E-marketing Communication in the Beverage Industry

Kristián Kalamen[1], Kateřina Mlsová[2], Róbert Világi[1], Michal Konečný[1]

[1]University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Management,
Dolnozemská cesta 1/b, Bratislava, 852 35
Slovak Republic
[2]Institute of Technology and Business, Faculty of Corporate Strategy, Okružní
517/10, 37001 České Budějovice, Czech Republic

kristian.kalamen@euba.sk

Abstract. The aim of the research is to identify best practices in working with social media by analyzing the e-marketing communications of a soft drink company and its direct competitors. For this purpose, the social media accounts of 3 selected soft drink manufacturing companies using their own social media accounts between February and March 2023 are monitored and analyzed. The social media networks monitored include Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Businesses promote their new or existing products on their social networks on an almost daily basis and often use celebrities for this promotion. By using celebrities, they gain more engagement from social media users in the form of likes, comments, views, and new followers.

Key words: Marketing Communication, Social Media, Online Marketing, Marketing on Social Networks, Social Networks.

JEL classification: *M31, L81, L82*

1   Introduction

Marketing is one of the most important tools for the operation of a business. According to Karlíček (2018), marketing activities consist primarily of building relationships with existing customers or building customer relationships with the brand. The success of companies depends on clearly defining the target group of customers, i.e., those whom the company wants to reach with its product. It is not possible to reach all customers equally and therefore market segmentation is the best solution (Pollák and Markovič, 2022). Thus, for marketing, a firm asks itself simple questions, namely who its customer is, what value it offers to customers, how it will ensure their long-

term satisfaction if possibly, and what competitive advantage it has and how it will maintain that advantage (Karlicek, 2018).

Nowadays, in these fast-paced times and in a time when most of us can't live without the internet, it's a smart idea to use social networks and the web for marketing. People can learn more about products every day without having to search for the information directly. Targeted and accurate advertising is such an important part of any company's sales strategy. For example, companies can reduce costs and gain a lot of new customers by targeting a group of potential customers through social networks using specific criteria such as gender, age, education, occupation, or their hobbies (Pollák and Markovič, 2022). However, it is possible to argue that ability of a company to attract and then retain customers is dependent on the ability to create high quality innovative products and services (Pollák, Dorčák and Saruc, 2015).

There is no need to have millions of followers and supporters or a service or product that everyone loves. However, it is necessary to know how to engage people, listen to them, present information well and evaluate it. Internet users behave differently online than in the real world, they are rushed, distracted and inattentive. Within the flood of content that is on social media, people tend to only notice posts that are relevant to their current needs, evoke strong emotions, or are distinctly different from other content. Thus, the content of posts should be short, to the point and have a clear objective (Losekoot and Vyhnánková, 2019).

Online advertising is an important tool for corporate rivalry. On the supply side, the online marketing market is characterized by a high proportion of small businesses. These businesses, due to their limit, mainly made up of limited resources (personal, financial and time), must operate as efficiently as possible if they want to survive in a turbulent and hypercompetitive market (Pollák, 2015). Therefore, companies compete for buyers and their attention, creating brand preferences and influencing purchasing decisions. Efficiency is a significant competitive advantage regarding local competitors in the battle for customer. Being more effective than a competitor is not only matter of low prices of inputs, but also the matter of responsible marketing department (Pollák, Dorčák and Saruc, 2013).The rapid development of information and communication technologies provides firms in the digital world with a wide range of advertising tools and enables advertising to perform its informative, persuasive, and competitive functions (Wiktor and Sanak-Kosmowska, 2021). Indeed, social media presence has become an essential part of marketing strategies and promoting products online through business accounts, and social media advertising has proven to be effective (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020).

