

The Influence of Corporate Advertising and Social Campaigns on Consumer Perception: A Case Study of Coca-Cola's 'Together Feels Better' Campaign in Indonesia During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Muhammad Rozan Fikri *

Universiti Utara Malaysia,
fikri_m_rozan@ahsgs.uum.edu.my

Vivi Silvia Turner

Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic
University Bandung,
silviahuriv@gmail.com

Lilis Satriah

Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic
University Bandung,
lilis.satriah@uinsgd.ac.id

Imron Rosyidi

Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic
University, Bandung,
imron.rosyidi@uinsgd.ac.id

Mohammad Afid Syafiri

Sunan Ampel State Islamic
University Surabaya,
alfidsyafiri21@gmail.com

*) *Corresponding Author*

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the influence of corporate advertising, especially in the form of social campaigns, on consumer perception of the Coca-Cola brand during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The main issue examined was how the "Together Tastes Better" campaign can create an emotional connection with consumers while conveying relevant social messages about togetherness in the face of adversity.

Method – A qualitative approach is used with the case study method, which allows researchers to explore in depth how audiences respond to advertising in the context of local social and cultural settings. The data collection technique involved semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, with participants consisting of consumers exposed to the campaign through social media and digital platforms.

Findings – Key findings from the study show that these ads successfully elicit emotional engagement from audiences, enhance the relationship between Coca-Cola and social values such as togetherness, and strengthen the brand image in the eyes of consumers. These findings contribute to the understanding of corporate advertising that prioritizes social and cultural issues, as well as the influence of social media in amplifying message impact. In conclusion, corporate advertising that incorporates social values can strengthen relationships with consumers and increase brand loyalty. The study suggests that companies should make better use of social media as an effective advertising distribution channel, and recommends further research to explore the impact of advertising in the broader context of local culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Corporate advertising and advocacy are two important components in building a company's image and strengthening relationships with stakeholders in today's dynamic business world. On a global level, many companies not only rely on product advertising to attract consumers, but also introduce their company values through campaigns that focus on social, ethical and social responsibility issues. This phenomenon has become increasingly important as public awareness of social issues grows, along with the need for companies to show their presence in the wider community. One notable example is Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" advertising campaign, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the company not only promoted its products but also conveyed an important message about togetherness in the face of adversity with families at home (Andrejczuk, 2020). The campaign reflects how companies can play an active role in supporting communities during difficult times, as well as the importance of effective communication in building stronger relationships with consumers (Nur Afiah, 2021).



The social issues that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic prompted many companies to adapt to a more sensitive way of communicating with current conditions. Based on previous research, this Coca-Cola ad managed to combine emotional messages with strong visuals to capture the audience's attention and raise awareness of the importance of togetherness in the midst of physical limitations. In the Indonesian context, this campaign received a positive response from the community because of the relevance of the message conveyed, as many families spent more time at home. Coca-Cola uses this social phenomenon as a means to introduce a positive image and strengthen its relationship with consumers. Thus, this research is expected to provide a better understanding of the role of advertising in shaping social awareness and cultural values in Indonesian society. The importance of effective communication in corporate advertising is not only limited to product promotion but also includes the delivery of social values that are relevant to society (Yosita Amalia, 2024).

However, there is a gap in the study of the relationship between corporate advertising and its impact on consumer attitudes towards brands in more specific socio-cultural contexts, such as in Indonesia. Previous studies have mostly addressed product advertising without considering in depth how these advertising campaigns relate to public perceptions of the social values promoted by the company. Therefore, this study aims to explore more deeply how corporate advertising, particularly in the form of social campaigns, influences consumers' views and attitudes towards a brand in the context of a global pandemic (Razali & Hidayat, 2022).

This study will focus on a qualitative analysis of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" ad,

examining the meaning contained in the visuals and messages conveyed, as well as how these ads affect the social perception of the Indonesian people towards the brand. The theoretical contribution of this research is to provide a new perspective in the study of corporate advertising, which not only promotes products but also creates strong social value. In practical terms, this research can provide insights for companies to design advertising campaigns that are more sensitive to the social and cultural context that prevails in society. This research is expected to provide new insights into effective communication strategies in corporate advertising, particularly in Indonesia's social and cultural context during the pandemic (Sihombing & Saputra, 2022).

