

# Research on Visual Design Based on Brand Competition Situations — Taking Coca-Cola and Pepsi as Examples

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## ABSTRACT

This paper takes the "competitive" behavior between Pepsi and Coca-Cola in the design field as the research and analysis object. It references the century-long "Cola War" between Coca-Cola and Pepsi. From the perspective of design method thinking, this paper analyzes how design "competition" is generated and takes effect. It makes a reasonable analysis from multiple levels of design, draws conclusions about positive competition and reverse competition, and applies the conclusions to the analysis of modern design ecology. Through the multi-angle competition analysis of the two companies, people can gain inspiration and clarify the responsibilities and burdens that contemporary designers have to shoulder.

**Keywords:** Design, Competition, Advertising, Strategy, Localization.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, people are in an era of relative harmony and stability in the world. People's requirements for modern life are no longer limited to food and clothing. The enjoyment of product appearance, comfort, and shape is gradually being valued and sought after. As the world enters the Internet era, communication between countries is unprecedentedly close, which makes it a shortcut for manufacturers to attract consumers' favor through exquisite design to overcome the pressure from home and abroad.

## 2. OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Design Competition Concept

Design "competition", as the name suggests, is the competitive behavior of various manufacturers in the field of design. Behind their behavior, their ultimate goal is one and only one, which is to occupy as much of the consumer market as possible.

### 2.2 Design Competition Concept Source

To a large extent, for a profit-making enterprise, it is better to invest a lot of manpower and material resources in researching the functions of products, thereby obtaining a few "advanced technologies" to make the products more advanced. Instead, it is better to invest relatively few resources in the visual design of products, which often brings more direct and effective results. The "competition" of design is naturally generated.

### 2.3 The Purpose and Significance of the Design Competition

The purpose of competition is not only to obtain sufficient benefits but also to create a more favorable and broader space for future development; that is, to develop oneself through various means. The design has many meanings for enterprises. Good brand design can help enterprises improve their brand effects, such as brand awareness. Good product design can help enterprises' products better meet the aesthetic habits, consumption habits, and usage habits of contemporary people. Good packaging design can add icing on the cake and promote sales. The meaning of design

"competition" is just like what Ray Dalio, the author of "Principles", said: "The internal quarrel process is a process of 'creative selection'. The more the truth is argued, the clearer it becomes. Through the brainstorming of quarrels, defects and mistakes of things are avoided as much as possible, and the chance of success is increased." Design "competition" is a collision of ideas. This "collision" can broaden the thinking of practitioners, so that the design can withstand the inspection and investigation from all sides in terms of style, level, pattern, and connotation.

### 3. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON "COCA-COLA" AND "PEPSI-COLA"

#### 3.1 *Coca-Cola's Exploration and Achievements in the Field of Design*

Coca-Cola is one of the leaders in the global soft drink market. Since the birth of the first bottle of Coca-Cola in 1886, its advertising, trademarks, and packaging have been constantly iterating and innovating. In 1900, the Coca-Cola logo has always used the Spencerian cursive script designed by Robinson as the words, which was directly applied to the English letters of "Coca-Cola", giving the brand logo a smart, elegant, elegant, and coherent aesthetic. The Coca-Cola logo that people are familiar with now was created by the famous American designer Raymond Loewy. It uses white as the color of the font and also uses a new elegant and smooth font for the words. The bottle of Coca-Cola beverage packaging was also designed by Loewy. The dark brown bottle can better set off the white and smooth font "Coca-Cola", making the short letters more impactful. The improvement of the high-quality brand image has enabled Coca-Cola to quickly occupy the global market, and the word "Coca-Cola" has become the most popular word in the world after "OK". Coca-Cola has undergone more than a hundred years of visual enhancements, but the abbreviation "Coca-Cola" has only been slightly changed.

#### 3.2 *Pepsi's Exploration and Achievements in the Field of Design*

Pepsi-Cola, also from the United States, is a strong competitor of Coca-Cola mentioned above in the business field. It was born at almost the same time as Coca-Cola, and its global sales and popularity are almost the same as Coca-Cola. Both

have a large number of loyal consumers around the world. Since 1983, when Pepsi-Cola hired Roger Enrique as president, because it was difficult to distinguish the taste of the two brands of cola, the new president Roger directly focused the development of the company on characteristic advertisements that can shape the image of the company's products, in the hope of generating better market feedback. First of all, find the right positioning. Pepsi-Cola positions its products as beverages for the new generation. In terms of strategy, it began cross-border cooperation, combining beverages with music ("Figure 1"), and hired well-known musicians from various regions of the contemporary world as partners. The theme of the design also closely follows the company's theme "Desire for Infinity", advocating to stimulate the vitality of young people, implying that the opportunities and dreams of young people are unlimited.



