

The “positioning” concept and the fight between two well known brands *Coca-Cola* and *Pepsi*

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Abstract: *Following the evolution in time of two interesting brands allows the researcher to find a lot of information about their success or failure. What is really essential in developing a comparison is the fact that, both of them (Coca-Cola and Pepsi) are part of the same category of products: soft drinks. In advertising, everything depends on strategy applied on the market, which is adjusted to the positioning. This concept has been developed in the last 20 years and it has totally changed the perspective upon the market, starting with the brain motivation of the consumer, on which the final choice is based. Coca-Cola and Pepsi have a compelling and competitive history, as one could see from the commercials and other creative proofs. For this reason, the positioning of these brands could be easily recognized analysing some commercial products, like their slogans, in this case. They demonstrate that, despite becoming the fashion-setter, Coca-Cola had to cope in time with a lot of unpleasant and unexpected situations, which conditioned variation of the positioning according to the enemy’s movements, Pepsi. This continuous competition has an effect upon the whole strategy of brand management, and it has given a lot of opportunities for creation and finding the right way to the consumer’s mind.*

Keywords: *brand, advertising, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, competition*

Argument

Going back in the history of advertising, we should try to understand how these brand changes are reflected in their positioning. For this purpose, we chose to analyse

their slogans, in order to compare their evolution. Starting from the creative features, we assume to discover their evolution and their reaction towards the implication in a permanent competition. They could not share the consumers' market at the beginning; they wanted to earn the monopoly. This is why they have been fighting for years, changing their positioning, reaching an extended target.

1. The positioning – a theoretical overview around this concept

Jack Trout and Al Ries are some of the most visionary specialists in this area of advertising, because, a couple of years ago, they understood that the consumer's mind has been changing into an oversimplified one. The title of this book speaks for itself about what positioning is, in a very particular and symbolical explanation: *Positioning: the Battle for Your Mind*. This concept is focusing on delivering the commercial's message directly to customer's mind, in order to integrate the brand in his world of connections and similarities. The first approach of this meaning is not to bring something completely new or different, but to somehow control the consumer's mind. It seems to be a kind of manipulation, unless we understand that everything from the customer's brain could be exploited for a better representation of the brand. The human being's mind has been created like a pantry where the shelves and boxes are very well organized depending on his motivations, interests, needs and preferences. Therefore, it is almost impossible to introduce new data into its mind on a daily basis, and to store it without any difficulties. Permanently using research methods, one could successfully discover the customer's weaknesses and points of attractions. Trout and Ries noticed that the longer and more complicated the message is, the quicker it will be deleted from a very busy mind: *In communication, as in architecture, less is more. You have to sharpen your message to cut into the mind. You have to jettison the ambiguities, simplify the message, and then simplify it some more, if you want to make a long-lasting impression.* (Trout & Ries, 2001, pp. 8-9)

This situation is due to today's society, overloaded with messages and communication. It hasn't got enough time to keep or to select the information in proper time. The selective "apriori" mind helps a lot, from the first contact to new information. Advertising is looking for new sources to win the battle for a stable place inside consumer's mind, and it uses a lot of tricks which could stimulate their perceptions. Once upon a time, the truth in a commercial was the key of the brand's promotion, but now the subjective details are more important, as Trout and Ries say: *Truth is irrelevant. What matters are the perceptions that exist in mind. The essence is to make the thinking mind accept the perceptions as reality and then restructure those perceptions to create the position you desire. We later called this process "outside-in" thinking* (Trout and Ries, 2001, p. 10). At that moment, the specialists in advertising were fully aware of what the connection of the brand with the consumer's habit of mind really meant: selling a product first of all, not for its quality, but for its fidelity towards customer's perception.

A couple of years ago, Jack Trout (this time Steve Rivkin was the co-author) reviewed his theoretical approach on this concept, in a book whose title is very suggestive about its purpose: *The New Positioning. The Latest on the World's #1 Business Strategy*. The first chapter, called *Thinks are getting worse* made the connection with the first book, because it came back to the features of the human being who conditions the brand's retention. The authors specified five important elements in the positioning process: 1. *Minds are limited*, 2. *Minds hate confusion*, 3. *Minds are insecure*, 4. *Minds don't change*, 5. *Minds can lose focus*. (Trout and Rivkin, 1996, p. 8) For each element, the writers identified different types of positioning, extending the first list, presented by Trout and Ries. They spotlight the positioning according to some important strategy. For example, positioning based on analogies corresponds to commercials created as "slice of life". Another type is the positioning developed following the "Bandwagon" effect, and this effect is the striving to always be the first in your domain. Taking off this discussion, Trout was focusing on this phenomenon for many years and, moreover, he searched the evolution of the concept itself, not only the trend in the advertising industry. As a result of these observations, we could assume that positioning is a very dynamic concept depending on its epoch, society's changes and consumers' behaviour.

