



# The Pepsi Paradox

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Investigating the rivalry between Coca-Cola and Pepsi during the 1950s-80s through comparative analysis while incorporating semiotics and emotional branding theory

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# Abstract

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The following Master thesis involves the investigation of the following problem:

*“Why was Coca-Cola’s marketing during “The Golden Age of Advertising” more effective than Pepsi’s and how was Coca-Cola able to sustain its market position despite losing the taste tests to Pepsi during the 70’s?”*

The research is based upon the interpretive research tradition and an empirical-inductive scientific approach. The scope of the thesis is Coca-Cola and Pepsi’s advertising from the 1950s-1980s, which is put into the context of American society in that same period of time.

The theoretical framework consists of semiotics and emotional branding theory which are utilized in an analysis of selected empirical data, which consists of Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements from the 1950s-1980s as well as other secondary data including cultural perspectives and other significant marketing campaigns by the two companies in the same time period.

To assist and to create structure in the findings relating to the problem statement, two research questions are presented: “Which semiotic differences are there between Coca-Cola and Pepsi’s eight selected advertisements?” “Why has emotional branding been so important to Coca-Cola and in which ways is it contributing to the company’s success in the scope of the 1950s-1980s?”

The findings for the first research question are as follows. The semiotic findings in Coca-Cola’s advertisements show a higher level of value-based signs and meanings. Pepsi’s advertisements were more superficial in their meaning. Also, Pepsi seems to target a younger audience than Coca-Cola in the advertisements that were analysed.

The findings for the second research question reveal that emotional branding is very important for Coca-Cola when trying to establish loyalty and bonds between the product and the consumers. Examples of emotional branding can be found in Coca-Cola’s Santa Claus advertisements, a 1971 television commercial and other Coca-Cola advertisements.

The conclusion for this thesis is also an attempt to answer the problem statement. The conclusion is based on the combination of the findings relating to the semiotic analysis and the emotional branding analysis. It seems that Coca-Cola's marketing was more effective than Pepsi's due to its ability to gain loyalty from its consumers. It did this by using value-based and emotional branding strategies in its marketing. Pepsi was not able to create the same bond and this was possibly also the reason why Pepsi did not surpass Coca-Cola after "The Pepsi Challenge" campaign.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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The 1950's, 60's and 70's have been coined "The Golden Age of Advertising" by author Jim Heimann (Heimann 2005) and others. It was in this period that some of the worlds largest advertising companies gained their founding success on Madison Avenue, New York City.

The time period between 1950-1980 is especially interesting from a marketing perspective because of the vast amount of advertising material that can be collected from this era. Much of the material is printed image advertisements or short television commercials, in this thesis the focus and core empirical data will be rooted in the former.

It was also in this time period that the so-called "Cola Wars" began to make its mark on the advertising campaigns between Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Many believe that the battle between Pepsi and Coca-Cola for supremacy on the cola market truly began in the 1970's when Pepsi launched a blind taste-test and used it as a marketing advantage. Pepsi won the test over Coca-Cola and marketed it as "The Pepsi Challenge". However, Pepsi never gained any significant market advantages despite having "proved" that Pepsi Cola tasted better than Coke as it will be described in more detail later in this thesis (Chapter 4). Some have deemed this "The Pepsi Paradox" because of the paradoxical issues of having a supposedly "better" product but still not being able to gain an advantage over the inferior taste of Coca-Cola. The explanations for this outcome can be numerous, however most experts seem to think that it is Coca-Cola's marketing that is the answer not only to the company's success in this era but its overall achievements as a leading soft drink company. This may be a little too simplistic. Chances are that it is far more complex than simply better marketing. As Christian Janzen argues in an article, Coca-Cola can activate the prefrontal cortex, Pepsi cannot (Janzen 2011). However, good branding and advertising are undoubtedly important factors and also the factors that will be examined in this thesis. It would take extensive research across various academic fields e.g. psychology, anthropology and possibly even biology to grasp the full nature of this so-called "Pepsi Paradox".

So, based on the assumption that marketing and advertising in particular is an important part of Coca-Cola's success over Pepsi, this thesis will investigate this subject while acknowledging that it is only one factor out of many that can be examined.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Grounded in eight selected image advertisements from the 1950's-80's, four to represent Coca-Cola and Pepsi respectively, this thesis will seek to investigate the following problem:

*“Why was Coca-Cola’s marketing during “The Golden Age of Advertising” more effective than Pepsi’s and how was Coca-Cola able to sustain its market position despite losing the taste tests to Pepsi during the 1970s?”*

Rooted in the theoretical framework of semiotics and emotional branding theory, the following research questions have been composed:

- “Which semiotic differences are there between Coca-Cola and Pepsi’s eight selected advertisements?”
- “Why has emotional branding been so important to Coca-Cola and in which ways is it contributing to the company’s success in the scope of the 1950s-1980s?”

The research questions will supply structure to the analysis and assist in investigating the problem in a sufficient and nuanced manner. This construction should also help to assure that the theory is applied correctly and in way that complements the overall framework of the thesis.

### 1.3 Scope and Delimitation

The primary empirical data of this thesis consists of eight Coca-Cola and Pepsi print advertisements along with look into Coca-Cola's iconic Santa Claus character, spanning a time period from 1950-1986. Secondary data includes cultural and political aspects from this time period as well as background information about Coca-Cola and Pepsi and their relationship.

This time period is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the main purpose of this thesis is to investigate how Coca-Cola's advertising during "The Golden Age of Marketing" was more effective than Pepsi's. Also, how Coca-Cola was able to sustain its market position despite of Pepsi's success in taste tests, also known as "The Pepsi Paradox". The study of this problem calls for analysis of both cultural aspects of the time period in relation to the selected advertisements. It would be unsuitable to analyze data from another time period because it would create an imbalance between the scope of the problem statement and the questions that it seeks to answer and the empirical data.

The focus of this thesis is exclusively centered on U.S.A mainly because the primary empirical data along with "The Pepsi Challenge" were published there and because the two companies despite their multinational status are deeply rooted in American culture.



# Chapter 2: Methodology

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This section will contain an elaboration of the methodical approach in this thesis. The scientific approach will be explained and put into the context of the scope. Furthermore, the data collection will be elaborated on and accounted for in a theoretical perspective. Finally, there will be an exposition of how theory will be used in order to answer the problem statement.

## 2.1. Scientific Approach

### 2.1.1. The Interpretive Approach

This thesis will be based on the interpretive approach to comparative research. Within this approach, the hermeneutical spiral is regarded a way of obtaining knowledge and understanding of a given phenomenon. How these approaches are relevant to the thesis will be elaborated upon below.

Scientific method is the basis of science in the way that scientists explicate the methodological procedures underlying their work where the aim is to generate the best possible knowledge. Hudson & Ozanne (1988) claim that there are two dominant approaches to gain knowledge in the social sciences: *“the positivist and interpretive approaches”*. According to Kuhn (1962), as cited in Hudson & Ozanne (1988), the two approaches are *“...incommensurable because they are based on different goals and philosophical assumptions”*. In addition to this, Askehave & Norlyk (2006, 33) state that the positivist thinking is more science-based whereas the interpretive approach is related to the humanistic tradition. Also, they state that: *“Rather than being predictive and assigning general patterns of behaviour to certain nationalities, the interpretive approach focuses on how patterns of behaviour are interpreted and shaped by the members of a given culture (Askehave & Norlyk 2006, 9)”*. This approach is applied in this thesis because the analysis relies on interpretation of material from a qualitative research perspective that needs to be understood in the context of branding and marketing and through the perspective of the American culture (1950’s – 1980’s).

According to Hudson & Ozanne (1988), the interpretive approach implies three assumptions that involve an ontological assumption, an axiological assumption and finally, an epistemological assumption. The epistemological assumption is the most relevant in this thesis, however the two other assumptions will be addressed as well.

### **Ontological Assumption**

*"All research approaches in the social sciences make ontological assumptions about the nature of reality and social beings" (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). With regard to the interpretive approach and the "nature of reality", interpretivists deny "...that one real world exists; that is reality is essentially mental and perceived. (...) Reality is also socially constructed in that all human knowledge is transmitted, and maintained in social institutions" (Berger & Luckman 1967 cited in Hudson & Ozanne 1988). This thesis aims at understanding how Coca-Cola's emotional branding is perceived and how Coca-Cola and Pepsi's marketing is differentiated.*

### **Axiological Assumption**

*"Underlying [each world views] are different fundamental goals or axiologies" (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). Within the interpretive approach the primary goal of research is "...understanding behaviour, not predicting it" (Rubenstein 1981 as cited in Hudson & Ozanne 1988). Here, it is important to note that understanding is a "process", however "...the process of understanding is a never-ending process..." (Hudson & Ozanne 1988), and this certain aspect is related to the hermeneutic spiral which will be presented later. As Denzin (1984), as cited in Hudson & Ozanne 1988, states; "One never achieves **the** understanding; one achieves **an** understanding".*

### **Epistemological Assumption**

This assumption is, according to Hudson & Ozanne (1988), based on three aspects: *Knowledge generated, View causality and Research relationship*. Firstly, when interpretive research focus on *"...a specific phenomenon in a particular place and time"*, it seeks to *"...determine motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences, that are time- and context-bound"* (Hudson & Ozanne 1988), in this thesis advertising by Coca-Cola and Pepsi from the 1950s-1980s. Secondly, the view of "causality" regards the fact that the interpretive approach views the world as *"....being so complex and changing that it is impossible to distinguish a cause from an effect*. Thirdly, the interpretive approach views "research relationship" in the way that they wish to interact with their *"people under investigation"* to be able to understand the different perceptions and *"...in order to be able to understand these perceptions, these individuals must be involved in creating the research process"* (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). This thesis does not communicate with the parties involved directly as the setting is U.S.A and it would be difficult

to find persons who actually was exposed to the selected advertisements at the time of their publication, also the focus of the thesis is not directly to investigate people but to investigate meaning.

### **2.1.2 The Hermeneutic Spiral**

The principle of the hermeneutic spiral is that understanding and interpretation of data is linked through a spiral's movement – one moves back and forth between interpretations of the smaller parts and the situation seen in a broader picture (Pahuus in Collin & K ppe 2003, 145). In this context the smaller parts can be seen as the eight selected print advertisements and the situation seen in a broader scope is U.S.A 1950s-1980s and Coca-Cola and Pepsi's influence on that time period.

This thesis is based on an empirical-inductive scientific approach (Compendium 2010 Pahuus in Christensen) because the thesis is moving from empirical data to theory. The instigator for the subject of this thesis was reading an article about "The Pepsi Paradox" which generated an interest and a desire to investigate this paradox further. The idea was substantiated by reading various non-academic attempts to solve the paradox however the existing research was vague and offered no academically founded answers to why Pepsi was not beating Coca-Cola if it had the better taste. After this process of investigating previous studies, a data collection process began where empirical data was examined and selected as a basis for analysis. It was not until after the empirical data was selected that the theoretical framework was selected. After this, an understanding of the difficulties was obtained and a disposition for the problem statement with research questions could be designed. The development of the problem statement is a continuous process that stretches throughout the investigation of the problem. When new material is found and new findings are exposed, the problem statement changes until the final product is complete.

## 2.2 Empirical Data Selection and Review

In the following, the data collection process for this thesis will be presented. First by an explanation of the primary data and which criteria were used in the selection of it. Secondly, a presentation of the secondary data, where and how it is collected and how it contributes to supporting the primary data.

When collecting data it is common to distinguish between primary and secondary data. One of the weaknesses with secondary data is that information is not collected from first hand sources but it can contribute to an objective understanding of a given issue.

### 2.2.1 Coca-Cola and Pepsi Advertisements

The primary data used in this thesis is as previously mentioned, eight selected advertisements, four by Coca-Cola and four by Pepsi. Images are considered primary data because it can be used to transmit meaning instead of or in conjunction with words.

*“The term “visual material” refers to any primary source in which images, instead of or in conjunction with words and/or sounds, are used to convey meaning.” (Yale 2014)*

The eight advertisements were selected according to several criteria, which will be presented below.

Firstly, relevance. Relevance is of course the most important criteria to consider when collecting empirical data and especially primary data. The advertisements needed to be Pepsi and Coca-Cola advertisements and it needed to be actual print advertisements and not stills from television commercials. It needed to be advertisements that could help in investigating the problem statement.