Marketing through corporate advertising has become an integral part of a company's strategy to build a brand image and connect the company with consumers. As a form of mass communication, corporate advertising not only serves to promote a product or service but also to introduce the company's values, philosophy, and image to the public. This concept refers to companies' efforts to introduce their identity through messages that emphasize the importance of corporate social and ethical responsibility. Corporate advertising typically aims to build a positive and immersive brand image, while highlighting the company's commitment to social or environmental issues relevant to the audience (Abhishek K. Singh, 2020). Thus, successful corporate advertising not only focuses on sales, but also creates a strong emotional bond with the audience, which is crucial in increasing customer loyalty. Effective corporate advertising is able to create an emotional connection with consumers, thereby increasing loyalty and trust in the brand.

Corporate Advertising Theory: One of the main theories relevant to this research is the theory of corporate advertising proposed by Crane at Spangardt. Corporate advertising, according to Crane, is a type of communication used by companies to introduce themselves to the public by highlighting elements such as the image, issues, and values held by the company. Unlike regular product advertising, corporate advertising often does not emphasize direct sales but rather focuses on building relationships with a wider audience. In the context of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" campaign, this ad not only introduces products but also creates social awareness about togetherness in the midst of a pandemic, which is increasingly relevant amid challenging global conditions (Armutlu, 2023).

The campaign shows how companies can use advertising to build an emotional connection with consumers and convey a deeper message about important social values. This illustrates the important role of advertising in shaping public perceptions of social issues, such as togetherness and solidarity, which are increasingly needed in difficult situations. The "Together Tastes Better" campaign reflects Coca-Cola's efforts to communicate positive values such as togetherness and solidarity, which are particularly relevant amid the challenges of the pandemic. The campaign also reflects how companies can contribute to society by promoting solidarity and social awareness in times of crisis (Amelia, Suyatman, & Sulaeman, 2024).

Advocacy Advertising Theory Another theory underlying Coca-Cola's advertising campaigns is advocacy advertising, which is a form of advertising used to support specific social issues. These ads aim to change or influence public opinion on social issues, such as health, the environment, or corporate social responsibility. Ads like "Together Tastes Better" aim to promote the value of togetherness in the midst of adversity, encouraging audiences to see Coca-Cola not just

as a product but as part of a social solution. Through these ads, companies try to introduce themselves as entities that care about the social situation around them, not just selling products (ERKAN, 2020).

In addition, the effectiveness of advocacy ads goes beyond mere brand perception; it can also drive consumer behavior and loyalty. By aligning their message with social goals, companies like Coca-Cola are capitalizing on growing consumer trends that prioritize ethical consumption and corporate responsibility in their purchasing decisions. Research shows that brands that are considered socially responsible can increase customer loyalty and positively impact market performance, especially among young demographics who are more engaged with social issues. This strategic positioning not only fosters a deeper emotional connection with consumers but also reinforces the idea that brands can play a critical role in addressing social challenges, thus transforming the traditional marketing landscape into one that supports social advocacy (Rupp et al., 2025).

Theory of Emotional Engagement in Advertising. In addition to the previously mentioned concepts, it is important to recognize that emotional engagement stands out as a very significant idea in the realm of corporate advertising, where the ability to connect with consumers on a deeper level is increasingly becoming a focal point for brands looking to capture attention and foster lasting relationships. According to comprehensive research conducted by Uspa & Kristiani, ads that have the ability to evoke a wide range of emotions in their audience tend to show a much higher level of effectiveness when it comes to building and maintaining long-term relationships with consumers who are emotionally invested in the brand they choose to support.

