



The Four “Ps”: What Marketing Does for Soda

Product

This is the item being marketed and the package in which it is sold. Sometimes, this marketing strategy involves inventing a product to attract consumers who are not already using a product. Take Coke Zero ("Real Coke Taste, Zero Calories"), created because many men do not like ordering "diet" drinks, which they perceive to be for women who are watching their weight. In 2007, according to SportsBusiness Journal, the company spent thirteen million dollars during the NCAA basketball tournament to boost the then-new product.

Place

This is the location of sale, service and consumption. Place can be a geographic location or a group of people. Take Pepsi for example. During WWII, Pepsi-Cola reported that it was the only soft drink available to African American soldiers and had become their soft drink of choice by the war's end. For decades, Pepsi had bragging rights of being first choice of African Americans. In the 1940s, Walter Mack, Pepsi's then-president, hired former National Urban League executive Edward Boyd to develop a program to increase its sales to the Black community. Boyd then gathered a team of ten African American salesmen who traveled the country spreading the Pepsi story of equality. The "place" Pepsi captured with its marketing was the African American community.

Price

Beverage companies often use price as a marketing tool. The companies' goal is to price the product attractively so every demographic group will find a perfect fit. In recent years, beverage companies have changed the price and size of their products to remain competitive.

Promotion

Promotion is the strategy companies use to spread their message about the attributes of their product and producer. Promotion informs the consumer of the product's benefits and improves the producer's public image. Soda companies' sponsorship of sports and music events and philanthropic donations for health research are also examples of promotion. Product placement, such as the judges' Coke glasses on American Idol, also illustrate industry promotion.

Soda marketers are on the cutting edge of promotion, and, in what could be called the fifth "P" of marketing, are driving "participation" or engagement with the product through digital marketing. This strategy commonly targets young people, and tactics include creating online videos popular with youth, sending coupons directly to kids' cell phones, and developing games



that increase the time children and teens spend interacting with the brand online. Such marketing is in addition to traditional promotions like TV ads, billboards, signs in stores, and prominent sponsorships.

Public health advocates can use the four "Ps" to prevent consumption of sugary drinks. To promote good health, advocates could raise the *price* of soda with taxes, advocate for the *product* to be sold in smaller portion sizes, restrict where sugary drinks can be advertised or sold (*place*), and limit the sugary drink advertising seen by children and youth (*promotion*). Effective use of the four "Ps" could help decrease sugary drink consumption and improve the public's health.