Secondly, the time period. This can in part overlaps the relevance criteria. The time period was important because it needed to match the scope of the thesis. It was important that the advertisements represented the time period in a sufficient manner from start to finish and therefore one advertisement from each company has been chosen for each era. This means that one from each company represents the early 1950s, one from each to represent the late 1950s etc.

Thirdly, content. The content of the advertisements is important because it has to complement the first two presented criteria in the sense that it needs to display relevance and

time period in a visual way. When conducting research and one is searching for empirical data it is difficult not to unconsciously or instinctively select data that one believes will suit the problem statement and the investigation best. It is also in part therefore, especially two advertisements (Chapter 5.1.7, 5.1.8) reflects, the Pepsi Challenge and the New Coke campaign respectively as presented in Chapter 4.2.2 and 4.2.3

### 2.2.1 Secondary Data

By using secondary data, it is possible to develop a more in-depth analysis because existing data is already available. Secondary data can be divided into *process data*, *scientific research* and *register data*, and thereafter again into qualitative and quantitative research methods (Andersen 2008, 159).

This thesis is primarily based on *process data*. Characteristic for *process data* is that this data is produced in connection with on-going activities in society and within the organisation, in this case American society and Coca-Cola and Pepsi. In accordance with this thesis, it was necessary to gather information within the scope: *Pepsi and Coca-Cola marketing communication* in order to narrow down the focus area. According to Creswell (2003, 27), it is important first to identify a study topic, and research literature within this area before the topic frame becomes a central idea as was also previously explained in Chapter 2.1.2.

The main purpose of the secondary data in this thesis is to act as a context creator for the primary data. Therefore the data has been divided into parts that present American Society in the time period of the scope, Coca-Cola and Pepsi's background information and other important examples of Coca-Cola and Pepsi marketing during the 1950s-1980s.

The data can be divided into three parts: Books, website articles and academic journals. Books were primarily used to create an understanding of American cultural aspects. One of the main books used as literature for the American society part is Donaldson (1997). His book gives a very comprehensive understanding of post-war American society and the issues that the Cold War brought to the public debate. Another important piece of literature used in that particular part of the empirical data is the series of books called *American Culture in the 1950's, 60s and 70's*. Many of the academic journals are used as criticism of various elements in the empirical data as well as within the theoretical framework.

Creswell (2003, 31) states that the approach to literature in projects (or dissertations) is integrative which means that: "*the researcher [summarises] broad themes in the literature*". This means that literature summaries – both empirical and theoretical- are used to create a basis for the analysis.

## 2.3. Choice of Theory

In this section, the theoretical framework for this thesis will be introduced.

The theoretical framework of this thesis can be divided into two parts: semiotics and emotional branding theory. The most important part however is semiotics as it will be the primary theory applied to the primary empirical data and will make up the most predominant part of the analysis.

Semiotics can be divided into different schools of thought, however the most common distinctions are made between the Saussurean tradition and the Peircean tradition developed by Ferdinand Saussure and Charles S. Peirce respectively, as explained in Chapter 3.2. This thesis will primarily be based on Charles Peirce and Roland Barthes's definitions and terminology. Roland Barthes is especially interesting because he was one of the first to apply semiotics to analysis of advertisements (Chapter 3.2.4). However, it will be Peirce's triadic typology that will be the basis of the analysis as presented in Chapter 3.2.5 where key concepts of semiotics are presented.

Semiotics is often criticized for being too difficult to define. There is very little agreement among semiotic scholars upon the methodological principles of semiotics. This lack of definition and methodology can make it very easy to become too subjective while conducting a semiotic analysis (Chandler, *Criticisms of Semiotic Analysis* 2013).

The emotional branding theory is based on Marc Gobé's book "Emotional Branding" and his ideas on the subject. It has been difficult to find much literature involving emotional branding as it is still a somewhat new term that is yet to be widespread in academic circles. To give the emotional branding theory a more academically sound structure, pathos theory has been added as it has been found to complement the element of emotion. One should always be careful when conducting research analysis based on a theory such as emotional branding theory where there is very little literature available. That is also why semiotics has a bigger role in this thesis and why the emotional branding analysis will not be conducted before the findings in the semiotic analysis are presented.

The figures below illustrate how the theoretical framework is applied in two steps, first with a semiotic analysis and later through an emotional branding analysis. This is also evidence of how the process is moving through the hermeneutical spiral as explained in Chapter 2.1.2.

This illustration presents an outlining of how semiotics will be applied in this thesis. It will primarily be used as a means to analyse the eight Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements while secondary data will be used as support in this process. The result will be the findings of the semiotic analysis.

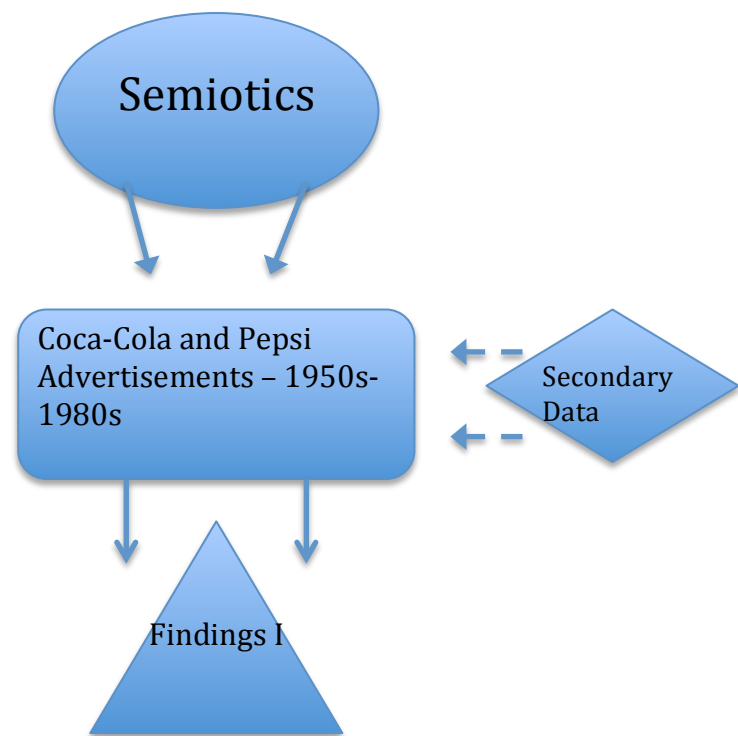


Illustration of semiotic analysis by Jensen (2014)

“Findings I” as illustrated above will then be the subject along with the eight advertisements as well as the secondary data in an emotional branding analysis as seen in the figure on the next page. This will subsequently lead to new findings, labelled “Findings II” in the illustration. Findings I and II will go on to become the foundation for the main conclusion in the thesis.



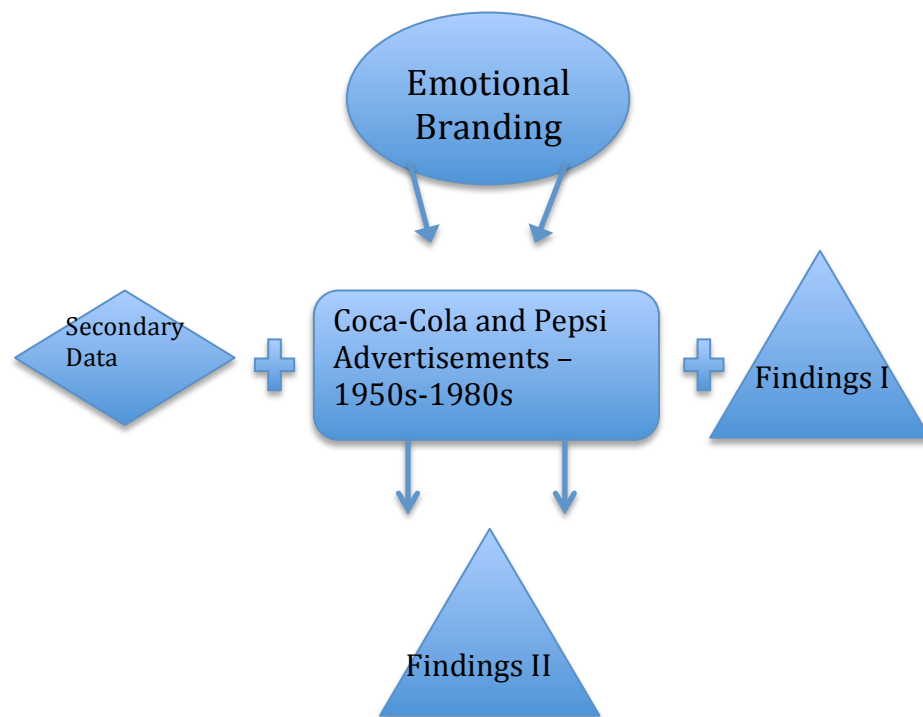


Illustration of emotional branding analysis by Jensen (2014)

# Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

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The following will contain a presentation of the theoretical framework for this thesis. The first part will present the core principles and terms of emotional branding as Marc Gobé presents it in his book *Emotional Branding* (Gobé 2001). The second part is a presentation of semiotics, which includes a short introduction as well as a more detailed look into the key scholars behind semiotics and some of the key terms. The relevance of these theories in relation to the thesis has been explained in the previous chapter.

## 3.1 Emotional Branding

In his book *Emotional Branding* (Gobé 2001), Marc Gobé outlines what he believes is a better way for companies to connect with consumers in an emotional way. He outlines the differences between traditional branding and emotional branding and covers the various elements that make up the latter. It is a branding perspective that seeks to create an opportunity for the consumer to realize his or her aspiration to experience emotional fulfillment through product and corporate branding. The following will present an overview of central terms described by Marc Gobé in *Emotional Branding* (Gobé 2001) as well as a look into Pathos as a persuasion strategy founded in the work by Gabrielsen & Christiansen (2010) and Higgins & Walker (2012).

In an article from 2012, John Rossiter and Steve Bellman wrote about emotional branding: *“Those consumers who become bonded to the brand (“It’s ‘my’ brand”), those who regard it as a companion (“This brand is like a ‘companion’ to me”), or those who admit that they feel something akin to love for the brand (“I would say that I feel deep affection, like ‘love,’ for this brand and would be really upset if I couldn’t have it”) reward the marketer with substantially greater purchase and usage of the brand (higher SOR%) than if they “merely” develop a favorable, above-neutral”* (Rossiter & Bellman 2012).

So in line with what Marc Gobé believes, they stress the importance of emotional branding when it comes to consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

Critics however, such as Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel (2006), argue that there is an underlying danger for companies when using emotional branding.

*"... a seldom-discussed risk of emotional branding strategies is their potential to expose firms to a particular type of cultural backlash, which we characterize as the "doppelgänger brand image"—that is, a family of disparaging images and stories about a brand that are circulated in popular culture by a loosely organized network of consumers, antibrand activists, bloggers, and opinion leaders in the news and entertainment media"* (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel 2006). What this means is that emotional branding has an inbuilt risk to trigger a wave of uncontrollable backlash.

### **3.1.1 The Four Pillars of Emotional Branding**

Gobé (2001, xxxii) presents four pillars as the founding principles of emotional branding, *relationship, sensorial experience, imaginative approaches and vision*. It is all about showing respect for the customers and connecting with them on a deeper emotional plane. Gobé describes the four pillars like this

*"Relationship* is about being profoundly in touch with and showing respect for who your consumers really are and giving them the emotional experience they really want. *Sensorial experience* is the key to achieving the kind of memorable emotional brand contact that will establish brand preference and create loyalty. *Imaginative approaches* to the design of products, packaging, retail stores, advertisements and web sites allow a brand to reach the hearts of consumers in a fresh new way. *Vision* is the ultimate factor of a brand's long-term success." (Gobé 2001, xxxii)

### 3.1.2 The Ten Commandments of Emotional Branding

Marc Gobé developed the “Ten Commandments” (Gobé 2001, xxviii-xxxi), which illustrates the differences between the traditional concepts of branding and emotional branding. It is created as an attempt to help companies and brand executives gain a greater understanding of what separates traditional thinking about branding from emotionally oriented branding and how this contributes to a stronger relationship with consumers as well as a stronger brand value.