Starting with these books, many specialists extended and developed the positioning types, shining lights on details which could emphasize the contrast between two apparently similar situations. For example, they tried to explain how many possibilities there could be to become a leader, to reach this top positioning. In the same direction, Luc Dupont studied this problem in his book *1001 Advertising Tips*, discovering 50 ways to position a product or a service. In comparison with the previous discussion, his approach focuses on print advertising, which can reveal many original commercials, through both the visual and the verbal dimension. The most important reason, from his point of view, for paying attention to position is that people often confuse the brands and they are satisfied to just use the product, without any identity in his mind. He exemplified a weird confusion, when only 2% of the tested smokers recognized their own brand. Everybody knows that smokers are hard users and they express their fidelity all the time, buying the same brand (Dupont, 1999, p. 14). What has an effective impact upon this situation is the brand invasion in the same category of the product. Every brand is going to develop its category, product lines and its main purpose is to extend the name of the brand and to create sub-brands. His hypothesis has been formulated in the first pages of this book: *Let's be honest. The difference is not in the tooth paste tube, the soft drink bottle or in strength of the detergent. The difference is, in fact, in the personality of the consumer. We do not buy products, we buy positioning.* (Dupont, Luc, 1999, p. 13).

What really draws attention in his book is the inventory of the factors which determine the positioning for every analyzed brand (Dupont, 1999, p. 44). These elements could be organized, as far as we are concerned, according to several criteria such as: general characteristics of the product, brand and its name's history, marketing

perspective (price, customer, selling) and style of advertising. According to this classification, but in a more particular way of presentation, Dupont selected the most representative factors in a commercial, which are like a signature on a book, such as: name of the brand, the placement (where it is sold) and a slogan. (Dupont, 1999, pp. 44-48) The last feature serves to our research interest, to the main objective of this article, which is to demonstrate that positioning could be brought in light according to the commercials slogans. Our research focuses on this aspect of the brand and product positioning using the slogans' meanings developed since the beginning of the 1900s, when these two brands, *Coca-Cola* and *Pepsi*, have been sharing the soft drinks' market.

2. From the beginning to the present

- a historical perspective on Coca-Cola and Pepsi's history

Who was the first

Even if *Coca-Cola* was not the first brand created in America and delivered to the market with a specific identity, because this was *Ivory*, a soap produced by Procter & Gamble in 1879, it became important since 1886, when it begun the history and evolution of this fabulous drink. Coming back to the start of this company is almost nothing to present, as a new idea of concept, or of creating a new category of the product. Soft drinks used to be sold in soda fountains, which were a very good business once upon a time. The ingredients were everything and the perception of the product in the customer's mind. Constance L. Hays wrote a kind of monography of this brand which has been treated like a human being with a very strong personality and a good public image. The name of this book – *The Real Thing, Truth and Power at the Coca-Cola Company* – revealed to the readers that this brand got through a lot of difficulties during its complicated evolution starting with trying to make the product's quality be seen as a constant, the international symbol of America. Hays emphasised this point of view from the first page of her book, dedicated to the product's birth: *A single formula joins together elements as commonplace as table sugar and as exotic as the cola nut. It begun as a drink, as dark as night, and became an experience, flowing over the time and places, linked by memory to the meal on the table and the company at hand. Over more than a hundred years it came to be seen as a constant amid change, a rock standing against the tide.* (Constance L. Hays, 2004, Preface, ix) Reading her words again, we could more easily review the evolution of this product, according to its use and bringing into fashion. At the beginning, this product was included into a totally different category: the drugs' one. The drink had been immediately recognized and appreciated for its quality to cure depression, headaches, impotence and neurasthenia. Due to the belief of this epoch, carbonated water was good for the health. For this reason, a doctor called John Pemberton was considered *Coca-Cola*'s inventor, developed the drink as a non-alcoholic version of the French Wine Cola.