Figure 1 Pepsi cross border collaboration poster.

The predecessor of Pepsi-Cola was called Brad's Drink. The initial design (see "Figure 2") was a simple blue letter on a white background with simple floral decorations.



Figure 2 Brad's Drink early signs

The 1905 logo revision was based on the 1903 logo with font and structural changes (see "Figure 3").



Figure 3 Brad's Drink logo.

The logo became softer. The spikes were retracted and the letters became a little wider. Overall, the logo maintained a wavy, curved shape, with the last "A" keeping its tail curled. In this version of the logo, a long banner extends from the top of the "C" in the cola, making this version of the logo closer to symmetry than the first version. In 1906, the Pepsi-Cola logo was adjusted again (see "Figure 4").



Figure 4 1906 Brad's Drink logo.

It was still red, it was still wavy, and it still looked a lot like the logos of certain other cola brands. The 1906 iteration of the Pepsi logo made the letters thicker again and compressed the word mark, making the letters "P" and "C" only slightly taller than the rest of the letters. At the same time, Pepsi also made other major changes, such as adding a pointed serif return, adopting an italic font, adding the word "drink", and adopting a colon in the logo for the last time. After several more changes, the year 1962 came, and Pepsi no longer had the word "Cola" (as shown in "Figure 5").



Figure 5 Pepsi logo in 1962.

It was called the year of "No More Coke". In addition to abandoning the word "Coke", Pepsi also

abandoned the clumsy, swirling red font that they had been using for the past 64 years. In 1991, Pepsi made another major change to the logo, retaining the word mark and retaining the globe, but for the first time in history, they were separated (as shown in "Figure 6"). The logo that people are most familiar with today is the one that underwent its last major revision in 2008 (see "Figure 7"). PepsiCo spent a huge sum of US\$1 million to have the Arnell Group design the logo, which returned to a flat design and eliminated capital letters.



Figure 6 Pepsi logo in 1991.



Figure 7 Pepsi logo in 2008.

#### 4. COLA WARS: COMPETITION BETWEEN COCA-COLA AND PEPSI IN VARIOUS DESIGN FIELDS

##### 4.1 *Competition in the Field of Localized Design*

In the localization stage of corporate naming, when Coca-Cola first entered the Chinese market, it was localized as "Ke Ke Ke La", which was a direct transliteration method. These four characters in Chinese have many complex strokes, and the meaning is confusing to most Chinese people and does not conform to the daily communication habits of Chinese people. After the market reaction, Coca-Cola adopted "Ke Ke Ke" as the new product name after the name-calling competition with a prize. As a latecomer, Pepsi-Cola learned from the experience of its predecessors and localized the naming much more smoothly. It fully considered the living customs and behavioral habits of the

Chinese people. Not only is the transliteration similar, but it also allows the Chinese people to appreciate the beautiful meaning of the name. Now Pepsi-Cola has even become a word of blessing for each other during important festivals of the Chinese people.

#### 4.2 Competition in the Field of Font Design

In terms of font design, Coca-Cola, which had just returned to the Chinese market in 2003, adopted a new streamlined Chinese font logo designed by Hong Kong advertising designer Chen Youjian (see "Figure 8").



Figure 8 Chen Youjian's Coca Cola logo.

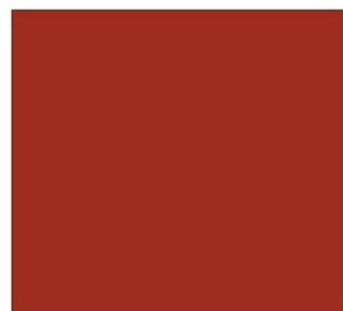
He used the traditional Spencerian style Chinese font design in the logo font so that the new logo has both the graphic characteristics of the English Spencerian font and the coordination of Chinese characters, which is more in line with the aesthetic habits of Chinese consumers and quickly received favor from the market. After entering the Chinese market, Pepsi directly adopted Chinese fonts as standard fonts. In 2008, along with the "smile" of the trademark (see "Figure 9"), its logo font also changed from the initial sharp corners to a slightly curved font, which fully matched and echoed the "smile" of the logo. In the field of font design, after entering the Chinese market, Coca-Cola and Pepsi both chose to use the standard Chinese font. Their purpose is to brighten the product image and attract more consumers' attention and favor.



Figure 9 Smiling Pepsi logo.

#### 4.3 Competition in the Field of Design Colors

Red is the favorite color of the Chinese nation and conforms to the color aesthetics of the Chinese people. The red used by Coca-Cola is a warm, impulsive, and powerful color. It can accelerate muscle function and blood circulation. Even a professional naming vocabulary such as "Coke Red" (as shown in "Figure 10") was created to name the red series used by Coca-Cola. More importantly, red has an inherent advantage in the huge Chinese market. Because the Chinese national flag is red, Chinese people like the "red and prosperous" element. It can be said that red is the color of China. Coca-Cola uses the advertisement "Chinese people are red" to combine its red elements with Chinese red.