#### 1. FROM CONSUMERS TO PEOPLE

(Consumers buy, people live)

Marc Gobé believes that the rhetoric often used about consumers by marketing professionals is too aggressive and that the communication sees consumers as “enemies” and that marketing is a “battle” that needs to be won at any cost. He argues that understanding consumers on an equal plane will create a better understanding of what they desire and need, thus creating a win-win situation in the marketing relationship.

#### 2. FROM PRODUCT TO EXPERIENCE

(Products fulfill needs, experiences fulfill desires)

Gobé argues that buying products just for need is driven by price and convenience therefore it is important for retailers and advertisers to supply the consumers with something that will create an emotional connection between them and the product.

#### 3. FROM HONESTY TO TRUST

(Honesty is expected. Trust is engaging and intimate. It needs to be earned)

Honesty is something that is expected in business today. Federal authorities, consumer groups and people in general demand honesty from businesses. Trust is something different, it is earned and not necessarily expected. Creating an environment where consumers trust the company and the product is essential in emotional branding.

#### 4. FROM QUALITY TO PREFERENCE

(Quality for the right price is a given today. Preference creates the sale.)

According to Gobé, preference is more important than quality, meaning that quality is

expected at the right price but what determines the sale is preference. Preference towards either Coca-Cola or Pepsi will determine the sale not the quality. It is important to notice that taste is of course a factor in this example but that is also a preference.

## 5. FROM NOTORIETY TO ASPIRATION

(Being known does not mean that you are also loved!)

Notoriety gets a company or product recognition but it takes more to be desired. The product or company need to convey something that is in line with the consumer's aspirations. Gobé uses Nike as an example. It is still a very well known brand but is it really as inspirational as it used to be? It is important for companies and products to keep up with what is of significance to consumers to be able to achieve the status of a desired brand.

## 6. FROM IDENTITY TO PERSONALITY

(Identity is recognition. Personality is about character and charisma!)

Gobé argues that identity is descriptive while personality is about character and charisma. The strongest brands not only have an identity but something deeper than that. They have something that makes them unique and that tells a story to the consumers. He uses a comparison between American Airlines and Virgin Airlines as an example, where the latter has a personality while the former has an identity.

## 7. FROM FUNCTION TO FEEL

(The functionality of a product is about practical or superficial qualities only. Sensorial design is about experiences.)

Functionality is important in a product but it is also something that most products can provide. Emotional branding is about more than functionality; it is about creating a design that gives the consumers a sensory experience. This not only applies to shape but also to looks, smell and taste.

## 8. FROM UBIQUITY TO PRESENCE

(Ubiquity is seen. Emotional presence is felt.)

According to Marc Gobé too many brands think in quantities when deciding on whether or not to promote their product in certain places. Instead they should be thinking about quality.

Advertising space makes a brand become seen however utilizing this space correctly will result in an emotional presence. An emotional presence is much more effective than simply distributing a large amount of advertising material on various platforms. Especially today it is easy to get forgotten in the clutter.

## 9. FROM COMMUNICATION TO DIALOGUE

(Communication is telling. Dialogue is sharing.)

Traditionally, marketing communication has been a one-way proposition not leaving any room for dialogue between companies and consumers. Especially when print advertisements and television commercials were the most common form of marketing it was difficult for consumers to voice their opinion. Today, many companies still follow this form of communication, however, the opportunities for dialogue are much greater than they have ever been before. Dialogue creates a relationship between the product and the consumer and according to Gobé it enables the marketers to create more personally targeted messages and branding.

## 10. FROM SERVICE TO RELATIONSHIP

(Service is selling. Relationship is acknowledgment)

Gobé argues that service involves a basic level of efficiency that either prevents or allows a sale to take place in commercial exchange it involves no need for a relationship between the brand and its consumers. A relationship on the other hand is developed when a brand acknowledges its consumers as individuals and actually tries to gain a larger understanding of who they are and what interests them. Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks puts it this way: *"If we great the customers, exchange a few extra words with them and then custom-make a drink exactly to their taste, they will be eager to come back."* (Gobé 2001, xxxi)

### 3.1.3 Pathos

According to Gabrielsen & Christiansen (2010, 106 + 98), *“Examples help to persuade”*<sup>1</sup> and its function is to *“...relate it to concrete persons or incidents”*<sup>2</sup>. In this way, Gabrielsen & Christiansen (2010, 98) claim that the use of examples will connect the message to the audience – a relation will be made between sender and receiver. Also, they state that the more concrete examples are, the easier it will be to provoke an emotional reaction from the audience. However, they highlight that it is important not to carry pathos to extremes as it can lead to a message not being perceived as anticipated and/or regarded as untrustworthy. (Gabrielsen & Christiansen 2010, 100).

Burke, as cited in Higgins & Walker (2012), claims that emotion *“... is achieved through “identification” (which he also refers to as “sociality”), whereby the persuader conveys a sense that she understands and relates to the needs, values and desires of the audience”*. Also, Higgins & Walker (2012) claim that *“...major metaphors and other non-literal language and imagery ... work to construct appeals to pathos – the emotional appeals that link to identification. These appeals are considered difficult to identify, and are often culturally or institutionally specific”*. This is considered an important notion as not everybody may perceive a message the same way.

Edlund (2010) argues, *“Advertisements for consumer goods often aim at making us insecure about our attractiveness or social acceptability and then offer a remedy for this feeling in the form of a product. This is a common strategy for selling mouthwash, toothpaste, chewing gum, clothing, and even automobiles”, and he continues, Appeals to the emotions and passions are often very effective and are very common in our society. Such appeals are not always false or illegitimate. It is natural to feel strong emotions about tragedies, victories, and other powerful events as well as about one’s own image and identity.”* (Edlund 2010)

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<sup>1</sup> Translated

<sup>2</sup> Translated

## 3.2 Semiotics

### 3.2.1 An Introduction to Semiotics

Semiotics or semiology is sometimes referred to as the “science of signs” and although it is not institutionally recognised as a science, the definition can be considered quite accurate. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and by many seen as the founder of semiotics, coined it as “the study of signs as part of social life” (Chandler 2000). It involves the study of various signs present in social culture whether it be art, cinema, books, television, radio, print and so on. Signs in semiotics are anything that can be used to communicate meaning or as Umberto Eco put it: “*Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign.*” (Eco 1976, 7) Semiotics is used to study the deep structures that lie beneath the signs, in other words it offers a range of tools to uncover the meaning and intent behind the sign e.g. text or images etc.

Even though the methodological and theoretical approaches to semiotics vary depending on the theorist, it shares many similarities with communication studies and linguistics and the analytical phase is very much rooted in rhetorical analysis. This is in part true because Ferdinand de Saussure saw linguistics as a branch of semiotics but also because many scholars within the field often mention television, art, radio etc. as being a form of text (Chandler 2002, 9).

In the 1960’s semiotics were applied as a major approach to cultural studies as well as advertising in a large degree thanks to French philosopher Roland Barthes, whose influence and ideas revolving semiotics will be examined later in this section (Chandler 2002, 7). Many of the terms used in semiotics are the same regardless of the theorist, however the use and approach to semiotics and especially the definition of what constitutes a sign and how a sign interacts with the reader/receiver varies depending of which branch of semiology is being applied.

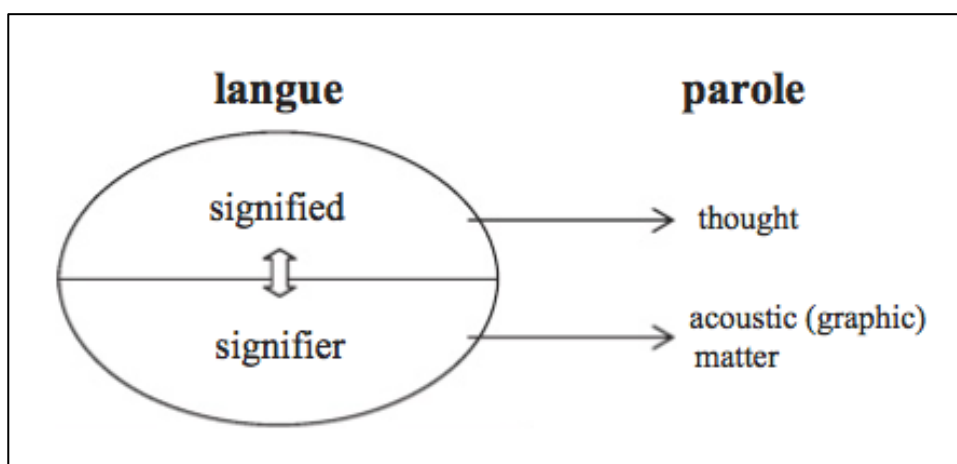
### 3.2.2 Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

The two most influential theorists within the field of semiotics are the previously mentioned linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and philosopher Charles Peirce. They were the driving forces behind the rise and recognition of semiotics as an important part of the rhetorical and linguistic fields of study in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s (Chandler 2002, 5). Even though they were contemporaries they had different approaches to semiotics especially how signs



and systems were constructed and how signs and the meaning related to these were connected.

Saussure is known for his linguistic approach to semiotics. He is one of the most predominant figures in early 1900's structuralism, which is a theoretical paradigm present in sociology, anthropology, linguistics and semiotics and implies that the elements of human culture must be understood in relationship to a larger system or structure (Ray & Murfin 1998). His focus was on language as a system of signs, which constructs meaning through symbols that are interpreted with the help of social and/or cultural conventions. He believed that a sign was made up of two parts, a signifier and the signified. The signifier would be the symbol or the word itself e.g. yellow and the signified would then be whatever the receiver interprets yellow to be depending on the conventions on which the receiver bases his/her interpretation.



(Lotman 2003)

To elaborate, Saussure believed that the signifier and the signified are arbitrary and therefore not initially connected. E.g. in Europe the colour yellow, in a traffic light context, means continue to cross only if unable to stop safely, while in China a new rule has changed it to "stop!" This confirms the arbitrariness between the signifier (yellow traffic light) and the signified (meaning or thought) and therefore there is a need for conventions for the two to be connected. Saussure's theory on signs is illustrated in above where "langue" defines the language as a system with conventions and rules, which also contains the signifier and the signified. "Parole" defines the use of the language and describes the signifier as an acoustic matter e.g. a word, and the signified as a thought derived from interpreting the acoustic matter (Bezuidenhout 1998). One could also interpret "langue" as the activity and "parole" as

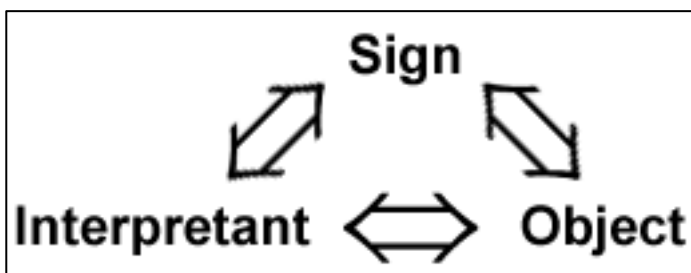
the product of the activity. This understanding of semiotics is also sometimes referred to as the Saussurean tradition

### 3.2.3 Charles Peirce (1839-1914)

As previously mentioned, the foundation for Ferdinand Saussure's theories on semiotics is based in the study of language. Charles Peirce on the other hand went beyond language and argued that almost anything can be determined to be a sign:

*"...every picture, diagram, natural cry, pointing finger, wink, knot in one's handkerchief, memory, dream, fancy, concept, indication, token, symptom, letter, numeral, word, sentence, chapter, book, library"* (Gorlée 1994, 50)

This became very important



(Bezuidenhout 1998)

Peirce's understanding of the sign is based on a triangle, which includes *sign, object and interpretant*. The sign refers to an object, which is interpreted by somebody and therefore has an effect on this person, the interpretant. There are similarities to be drawn between this theory of the sign and Saussure's signifier and the signified, however one important part is that Saussure as previously mentioned did not believe that the sign and the object are dependent on each other (Bezuidenhout 1998). So it is safe to say that one of the main differences between Saussure and Peirce is that the latter does not share the same belief of arbitrariness between signifier and the signified as Saussure did.

