

The marketing mix: promotion



The Marketing Mix: Coca-Cola Blak The purpose of this paper is to provide a critical analysis of the introduction of the marketing strategy as employed by Coca-Cola for the launch of Coca-Cola Blak in the U. S. Market. The format that this paper will utilize is to first identify a little information about the product in question, then analyze what strategy was employed by the soft drinks giant followed by a discussion of how the promotions strategy could have been improved.

Coca-Cola Blak was a coffee flavored soft drink that took essences of coffee and infused that with traditional Coca-Cola. It has been described as a mid calorie drink (Meaning fewer calories than traditional Coke but more than diet Coke) and was arguably positioned to appeal to adults and reaches out to new audiences and addresses new beverage occasions (Packaging Digest, 2006).

The question of what marketing strategy was employed by Coca-Cola is difficult to pinpoint insofar as the launch of the product was staggered between the United States, Canada and continental Europe. In this regard one could postulate that there are some common threads between these different marketing strategies however some differences can be recognized. In regards to the four P's it is the case that the price affixed to Coke-Blak was significantly more than traditional coke insofar as according to Hunter (2006) in the United States a pack of four eight ounce bottles are sold in four packs at a cost of \$7. 99 however upon examining a typical grocery store one recognizes that Kroger in Ohio sells a twelve pack of most Coca-Cola Varieties at \$3. 49 for a twelve pack of twelve ounce cans. In this respect the pricing strategy may seem confusing to customers who typically view the Coca-Cola as an inexpensive sweet beverage, and not a luxury beverage

which commands a more luxury price.

In regards to the product it was indicated by Hutson (2006) that most food panel tasters found the product displeasing and in the end “ Displeasing.” Overall it is the case that upon tasting the beverage a great deal of people seemed confused and this in the end may have stirred a negative response from first time buyers. Building on this point it was the case that CNN’s Anderson Cooper tasted the beverage on ‘ Live with Regis and Kelly’ and publicly spit the beverage out in August of 2006. This indefinable flavor probably hurt the prospects of the product in the end.

In regards to the placement of the product, it was the case that the launch was staggered, and ultimately the product was discontinued in the United States before the product was launched in Europe (However it should be noted that the product was launched/tested in France to mixed reviews). If consumers were to get word of this product discontinuation in North America it is likely that this would cause a negative perception of the product.

Lastly in regards to promotion, the product utilized a stylized packaging incorporating aluminum bottles and glass bottles with twist tops. Massive events were held to launch the product such as events staged in Dundas Square, Toronto where free samples were handed out to consumers.

However with not much promotion directed towards educating consumers on what to expect one could postulate that consumers were not prepared for the bitterness associated with the coffee component, and generally garnered mixed to unfavorable reviews from consumers. Different advertising and promotion strategies were utilized in different nation which could confuse consumers living in border regions in Europe.

In terms of recommendations it is clear that the market was more or less

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unprepared for the new product. The pricing strategy was not on par with most soft-drinks, consumers were not prepared for a coffee infused beverage and ultimately tasters did not respond favorably. The logical conclusion would be to conduct more taste tests to establish and develop a flavor that is more in keeping with regional consumer preferences, secondly more promotion to the ‘energy’ side of the beverage should have been promoted rather than the ‘thirst quenching’ side of the product. Lastly the company should have standardized their promotion strategies to send a unified message regarding the inherent benefits of drinking the beverage.

References

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