



the bubble, print block letters that are used by Pepsi. People hated it. Within months New Coke was taken off shelves, and the CEO had a press conference to formally apologize on behalf of the company and to establish that they were returning to Coke's original look and formula. He said that he did not know that this many people truly love the old Coke and would always support it, even with other competing brands around.

In retrospect, it is extraordinary that the most successful brand in history should have made the fundamental mistake of failing to understand that brands are a combination of rational and emotional factors. By basing their decision on the rational aspect of the taste, they ignored “the fact that Coca-Cola had been an integral part of American life for more than a century—that it was a part of the American identity—Coke was much more than a cola-flavoured drink; it was an American institution—a national icon” (Fanning 269).

New Coke vending machines were tossed into dumpsters, as the old version of old was reinstated on store shelves with a new name, “Coca-Cola Classic.” New Coke failed because Coke violated all their core messages of nostalgia, the stable dependable brand, the classic that never goes out of style, the brand that fosters lifelong consumer relationships with people and doesn’t try to change itself to be something it’s not.

In conclusion, this project explores Coca-Cola’s branding, logo, Aristotle’s rhetoric used, the annual reports for the past five years, and the most popular and influential print and TV advertisements of all time. With every new advertising adventure and campaign to appeal to a different demographic, Coca-Cola has held onto their core values, with the exception of their New Coke failure. Whether they are promoting economic growth, sustainability, or social media in their annual reports, to shareholders and investors, or selling refreshment, holiday fun, summer or happiness in a bottle to the public, Coke remains the same. Time and time again, they have shown consistency within their branding and beliefs across multiple mediums to dozens of demographics. Coke is a brand that wants humanity to drink it, believe in it, be happy because of it, and

share that happiness communally with the world. In *The Importance of Being Branded*, it says:

A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a consumer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product will be quickly out-dated; a successful brand is timeless (Fanning 37).

Coca-Cola has proven itself as a long-lasting, successful brand that can withstand every test. It is the drink for the human race. Iconic. Never fading or ever going out of style.

Coca-Cola is timeless. Coca-Cola is classic.

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**For much of my analysis of Aristotle's Rhetoric, logical fallacies, visual design elements, Gestalt principles, photography and semiotics within the annual reports and advertisements, I utilized multiple lectures from Dr. Larkin's Visual Rhetoric class I took in Fall 2012: Colour as Visual Rhetoric in Financial Reporting; Perception Theory and Gestalt lectures 1, 2, and 3; Visual Composition lectures 1 and 2; Rhetoric of Page Design; Vectors, Eyelines and Hierarchy; Visual Arguments; Relevance of Aristotle; Rhetoric and Semiotics; Color in Design; Graphs, Charts and Annual Reports