### 3.2.4 Roland Barthes (1915-1980) and Semiotics Applied to Advertising

As previously touched upon, Roland Barthes was a French philosopher and literary theorist who, during the 1960's, brought attention to how semiotics could be used to study the meanings, messages and techniques used in advertising. Even though his work is inspired by the Saussurean tradition of semiotics (many of Barthes' terms and ideas on semiotics is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's theoretical work), his re-thinking and contributions to semiotics are considered post-structuralistic.. In his book "Mythologies" from 1957 he argues that advertisements have a deeper purpose than what the surface initially reveals and that the "secret" purpose is to establish a connection between the consumer and the product using various techniques (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 20).

According to Barthes and other theorists inspired by his initial work, advertisements have two levels, a surface and an underlying level. The underlying level uses signs in a very creative and sometimes highly complex manner to create "a personality for the product" (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 20). The surface level constructs traces to the underlying level through the use of images, words, colors etc. which reveals the true meaning and intend of the advertisement.

Barthes also created the term "Neomania". It essentially means the constant craving for new consumer goods. Barthes believed that advertisers constructed this "Neomania" by constantly changing the techniques and styles used in advertising. He also believed that the use of mythologies (mythological figures/characters) e.g. the Marlboro Man<sup>3</sup> had elevated consumption to a new level that resembled that of a religious event (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 19).

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<sup>3</sup> An iconic cowboy character used in Marlboro Cigarette advertisements

### 3.2.5 Key Concepts of Semiotics applied to Advertising

#### **Medium**

When analysing advertisements from a semiotic approach, one has to understand that the advertisement is considered a *medium*. The medium is dependent on the choice of channel because the form in which the medium communicates will depend on whether it is a radio advertisement or a printed image advertisement. The medium is the means of communication and the channel is what constitutes the signal or the carrier of communication between the sender and the receiver. Medium can refer to very broad categories e.g. radio broadcasts as well as more specific categories such as radio news broadcasts (Chandler 2000).

#### **Denotation and Connotation**

Two of the most central concepts in semiotics are *denotation* and *connotation*. According to Barthes these are the two orders of signification and constitute what was previously explained as the surface level and the underlying level. *"It will be remembered that any system of significations comprises a plane of expression (E) and a plane of content (C) and that the signification coincides with the relation (R) of the two planes: E R C."* (Barthes 2003, 218)

What Barthes means by this is that signification arises when the expression plane (denotation) and the content plane (connotation) is connected via the relation of the two planes (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 44-45).

In advertising denotation and connotation can be seen as explicit and implicit meaning. These are two different levels of meaning, however, they still are interdependent for the reader/receiver to be able to create signification and to interpret the true intend of the advertisement.

#### **Signification Systems**

Even though the terms signifier and signified has already been explained from a Saussurean point of view it is important to further elaborate on the significance of these terms in relations to creating what is known as a *signification system*. Signification systems can be described as an open-ended connotative chain that relates to the meaning interpreted through the signifier and the signified of a sign. In advertising the signification system is everything that the receiver associates with the product or brand e.g. emotions such as happiness or anger or

memories that are associated with personal experiences relating to the brand or product etc. (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 23).

### ***Code, Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Relations***

Beasley & Danesi (2002, 39) use an example of how *codes* are used in a shoe ad: *"The colors of the dresses in shoe ads, the color of their hair, the color of the shoes, and so on constitute a color code, which is interconnected with a system of the symbolic meanings that colors possess."* (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 39).

Codes connect semiotic systems of meaning that the receiver interprets based on cultural and social conventions e.g. black and white are opposites and can be interpreted in many ways for example good vs. evil. This concept of is called *paradigmatic relations* and is very useful in advertising because it is often very easy to interpret and to understand. Besides paradigmatic relations, advertisements also use *syntagmatic relations*. Beasley & Danesi (2002, 39) explain this as follows: *"As the elements of an ad enter into a paradigmatic relation with each other, they simultaneously form combinatory and associative patterns."* (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 39) An example of syntagmatic relations could be as simple as how words are presented in such an order that they create an understandable sentence. It could also be the way colours are used to complement the rest of the picture e.g. a white dress on a woman with pale skin (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 39). In analysis, the terms syntagmatic and paradigmatic also appear however in a more general form. Syntagmatic analysis refers to the analysis of surface level connections that are constructed to create meaning. Paradigmatic analysis seeks to identify the signifiers that are present in a certain context on an underlying level (Chandler 2000).

### ***Peirce's Triadic Typology***

Charles Peirce developed what is called a triadic typology, which consists of *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. He believed that these were the three typologies used when humans were representing the world (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 40). He also argued that two or sometimes all three typologies could come into play in the same sign.

An icon is a sign in which the signifier is made to resemble the signified e.g. an image of a dog (Chandler 2002, 39). In this case the signifier, a picture of a dog, is made to refer to a physical dog. In other words there is a direct and apparent relationship between the object and the signified.

A symbol on the other hand is where there is no direct relationship between the signifier and the signified. For example a flag is a symbol of a country. To understand this symbol one needs to have learned the connection between a certain flag and a country or else it will make no sense because the signifier (American flag) has no apparent connection to the signified (America). (Chandler 2002, 38). So, it depends on the context and the intention upon which the sign was constructed.

The last typology mentioned by Peirce is index and is a sign, which encodes cause-and-effect relations (Chandler 2002, 41). Index is very much about "leading", which is the very idea behind advertisements, to lead the reader in a certain direction. In advertising this is often used to direct attention to the product. It can be a boy in an ad who points in a direction followed by text that promotes the product or it can be the placement of the product that indicates its importance or characteristics of a character that is made to lead to a certain interpretation (Beasley & Danesi 2002, 40).

# Chapter 4: Empirical Data

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The following will serve as empirical data and will be the foundation for the analysis presented in Chapter 5. The empirical data is divided into three parts:

- An overview of important aspects of politics, popular culture and family culture from the 1950s-1970s in the U.S.
- Introduction of Coca-Cola and Pepsi along with various marketing campaigns.
- Coca-Cola and Pepsi from a Marketing Perspective 1950s-present. Includes eight printed advertisements, which will serve as primary empirical data.

To understand what separates the two companies and to answer the problem statement in a thorough and sufficient manner, it is important to understand not only the individual history of Coca-Cola and Pepsi but also how the two brands are intertwined and what cultural context they are operating within. Therefore, a short presentation of American culture from 1950-1970 will be presented. A presentation of the companies will be followed by a review of selected advertisements and marketing campaigns from 1950-1985.

The selection and rejection of data is explained in Chapter 2.2, as well as the process of collecting the data.

## **4.1 American Politics, Media and Family 1950's - 70's**

### **4.1.1 Political Perspective**

#### **Economic Growth After the War and beginning of the Cold War**

After World War II, the U.S. experienced a high economic growth, which resulted in higher wages and general prosperity. Many people, especially farmers, moved into the larger cities or the suburbs and started a new life (Donaldson 1997, 123-126).

The end of the war also meant the beginning of the Cold War (1947-1991), which was a “cold” conflict between the former allies U.S.A and the Soviet Union. The Cold War was also characterized by the apparent confrontation between liberalism and communism (Donaldson 1997, 50) (Doherty 2003, 174). The Cold War started the Arms Race, a battle of military and weapon supremacy most notably the systematic development of nuclear weapons (Donaldson 1997, 32). This period also included the Korean War and the Vietnam War, which were fought as proxy wars between U.S.A and the Soviet Union with both countries supplying their allied parties with troops and technology (Donaldson 1997, 89, 91).

#### **A New Generation**

The culmination and ending of the Vietnam War in the late 60's saw the rise of a new youth generation in America. This group of people, today most famously known as “hippies” believed in sexual freedom and the use of drugs among other things. They preached for peace, love and harmony, and acted as a counter part to the decade of war in Vietnam and before that Korea, which had come before. During the 50s and 60s, the civil rights movement also gained strength with one of the most famous African-American civil rights leaders Martin Luther King leading the way.

### **4.1.2 Popular Culture**

#### **Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Elvis Presley and the Rise of Television**

Some of the most popular stars of the 1950's are Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and Elvis Presley. Especially Monroe and Presley took the term “star” to another level as they became icons for a generation of young men and women. James Dean became and still is a cult figure in American popular culture. He portrayed the rebellious wild boy that obeyed no rules in his



epic role in the film from 1955, "Rebel Without a Cause", meanwhile mirroring the rebellious spirit that was rising amongst the youth of America (Halliwell 2007, 148). Marilyn Monroe was Playboy Magazine's first centre-fold in 1953 (Halliwell 2007, xiv) and became famous for portraying the dumb, naïve but stunningly beautiful blonde in films such as "The Seven Year Itch" (Halliwell 2007, 170). Marilyn Monroe was above all a sexual icon and a symbol of female liberation. After her death in 1962 Andy Warhol, famous for his pop-art and provocative filmmaking, portrayed Monroe in his painting "Gold Marilyn Monroe" (Monteith 2008, 37). What Marilyn Monroe was for men, Elvis Presley was for women. He is commonly known as one of the first Rock and Roll musicians and became an idol for woman all over the world shortly after his debut in 1953 (Halliwell 2007, 132).

In the 1950's, television became a real rival to cinema. Television would often be portrayed as less glamorous and boring compared to cinema (Halliwell 2007, 147-148). However, during the 1960's, cinema lost its role as the classic provider of family entertainment to television (Monteith 2008, 73). By the end of the 1960's almost every home in America had a television installed and because of this large exposure, talk show hosts and news presenters became stars in their own right such as The Tonight Show's Johnny Carson (Monteith 2008, 74). Television shows also became extremely popular during the 60's and 70's with millions of viewers tuning in each week to follow their favourite programmes. Some of the most popular television shows during this time period were: "Star Trek", "The Brady Bunch", "Little House on the Prairie", "Mash", etc. (Monteith 2008, 74)(Kaufman 2009, 55, 56)

#### **4.1.3 Family Values**

##### **The American Family**

In 1950, a typical American family would consist of a father, a mother and their children. The father would be the sole provider of house income while the mother would take care of the home and the children. Career was for men and family and house matters were something that women took care of (Walsh 2010). It was also not uncommon that women experienced violence in some form from their husband at this point in time. Domestic violence usually went unreported and it was seen as acceptable behaviour that a man slapped his wife once in a while as long as it stayed private. Print advertisements from this period, as exemplified in Appendix A gives a clue to how society depicted the relationship between husband and wife.

During the 1960's the baby boomers were becoming adolescent and began to question the values and general perception of family life that they had been taught by their parents. Some of these young people transitioned their life into the hippie movement as previously described.

However, it was not only young people who began to question the classic American family structure. By the end of the 1960s more than 80 % of American wives used contraception, which allowed them to plan their future more freely. More women began to work, which fundamentally changed the traditional family structure and in the mid-late 1970s most middle class women expected the same career opportunities as men (Walsh 2010).

### **Moving into the suburbs**

American families began to establish themselves in the suburbs during the 50s and 60s. The prime motivation behind moving out of the large cities was the dream of owning a house and land. It enabled the family to live in close proximity with the city, and being able to travel back and forth with little effort and within a reasonable time, while still enjoying the comfort of living in a less congested and more child-friendly environment (Donaldson 1997).

## 4.2 About Coca-Cola and Pepsi

### 4.2.1 About Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola was created in 1886 in Atlanta, USA by pharmacist John Pemberton and the first bottle was made in 1894. In 1899 the exclusive bottling rights were sold to three businessmen for \$1 (Coca-Cola History 2014). In the beginning, cola was seen as a pharmaceutical beverage consumed to energize and help digestion. Coca-Cola quickly became a success and the demand rose rapidly but so did the competition. In 1916 the classic contour bottle was introduced and has stuck with Coca-Cola ever since (Coca-Cola History 2014).

The first marketing efforts were coupons that promoted free samples of Coca-Cola along with newspaper advertising, which was considered an innovative tactic in 1887 (Coca-Cola History 2014). Robert Woodruff who's father had acquired the Coca-Cola Company in 1919 established a department in 1923 that was intended to optimize the sale of Coca-Cola by intensifying the market research as to develop more advanced marketing strategies. He was also one of the first executives of Coca-Cola to emphasize the importance of standardization within all the company's branches (Rothacher 2004, 69). During World War II Coca-Cola was sending supplies to the American troops overseas. This was seen by many as one of the most brilliant marketing campaigns ever by Coca-Cola because as a returning war veteran said: *"Personally, I think that the Coca-Cola Company's cooperation with the Army in getting Coca-Cola to the men in the field is the best advertisement that Coca-Cola has ever had. The things that are happening to these men now will stick with them for the rest of their life."* (Rothacher 2004, 70)

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Coca-Cola had reached a status of an American national symbol as well as an icon for globalization (Rothacher 2004, 65). Today the Coca-Cola Company is a global business, which produces more than 3500 different products worldwide (MarketLine 2013). The Coca-Cola brand is one of the most iconic the world has ever seen and the classic Coca-Cola drink is still the most sold soft drink in the world, with Diet Coke coming in 2<sup>nd</sup> place (Riley 2011).