A prime example of this strategy can be observed in Coca-Cola's heartfelt "Together Tastes Better" ad, which skillfully uses a variety of emotional elements to showcase touching moments of family togetherness, thus creating an indirect but powerful connection between the brand and important humanitarian and social values that resonate with viewers on a personal level. Audiences who find themselves emotionally connected to the touching message conveyed in an ad are much more likely to retain a brand's memory over a long period of time and, as a result, may also show higher levels of loyalty and preference for products offered by the brand in the future (Zhang, 2024).

Previous relevant studies have shown the importance of the influence of corporate advertising on public opinion. Spangardt argues that a company's advertising can increase a positive perception of a company if it promotes values that are relevant and accepted by the audience. In addition, Uspa and Kristiani, in their study of Coca-Cola Indonesia advertisements, showed that the "Together Feels Better" campaign succeeded in conveying emotional messages that are relevant to the social situation faced by the community. Kuntum Hana also highlighted that advertisements that emphasize the theme of togetherness in the midst of a pandemic have a strong impact on strengthening social relationships, thereby creating an emotional bond between consumers and brands.

However, there are gaps in existing research, especially regarding a deeper understanding of the impact of corporate advertising in specific socio-cultural contexts, such as in Indonesia. Although previous research has shown that corporate advertising can influence public perception of a company, there is little research that addresses how local social contexts can affect audience

responses to corporate advertising, especially in the unique situation of a global pandemic. Based on the above literature review, this study will use corporate advertising theory, advocacy advertising, and emotional engagement as a conceptual framework to analyze the impact of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" campaign in Indonesia. This study aims to fill in existing theoretical gaps by exploring how local social and cultural values influence audience responses to corporate advertising, as well as how these ads can shape consumer perceptions of the Coca-Cola brand. This study is expected to contribute to the study of advertising and a deeper understanding of the dynamics of advertising in an ever-evolving social context.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the impact of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" advertising campaign in the Indonesian socio-cultural context during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research was conducted for six months (June-November 2023) in Surabaya and involved consumers who were exposed to campaigns through social media, television, and other digital platforms. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation to explore in depth the audience's experiences and perceptions of the social messages conveyed in the advertisement.

To ensure validity, the research applied triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and audit trails to maintain consistency and transparency. The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman thematic analysis model. The open and axial coding process is carried out by referring to the conceptual methodological framework that has been determined, namely: (1) corporate image categories, (2) social advocacy messages, and (3) emotional engagement indicators. This ensures that the identification of key themes remains consistent with the theoretical foundations of corporate advertising and advocacy advertising used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Based on data analysis obtained from semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, this study finds several key themes related to the influence of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" advertising campaign on the social perception of audiences in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings illustrate how these ads play a role in shaping brand image, connecting social messages with audiences, and influencing public views on the value of togetherness in the midst of a crisis.

Theoretical Categories	Evidence	Generated Themes
Advocacy & Emotional	"It's not just a marketing ploy, it's a sign that we're going to be able to get back on track." (P1);	Theme 1: Togetherness as a Response to the Crisis

Theoretical Categories	Evidence	Generated Themes
	"Eating out with family makes you miss home." (P3)	
Corporate Advertising	"Look at the Instagram feed, many people reshare and comment 'really relatable.'" (P4); Observation: Ads appear during YouTube prime time.	Theme 2: Image Digitization and Social Interaction
Emotional Engagement	"Coca-Cola used to be just a party drink, now it feels more 'warm' and caring." (P2); "This brand has a 'heart'." (P1)	Theme 3: Humanization of Brands through Social Value

Key Theme 1: Togetherness in Crisis

One of the main themes that emerged in this study was the importance of togetherness in facing crises. The Coca-Cola ad clearly showed moments of family togetherness at home during the pandemic, which were warmly welcomed by most participants. As one participant said: "This ad reminds me that togetherness is important, even if we can only be at home. It's like an invitation to enjoy small moments with family." (Participant 3, Surabaya). This message effectively aroused the emotions of the audience, who felt that Coca-Cola was not only selling products but also playing a role in reinforcing social values relevant to the conditions of society. In participatory observation, it was seen that many audiences associated ads with their personal experiences during the pandemic, making them more meaningful.