Today, more than 90% of teens have at least one social media account and their social media presence been growing. Influencers are present in all sectors: health and fitness, fashion, food, high-tech and more. Bloggers on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook often showcase products they have tested by giving their opinion to their followers or promoting products online to other users (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). According to Sedalo, Boateng, and Kosiba (2022), social networks are essential platforms for advertising and promoting products and services and allow businesses to design their advertising materials using rich, dynamic, and interactive media at minimal cost. In fact, businesses should be transparent with customers on social networks to improve their online image and gain the trust of social network users. Lastly, trust and

a positive customer experience can encourage customers to become active brand promoters and develop brand loyalty.

As consumers have become accustomed to the virtual world and moved to the internet and virtual marketplaces, marketers have focused their marketing attention on this market. In response to this major shift of consumers from traditional to digital media, marketers are constantly trying to grab opportunities by designing product, price, place, and promotion strategies for this market (Faruk et al., 2021). A more multi-dimensional communication where consumers are more interested and find more credibility by tracking and streamlining the opinions of other customers instead of getting traditional information from marketing ads (Shareef et al., 2019). Thus, marketing professionals are adapting traditional marketing strategies to social media, and consumers' shift from traditional media to digital media allows them to reach, inform, engage, sell, learn, and serve their target audiences more effectively (Faruk et al., 2021). Consequently, companies are looking to leverage the useful collective knowledge available on social media to support different types of marketing decisions.

The aim of the research will be to identify good practices in working with social media by analyzing the e-marketing communication of a soft drinks company and its direct competitors.

2   Literature review

Farivar and Wang (2022) investigated the effectiveness of influencers, their social community, influencer marketing settings, and its impact on followers' perceptions, experiences, and decision-making. Influencer marketing is set in a social setting in which followers interact with multiple communities of influencers. Influencer marketing has become a popular approach for companies to reach potential customers and promote products and brands. Influencers are social media users who have gained a significant network of followers by posting content on social media. Additionally, these influencers have built a trusted relationship with their followers and are instrumental in engaging their followers, so they serve as an ideal group for product promotion and placement. Fink and Collective (2020) claim that social networks offer countless opportunities for business marketing strategies that harness the power of communities, especially when combined with traditional approaches such as celebrity endorsement. Hence, the reach, frequency, and speed of communication between communities on social networks offers an ideal tool for marketers. Specifically, the authors tested the long-term effect of celebrity endorsement on Facebook purchase intent among 234 community members. Results showed that the credibility of celebrity promoters increases purchase intention among members of a sponsored Facebook fan community by improving brand image.

Cheng Chu Chan, Chen and Leung (2023) suggest that visual elements in social media marketing must be strategically designed to evoke audience interest and action. The objective of their research was to investigate how different visual strategies, including visual volume, variety, and dynamics, interactively influence viewers' emotional and behavioral responses to social media posts. Further extending the AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) model, they uncovered the underlying

mechanisms that drive the positive effect of visual volume on viewers' intention to visit restaurants after viewing social media posts about restaurants. Liu, Shin, and Burns (2021) also concluded that the visual focus of social media posts on fun, interaction, and trendiness significantly increases customer engagement, while a focus on customization does not. Their research used big data in examining the impact of luxury brand marketing activities on social media on customer engagement.

Zhang and Erturk (2022) conclude that for more success in e-commerce, it is preferable to focus on live broadcasts, short videos, customer reviews, and private traffic management on platforms tailored for this purpose. They explored the potential for improving digital marketing for SMEs in New Zealand by leveraging different approaches used by SMEs in China. Lastly, they concluded these results by using semi-structured interviews with Chinese participants to gain insight into the online marketing strategies and platforms used in China.