#### 4.2.2 About Pepsi

Pepsi Cola was first known as “Brad’s Drink” in 1883, named after the pharmacist Caleb Bradham who was the inventor behind the beverage. In 1898 the name was changed to Pepsi Cola. The Pepsi Cola Company had a rough start and immediately after World War I, the company went bankrupt (Pepsi 2005, 4). Pepsi was then bought by Charles G. Guth who struggled to make it a success just like Caleb Bradham and even offered the Coca-Cola Company the opportunity to buy the Pepsi Cola Company, but the offer was refused (History of PepsiCo 2014).

In the 1930’s, the international expansion began and Pepsi was sold in places such as Latin America and the Soviet Union. However, by the end of World War II Pepsi was in trouble once again. The problem was the fluctuating prices on sugar. The Pepsi logo as well as the bottle design was changed to suit a more modern look.

In 1965 The Pepsi Cola Company and Frito Lay merged and became PepsiCo as it is still known today. Pepsi was one of the first companies to use radio jingles as advertising and became famous for its “Nickel Nickel”, which referred to the price of a Pepsi Cola. From the 1950’s the company switched its marketing toward a youth oriented focus and campaigns such as “The Pepsi Generation” and “The Sociables” became trademarks of Pepsi, examples of which are exemplified later in this thesis. The focus on youth is still a very central part of Pepsi advertising. Pepsi is also well known for using pop stars, movie stars and other celebrities in its advertising. E.g. Michael Jackson starred in the Pepsi campaign “Pepsi the Choice of a New Generation” from 1984 (Pepsi 2005, 14).

Today PepsiCo is the largest beverage and snack company in the world especially due to the large merger with Quaker Oats in 2001 (Pepsi 2005, 22), however Pepsi Cola is just the 3<sup>rd</sup> most sold cola behind Coca-Cola and Diet Coke (Riley 2011).

### 4.3 The Pepsi Challenge and New Coke

In the following section a variation of different Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements and marketing campaigns will be presented. The data is divided into different eras and its purpose is to show how the marketing for both brands have evolved from the 1950s -present and to create a solid foundation for further analysis of the differences and similarities as well as to create a general understanding of the two brands' identities.

#### 4.3.1 "Hilltop" 1971

Hilltop or "I'd like to buy the world a Coke" was a television commercial by Coca-Cola that was first presented in 1971. It quickly gained an iconic status for its innovative approach to advertising (Ryan 2012). Stills from the commercial are presented in Appendix B.

It starts with a close-up of a young blonde girl, who sings the line,

*"I'd like to buy the world a home, and furnish it with love."*

The camera slowly zooms out as a large choir chimes in and it is revealed that the girl is standing in a crowd alongside many other relatively young people. All of them are holding a Coca-Cola bottle in their hand while they continue with the line,

*"I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony."*

After that line it becomes apparent what the message of the commercial is truly about:

*"I'd like to buy the world a Coke, and keep it company."* Followed up with, *"That's the real thing."*

It repeats the line *"I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony"*, again followed by the "Coke" part of the song and as the camera moves sideways it exposes many different nationalities and ethnicities singing the line, *"It's the real thing."*

The singers repeat the line *"Coca-Cola, it's the real thing."* over and over while the camera turns to an angle shot from the sky revealing approximately 100 people standing on a hilltop in a pyramid formation. A bottle of Coca-Cola appears in the middle of the screen accompanied by the text, *"It's the real thing"*.

The co-creator of the commercial, Bill Backer about how the idea for the advertisement came up:

*"So [I] began to see the familiar words, 'Let's have a Coke,' as more than an invitation to pause for refreshment. They were actually a subtle way of saying, 'Let's keep each other company for a little while.' And [I] knew they were being said all over the world as [I] sat there in Ireland. So that was the basic idea: to see Coke not as it was originally designed to be - a liquid refresher - but as a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples, a universally liked formula that would help to keep them company for a few minutes." (Ryan 2012)*

#### 4.3.2 The Pepsi Challenge

The Pepsi Challenge is an on-going marketing campaign launched by Pepsi in 1975. The original idea of the Pepsi Challenge was a taste test in which two non-labelled glasses of cola was presented one with Pepsi and one with Coke. A Pepsi representative would set up a stand in e.g. a shopping mall and visitors would then be able to take a sip of the two glasses and decide on which of the two cola's they preferred. An example of this can be found in

After the test, the Pepsi representative would then reveal which of the cola's was preferred. The general idea behind the Pepsi Challenge was to show that the public liked Pepsi over Coke, which was also the general interpretation of the results of the tests (Pepsi 2005, 13). Pepsi turned the results into a marketing strategy to emphasize that Pepsi had the best taste. Taste tests were used as part of television commercials and print advertising as presented in Chapter 4.4.7. During the late 1970s Pepsi became the number one selling soft drink in supermarkets, in part as a result of the Pepsi Challenge campaign (Pepsi 2005, 13). In the early 1980s, Pepsi steadily won a larger part of the market share, however it never surpassed Coke in sales.

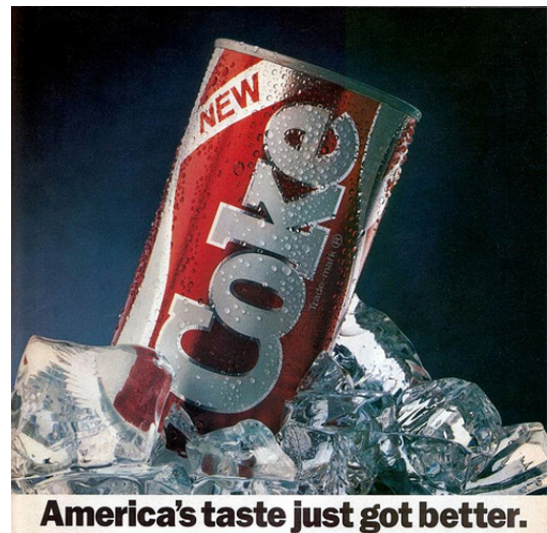
The Pepsi Challenge has been criticized by various experts, among them Malcolm Gladwell, who in his book "Blink" (Gladwell 2007) discusses the Pepsi Challenge along with other subjects. He emphasizes the issues of what he argues are flawed tests that are incomparable to the actual consumption of beverages. He argues that taking a sip of something sweet such as Pepsi is not the same as consuming an entire can or bottle. Pepsi is known for being sweeter than Coca-Cola (Gladwell 2007, 83). Also Carol Dollard who worked for Pepsi for

several years had this to say about the difference between taste tests and taking the product home:

*"I've seen many times when the CLT will give you one result and the home-use test will give you the exact opposite. For example, in a CLT, consumers might taste 3-4 products in a row taking a sip or a couple sips of each. A sip is very different from sitting and drinking a whole beverage on your own. Sometimes a sip tastes good and a whole bottle doesn't."* (Gladwell 2007, 84)

### 4.3.3 New Coke

“New Coke” was an attempt made by Coca-Cola to rejuvenate its brand and core product by introducing a new formula of taste for Coke. The idea partially came as a reaction to the on-going Pepsi Challenge, which had created question marks surrounding the taste of Coca-Cola. However, this act never became popular and is today known as one of the biggest failures in advertising history (Gladwell 2007, 82).



New Coke - (Johnson 2011)

New Coke was launched in 1985 as a refreshing new formula of Coca-Cola, which was supposed to emulate some of the more sweet flavours known from Pepsi. Right from the beginning the introduction of New Coke was a failure and created what can be described as an uproar among Coca-Cola consumers. This led to the re-introduction of the original taste of Coca-Cola, now marketed as Coca-Cola Classic. New Coke was renamed “Coca-Cola II” in 1992 but discontinued in 2002 after never really gaining any significant market recognition (The Real Story of New Coke 2012).

New Coke did bring some positives with it. It reminded Coca-Cola of its extreme significance amongst its consumers.



#### 4.3.4 Coca-Cola's Santa Claus



Santa Claus - (The Coca-Cola Company 2012)

Coca-Cola and Santa Claus have been associated since the 1920's where Santa Claus was portrayed in various Coca-Cola advertisements every Christmas season. However, it was artist Hadden Sundblom who created the most memorable and recognisable Santa Claus of them all and went on to do so for over 30 years (1930-1964). The first painting of Santa Clause by Sundblom was made for the "Thirst knows no season" campaign that ran during Christmas 1930 (The Coca-Cola Company 2012).

In 1964 Sundblom painted his last Santa Claus advertisement for Coca-Coca. However, for decades Coca-Cola published advertisements featuring his original work and many of the portraits of Santa Claus have been exhibited in museums all over the world (The Coca-Cola Company 2012).

It is a popular misconception that Coca-Cola invented Santa Claus, as he is usually portrayed with a red coat and white beard. Hadden Sundblom was inspired by depictions of Santa Claus that came before, however Coca-Cola's Santa Claus advertisements helped to solidify the appearance of Santa Claus that is recognized in the western world today (BBC News 2007).

## **4.4 Examples of Coca-Cola and Pepsi Print Advertisements 1951-1986**

In the following section a variation of different Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements and marketing campaigns will be presented. The data is divided into different eras and its purpose is to show how the marketing for both brands have evolved from the 1950s -present and to create a solid foundation for further analysis of the differences and similarities as well as to create a general understanding of the two brands' identities.

### **Refreshment and More Bounce to the Ounce**

Refreshment was an ad campaign by Coca-Cola in the beginning of the 1950's and often includes characters that seemingly get refreshed through drinking Coke (Chapter 4.4.1). It is a series of ads that puts emphasis on the refreshing characteristics of the soft drink. The characters displayed represent varying social class, age and gender.

More Bounce to the Ounce was a printed ad campaign by Pepsi presented in the early 1950's. The focus of these ads is always young people having fun doing something social together. It also always includes representatives of both genders. It was one of the first ads for Pepsi that did not focus on price but on how Pepsi was part of a lifestyle (Pepsi 2005, 8)

### **Sign of good taste and The Sociables**

By the end of the 1950's both companies were trying to elevate their cola to something more than simply a soft drink. The two campaigns "Sign of Good Taste" and "The Sociables" by Coca-Cola and Pepsi respectively, contained a series of printed ads, which aimed at making the products a central part of a modern lifestyle, especially amongst the 20-somethings.

Especially Pepsi's "The Sociables", which often illustrated some sort of a social event with a young beautiful woman and possibly a boyfriend or cavalier as a central part of the ad. It promotes Pepsi as part of a modern lifestyle (Pepsi 2005, 9). The "Sign of Good Taste" campaign from Coca-Cola was more toned down and also included family life however still communicating the product as being a quality mark and a status symbol. In Chapter 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 examples of these campaigns are presented.

#### 4.4.1 Coca-Cola – “Travel Refreshed” 1951

“Travel refreshed,” I say



Ice-cold Coke  
is what it takes to travel refreshed!  
Try it. You'll like it.

“PEPSI” IS A REGISTERED TRADE MARK.

EXPIRY DATE 1951, FOR COCA-COLA COMPANY

(Coca-Cola Magazine Ads from 1950s 2010)



#### 4.4.2 Pepsi Cola – “More Bounce to the Ounce” 1952



(Clash of the Titans: Pepsi vs Coke Ads in the 50s and 60s 2014)



#### 4.4.3 Coca-Cola – “Sign of Good Taste” 1958

Have a Coke—so good in taste, in such good taste



The cheerful lift of Coke adds to the family fun

There's the refreshment of the famous taste . . . the gaiety in the quick natural lift . . . and always the rightness of good taste Coca-Cola brings to any occasion. • Keep Coke always on hand—for your family to enjoy . . . anytime.