The new wonder of the world was sold at soda fountains, for five cents a cup, and after that, when the Company was founded by Asa Griggs Candler, it represented, step by step, the fundament for each popular soda beverage. From the historical point of view, *Pepsi* was invented in 1898 by Caleb Bradham, a New Bern, North Carolina, druggist, as Stephanie Capparell noticed in her answer to the books dedicated to the king brand. In order to be consequent, the name of this took its substance from this hierarchy created in the mind of the whole world: *The Real Pepsi Challenge – the Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Barrier in American Business*. The original trademark application for *Pepsi* was made on June, 1903, and the second registration integrated this brand into the same area as *Coca-Cola*, using its qualities. This drink became popular by 1920, at the beginning of its career, when the company reached bankruptcy. The company was liquidated incredibly fast, in 1931, but *Pepsi's* formula was bought by Charles Guth, president of the Loft candy-store chain. He sold the drinks at Loft only one year, while he ordered that all his soda fountains serve only *Pepsi-Cola*, which was promoted as *the best 5 cents drink in America. It is a real bracer...* As Mark Pendergrast very assertively noticed in his book *The definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes*, Guth realized that the competition with *Coca-Cola* could be dangerous for the new brand, saying to his employees: *Under no circumstances is Pepsi-Cola to be offered for Coca-Cola or compared with it.* (Pendergrast, 2000, p. 189). As for his concern, challenging *Coca-Cola* was impossible at that moment, and almost everybody was aware of it. But, this is the crucial moment, when the customer of those soda fountains might have changed their mind. We are not going to display here the follow-up of the whole history of these two brands, because our purpose is to describe the context of this interesting time and to understand the phenomena of positioning.

The dynamics of this competition in time

In order to have a clear presentation, we consider that the best solution is to display the competition of these two brands according to the evolution of the first one, because the second became a real competitor later. Our actual goal is to compare the situation of these brands according to their competitive movements. That's why we chose to follow the time flow, proposed by Mark Pendergrast in his book, which has just been quoted previously. We suggest that this pattern will improve the comparison of both brands in the next research.

According to Pendergrast's classification, *Coca-Cola* got through a lot of development stages, proofs of the brand's ascension and failure, too. The first one **was called the beginning** and it developed between 1886-1889, when the market was empty and easy to be taken over by this new product. Coming back to Dupont's positioning, everything was based on the product's naming, courtesy of Frank Robinson. He justified his choice using the musicality and the American style of naming, as Pedergrast quoted his words in the book: *Robinson later wrote that he created the name "Coca-Cola" not*

only to indicate the key ingredients, but “because it was euphonious, and account of my familiarity with such as names as: S.S.S. and B.B.B. ” (Pendergrast, 2000, p. 30) According to Trout’s classification we could speak here about positioning through product’s qualities and by name. It is not necessary to remind that the competition did not even exist till 1898, when *Pepsi* appeared and began to use, as it was expected, the same positioning. The brand focused on its formula and searched for specific features against the competitive brand. Walter S. Mack, the president of the *Pepsi-Cola* Company, tasted the product in his labs and reached an interesting conclusion, which was already spoken about the comparative positioning: *Coke is spicy, Pepsi is citricity* (Capparell, 2007, p. 52) Beginning with this statement of differentiation, the fight was on.

The next step was called ***Heretics and True Believers (1900-1922)*** and this time outruns the first position, because everyone knew the product. The attention was driven to the image, and this is why the company invested a lot of money in advertising. But, at the same time, *Pepsi* was confronted with a very difficult economical situation, because the product was not well established on the market. The company tried to sell the product to *Coca-Cola* but they refused any form of association.

Between **1923 and 1943**, *Coca-Cola*’s life stage was called **the Golden Age**, because the brand brought up a lot of innovation which are still on the market. One of them is the symbol positioning, for which a very familiar and popular character was chosen, no one else that Santa Claus. Since 1931, Santa became the image of every Christmas campaign, due to the association of colours, inspired by the logotype. So, at this point, we can speak about two important marks of the brand: logo and emblem. The same situation happened to *Pepsi*, which was already a serious competitor during 1930s. Beside in 1942, *Coca-Cola* lost its exclusivity regarding the word “Cola”. This is why, the prestigious mark looked for a nickname, which was, as everybody knows, *Coke*. But, World War II promoted *Coca-Cola* as an international drink, as an American symbol for the army (one of the texts for a print said *Congratulations. You’re the 100th soldier who has posed with the bottle of Coca-Cola, You can drink it*), fact that transformed it into a leader of the market in spite of any competitor.