Kusumasondjaja and Tjiptono (2019) researched differences in consumer enjoyment and purchase intention when consumers encounter food advertisements on Instagram with different promoters and levels of visual complexity. Therefore, they conducted an experimental survey involving 180 undergraduate students from several universities in Surabaya, Indonesia. Participants actively used Instagram for at least one year, and the results showed that celebrity-promoted food ads generated more enjoyment and excitement than ads promoted by food experts. Overall, food ads using high levels of visual complexity generated more pleasure and excitement than less complex ads. Ares et al (2022) also reached similar conclusions. Their results showed that images, music, news, price promotions and celebrity endorsements were the elements in advertising that participants in semi-structured interviews remembered most. The research was conducted on 209 participants from Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, in two private educational institutions and a public health facility. As a result, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using content analysis based on a deductive-intuitive approach. In addition, results showed that participants were exposed to digital food marketing, with fast food restaurant advertisements and food ordering apps being mentioned most frequently.

Using data collected over 12 months from a major online retailer, Dolega, Rowe, and Branagan (2021) explored the impact of daily social media activity on daily business outcomes - website traffic, orders, and sales. Those findings show that social media leads to increased website traffic but does not cause a significant increase in product orders and sales revenue. However, when it comes to larger social media campaigns, these already lead to more orders and sales revenue, and Facebook has proven to be a very effective channel.

Hanaysha (2022) tested the influence of four elements of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions in the fast-food chain industry. For this study, the required data was collected from visitors to fast food outlets in the United Arab Emirates through a quantitative online survey. The results confirmed the importance of brand trust in predicting purchase decision and showed that informativeness, perceived relevance and interactivity have a positive influence on consumer purchase decision. Wiktor and Sanak-Kosmowska (2021) identified and empirically evaluated the importance of online advertising in the development of firms' competitive strategies in the online advertising world and say that the intensity of industry competition encourages firms

to exploit their information superiority over consumers and create moral hazard in the advertising messages and the process of building competitive advantage. They also highlight that companies consciously use online advertising in sectoral market competition, monitor and analyze competitors' advertising activities, and create content that has a major impact on consumer behavior. Finally, Jacobson, Gruzd, and Hernández-García (2020) analyzed a sample of 751 online adults to determine consumer perceptions of the use of social networking sites for marketing purposes. In doing so, they looked at marketing convenience, which refers to an individual's comfort in using information posted on social networks for targeted advertising, customer relations, and opinion seeking. Specifically, they found that consumers' perceived risks and benefits of using social media are related to their comfort with marketers using their publicly available social media data. Most online users are uncomfortable with marketers using their publicly available social media data.

3   Data and methods

For observation and comparison, we have selected the 3 most well-known enterprises involved in the production of soft drinks. These businesses are chosen because of their activity and visibility on various social media. The companies are Kofola, Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Each of these businesses has its own social media marketing communications. In this instance, the reason for selecting these companies for analysis is to compare their marketing strategies. By examining the presence of these companies in the market, we can gain insight into their competitive dynamics, consumer preferences and potential social media strategies. Although Kofola does not have the global reach of Coca Cola and Pepsi, its importance and popularity in the local market make it an interesting subject for analysis. Understanding how Kofola competes with globally recognized brands such as Coca Cola and Pepsi in the local market can provide valuable insights into its marketing tactics, and potential growth opportunities. Adding Kofola to our analysis allows for a more comprehensive examination of the soft drink market and provides a broader view of the dynamics between global players and local competitors in a particular market.

As the first method, we will use observing. The open-source social media data of the selected soft drink manufacturing companies will be analyzed from February 1, 2023, to March 31, 2023. The media analyzed will include their social networks, specifically Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The follow-up will include the Czech accounts of these companies, if any, and the main official accounts where the country is not directly specified. Relevant data from the selected social networks will be analyzed through their own accounts on these networks.

The second approach will be a comparison. By observation, open data of selected enterprises that are also involved in the production of soft drinks will be analyzed and then these enterprises and their communications on selected social networks will be compared. Due to the comparison, it will be possible to determine if there are any areas in which the businesses stand out compared to their competitors, or where they could improve and where their online marketing communication differs.

The results of all quantitative data will be processed in MS Excel, where the basic statistical characteristics (average) will be presented, and graphs will be created from the data.