**SIGN OF GOOD TASTE**



(Clash of the Titans: Pepsi vs Coke Ads in the 50s and 60s 2014)



#### 4.4.4 Pepsi Cola – “The Sociables Prefer Pepsi” 1959

### THE SOCIABLES prefer Pepsi



They entertain the modern way and they serve the modern refreshment: Pepsi-Cola. It refreshes without filling. You're one of The Sociables. Have a Pepsi anywhere — at play, at home or at your favorite soda fountain.

"PEPSI-COLA" AND "PEPSI" ARE TRADEMARKS OF PEPSI-COLA COMPANY, REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

**Be Sociable,  
Have a Pepsi**

*Refresh without filling*

(Be Sociable, Have a Pepsi 2012)

#### 4.4.5 Pepsi Cola – “Taste That Beats the Others Cold!” 1968

# taste that beats the others cold!

Pepsi pours it on—pours on the taste that actually gets better as it gets colder. It's a cold fact! Pepsi-Cola is bottled as cold as we can make it so you can drink it as cold as you like it! And cold is the way to really drench a thirst. Prove it for yourself—put it to the taste.

PEPSI-COLA, THE NUMBER-ONE SOFT DRINK IN MEXICO CITY, INVITES YOU TO THE SUMMER OLYMPICS.



(Pepsi Cola Beats any Cola Cold! 2011)



#### 4.4.6 Coca-Cola – “It’s the Real Thing. Coke” 1970



(The Visual Tour into Coca-Cola Print-Advertising 2009)



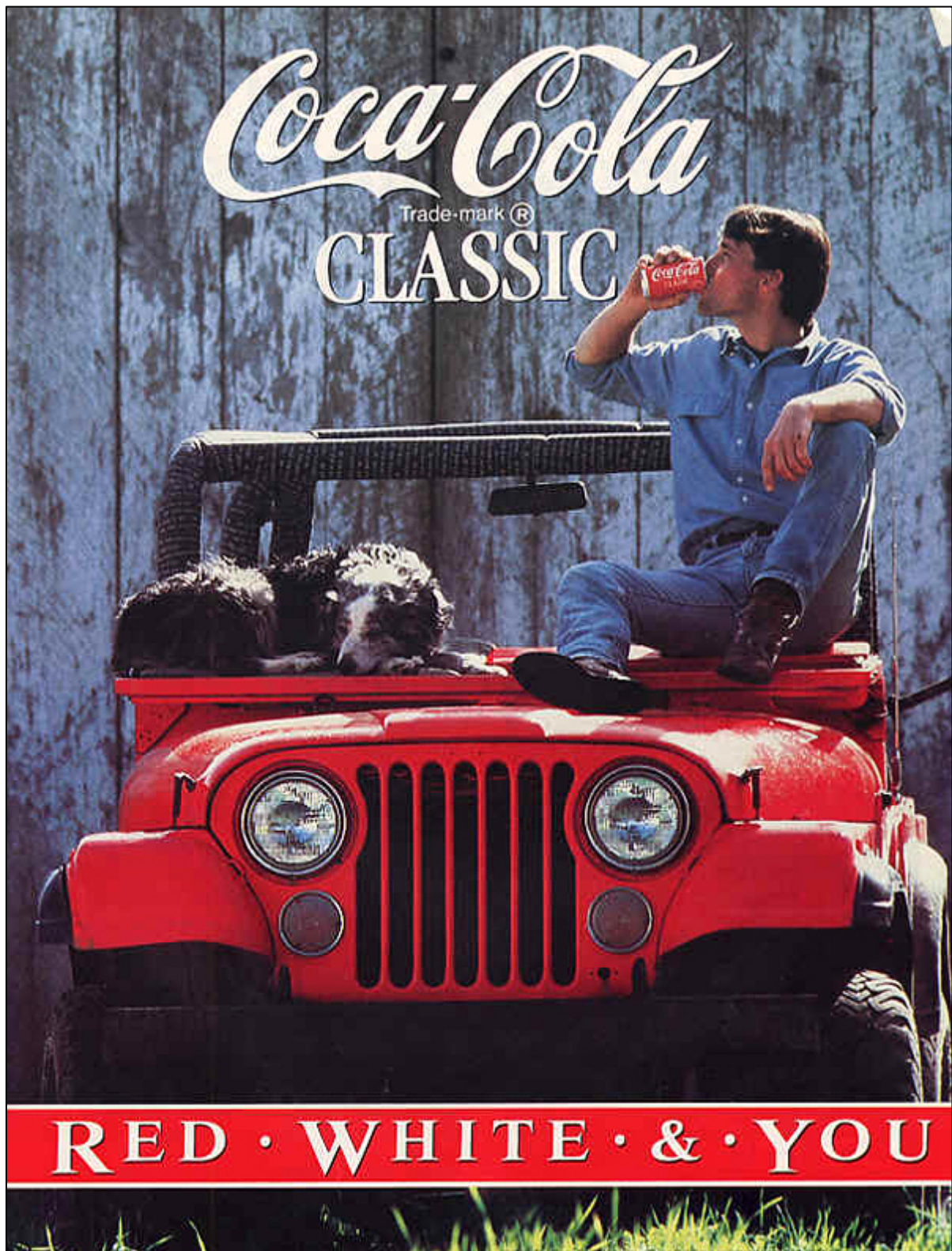
#### 4.4.7 Pepsi Cola – “Celebrate with the Winning Taste of Pepsi” 1975



(Johnson 2011)



#### 4.4.8 Coca-Cola – “Red, White & You” 1986



(Vintage Coca-Cola Print Ads 2011)

# Chapter 5: Analysis

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## 5.1 Semiotic Analysis of Coca-Cola and Pepsi Advertisements

The following sections will present a semiotic analysis of 8 printed advertisements (4 Coca-Cola and 4 Pepsi). Each advertisement will be examined on both a denotative level and a connotative level (Chapter 3.2.5) also what Barthes would call a surface level and an underlying level (Chapter 3.2.4).

The primary examination tools will be, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations as well as Peirce's Triadic Typology, icon, symbol and index with a special focus on the latter, as it has been presented in Chapter 3.2.5.

This semiotic analysis is not intended to examine and discuss every word or every inch of the respective advertisements' texts or illustrations. The purpose of this analysis is to uncover the underlying meaning and intend behind the advertisement thus it will be focussing on the most central signs in each ad. Also, there are icons everywhere in image advertisements, e.g. a young woman is an icon however it is more interesting to examine if she also obtains some sort of indexicality which contributes to the meaning of the advertisement. Therefore, it is acknowledged that icons are present in every advertisement, however it will not always be discussed in detail.

### 5.1.1 “Travel Refreshed” Analysis

#### ***Denotative level***

The first ad, which will be examined, is a Coca-Cola ad published in 1951. It displays what appears to be a middle-aged taxi driver standing in front of a yellow taxi. He is smiling and in his right hand he is displaying a bottle of Coca-Cola. In the background on the left side of the ad a small part of a building can be seen. The picture is framed by a white top and bottom margin. At the top of the ad it says: “Travel refreshed, I say”, and at the bottom the following text is displayed: “Ice-cold Coke is what it takes to travel refreshed! Try it. You’ll like it.” On the right side of the text and located in the bottom right corner we see a red Coca-Cola dispenser with the Coca-Cola logo on top and “Travel Refreshed” written in the middle of the machine followed by: “Ice Cold”. The Coca-Cola dispenser breaks the margin and thus the top of the machine is covering some of the man’s left elbow.

#### ***Connotative level***

The taxi driver is not only leaning against his vehicle because he is relaxing, the layout is made so that he is leaning against the Coca-Cola dispenser leading the reader of the ad to the dispenser and or brand name thus creating what Peirce refers to as indexicality (Chapter 3.2.5).

The yellow taxi can be seen as a symbol for New York or a large American city. The large building in the background on the left side and the branch from a tree could be an index for Central Park in New York.

The taxi driver while an icon, which resembles a taxi driver, he is also a an index for the working man who works in the city and needs a refreshment/a relieve from his stressful job. The refreshment that Coke supplies him with brings a smile to his face, which creates a connotation with the reader in the form of happiness and/or rejuvenation. The rejuvenation part is important because he looks to be middle-aged and possibly in his fifties. However he somehow lights up with a cheerful smile resembling a young boy’s after he has had a sip of Coke, which enforces the indexicality that is constructed by leading the reader to believe that the rejuvenating and refreshing power of Coca-Cola has put a smile on his face.

On the paradigmatic level he is leaning up against his vehicle as if he relies on it. However, as described above, the syntagmatic relation that makes him appear to be leaning up against the dispenser as well can arguably symbolize that he relies on a bottle of Coca-Cola as much as he relies on his trusted vehicle. Another paradigmatic relation that is interesting to examine is the fact that the ad displays a male character and not a female, a working class man and not a businessman. In the 1950's it would be unlikely to see a woman in this situation because the symbolism behind the character would change. First of all not many women were taxi drivers at this point in time and second of all, the ideal situation for a woman was to stay at home and take care of the house and children as described in Chapter 4.1.3. This does therefore not correspond very well with the symbol of being "on the road" and in need of refreshment. It would also not correlate with the rest of the ad if the taxi driver had been substituted with a businessman. By doing this, the rest of the ad starts to crumble and the ad gets a new meaning. This does not mean that the only individuals who can relate to this ad are working class men because almost every social class, both genders and all ages can relate to the symbolic value of the ad, to be in a situation where you want something refreshing to drink.

### 5.1.2 “More Bounce to the Ounce” Analysis

#### ***Denotative level***

In this Pepsi advertisement from 1952, four young people are apparently having a picnic. Three of them, two girls and a boy, are placed around what appears to be a cooler filled with ice and Pepsi Cola. Two of them have a Pepsi Cola in their hand while one of the young women is preparing some bread buns. The fourth, a young man, is placed in the foreground of the ad and is handling a grill built off stones of some sort with beef patties on it. He is also wearing a “napkin” and a typical chef’s hat. He is also holding a Pepsi Cola in his hand while looking over at the other three young people with a laugh on his face. They are all seemingly enjoying themselves. In the top of the advertisement three lines of text is displayed. First a small line of text that reads: “Fun’s a cookin’ – with plenty of PEPSI!” Followed by two much larger lines that say: “More Bounce to The Ounce”, with a large Pepsi bottle cap placed partially covering the “O” in “Ounce”.

#### ***Connotative level***

The text, “Fun’s a cookin’...” creates a syntagmatic relation with the scenario in the advertisement where the young people are enjoying a picnic including cooking burgers.

The four young persons in the ad are icons, but at the same time indexes for youth. By examining the connotative chain further, one could argue that youth also stands for vitality, a carefree life and something desirable. Some of the readers of this ad would want to be young again, because they see the carefree nature and happiness of the characters portrayed.

This ad also draws upon the relationship between girl/boy, man/woman. The two girls are looking relatively relaxed while the boys, especially the one in the foreground of the ad, are displaying a somewhat child like behaviour. The boys entertain the girls and this can be seen as flirtatious behaviour between man and woman. It also emphasises the paradigmatic relation between men and women and how they are opposites but at the same time they belong together.

Cooking was also normally something that women took care of at this point in time as described in Chapter 4.1.3, however Pepsi makes it fun and it can also be seen as a sign of the new youth culture that was being established at this point (Chapter 4.1.1)



### 5.1.3 “Sign of Good Taste” Analysis

#### ***Denotative level***

In this Coca-Cola advertisement from 1958, the reader encounters a man and a woman, a boy and a girl. The woman and the young boy are positioned in the foreground and the man and the young girl are positioned slightly in the background. The woman is pouring the boy a glass of cola from a Coca-Cola bottle. The man is sitting in a chair and is holding a Coca-Cola bottle in his right hand while looking at the television. Meanwhile the young girl is bend over the television set and is seemingly trying to configure it with her right hand while holding a glass of cola in her left hand. A long bookshelf is placed over the television set, with books in various colours place inside it. They are all seemingly happy because they all have smiles on their faces. The woman and the young boy in the foreground look especially happy.

Two white columns one in the top and one in the bottom frame the image. In the top there is a text that reads, *“Have a Coke – so good in taste, in such good taste”* and in the bottom of the ad it says, *“The cheerful lift of Coke adds to the family fun”*. In the bottom right corner is a round Coca-Cola logo and on the left side of it a text, *“Sign of Good Taste”*. There are also smaller lines of text present in the bottom column, however this is too small and unclear to read.