Through the lens of Advocacy Advertising Theory, these findings prove that Coca-Cola has succeeded in 'framing' social problems (pandemic isolation) into emotional solutions (togetherness). This success occurs because advertising does not emphasize product attributes (taste, price), but rather emphasizes the value of solidarity. This explains why the audience gives a positive response; They feel morally supported by corporate entities in the midst of global uncertainty.

Key Theme 2: The Influence of Social and Digital Media

The second theme that emerged was the influence of social media in spreading advertising messages and shaping public opinion. Many participants stated that they first saw these ads through digital platforms such as YouTube or Instagram. For example, one participant said: "I saw this ad on Instagram, and I found it more touching because I could instantly comment or share it with my friends." (Participant 7, Surabaya).

Based on Corporate Advertising Theory, this digital interaction transforms one-way communication into a dialogue of values. Observational data shows that *the engagement rate* on social-themed content is higher than regular product promotion content. This shows that in the Indonesian sociocultural context, corporate image is more effectively built when the public is engaged in conversations about values relevant to their daily lives. This shows how digital platforms, especially social media, function not only as advertising distribution channels but also as spaces for

social interaction that reinforce the impact of the message conveyed by Coca-Cola.

Key Theme 3: The Association between Brands and Social Value

The third theme is how audiences began to associate Coca-Cola with social and humanitarian values. Some participants stated that they felt the Coca-Cola brand cared more about the community because of the ads featuring themes of togetherness and social support. One participant stated: "I feel that Coca-Cola is more humane now. This ad not only sells drinks, but also reminds us of togetherness in difficult situations." (Participant 5, Jakarta). These findings suggest that corporate advertising that embodies social values can create a deeper connection between consumers and brands.

Theoretically, this indicates the success of Emotional Engagement. When a brand is able to evoke genuine emotions (empathy and emotion), audiences tend to lower their "defense" against the advertisement's message. The use of local Indonesian values such as *gotong royong* (togetherness) in the midst of a global pandemic has shifted Coca-Cola's position from just a soft drink to a symbol of social resilience. It answers how corporate advertising can create long-term bonds that go beyond buying and selling transactions.

Discussion

This section operationalizes the theoretical framework established by Corporate Advertising, Advocacy Advertising, and Emotional Engagement as an analytical tool to interpret the field findings regarding the Coca-Cola "Together Tastes Better" campaign.

Deconstructing Identity through the Lens of Corporate Advertising

This study found that there is a shift in audience perception from a transactional view (Coca-Cola as a product) to a relational view (Coca-Cola as a "human" entity). If analyzed using the Corporate Advertising Theory of Crane and Spangardt, this phenomenon is the success of the operationalization of the corporate image above the product attributes.

The data shows that when companies highlight values relevant to societal crises, they are building a "brand personality" that goes beyond economic functions. As stated by Singh (2020), successful corporate advertising creates an emotional bond through the company's philosophy. In the Indonesian context, Coca-Cola is no longer "selling drinks," but is "communicating empathy." This proves the theoretical proposition that corporate advertising serves as a strategic instrument to align a company's identity with the socio-cultural pulse of its audience.

Operationalization of Advocacy Advertising: Brand as a Social Solution Agent

Findings on the theme "Togetherness in Crisis" must be read through Advocacy Advertising Theory. According to Erkan (2020), this type of advertising aims to change public opinion on social issues. The empirical data of this study where informants feel "accompanied" in the midst of isolation show that this advertisement is successfully operationalized as a form of moral support.

In contrast to previous studies that looked at rigid advocacy ads on policy issues, this campaign shows that in the context of the pandemic in Indonesia, advocacy of the value of "togetherness" has become very effective. This confirms the argument of Rupp et al. (2025) that modern consumers tend to give loyalty to brands that take an active position on social issues. Thus, "Together Tastes Better" is not just a slogan, but a social advocacy tool that transforms Coca-Cola's image into a solution partner for people who are experiencing psychological distress

Mechanisms of Emotional Engagement in Digital Space

How social media amplifies the impact of this campaign can be explained in depth through the Theory of Emotional Involvement. The operationalization of this theory in data analysis

suggests that digital interactions (such as sharing content or commenting) are physical manifestations of deep emotional engagement.