RGB: 159 45 32

Figure 10 Cola red.

Pepsi's blue is a symbol of eternity and it is the coldest color. Pure blue shows a kind of beauty, quietness, rationality, tranquility, and cleanliness.



With young idols, it is a representative of fashion and vitality. Both Pepsi and Coca-Cola have launched brand image designs with "gold" as the main color. In 2008, Coca-Cola launched the Spring Festival special gold package during the Spring Festival and the Olympic Games respectively (as shown in "Figure 11"), and Pepsi followed suit and launched a special "gold package" to compete with Coca-Cola during the Spring Festival two years later (as shown in "Figure 12").



Figure 11 Coca Cola gold can.



Figure 12 Pepsi Cola gold can.

#### 4.4 Competition in the Field of Advertising Design

Since the world gradually entered the Internet era, advertising media has gradually shifted from paper publications to electronic media. The two companies continue to focus their marketing advertising on major events that Chinese people pay close attention to, such as the "World Cup", "Olympic Games", "World Expo", and other important festivals, including the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.

In 1930, facing a large competitor, Pepsi-Cola began to think strategically and launched products

with equal volume but lower prices. Once this strategy was launched, Coca-Cola, which has a huge volume, could not respond effectively in the short term. In 1939, Pepsi-Cola quickly launched large-bottle products with larger volumes but more affordable prices, and cleverly hinted to consumers in the slogan: "For the price of 5 cents, enjoy twice as much Pepsi-Cola."

The key turning point for Pepsi-Cola came in 1975, when they launched a blind drinking cola promotion campaign (as shown in "Figure 13"), inviting passers-by to randomly taste the cola, provided that the passers-by did not know the manufacturer of the cola in the cup. The results showed that consumers chose Pepsi-Cola one after another. This year, Pepsi's sales soared. A few years later, Pepsi-Cola started to work with popular artists on advertising. In 1983, it spent 5 million US dollars to invite Michael Jackson to endorse its brand (see "Figure 14"), which quickly won over Coca-Cola's young followers.



Figure 13 Cola blind drinking activity.



Figure 14 Jackson endorses Pepsi Cola poster.

In contrast, Coca-Cola still sticks to its traditional, nostalgic advertising strategy. What's more interesting is that on April Fool's Day, Pepsi-Cola launched an advertisement: "We all love Coca-Cola." In Coca-Cola's advertisement, Pepsi employees chose Coca-Cola instead of Pepsi, implying that Pepsi's company lacks appeal. Coca-Cola used a picture to express its persistence, satirizing Pepsi's fickleness. Pepsi-Cola

immediately responded, saying that Coca-Cola tastes bad and they don't want to drink it. Coca-Cola quickly counterattacked, saying that you need to open the lid to drink Coca-Cola, while Pepsi-Cola "will kill you."

On Halloween, the competition became even more intense (see "Figure 15"). Pepsi-Cola responded to Coca-Cola: "I wish you a terrible Halloween," and used the vampire cloak to mock Coca-Cola as a "devil." Coca-Cola immediately released a picture, saying that every ordinary person wants to be a hero, showing a Superman cape, countering Pepsi's ambition to become Coca-Cola.



Figure 15 Two companies' promotional posters.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Design "competition" itself is also directional. Positive "competition" brings about the mutual pursuit of good money. Design can increase social attention, thereby achieving better profitability of products; it can improve the competitive awareness of practitioners, thereby achieving the practical level of practitioners' business; it can increase the activity of the market where the product is located, thereby maintaining the vitality and development of the track; it can promote enterprises to improve self-supervision and market supervision, thereby maintaining the corporate image and product image. It can be said that where there is design, there is competition, and the development of society is always accompanied by design. Throughout human history, from stone tools to iron tools, to pottery, and then to today's industrialization, design has been everywhere. Whether a machine can operate smoothly can never rely solely on verifying the theory and then piecing together the parts. After the theory is verified, it often requires generations of designs to be reasonably arranged before it can be put into full operation. As William Morris believed

that design serves tens of millions of people, design "competition" also has negative effects. Excessive competition may lead to waste of resources, vicious competition in the market, and mutual slander among practitioners, which will not only affect the quality of products and the image of enterprises but also hinder the progress and development of design. Therefore, it is necessary to face up to the two-sided nature of design "competition" and guide it to develop in a positive direction. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the important role of design in social development, promote social progress through design, and improve people's quality of life. In the future, design "competition" will be more intense, but it will also bring more opportunities and challenges. We look forward to seeing more excellent design works, as well as companies and practitioners who continue to grow and progress in the design "competition".

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