#### ***Connotative level***

The boy’s shirt is red and white, which compliments the colours of Coca-Cola’s logo. The red and white colours are generally spread out through the ad reminding the reader of Coca-Cola.

The ad as a whole is a symbol of typical American family happiness. The television provides entertainment, which corresponds well with the idea of television replacing cinema as the primary source for family entertainment as described in Chapter 4.1.2. The mother is an important character in this advertisement. From Peirce’s icon perception (Chapter 3.2.5) it is a depiction of a woman, however the context implies that she is index for a mother and thus put into the context of Peirce’s Triadic Typology, a symbol of paternity, motherhood, love, security, warmth, etc. Both she and the boy also are signs of indexicality, which is evident in the way their looks are pointed towards the Coca-Cola bottle pouring cola into the glass. There is a strong emphasis on family values and the fact that it is modern to own a television as implied by the *“Have a Coke - ...”* line that suggests that it is good taste to have a television and to drink Coca-Cola.

#### 5.1.4 “The Sociables Prefer Pepsi” Analysis

##### Denotative level

In this Pepsi ad from 1959 a woman is presented in the middle of the room getting ready to turn off the light for what appears to be a projector placed behind her. Men and women are seated and standing around her also ready for the light to be switched off so that the picture presentation can begin. The woman in the middle of the room is blonde and is wearing a gold scarf around her waist. She is wearing a green shirt with a pattern on it and blue pants. In her left hand she is holding a bottle of Pepsi Cola while her right hand is placed on the light switch placed on the cord of a white lamp, which is the foremost part of the advertisement. At the top of the advertisement it reads: *“The Sociables Prefer Pepsi”* and in the bottom of the ad is a text that says: *“They entertain the modern way and they serve the modern refreshment: Pepsi Cola. It refreshes without filling. You’re one of the Sociables. Have a Pepsi anywhere – at play, at home or at your favourite soda fountain.”* Beside the text is a Pepsi logo and on its right side it says: *“Be Sociable Have a Pepsi. Refresh Without Filling.”*

##### Connotative level

The pillar in the background almost serves as an extension of her body and helps to centralize her position in the room which creates a syntagmatic relation as explained in Chapter 3.2.5. The gold scarf that she is wearing around her waist also has a syntagmatic relation with her hair as it is almost the same colour.

The beams that are connected to the pillar are constructed and placed in such a way that they arguably symbolize a crown or a halo over the blonde lady’s head. This can be seen as a syntagmatic relation that has a paradigmatic function when interpreting the ad. It draws connotations to expressions such as, divine, goddess, queen, princess and it helps to further stress how desirable she is and how important she is to the understanding of the advertisement. She is also wearing a gold scarf around her waist, which could be a colour code for, royalty, money, etc.

Her pose draws resemblances to Venus de Milo and her blonde hair symbolizes femininity and angelicness. The text in the bottom of the advertisement suggests that drinking Pepsi makes the consumer one of the Sociables.



### 5.1.5 “Taste That Beats the Others Cold” Analysis

#### Denotative level

This Pepsi ad from 1968 is apparently situated on a beach. Four persons are displayed in the ad, two young men and two young women. The most predominant figure is a smiling, blonde young woman who is placed on her knees in the foreground of the ad wearing a red bikini while using an ice pick on a block of ice. Inside the block of ice is what appears to be bottles of Pepsi insinuated by yellow sign with Pepsi written in red capital letters. While she is holding the ice pick with her left hand, she is resting a bottle of Pepsi on the top of the ice block with her right hand.

The other characters in the ad are situated in the background. The other young woman is running towards the camera and wearing a pink bikini while the two young men are behind her lifting a surfboard down from what appears to be the roof of a vehicle. The men are also wearing swimwear in the form of shorts.

At the top of the ad it reads: *“taste that beats the others cold!”* in large black letters.

Underneath, in smaller letters it says: *“Pepsi pours it on – pours on the taste that actually gets better as it gets colder. It’s a cold fact! Pepsi – Cola is bottled as cold as we can make it so you can drink it as cold as you like it! And cold in the way to really drench a thirst. Prove it for yourself – put it to the taste!”* To the right of this text is a Pepsi logo (possibly a bottle cap) inside an ice cube. Directly underneath this is one line that reads: “Pepsi – Cola. The number one soft drink in Mexico City, invites you to the summer Olympics.

#### Connotative level

The surfboard in the background is following the angle of the blonde girl’s body and aiming up at the top right corner where a Pepsi logo is situated. The text in the top of the advertisement is followed by an ice cube, which creates a syntagmatic relation between the text’s meaning and the visualisation of a Pepsi bottle cap inside an ice cube. However, as with many syntagmatic relations, this can also be interpreted through a paradigmatic perspective.

There is also a syntagmatic relation between the text in the top of the ad that says: “...beats the others cold”, and the fact that the blonde girl is “beating” an ice block with an ice pick.

There are certain similarities that can be drawn between this advertisement and the ad previously analysed in Chapter 5.1.2. This ad also draws upon the relationship between man and woman and this ad stresses the attraction between the genders further than the “More Bounce to the Ounce” ad from 1952.

The girl in the foreground is interesting because she is so centrally placed in the ad, right beside the Pepsi sign. She is an icon for a young woman and her young look and happy smile is an index for youthfulness, beauty and a care free spirit. Her picking at the ice block also is a way to create indexicality (Chapter 3.2.5) because it leads the reader to the ice block where the Pepsi sign is placed. These are all adjectives that Pepsi wants the readers of the advertisement to associate with Pepsi Cola. Her red bikini could also be an index for heat, summer, warm and sensuality. Her blonde hair is an index for innocence, virginity and again youthfulness. The yellow Pepsi sign is a symbol for Pepsi Cola and it helps to establish a clear connection between Pepsi and what is inside the ice block, bottles of Pepsi Cola. The word “others” in “... beats the others cold” is most likely an index for Coca-Cola.

### 5.1.6 “It’s the Real Thing. Coke” Analysis

#### Denotative level

In this Coca-Cola advertisement, a Coke bottle is placed in the middle of the image. It is surrounded by various fruits, nuts and cheese and next to it is a glass filled with cola and ice cubes. At the bottom of the image is a large text with white letters that says: *“It’s the real thing. Coke.”*

On the left side of the Coke bottle is another piece of text, however written in much smaller letters that says: *“This time of year the food is varied, rich – good tasting. Isn’t it great that one soft drink has a special taste of its own that goes with everything you eat. The unique taste of Coke compliments everything from ham to hamburger, imported cheese to roast beef. That’s another reason why they call it the real thing.”*

#### Connotative level

This is an advertisement where the syntagmatic composition is very important, particularly because of the simplicity of the advertisement. The Coca-Cola bottle is surrounded with fruit and cheese and placed in the middle of the image this creates a syntagmatic relation between the bottle while the central position of the Coca-Cola bottle stresses its importance.

By surrounding it with fruit, which is a natural food source and could be considered “the real thing” it creates a connection that intends to give the reader an impression of Coke as a natural part of a diet because the other products presented are natural as well. An apple is an icon for apple, but apple also is an index for freshness, health, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away”, can the same be said about Coca-Cola?

The lack of persons in the ad also helps to keep the focus clean and very direct as it presents the product itself with very few signs to create indexicality. A question that seems appropriate to ask is if Coke is the real thing what is then not to be considered the real thing? One could argue that this is a hit at Pepsi.

### 5.1.7 “Celebrate with the Winning Taste of Pepsi” Analysis

#### Denotative level

This Pepsi advertisement is from 1975 and is a part of “The Pepsi Challenge” campaign. The ad is placed on a yellow background with the word *“Celebrate with the winning taste of Pepsi!”* printed on it in large red letters. In the middle of the ad a girl on roller skates is displayed rolling on one leg with her right leg in the air behind her and her arms stretched out to the side. Around her are 3 pictures, a text box and a Pepsi logo. The first picture shows four people running, presumably in some sort of competition because of the numbers on their chest typically worn in official runs. The second picture is a picture of a boy and a dog, which seems to be a Labrador puppy of some sort. The third and final image shows a girl drinking a glass of what most likely is cola due to the context. Underneath the third picture is a text box that says: *“The Pepsi Challenge showed who won. Over 275.000 Southern Californians have taken the Pepsi Challenge. 60.12 % prefer Pepsi over Coca-Cola. So celebrate, with the winning taste of Pepsi!”*

#### Connotative level

The girl on roller skates almost forms an “X” which divides the ad up into 4 parts around her with herself being the most central and fifth part. There is also a syntagmatic relation between the text in the top of the ad and the girl drinking cola, presumably as part of the “Pepsi Challenge”.

There is a lot of indexicality present in this advertisement. Each of the three pictures are meant to be indexes for something that relates to “The Pepsi Challenge” and the girl in the middle is also an index. The girl is smiling and seems carefree, while almost “flying” away on her roller skates. As seen in some of the other Pepsi advertisements this is an index of carefree behaviour, youth, vitality etc. She is celebrating life, just as it says in the top of the ad that one should *“Celebrate with the winning taste of Pepsi!”* Her costume-like outfit could lead the reader to believe that she is performing in some way, which also relates to the challenge/competition theme.

The picture of the four persons running is a picture of four icons, man, woman, girl and girl but more importantly to the understanding of the advertisement their clothing and their movement is an index for running. Running in this context can be an index for competition but

also unity as it could very well be a family running. They are competing in a race just like Pepsi is competing against Coca-Cola in a taste test.

The young girl drinking cola is an index for “The Pepsi Challenge”, because of the context of the advertisement. Each part of the image can be divided into indexes such as the glass with brown liquid is an index for cola. The setting and the context implies to the reader that it is cola and either Coca-Cola or Pepsi because it relates to the text below the image which states that it was a taste test between these two brands.

The last picture is more difficult to interpret in this context because it seems to remove itself from the “Challenge” theme of the ad. However, the boy is an index for childhood and innocence, while the dog is an index for innocence and loyalty. Together they are an index for friendship and love.

### 5.1.8 “Red, White & You” Analysis

#### Denotative level

This is a Coca-Cola advertisement from 1986, which introduces the term “Coca-Cola Classic” on top of the New Coke campaign and product launch in 1985. This ad contains an image of a man and a dog placed on the front end of a red vehicle. The background is blue/grey hoarding. At the top of the it says in white letters “*Coca-Cola Classic*” and in the bottom placed on a red banner with white lining it says, “*Red – White - & - You*” in white letters. The man is wearing jeans and a shirt while drinking from a Coca-Cola can placed in his right hand. The dog is relaxing beside him.

#### Connotative level

The colours red, white and blue are present in the image, which creates a syntagmatic relation with the text in the bottom of the advertisement where “blue” has been switched with “you”.

The whole construction of this advertisement is an index for U.S.A and patriotism. The phrase “Red, White and You” is meant to create connotations to the commonly used term “Red, White and Blue”, used about the American flag, which consists of these three colours. The American flag is a symbol for America and an index for patriotism and national identity. Red and white are also the colours of Coca-Cola so it also means “Coca-Cola and You”, as if Coca-Cola is an important part of America and life. The man is also an interesting character in this context. His jeans are index for hard work, Americana culture and classic American apparel. His overall demeanour and clothing is very relaxed and he could be interpreted to be a loner and some one who does what he wants. There are also no females present here which helps to emphasize the man’s role as a loner who only has his dog as a companion. The dog is index for loyalty and “man’s best friend” however, this dog also seems to be poorly groomed and it helps to connect the man and the dog in a carefree, loner, relaxed unity.

### 5.1.9 Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of the previous analysis was to be able to answer the first research question:

*“Which semiotic differences are there between Coca-Cola and Pepsi’s eight selected advertisements?”* The findings in this analysis shall assist in answering this research question as well as partly answer the Problem Statement in a larger context.

#### **Pepsi Findings**

In most of the ads, youth is an important theme. Also the relationship between men and women are profound especially in “More Bounce to the Ounce” and “Taste that beats the others cold” but also in “The Sociables Prefer Pepsi” where it is the woman who receives the men and women’s admiration. Icons in the form of young men and women are indexes for youth, vitality, carefreeness and attraction. In a way Pepsi communicates to the consumers that young, beautiful and admirable men and women drink Pepsi and if you are one of these or want to be one of these you need to drink it too.