Trouble in the Promised Land was the next step in Pedergrast’s classification, which has been established between **1950-1979**. *Coca-Cola* was focusing now on the positioning as a high-status product, the association with the most important stars, from the political, social or cultural stage. Despite earning the glory and enjoying the celebrity, *Coca-Cola* had trouble because *Pepsi* did not give up fighting for a place on the market, and recover the customer through “below the line strategy”, which increased its profit, and decreased competition’s credibility. The problem was that *Coke* was positioning in the mind of consumer as a high brand or an expensive one, while *Pepsi* was its poor relative. By that time, *Pepsi* tried to get separated from *Coke*, and declared that its competitors are tea and coffee. What really proved the

superiority of the first brand, was the television advertising which helped to extend its customers. At the same time, the brand underlined the symbolical advertising, opening the association with Walt Disney's characters, in 1950. The new strategy was to support the right of the whole humanity, and to build a social aura around the brand, things that are easy to notice in texts like this: *Our products appeals to the entire population without consideration for race, colour, economic status, geographical location or religious preference.* (Pendergrast, 2000, p. 255) This time meant sharing the market and making a choice between tradition and cultural connections and the New Generation for everyone. The last words turned the individuality to *Pepsi*, which has been strongly oriented towards the young consumers.

The Corporate Era (1980-1999) represented for *Coke* the opportunity to find diversity (*Big Coke, New Coke, Diet Coke*), developing the brand and awaking the interest for its tradition. In spite of its effort to be innovative, the company did some mistakes regarding the brand management, as it was in 1986, when *the New Coke disaster effectively killed the "Coke Is It", since it wasn't quite clear which Coke was it.* (Pendergrast, 2000, p. 361) The most interesting mistake, from our point of view, was that the advertiser from McCann Ericsson tried to compare the *New Coke* with *Pepsi*, in order to find the appropriate target, the young one, for the revolutionary soft drink. Actually, instead of looking for a similar positioning – the teenagers – the company should have searched for a niche target, which might have been reached by the product.

In the last few years, the fight is developing in the field of integrated marketing communication, but also in the creative area. Everyone knows the commercial in which a little girl is given a *Coke* instead of a *Pepsi*. As a result of this competition, both of them have been having a lot of advantages, such as: innovation, diversity, ambition, involvement in many activities and, especially, avoiding dangerous limitation. *Pepsi* started as a poor and distant relative, but had used every moment of *Coca-Cola's* weakness for gaining points in front of the enemy, and now the brand has a stable positioning while *Coca-Cola* could still be threatened, if they don't keep up the rhythm.

3. The research method

It is obvious that the essential principle of analysis remains the classical comparative method. This method was applied here using some indices from the semiotic and structural criteria. In the book called *Comparative Literature Compendium*, written by Francis Claudon and Karen Haddad-Wotling, the authors make the suggestion of using the comparative method as an analytic device and method of thinking. In other words, despite its privileged use as a method in literature, comparative is available in every scientific area. The mentioned authors classified comparative according to the object of analysis:

- First level comparison is based on the parallel between two meanings – in a stylistical and rhetorical version, as interpretation.

- Second-level comparison consists in an very ample analysis, using specific criteria, which allows an extensive incursion in the cultural space, so it allows some flexibility to the analyst.
- The tertiary (third level) comparison was also called comparative constructivism, and is *based on the existence of one factual relationship, on a connection of dependence, awareness or not, between at least two texts*¹ (Francis Claudon & Karen Haddad-Wotling, 1997, p. 22). The dependence could be defined as finding the similarities, which help the integration of the text in the same category. The factual relationship reflects the semantic interference or the discovery of some modalities for reciprocal approach of the meanings.

We are going to apply the second-level of comparison, because we chose some criteria for the analysis such as: positioning types, historical time, products' qualities, and brands' image. Our intention is to focus on the similarities and differences between the two brands as they were observed along the flow of time. Another argument for using this research method is the parallelism, which allows to analyse the movements of *Coca-Cola* and *Pepsi* in a successive way, not in a consequent one. The main hypothesis of the future research is that the positioning depends on the permanent competition between both soft drinks brands, which changed permanently their image and the relationship with the consumer.

4. What did slogans say during this fight?

In the following lines we are going to analyse every one of the periods we have just spoken about, according to Mark Pedergrast's classification, in order to notice the details about positioning suggested by the slogans of the two brands.

4.1. The beginning (1886-1889)

The first period is the most simple one, because it was only a few years, from 1886 till 1889. *Drink Coca-Cola* was the 1886 slogan and its aim was to position the brand in the category of soft drinks. The ad was created in a mechanic way, pointing out the name and its use.

4.2. Heretics and True Believers (1900-1922)

The second phase records the *Coca-Cola's* investment in advertising, fact suggested by foundation of the first magazine for advertiser, *Printer's Ink*, launched just two years after the *Coke* apparition. Between 1900 and 1922, the soft drink's copywriters created a lot of slogans, which revealed its focus on the qualities of the taste. At the beginning, the positioning respected the category where the brand was integrated: *1900 Delicious and refreshing. For headache and exhaustion.*

¹ The English version of the Romanian mentioned fragment was translated in a personal perspective, because we did not have access to an official English translation. The Romanian title of book is *Compendiu de literatură comparată*.