4   Results and discussion

The companies' own accounts on these social networks were used to observe the activity. The number of followers and the number of posts posted on each social network, the number of stories posted on Instagram, the number of likes on Facebook pages, and the number of likes received over a given period on posts posted and the number of views on Instagram videos and Twitter posts were also observed. For February 2023, Coca-Cola gained the most followers on Twitter. It gained 386 new followers for the month. This was followed by Kofola, which gained 25 new followers, and Pepsi, which even lost 1,217 followers, gained the fewest new followers for February. In the case of Instagram and YouTube, the limitation was that these social networks only show rounded numbers of followers, so it is not possible to say the exact number of followers gained. On Instagram, Kofola gained approximately 100 new followers, the Czech Pepsi CZ account lost approximately 100 followers, the global Pepsi account had 1.7 million followers for the whole month, the Czech Coca-Cola CZ/SK account lost approximately 100 followers and the global Coca-Cola account had 2.8 million followers for the whole month. In the same round number of followers, Kofola had 25,400 followers on YouTube for the whole month of February. The same was true for Pepsi CZ's Czech channel, which had 3,340 followers for the entire month. Pepsi's global channel gained approximately 2 000 new followers on YouTube and Coca-Cola gained the newest followers on the social network, reaching approximately 10 000 new followers. Across Facebook business pages, all observed businesses lost followers for February 2023. Kofola lost 183 followers, Pepsi CZ lost 42 followers, Pepsi lost 9,906 followers and Coca-Cola lost 34,428 followers.

Pepsi posted the most posts, 135 in total, to selected social networks for February 2023, mainly to its global accounts. Altogether, 114 posts were added to Twitter, where posts were related to a new campaign for Pepsi Sugar Free with actors Ben Stiller and Steve Martin, a collaboration with Peeps, and the Super Bowl, which took place on 13 February and Pepsi is a secondary sponsor. Throughout February, Pepsi published 19 posts on Instagram on the same themes and added 5 short videos on YouTube where the above-mentioned actors present the new sugar-free Pepsi in short funny videos. On Facebook, Pepsi did not add a single post.

Coca-Cola also added many posts to its selected social networks, 93 in total. Mostly on YouTube, where it added one or more new videos almost every day. On YouTube, Coca-Cola has a global channel where it posts videos in different languages for different countries. During February 2023, for example, Spanish, Japanese, English and Czech Coca-Cola commercials appeared there. Overall, Coca-Cola added a total of 86 posts to YouTube during the month of February. On Facebook, Coca-Cola also has one main account, but this is automatically translated into the language of the account from which users are viewing the site, in this case Czech. Coca-Cola posted 7 posts on this Facebook page in February related to the Coca-Cola drink and the upcoming Angel

Awards, which Coca-Cola sponsors. On Twitter, Coca-Cola only added 3 short posts on its global account. On Instagram, Coca-Cola added 4 posts to its global account in February regarding a collaboration with a Spanish singer Rosalía.

Kofola has only posted 6 posts in the whole February, all on the social network Twitter. The posts were related to the introduction of the new energy drink Semtex Extrem with Slovak rapper Separ, recycling of plastic bottles and the success of one-liter returnable glass bottles, new workshops for the public by Kofola's Leros brand and the establishment of a new non-profit organisation Kvapka Rajecka Dolina.

For the month of February 2023, the selected businesses were most active on Twitter, followed by Instagram and YouTube, and finally Facebook, where the fewest posts were made.