Pepsi wants to point out its taste as a very important quality in “Taste that beats the others cold” but especially in “Celebrate with the Winning Taste of Pepsi” ad, which clearly points out the result of the “Pepsi Challenge” and that Pepsi tastes better than Coke. It seems very important to Pepsi to stress that its taste is better than that of Coca-Cola. The focus is often on quality and not as much on the brand value.

#### **Coca-Cola Findings**

Coca-Cola seems to focus its advertising on values such as family, hard work and patriotism. The family values are especially apparent in “Sign of Good Taste” while the hard work is displayed in the form of the hard working taxi driver in “Travel Refreshed” who deserves cool refreshment. The Patriotism is clearly present in “Red, White and You” as well as indexes for friendship and Americana culture.

As opposed to Pepsi, these Coca-Cola advertisements do not say much about the quality of the product. The focus is on the Coke product as a brand and what connotations that are attached to the brand. It seems to be more about the feelings and emotions and not as much about what setting and what characters are being presented.

## 5.2 Coca-Cola from an Emotional Branding Perspective

While Pepsi focuses much of its advertising on youth and the relationship between men and women, Coca-Cola is more value-oriented and uses these values to tap into the consumers' emotions. According to Marc Gobé, emotional branding is important if brands want loyal customers (Chapter 3.1). Rossiter and Bellman even argue that emotional branding can help to increase sales (Chapter 3.1). Some examples of this will be examined and explained in the following.

### 5.2.1 Santa Claus

Santa Claus holds a very high emotional brand value. In its Santa Claus advertisements Coca-Cola is able to establish a connection between a yearly tradition not only deeply rooted in Christianity but also in Western culture.

By incorporating Santa Claus into its branding strategy, Coca-Cola shows an *imaginative approach* to branding as well as a desire to create *relationships* with its consumers, the importance of which is stressed by Marc Gobé in Chapter 3.1.1.

The Santa advertisements also helped Coca-Cola in establishing a personality. As Gobé argues, it is important to distinguish between identity and personality (Chapter 3.1.2). Brands need to tell a story to the consumers to create personality and that is what Coca-Cola does with Santa Claus.

Coca-Cola's connection with its consumers is also evident in the events that followed after New Coke was introduced. It was not so much about the taste changing, it was about the emotions that was connected with the brand. Consumers regarded Coca-Cola as a companion and became bonded to it like Rossiter and Bellman states in Chapter 3.1, and therefore did not want it to change in fear of the product losing its emotional qualities. The Santa Claus advertisements have the same effect because it becomes synonymous with Christmas and therefore an important part of many consumers' holiday traditions.



### 5.2.2 Hilltop

The “Hilltop” commercial from 1971 as presented in Chapter 4.3.1 is a clear example of how to use emotional branding. It is filled with pathos appeals and it draws connections between the product and the emotions of the consumer’s in a very unique way.

By using the phrase “I’d like to buy the world a home, and furnish it with love” and later switching it to “I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company”, it draws a parallel in the mind of the viewer/listener between making the world a better place and buying/drinking Coca-Cola in company with other people. It uses a large amount of pathos in this commercial to speak to the emotions of the viewer, when emphasizing friendship and harmony.

It is also a commercial especially speaks to the youth of that time. As it has been explained in Chapter 4.1.1 the youth of the late 60s and early 70s was going through a generational change where peace, love and harmony was very popular terms to use. Many was tired of the many wars that America had been involved in the previous years and wanted the world to be free of war. These values correspond very well with the message in the advertisement, thus creating a connection between Coca-Cola and the people who sympathize with these values.

Gobé argues in Chapter 3.1.2 that it is important for brands to keep up with what is important to consumers and this advertisement is a perfect example of doing so. It is in touch with the times while still being very universal and able to create a personality for the product just like with the Santa Claus advertisements. It also excels when it comes to Gobé’s first pillar of emotional branding, relationships (Chapter 3.1.1). Just as was evident in the Santa Claus advertisements, Coca-Cola established a personality as more than a product. It is not just a cola, it is something people share and give to each just like love. The commercial wants viewers to feel like drinking Coca-Cola makes them part of a society that is built on friendship and love for each other and the world.

This strategy is not something that is uniquely found in this commercial. As late as 2013, Coca-Cola launched the “Share a Coke” campaign, which, just as the 1971 campaign was built around, sharing, giving and friendship. The new campaign had male and female names printed on the bottle encouraging consumers to give a Coke to someone with his/her name on it and then share it with this person (Shakespeare 2013).

### 5.2.3 “Sign of Good Taste”

In this advertisement from 1958, Coca-Cola focuses on the family setting in which a mother, a father and two children are displayed. This ad connects the product with an experience, just like Gobé suggests in his first commandment for emotional branding described in Chapter 3.1.2. Coca-Cola becomes a part of family entertainment.

A mother is the foundation in the classic American family in the 1950s (4.1.3) and is an important part of any child’s life. The father may supply the family with a financial income, however the mother supplies the family with love, affection and tenderness. And in this case also Coca-Cola. It uses pathos to appeal to mothers and their love for their children as well as children feel love for their mothers. Everyone wants to experience a mother’s love, the ones who have not been so fortunate will wish that they had and the once who have left childhood long ago will wish to return. Either way it touches consumers in an emotional way.

Once again Coca-Cola is able to place its product in an emotional context that most consumers can relate to. By doing so it once again creates a relationship with the consumers and at the same time develops a personality for the product as something to share with friends and family.

### 5.2.4 “Red, White & You”

The Red, White and You advertisement was published just after the re-introduction of the original Coke in 1986, or Coca-Cola Classic as it was called. It came as a reaction to the failure of New Coke and was a way for Coca-Cola to try and re-gain some of its popularity and trust from loyal consumers.

The advertisement presents a clear statement from Coca-Cola, which tries to solidify Coca-Cola’s position in the heart of the consumers. Coca-Cola is a part of the consumers and the consumers are a part of Coca-Cola. This message is evident in the phrase “Red, White & You”, where red and white are the colours that represent Coca-Cola. This is really an attempt to re-establish the relationship that Gobé writes about (Chapter 3.1).

“Red, White & You” also refers to the popular phrase used to describe the American flag “Red, White and Blue”, which calls upon some degree of patriotism and Americana culture, which has previously been presented in the semiotic analysis in Chapter 5.1.8. This message is using a high degree of pathos appeal because it speaks to the reader’s emotions and it forces

him/her to think about the relationship he/she has with America as a nation. At the same time it puts Coca-Cola into that context and as a result it creates a connection between America-Coca-Cola and the individual American. In this Coca-Cola not only tries to create a relationship between the consumer and the product but forces the consumer to think about Coca-Cola's role in society from a larger perspective.

### 5.2.5 Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this analysis was to answer the second research question: *“Why has emotional branding been so important to Coca-Cola and in which ways is it contributing to the company’s success in the scope of the 1950s-1980s?”*

Emotional branding seems to be an integrated and very important part of Coca-Cola’s branding as evident in the examples in the previous analysis.

It is important to Coca-Cola because it helps to create a large degree of loyalty as well as a bond between the Coca-Cola brand and the consumers. This bond is apparent in the failure of New Coke and the success that the company experienced with the subsequent re-launch of Coca-Cola Classic. Coca-Cola underestimated the bond that the consumers had with the product.

This bond was established by creating a relationship with the consumers through the Santa Claus advertisements, The Hilltop commercial and many other advertising initiatives. It holds a high degree of pathos appeal and as seen in the previous section (Chapter 5.1.4) Coca-Cola is not afraid to put the product into a larger context. One could argue that it was this relationship that kept the company as the number one soft drink in America after the Pepsi Challenge.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

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This thesis started out by presenting a problem statement, which asked the following question: *“Why was Coca-Cola’s marketing during “The Golden Age of Advertising” more effective than Pepsi’s and how was Coca-Cola able to sustain its market position despite losing the taste tests to Pepsi during the 1970s?”*

The semiotic analysis in Chapter 5.1 revealed that Coca-Cola’s appeal is often on a more family-oriented plane with many classic values implicitly placed in the ads. As for example, the “Sign of Good Taste” ad, which emphasized family values or the “Red, White & You” ad that tried to re-establish the connection between Coca-Cola and its consumers as presented in the findings in Chapter 5.1.9.

Pepsi’s advertising on the other hand is less value-based and more focused on the characters in the advertisements and how they interact or what status they symbolize. E.g. the woman in the “Sociables Prefer Pepsi” advertisement from 1959, who symbolized angelicness and received admiration from both men and women. This is someone that the female consumers would want to be like and the male segment would want to be with. She becomes an iconic figure like Marilyn Monroe (Chapter 4.1.2). Another example is the young people on the beach in “Taste that Beats the Others Cold”, who symbolizes carefreeness and youth.

To summarize, one could argue that Pepsi wants consumers to want to BE like the people in the advertisements while Coca-Cola on the other hand wants its consumers to want to obtain the FEELING that the characters in the ads are representing. Coca-Cola wants to connect with its consumers on an emotional level, which Gobé along with Rossiter and Bellman (Chapter 3.1) stress the importance of and that is one of the reasons why its marketing seems to have been more effective than Pepsi’s.

Coca-Cola is tapping into emotions and feelings whereas Pepsi is hitting on a more superficial level. This is possibly also the reason why Coca-Cola was capable of sustaining its lead over Pepsi during “The Pepsi Challenge” campaign. It may seem incredible that Pepsi did not surpass Coca-Cola in sales after “The Pepsi Challenge” when it could supply the consumers with a better taste than Coke and even had its own “evidence” to back it up. However, market

competition seems to be about much more than simply having the best product. As previously discussed in Chapter 5.2.5 it is possible that the relationship that Coca-Cola was able to develop with its consumers through its marketing efforts had created a high degree of loyalty towards Coca-Cola that kept the consumers from simply switching to Pepsi for the better taste. However as it is also discussed in Chapter 4.3.2, Malcolm Gladwell questions the validity of the taste tests performed during “The Pepsi Challenge”. It is simply two very different things to taste a sip of a beverage and drawing an immediate parallel to drinking an entire serving.

This thesis does not try and offer a full explanation for why Coca-Cola has been and is more successful than Pepsi when it comes to soft drink sales, however it does try to cover some of the differences that there seem to be in the two companies’ advertising to try and offer a solution out of many possible relating to “The Pepsi Paradox”. These have been presented in the findings as well as above. The conclusion is based on the combination of the findings relating to the semiotic analysis and the emotional branding analysis. It seems that Coca-Cola’s marketing was more effective than Pepsi’s due to its ability to gain loyalty from its consumers and also in its ability to create a personality for the product. It did this by using value-based advertising as seen in the semiotic analysis and emotional branding strategies in its marketing. Pepsi was not able to create the same bond and loyalty because its appeal was on a more superficial level and this was possibly also the reason why Pepsi did not surpass Coca-Cola after “The Pepsi Challenge” campaign.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A “Examples of Sexist Advertisements



**It's nice to have a girl around the house.**

Though she was a tiger lady, our hero didn't have to fire a shot to floor her. After one look at his **Mr. Leggs** slacks, she was ready to have him walk all over her. That noble styling sure soothes the savage heart! If you'd like your own doll to-

doll carpeting, hunt up a pair of these he-man **Mr. Leggs** slacks. Such as our new automatic wash wear blend of 65% **Dacron**™ and 35% rayon—incomparably wrinkle-resistant. About \$12.95 at plush-carpeted stores.

**Dacron**™ For Fall!

Get yourself a new pair of **Mr. Leggs**™

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# If your husband ever finds out *you're not "store-testing" for fresher coffee...*

... if he discovers you're  
still taking chances  
on getting flat, stale coffee  
... woe be unto you!

For today  
there's a sure  
and certain way  
to test for freshness  
before you buy



The Chef  
does everything  
but cook  
- that's what  
wives are for!

A vintage advertisement for the Kenwood Chef mixer. A man in a dark suit and a woman in a black dress and white chef's hat are smiling and posing behind the white mixer. The woman has her hand on the man's shoulder. On the counter in front of the mixer are two glasses of juice (one orange, one red), two eggs, and a plate of food. The Kenwood logo is visible on the side of the mixer.

I'm giving my wife a

**Kenwood** Chef



## Appendix B “Hilltop Stills”