The curative features were exploited, because those were the audience's expectation at that time. Then, the main idea focused on attributes such as: *delightful, tasty, healthful, and delicious*. 1909 *Delicious, wholesome, refreshing. Delicious, wholesome, thirst quenching. Drink delicious Coca-Cola*. The next positioning type was based on customer's satisfaction, especially female: *The favourite drink for ladies when thirsty, weary, and despondent* (1905) Positioning through the quality anticipated the brand's future: 1906 *The drink of quality*. Beside, the drink outstood itself already as an American symbol like in this headline *The Great National Temperance*.

In 1912, a first sign of competition announced that, on the market, someone could become a danger or the customers could be manipulated. This was the meaning of two slogans, created consequentially for refreshing the consumer's mind and demanding his loyalty:

- 1912 *Demand the genuine – refuse substitutes*
- 1913 *Ask for it by its full name – then you will get the genuine.*
- 1914 *Demand the genuine by full name. Exhilarating, refreshing.*
- *Nicknames encourage substitutions.*
- 1919 *Coca-Cola is a perfect answer to thirst that no imitation can satisfy.*
It satisfies thirst
Quality tells the difference

As a result of this first slogan's analysis, we could notice that the positioning based on the name of the product was generally applied, because the product was in the pioneer phase, where the soft drink has to introduce itself very often. In addition, this is the first effect of finding a good place for the name of the brand, in the customer's mind, which should be easily recognized. Dupont underlined the importance of this element and gave some advice in order to reach the success of every brand: *When you are looking for a name for a new product, avoid initials, and remember to make it short and easy to memorize. Try as well to include the consonant letters B, C, D, G, K, P or T which linguists call "plosives", since they produce an explosion in the mouth when pronounced.* (Dupont, 1999, p. 45) From this point of view, both brands did a very good choice, very well attached to the ingredient too.

We will now see what happened with *Pepsi* at the same time, on the same field of creativity. The first advertising slogan came out quite late in comparison with *Coca-Cola's*. They were not so numerous, which suggest us that they did not spend money for advertising products, at least in the beginning. Taking into account that the examples are not so many, we make a preview, for a better argumentation of the next ideas:

- *Delicious and Healthful*
- *When they find the Pepsi-Cola bottles are empty, their morale will go down another 10 points*
- *Pepsi-Cola hits the spot, 12 full ounces, that's a lot, Twice as much for a nickel too, Pepsi-Cola is the Drink for you!*
- *Nickel, nickel, nickel, nickel, Trickle, trickle, trickle, trickle*

They did their positioning at the same level with *Coca-Cola's* when it came into season. The consumer's mind was oriented towards the taste of the product and its qualities. We meet the same word, *Delicious*, and the same idea of curative product. The price was the second criteria, and it is obvious that 5 cents, how much a *Coke* was, became a nickel by *Pepsi*, but the quantity gave it an advantage up against the concurrence. The slogans' tone was amusing and tried to spotlight the sensible aspects of the drink, the taste's satisfaction (*Nickel, nickel, nickel, nickel, Trickle, trickle, trickle, trickle*)

4.3. The Golden Age (1923-1949) was characterized through the same intensive advertising activity of *Coca-Cola*, while *Pepsi* seemed to search hard for the right way to the consumer's mind. The brand had only one slogan in that time, since 1939 till 1950 which underlined the positioning by quantity, not by quality: *Twice as much for a nickel too*. According to Dupont's classification, this was positioning as a "2 for 1", due to the opposition between the quantity and the price. They kept the magic word nickel and duplicated the quantity.

Meantime, *Coca-Cola* continued the campaign and developed a lot of slogans which appealed to the subjective features of the drink. The idea suggested that the product was established on the mark, its presence had been confirmed by the customer. In this comparison, the slogans could be analyzed according to several axis: **the consumer, the product, the brand and the connection with the national culture**. The positioning based on the effect of the drinks upon the consumer had been used in messages like:

1923 – *Refresh yourself and There's nothing like it when you're thirsty*

1935 – *The drink that keeps you feeling right*

1937 – *Stop for a break... go refreshed*

1946 – *What refreshment ought to be/Get the feel of wholesome refreshment*

1940 – *Bring in your thirst and go away without it*

Try it just once and you will know why

1941 – *A stop that belongs to your daily timetable*

1942 – *Wherever you are, whatever you do, wherever you may be, when you think refreshment, think ice-cold Coca-Cola.*

Regarding the product, its qualities were put forward (*turned to advantage*) not so much as the brand's values or the consumer's importance. The D'Arcy agency's copywriters insisted on the senses implied by consumption such as taste and smell. The refreshment's sensation was the key meaning everywhere: *Ice-cold sunshine* (1932), *Ice-cold Coca-Cola is everywhere else – it ought to be in your family refrigerator* (1934) or *A pure drink of natural flavours*.