Based on Zhang's (2024) research, the emotions that are awakened will prolong the brand's memory. Here, local Indonesian values such as *gotong royong* are operationalized through the visual of the family dining table. Through this lens, we can understand why audiences feel moved to interact on Instagram or YouTube; it is because the advertisement has touched the "collective sentiment" of the Indonesian people. This complements the study of Usps and Kristiani as well as Kuntum Hana, where emotional engagement is not just about feeling happy, but about how local socio-cultural values (togetherness) "ride" on the company's global narrative to create a strong resonance.

Paradigm Shift in Advertising in Indonesia

The synthesis of the findings of this study shows that the success of Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" campaign in Indonesia is the result of the systematic integration between three theoretical pillars that are operationally operated in depth in the face of the global crisis. Analytically, this study proves that the boundary between corporate advertising and advocacy advertising has merged into a single strategy called corporate moral identity. Through the lens of Advocacy Advertising Theory, Coca-Cola no longer simply builds a static image, but positions itself as a "social actor" that intervenes in the psychological conditions of isolated communities. When this advocacy element is combined with Corporate Advertising Theory, there is a transformation of public perception in which companies are no longer seen as mere profit-seeking entities, but as humanistic philanthropic entities. This explains why audiences in Indonesia show such a high acceptance rate; They don't feel like they're being targeted by advertising, but rather are getting moral support from a brand.

Furthermore, the operationalization of the Theory of Emotional Engagement in this study reveals that emotions function as the main engine that bridges global messages into the local sociocultural space of Indonesia. The visual of the "family dining table" displayed is not just an aesthetic property, but a cultural symbol that is operationalized concretely to trigger collective sentiments or *values* that are very thick in Indonesian society. In this context, emotional engagement is not just about emotion, but a mechanism that transforms one-way messages into value dialogues that are validated through interactions on social media. This proves that digital platforms are not just technical distribution channels, but rather a space of "social validation" where consumers and brands celebrate the same human values in *real-time*, thus extending the brand's memory in the audience's memory beyond the duration of the campaign itself.

Ultimately, this synthesis offers a new theoretical contribution through a model called "Relational Advertising", in which consumer loyalty in times of crisis is built through structured empathy mechanisms. This paradigm shift shows that corporate advertising in Indonesia has transformed from a product-oriented transactional approach to a human-oriented relational approach. These findings provide the basis for future marketing communication studies that in order to win a market sensitive to social issues, companies must be able to sew their brand autonomy into the fabric of social values that society is currently needing. Thus, "Together Tastes Better" is proof that effective advertising during a pandemic is an advertisement that is able to stop being just a promotion and start to become an authentic means of empathy communication.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that Coca-Cola's "Together Tastes Better" advertising campaign has made a significant impact in building brand image and conveying a social message about togetherness

amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings show that these ads not only promote the product but also associate Coca-Cola with deep social values, such as togetherness and family support, which are highly relevant to social conditions in Indonesia. The use of social media as an advertising distribution channel has also been proven to strengthen the emotional impact of these ads, making them more effective in reaching a wider audience. Theoretically, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of corporate advertising and advocacy advertising by showing how companies can use social messaging to strengthen relationships with consumers and improve brand image. From a practical point of view, these findings highlight the importance of incorporating social values into marketing strategies, especially in the face of global crises such as pandemics. Companies are also advised to use social media more effectively in spreading their advertising messages, given the high level of interaction between audiences and content on digital platforms.

The study also opens the door to further research on comparing the impact of corporate advertising across cultures, as well as the role of social media in modifying advertising impact. More in-depth research in the context of local culture can provide additional insights for companies in designing more targeted and relevant campaigns.

Thus, this research manages to provide new insights into the phenomenon of corporate advertising that not only focuses on product promotion but also builds stronger emotional and social relationships with audiences, as well as its contribution to the development of advertising theory and practice.

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