



2. The Underground Mainstream

Marketing was the starting point for #ShareaCoke. For most of its history in the United States, marketing had been applied more as a science or managerial activity. From about 2005 to 2012, marketing was seen as an investment. Companies would use deeper customer insights to aid marketing initiatives and their activities were directed at the customer level. This was what Coca-Cola had done right off the bat. Coca-Cola also had the advantage of their historic brand. As seen in ads like the famous hilltop version of "Buy the World a Coke" in 1971, Coke was all about inspiring moments of optimism and happiness. This was the mainstream that Coke could continue to use to their advantage in what was initially called "Project Connect". But in order to connect with this new generation, Coke was going to have to change gears. The first and primary objective: Increase sales during the summer period in Australia. Talking directly to millennial consumers was the second objective. Powered with Coca-Cola's existing mainstream brand of "inspiring happiness", the company would take a leap of faith into the deep end and use underground methods of marketing, including personalization as a form of connection, diversifying the applications of the call to action, and untapping the new and unbridled potential of the internet and social media.

Share a **Coke** with...

5. A Powerful Call to Action

Few call to actions are as multilayered as the call to action of the #ShareaCoke campaign. If the personalization of names and the imagery of familial connection wasn't enough to spur one to passing on the experience, Coca-Cola blatantly tells people to share. The genius behind this is the multiple ways one had the ability to share

First, the most obvious one, giving the product to another person. The bottles already engaged the audience with a presence in their lives. Peer to peer promotion meant that consumers would do the job of convincing others to have a Coke without Coca-Cola having to tell them themselves. Coca-Cola encouraged its audience to reach to everyone from their mothers to friends they haven't seen in a while. This was the second thing Coke encouraged you to share: your experience with the product. With the audience equipped with something to talk about, the last and most revolutionary form of sharing of all was not a matter of what, but a matter of how, as Coke equipped consumers with a simple, yet effective hashtag.

shareacoke.com.au

1. Starting From Down Under

In 2010, The Coca-Cola Company realized they had a problem. The company had been a well known international brand since 1923 and had loyal consumers from almost a century of establishing its brand and product, but sales for Coca-Cola had been on the decline for about a decade. The company decided that it needed to reach out to a new audience: millennials. By targeting a new demographic, Coca-Cola would be able to potentially increase sales again. Before they could begin however, they had to strategize on how to appeal to an entire generation that had not only been raised to be more health conscious than any generation before them, but was also extremely distrustful of large corporate brands.

It might seem random, but #ShareaCoke's geographical birthplace was very crucial to its success. Australia had a history of rich and effective marketing, but according to the director of marketing at the time, certain corporations in the land down under could fall victim to what is referred to as "tall poppy syndrome". Australian consumers will often reject a brand for being "too big for their boots" and get cut down "like a tall poppy". Coca-Cola decided to use consumer insights to their advantage to find out why they were suffering from this phenomenon. The problem was that many millennials felt that Coca-Cola as a brand was not talking to them at eye level. They were a well known product that everyone knew about, but Coca-Cola was failing to connect with the values and mindset of the newest generation. In other words, they had become too mainstream.

The Secret Formula of #ShareaCoke

by: Garnet Garcia

3. The Rhetoric of the Image

Coca-Cola's experiential selling point has always been one of closeness, love and unity. There is an extensive area of product development for which marketing diversity should be considered because not all people have the same tastes, preferences, and/or needs. However, ideas such as happiness, love, connection to the people you care about; these themes could always be applied on an international scale.

The ideological metalanguage used in the #ShareaCoke campaign consists of the consumers knowledge and previous associations with messages of closeness and happiness associated with Coca-Cola. The visual elements of the images used in the adverts never display face, but also imply the experience of connection by displaying the bottles close together in a way that resembles the interactions of a familial group of people. This connoted image, paired with phrase "Share a Coke with...", is the rhetoric of most, if not all, of #ShareaCoke's ads.

#ShareaCoke

6. A New Age of WOMM

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has always been established as a powerful and influential marketing technique. However, up until the early 2010s, it had been seen through the lens of a marketing world untouched by the Internet. Accessibility, reach and transparency had yet to empower marketers like never before." Coca-Cola decided to try something new and tapped into the power of the digital world. They did so reluctantly, as it was still an unknown factor at the time of the campaign's release, but its success in building internationally was heavily reliant on internet and social media platforms. The use of the #ShareaCoke hashtag not only allowed consumers to share their experiences with others, but also created a community. Consumers that could now feel an even deeper level of social connection because of all the experiences they would see on this hashtag. #ShareaCoke inspired shared moments of happiness in the real and virtual worlds that could be peer promoted on an international stage. Consumers shared more than 500,000 photos via the #ShareaCoke hashtag within the first year alone and Coca-Cola gained roughly 25 million new Facebook within that same year. This revolutionary method of marketing can be easily overlooked as an obvious outcome when you've been living in that world for 10 years. However, a lot of this "common knowledge" that we know today was discovered because of the success of the #ShareaCoke campaign. If one considers that Instagram was launched in October of 2010, and the #ShareaCoke campaign started in Australia in 2011, then it is safe to say that Coke-Cola radically changed the advertising industry and its relationship with social media influence, changing the mainstream marketing game forever.



4. A Childlike Connection

By reflecting on personal experiences, consumers feel like their lifestyles are the center of the narrative, instead of feeling like they are mere tools in a company's promotional machine. The personalization of the #ShareaCoke bottles took into account the almost "avant-garde" mentality that was the millennial generation's values. First, they valued experiences over products. Second, friends were very important to them; friends that were trustworthy but also genuine, sociable, mature and humble. For those who saw their own names, the experience was that this product was a gift made specifically for them. For those who saw the names of others they knew, there was a desire to share the gift of that experience. Coca-Cola was able to engage their consumers with a delightful experience they gave to themselves, or their loved ones, all while subtly presented the company as genuine, sociable, and humble.