Focusing on its own image, *Coke* insisted on its force and authority as a brand on the market. The agency in charge with the campaigns decided to strongly individualize the brand. This is why they picked up the main idea of positioning based on colour (according to Dupont's classification), when the message sounded like that: 1926 – *Stop*

at the red sign and 1938 – *Anytime is the right time to pause and refresh at a red cooler*. Sometimes, the brand was described redundantly, through the name itself, in order to present the originality, as Dupont explained in his book: *The “we are original” position is very profitable. Research shows that in the long run, pioneer brands obtain greater shares in the market than do more recent brands.* (Dupot, 1999, p. 15) If the message said *The only thing like Coca-Cola is Coca-Cola itself* or *It’s the real thing* (1942-1943), the brand would be aware of market’s competition and it would try to control their customers. In other situations, the slogans were created using enthymemes (partial syllogisms), in order to make the connection with other values which could not come up with: 1947 – 1948 *Serving Coca-Cola serves hospitality* or *Where there’s Coca-Cola there’s hospitality*. Very interesting is that *Coca-Cola* realized that changing its name in *Coke*, should work on this re-positioning based on new title, for keeping the consumer’s loyalty: *Coke means Coca-Cola* (1942-1943).

The last axis of *Coca-Cola*’s slogans’ topic is the one connected with the American proud, with the national culture and patriotism. One explanation for this national proud image is that World War II helped the brand a lot to become well known by everyone in the world and also as a support for the American soldiers. According to Dupont, this idea could be integrated in positioning based on the country origin of a product, as we can notice in future examples: in 1937 – *America’s favourite moment Cold refreshment* and in 1945 – *Whenever you hear “Have a Coke”, your hear the voice of America*.

To conclude this ample presentation upon the epoch of *Golden Age*, we could frame the idea, that *Coke* was one step in front of *Pepsi*, referring the positioning variety and the brand management.

4.4. Trouble in the Promised Land (1950-1979) meant that the two brands worked intensively upon the consumer’s mind, fact that could be translated in a dynamic implication of *Pepsi*. For these reason, we are going to compare them starting with the youngest brand, because its positioning was homogenous and much more stable than the other brand. According with this intention, our aim is to put the brand face to face, for presenting the slogans’ competition from the angle of meaning and frequency.

- First, this is how the correspondence looked like between 1950-1952, regarding the number and density of the message:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1950 – <i>Help yourself to refreshment</i> 1951 – <i>Good Food and Coca-Cola go just naturally together</i> 1952 – <i>Coke follows thirst everywhere</i> or <i>What you want is a Coke</i> or <i>The gift of thirst</i>	<i>The Light Refreshment</i>

No doubt that both brands were based on the subjective quality of their product, as the word refreshment proved easily. In the first case, the message is personalized to the customer, in the second seems to be a general definition of the brand. On the

one hand, *Coke* associated itself with other categories of products, like food, but, on the other hand, the brand started to be focused on the “heavy user”, and, of course, on a high level of loyalty. What happened to *Pepsi* could be explained as a strategy of keeping the brand in the consumers’ mind, maybe with an association, on purpose, with the authority of the first “refreshment ” mark.

- The next time span was longer (1953 - 1961) and it is dependent on the next *Pepsi* slogan in comparison with a long list of possibilities given by *Coke* to the consumers:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1953 – <i>Dependable as sunrise</i>	Be sociable
1954 – <i>For people on the go</i>	
1955 – <i>Almost everyone appreciates the best America’s preferred taste</i>	
1956 – <i>Feel the difference</i>	
1957 – <i>Sign of good taste</i>	
1958 – <i>Refreshment the whole world prefers and The cold, crisp taste of Coke</i>	
1960 – <i>Relax with Coke</i>	

Most of *Coke*’s slogans underlined the opposition, the difference between this special drink and another one, fact that was also spotlighted using short sentences. Focusing on life style, *Coke* changed the direction and adjusted to *Pepsi*’s positioning: *Sign of good taste*. While *Coca-Cola* seemed to look for a new brand’s image, *Pepsi* found one, which ought to have inspired the final one, till 1963. Drinking *Pepsi* meant being together, integrating in a appropriate social circle and sharing the same tastes and interests, while *Coke* was still individual name for feeling good, but still alone.

