

## **FAILED MARKETING CAMPAIGNS**

Every brand has had its failed campaigns — and big companies are no exception. Failing to fully understand their audience or just making careless mistakes often leads to marketing failures. Sometimes a campaign doesn't achieve the desired results, and sometimes it can seriously hurt the brand's reputation [1].

Coca-Cola was losing its market share: blind taste tests showed that consumers preferred Pepsi. As a result, the brand decided to change its nearly century-old secret recipe. The new cola was meant to have a smoother, sweeter taste — similar to Diet Coke, but with corn syrup. Marketers were confident this would bring Coca-Cola back to success, but Americans reacted negatively to the change, and the new cola turned out to be a failure. Within three months, Coca-Cola underwent a rebranding and reintroduced the original drink under the new name Coca-Cola Classic. This led to a significant increase in sales. There were even rumors that the company had planned this move in advance.

The Dove brand is no stranger to failed marketing campaigns. In 2017, the company ran a short-lived Facebook ad featuring a Black woman taking off her shirt to reveal a white woman, who then revealed a Middle Eastern woman. All this supposedly happening after the women used a Dove body lotion. The idea with the advertisement probably was to inform consumers that Dove's product line is for everyone no matter the color of their skin, which is very much in keeping with Dove's brand message of real beauty. After the initial response Dove removed the video clip and issued an apology. However, in 2011, Dove published a "before-and-after" advert which charted the transition of a woman of color into a white woman after using their body wash [2].

In another failed marketing campaign from 2017, Audi ran a campaign in mainland China, hoping to increase their sales of used cars in that country. The ad itself pictured a man and a woman, standing in front of a priest, when the mother of the groom raises her hand. She walks up to the couple, where she starts inspecting the bride.

The most controversial McDonald's ad, shown in the UK in 2017, left many people upset. After receiving hundreds of negative comments on social media, the fast food chain removed the video and apologized. The ad showed a boy who was missing his late father and asked his mom what he had in common with him. While at McDonald's, the woman realizes they both love the Filet-O-Fish. Social media users were angered by the use of a child's emotions to promote burgers, and the brand also faced criticism from several charity organizations [3].

The Gillette commercial, aimed at addressing unacceptable male behavior and "toxic masculinity," received mixed reactions from the public and sparked a lot of debate, but it also gathered millions of views. Part of the audience was outraged by the negative portrayal of men. For example, American actor James Woods commented that supporting a campaign perceived by some as portraying men negatively was unacceptable and promised to boycott Gillette products.

Even the most well-intentioned marketing ideas may turn into reputational disasters if companies misjudge their audience or cultural context. A lack of understanding of your

customer can lead to failure. Using references to social issues in advertising is not always a bad idea, but it's a risky path if you're not sure how it will be received. Sometimes, carelessness not only makes the campaign ineffective but also offends people [1].

### **REFERENCES**

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