Soft drink companies: web site evaluation

Business, E-Commerce

Soft Drink Companies: Web Site Evaluation The Internet has become one of the primary ways in which a corporation communicates with its base and investors. In decades past they relied on advertising to get their message to the public, announce new products, and excite customers with promotional offerings. Firms are no longer limited to the 30 or 60 second spots on television or radio, but can now offer a vast array of information to their customer base. They can be informative, promoting, or just for fun. Coca-cola, Pepsi, and Fanta each have web sites that reflect their own individual character and culture. While some of the information is interesting and useful, some of it is merely an obligatory afterthought.

The Coca-cola web site reflects its image as the historical leader in the soft drink industry. It is useful to the consumer as a vehicle to access their Coke Rewards program where shoppers can trade their reward points for things such as MP3 players or Coca-cola fashion items. The Coca-cola store is helpful in locating items that have been a favourite among collectors. In addition, the Polar Bear support fund is a project that works to save the environment that these animals rely on. The site accurately portrays Coca-cola as a solid company with a rich tradition. The Coca-cola web site loses its value when it offers music that is of little interest outside the promotional venue. The same can be said of its sports information. One of the worst features of the site is its slow response and lack of download speed.

The Pepsi web site reflects the company culture of youth and innovation. It is effective as it opens with background music that portrays its image. There is a useful link to Pepsi Corporate headquarters where consumers can find career opportunities with the company. There is also an interesting link to

'False Rumour Alert' that dispels some of the urban legends that permeate the soft drink industry. Pepsi hits the mark in attempting to reach its target audience, which are young and are major consumers of soft drinks. However, the web site fails in its sports department by self-promoting its official spokespeople. The same can be said of its 'Car Culture' feature, which has limited appeal to the average consumer. The 'Members Only' area is another poor use of the Internet as most consumers do not differentiate themselves by the soft drink they choose.

The Fanta web site is a site almost purely for fun. It is useful for a child to get their parents to buy Fanta products. In addition, some of its games are enjoyable and are able to attract a younger audience. The same can be said of its e-card function where a consumer can send an electronic greeting card that promotes Fanta products. However, the site fails when it uses a promotional band that is unknown. While the trivia question section is a nice idea, the questions are of little interest to anyone. Another useless feature is the section where a consumer can mix flavours. This is a product that has a brand image of fun, but does not instil any investor confidence. This would only be of interest to a child, which has few consumer dollars to spend.

The soft drink business is a multi-billion dollar industry. The leaders have created web sites that reflect their history and their brand image. While some have useful information that can benefit the customer, they are largely a self-serving endeavour that has little value to the consumer or the company. All three web sites have some useful and entertaining features, but the Coca-cola web site is superior in its attractiveness from the standpoint of an investor. It is more professional and is able to reach the

consumer segment that has money to spend.

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