- The next level of the comparison between the evolution of the brands was the interval 1961-1963, when *Pepsi* showed the first sign of increasing its values, which continued the previous positioning:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1961 – <i>Coke and food-refreshing new feeling</i>	<i>Now It’s Pepsi for those who think young</i>
1962 – <i>Enjoy that refreshing new feeling</i>	
1963 – <i>A chore’s best friend and Things go better with Coke</i>	

For that time being, *Pepsi* was positioned definitively on the life styles, which meant that the customer was young, dynamic, sociable and nonconformist. *Coke* followed the fashion using the verb “enjoy”, which was associated with new and young refreshment, the magic word.

- Between 1963-1969 the bomb exploded, because *Pepsi* was already independent, chose a niche positioning and its target had a very good segmentation. *Coke*

tried to preserve its image based on the “heavy users” and on positioning against the competition. The play part had been changed, *Pepsi* represented the advertising trend and *Coke* looked for another place in consumers’ mind. Using innovative techniques such as hand-held cameras, real California children instead of actors, the new commercials identified the drink with the baby boomers and the political Kennedy’s age. *The Pepsi generation* represented the start of a very successful image, which offered the brand a lot of advertising opportunities for many years. The following parallel demonstrates the balance between the directions of both soft drinks, in this ample creative field, where everything concerned the brand’s strategy:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1964 – <i>You’ll go better refreshed</i>	1963-1967 – <i>Come alive! You’re in the Pepsi Generation</i>
1965 – <i>Something more than a soft drinks</i>	1967-1969 – <i>Taste that beats the others cold</i>
1966 – <i>Coke...after Coke...after Coke</i>	

- The last epoch (1969-1979) from this competition before *the Corporate Era* came into notice through the visible *Coca-Cola* effort to recover the stable place in the consumers’ mind. Despite *Pepsi’s* huge ascension, *Coke* did not accept that anyone could knock it off its top position. One could easily notice a handicap in the number and variety of slogans which certainly decreased compared to the past. Playing on different themes was a dangerous movement, and for these reason, *Coke* came up to the starting point but it chose to refresh the old messages, such as:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1970 – <i>It’s the real thing</i>	1969-1973 – <i>You’ve got a lot to live, Pepsi’s got a lot to give</i>
1971 – <i>I’d like to buy the world a Coke!</i>	1973-1975 – <i>Join the Pepsi people feeling’ free</i>
1975 – <i>Look up America</i>	1975-1978 – <i>Have a Pepsi day</i>
1976 – <i>Coke adds life</i>	1978-1981 – <i>Catch that Pepsi spirit</i>
1979 – <i>Have a Coke and a Smile</i>	

Catch that Pepsi Spirit means joining the new generation and sharing this specific life style daily. Dupont noticed in his book, mentioned here before, that both soft drinks were impersonal for such a long time, while other products exploited this advantage in that period: *Other research shows that drinkers of Pepsi-Cola and Pepsi-Cola are more extroverted than are drinkers of Dr. Pepper. In contrast, typical Br. Pepper drinkers believe they should live life in accordance with their own personal values and not to try to meet other people’s expectations.*(Dupont, 1999, p. 42). As for our concern, *Pepsi’s* slogans by that time proposed the consumer an introverted communication, inside the circle of young consumers. And also, the difference was certainly established: *Coca-Cola* ads are created focusing on the brand itself, while *Pepsi’s* ads were centred on young consumers.

4.5. The Corporate Era (1980-1999) could be extended to today, because the perspective seems to be constant: the brands are confirming their positioning and the competition is prolific. This time has been called *corporate era*, because the company are focusing on the management policy and on their international image. As we can see, *the New Generation's* positioning is still alive and, even if it is diversifying its topics, the axis will be constant. We try to make a selection from the most well known commercials, which represent the principal positioning line, in this time interval:

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1985 – <i>We've got a taste for you</i> 1986 – <i>Catch the wave</i> 1989 – <i>Can't beat the feeling</i> 1990 – <i>Can't beat the real thing</i> 1993 – <i>Always Coca-Cola</i> 1996 – <i>Enjoy it</i> 2001 – <i>Life is good</i> 2003 – <i>Life tastes good</i> 2005 – <i>Make it real</i> 2006-2007 – <i>Live on the Coke side of life</i> 2009 – <i>Open happiness</i>	1981-1982 – <i>Pepsi's got your taste for life</i> 1983 – <i>Pepsi now!</i> 1984 – <i>Pepsi, the choice of a New Generation. Are you ready to take the challenge?</i> 1985 – <i>Taste the difference taste. Generation next</i> 1986 – <i>Join the Pepsi Generation: feel the Taste</i> 1989 – <i>A Generation ahead</i> 1992 – <i>Gotta have it</i> 1993-1995 – <i>Nothing else is a Pepsi</i> 2000 – <i>The joy of Pepsi</i> 2003 – <i>Pepsi. It's the Cola</i> 2005 – <i>An ice cold Pepsi. It's better than sex.</i> 2007-2008 – <i>More happy/ Taste the once that's forever young</i> 2008-2009 – <i>Something for everyone</i> 2009 – <i>Refresh everything and Every Generation refresh the world</i>