In terms of Instagram stories, companies posted a total of 52 stories and Coca-Cola was the most active on its Czech account, with 31 stories posted in February. These stories were mostly related to a competition to win a trip to Disneyland Paris. On Pepsi's global account, Pepsi published 6 stories for February that involved collaborations with Peeps. Chart 1 shows how businesses added stories to their Instagram accounts in February 2023.
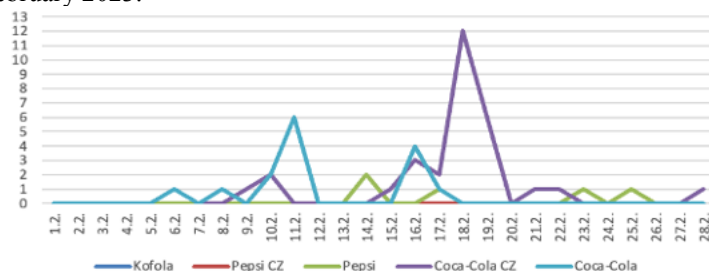

Chart 1: Instagram Stories February 2023
Source: Own elaboration

Facebook was the lightest of the selected social networks, whether with posting, number of followers or likes on the pages of these selected businesses. In fact, for the month of February, all the selected businesses lost users who gave a "Like" to their Facebook page. Coca-Cola did best on YouTube. In February 2023, it received a total of 110 788 300 views on its global YouTube channel, which it has had since January 2006. Even though Pepsi added only 5 posts to its global channel, which it has had since November 2005, it received a total of 10 573 785 views for the month of February. The Pepsi CZ channel, which was created in July 2016, although no new videos were added, received 1,633 views for February. Kofola, which has had a YouTube channel since June 2013, also added no videos and received 57,846 new views for February 2023. Pepsi was the most active on Twitter, gaining a total of 96,708 likes on posts published in February. Coca-Cola received a total of 708 likes on its Twitter posts. Coke received the lowest number of likes on Twitter at 82.

On Instagram, Coca-Cola received the most likes on its global account, with a total of 514,640. The average number of likes on new posts was 128,660, with the most likes on a post being 497,474 and the fewest being 2,570. Across its Czech account, Coca-Cola received a total of 7,585 likes for the month February. The highest number of likes on a post was 5,982, the lowest was 107 and the average number of likes for February

was 1,264. Pepsi on Instagram received a total of 156,731 likes for February 2023, with an average of 8,707 likes, where the highest number was 26,142 and the lowest was 1,489. Pepsi received a total of 103 likes on its Czech account. The average number of likes was 34, with the highest number of likes being 37 and the lowest being 31. Kofola did not add any new posts to its Instagram account for the month of February.

The highest number of newly added posts on YouTube resulted in Coca-Cola gaining a total of 22,977 likes for February 2023. Although Pepsi did not add as many posts to its global YouTube channel for February as Coca-Cola, it still received many likes on its new posts. The total was 12,130 likes, the most being 6,800 and the least being 291.

Pepsi received the most views of new posts on Twitter due to the large number of posts added. On average, its new posts for February 2023 received 1,671,087 views and a total of 190,503,897. While Kofola did not add as many posts, it still had an average of 1,082 views, for a total of 6,493 views. Coca-Cola, although it added the fewest Twitter posts for February, had an average of 57,300 views on its new posts and 171,900 total views.

On its global profile, Pepsi had an average of 3,221,440 views for videos added in February, and its new posts received a total of 35,435,839 views. Coca-Cola had an average of 2,894,182 views on its global profile for new videos with a total of 8,682,545 views. On Coca-Cola's Czech profile, new videos for February 2023 had an average of 48,871 views and a total of 195,484 views. Kofola and Pepsi CZ did not post any videos on their Instagram profiles in February 2023.

In terms of posts, these selected companies posted most frequently to Instagram, followed by Twitter, YouTube, and posted to Facebook at least for the month of March 2023 from the selected social networks.