On the one side, *Coca-Cola* insisted on the traditional image, and the positioning is here based on time, especially when we speak about *Always Coca-Cola*. On the other side, the first historical drink image is based on life styles, because taste has a double meaning: the product's quality and the social one. In the last two years *Coke* looked to bring to light another feeling, happiness, which means positioning based on surprised expectations, as Dupont said. A very good example for that is the commercial called *Happiness Factory*, which developed this abstract feeling as a mechanical instrument of reaching the ideal in life.

The common point of view for the two brands in discussion is the word "taste", but with a completely different signification by *Pepsi*: it means living a life as a challenge, tasting the feeling of being forever young. We now meet the same enthymeme as in the past, by *Coca-Cola* (*Serving Coca-Cola serves hospitality*), but now we notice another type of equivalence between the brand and the young generation and having fun. In comparison with the first example from *Coke*, we can re-build the whole syllogism like that: *If you are young, you should have fun, so you must drink Pepsi = Be young, Have Fun, Drink Pepsi*. What was really new and bold, refers to the positioning as a "substitute product" (Dupont, 1999, p. 39), using the magic drink as replacement for everything, sex especially, which means that *Pepsi* cannot be replaced by any pleasure

in world: *An ice cold Pepsi. It's better than sex.* Being happy is another common aim of the two brands and they are focusing on the consumers' spirit, on the effect upon him.

To conclude this analysis, it is really interesting to review the beginning of this competition. What said *Coca-Cola* in 1900s? *Delicious and refreshing.* What said *Pepsi* approximately at the same time? *Delicious and Healthful.* What *Pepsi* says in one of its latest slogans, which seems to come back at the beginning of its enemy's history? *Refresh everything and Every Generation Refresh the World.* *Pepsi* used the same idea in the "Golden Age" when it came on the market with the slogan: *The light refreshment.* The huge difference is that *Coke* refreshed the consumer only, while *Pepsi* covers nowadays the whole world and it became a sign of autocracy on the market. In addition, *Pepsi* applies *Coke's* old opposition strategy, when it tried to prove that it is the only original *Cola* (*Coke means Coca-Cola*), but in a very selfish and personal way: *Pepsi. It's the Cola.* Then, *Pepsi* is not a simply cola, it is "the Cola", the only one which deserves this name, according to the brand's image. We can notice that the circle is going around the same keywords, but everything depends on the consumers' dynamic. Beside, *Pepsi* supports positioning based on international, global view more in present days (*Something for everyone*), because in a multicultural world, a product should break its initial border, while *Coca-Cola* is fighting strongly for time's authority, for being "the real thing" forever, because the international status has been earned for years.

5. Conclusions:

Both *Coca-Cola* and *Pepsi* changed their positioning in costumers' mind with time, keeping their focus either on product's quality, customer, or brand image depending on two major factors. First, they have a long experience as a brand on the market, which means authority, identity and credibility. Second, the competition was in the same category of the products, in this case, soft drinks. Being alone on the market, *Coca-Cola* earned the title of leader in the first 40 years, so the positioning was diversified in order to build a general perspective upon the brand and the company, too. After *Pepsi* powerfully emerged on the market in 1930s, the advertising had been playing a game of strategies and positioning, they lost the first place, they recovered quickly, they changed the roles, and they aspired to dominate the market as much as possible. For *Pepsi* it was a challenge, because it grew up under a huge umbrella and its development was, actually, a reaction to *Coke's* status. For *Coca-Cola* was a challenge too, losing the absolute propriety upon the drink's name (*Cola*), and looking for a lot of solutions for not being dethroned as a top-leader.

Over time, the two brands extended their influence area, becoming well known in the whole world. For this reason, their strategy have been orientating in specific directions, they looked for the connections with other brand, which could help to keep them easily in consumer's mind. *McDonald's* and *Coke* got married for such a long time, and *Pepsi* followed the example and it engaged immediately with *KFC*.

Their brand images are very well controlled, and the positioning has been focusing for years on internal values, such as tradition, history, good life styles, for *Coca-Cola*, and being fun, enjoy the adventure, life refreshing, for *Pepsi*.

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