For the month of March, businesses posted a total of 46 stories on Instagram, see Chart 2. Coca-Cola posted 7 stories on its global account, Kofola posted 4 stories and Pepsi posted 3 stories on its Czech account. Regarding likes on the Facebook pages of businesses, only Coca-Cola gained 20,298 new likes in March. Pepsi lost 11,986 likes on its global profile, 33 likes on its Czech profile and Kofola lost 69 likes on its Facebook page in March 2023. Like February, Coca-Cola was the most successful on YouTube in March. It added another 195,620,260 views to its YouTube channel in March. Pepsi racked up more views on its Czech channel, 563,361, than on its global channel, which received 285,463 views in March. Kofola, although it did not add any YouTube videos in March, added 62,331 views to its channel.
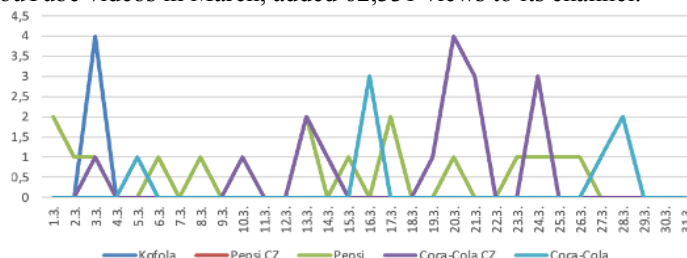

Chart 2: Instagram Stories March 2023
Source: Own elaboration

By being most active on Twitter, Pepsi gained a total of 4,457 likes on its posts for the month. Coca-Cola received a total of 956 likes on Twitter. Moreover, Kofola, with the same number of posts added as Coca-Cola, received a total of 45 likes on Twitter for March.

On Instagram, Coca-Cola's global profile led in likes, with a total of 64,523 likes on its posts in March 2023. On the Czech Instagram profile, Coca-Cola CZ/SK received 17,888 likes in March. Pepsi's global Instagram profile received a total of 52,108 likes for March. Over March, the Czech profile of Pepsi CZ received a total of 1,758 likes on its posts. Kofola did not add any new posts to its Instagram profile in March 2023 either.

Just as in February, Facebook pages of selected businesses had the fewest likes. Kofola did not add any posts and Coca-Cola received 9 likes for its only post in March. Pepsi's Czech page received the most likes on Facebook, with a total of 361. Furthermore, on YouTube, Coca-Cola received the most likes on its channel. The total number of likes was 34,432. Pepsi received a total of 1,994 likes on its global channel. Lastly, Kofola did not post any new videos on its YouTube channel in March 2023.

Pepsi had the highest number of Twitter impressions for its posts added in March, attracting a total of 1,016,100 users to view its posts. In fact, Coca-Cola had a total of 225,300 views for its Twitter posts in March, with an average of 37,550 users viewing its posts. Kofola's posts on Twitter were viewed by a total of 4,161 users in March.

5 Conclusion

Businesses use their social media accounts almost every day, posting with their regular or new products. To achieve this, they use their social media accounts such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Most often, the visual aspect of the posts, interactivity and humor play a major role in these posts. Familiar celebrities are also an important element of the added posts related to the promotion of new or permanent products. Thus, businesses get more engagement from other users in the form of likes, comments, or new followers. However, the results with the number of followers were only approximate, as some social networks such as Instagram and YouTube do not show the exact number of followers, but only a rounded number. Companies that were more active on the selected social networks during the period under review had more likes, views, and new followers on their profiles. By being more active, companies also increased awareness of their products and can reach potential customers who will buy the products.

Furthermore, social media activity has an impact on a company's economic performance, but it is only one of many factors that contribute to the overall success of a business. While a strong social media presence and effective social media marketing strategies can positively impact brand awareness, customer engagement and ultimately sales, it is necessary to consider the broader context and other business factors that contribute to economic performance. However, it is important to note that social media activity alone does not guarantee economic success. A company's overall business strategy, product quality, customer service, pricing, distribution channels and

competitive environment play a significant role in determining its economic performance.

The aim of the research was fulfilled. Data from observations on social networks were processed in Excel. Then this data was analyzed and presented in graphs in the results and discussion of findings chapter.

For future research, it would be interesting to analyze the exact social networking business data that each social network offers to its users. However, this data is only visible to account holders and, for instance, on Instagram, various statistics on posts, stories and followers are visible to them in reports.

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