Effectively Incorporating Social Media:  
A Case Study on Coca-Cola

By: Laura Mayes

A Capstone Project

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Communication  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Communication

Supervisor: Professor Kathryn Montgomery

May 3, 2011
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ...........................................................................................................3  
Abstract ............................................................................................................................4  
Introduction .......................................................................................................................5  
  *Significance of the research* .............................................................................................6  
Methodology .......................................................................................................................8  
Literature Review ...............................................................................................................10  
  *Uses and Gratifications Model* .....................................................................................10  
  *Groundswell* ..................................................................................................................12  
  *Viral Marketing Campaigns* ........................................................................................17  
  *Best Practices* ...............................................................................................................17  
Case Studies ......................................................................................................................20  
  *History of Coca-Cola* ...................................................................................................20  
  *Summary of Social Media Presence* ...........................................................................23  
    *Social Media Monitoring Report* ..............................................................................25  
  *Social Media Campaigns* ............................................................................................27  
    *Expedition 206* .........................................................................................................27  
    *24-Hour Session with Maroon 5* .............................................................................31  
Summary of Findings .........................................................................................................36  
Discussion .........................................................................................................................38  
Conclusion .........................................................................................................................40  
References ..........................................................................................................................41
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my family, friends and professors that helped me with this capstone. Their guidance and patience helped me evolve this paper to its fullest potential. I am forever grateful and thank them from the bottom of my heart. Judging by the quote below, I have to think that the above-mentioned are overflowing with happiness.

In about the same degree as you are helpful, you will be happy.

Karl Reiland
Abstract

This paper explores social media marketing, its functions and best practices. By examining uses and gratifications theory and the “groundswell,” this paper analyzes how to best use social media. Two case studies of beverage giant Coca-Cola are examined and analyzed. Expedition 206 followed three bloggers on their mission to find happiness on a trip around the world, and 24-Hour Session With Maroon 5 examines an interactive song-writing session with the pop band Maroon 5.

Key words: social media, Coca-Cola, uses and gratifications theory, Groundswell, Maroon 5, Expedition 206
Introduction

Social media is an imperative public relations and marketing tool for companies to utilize in their business practices. It allows companies to have more of a relationship with their customers and acts as another means of information. However, since it cannot be regulated, users are free to post what they please about the company, whether it is good, bad or ugly. Social media is developing rapidly and there are new platforms daily, making it necessary for companies to not only be familiar with those platforms, but also know how to reach the consumer through them.

This paper explores the concept of social media and its users with a case study of Coca-Cola’s web presence. Two of the most recent social media campaigns, Expedition 206 and 24-Hour Session with Maroon 5 will be examined. Questions that will be answered throughout the paper will identify the effects social media has, if companies can reach their audiences effectively through social media, and what will make social media better by research on best practices.

Social media marketing helps a company form a relationship and connect with their audience. Tools such as Twitter, Facebook, various blog sites and Foursquare are used to fuse a connection. It is then up to the company to ensure that a relationship develops. Social media is widespread and it is imperative to remain ahead of the competition. Coca-Cola’s competitors, Pepsi Co., Nestlé and Dr. Pepper Snapple Group all have a presence on social media sites and engage in social media marketing.

Coca-Cola is a market leader in the carbonated beverage industry not only in numbers, but also with their presence on social media. Companies in any industry can study their social media presence and interaction and form their own social media
guidelines based on Coca-Cola’s current presence. The company’s presence on social media engages fans and followers while also allowing Coca-Cola to be a part of the conversation. Whether a user is new to social media or has been active on several platforms for years, Coca-Cola appeals to all users.

**Significance of the research**

Social media is a driving force in the field of communication and marketing and is only getting larger. This phenomenon is changing the way marketing has been done in years past. Instant feedback and connecting first hand with your audience are only two of the benefits. This research will showcase a large corporation utilizing various social media platforms that can serve as a model for future organizations.

Coca-Cola is a well-respected brand in the food and beverage industry and has been known for its high sales and community involvement. The company is actively involved in several social media platforms and their engagement can help serve as the foundation for a social media marketing plan. Coca-Cola also recently wrapped up two social media campaigns, “Expedition 206,” where Coca-Cola sent three bloggers on an all expense paid trip around the world and “24-Hour Session with Maroon 5”, where Coca-Cola invited fans to write a song with pop band Maroon 5 in 24 hours. The team used various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to document their trip and uncover what makes people around the world happy. Users helping Maroon 5 write a song in 24 hours used Twitter and Facebook to participate. Updates were posted throughout the songwriting session on Coca-Cola’s Facebook and Twitter pages.
Examining their social media presence will uncover the strategies used by Coca-Cola and provide a framework for understanding this new phenomenon.
Methodology

This study focuses on secondary research developed from scholarly articles on social networking sites and the uses and gratifications theory. Also, the use of social media by The Coca-Cola Company is examined in two social media campaigns. Both campaigns are recent, one began in 2010 and the other in 2011. The first campaign’s duration was one year and the second was held for 24 hours, but promotion for the campaign was drawn out over two weeks. The findings of the research were analyzed and developed into elements of social networking sites best practices for large companies aiming to reach a target audience through multiple platforms.

Examining the competitive landscape within the carbonated beverage industry presented Coca-Cola as the most successful in the realm of sales, as well as social media presence and engagement. By studying the company’s attempt at connecting with the audience and the response, these two campaigns served as the basis for my research.

Using social media analytics tools such as TweetReach and Quantcast, I was able to track the progress of the campaigns before, during and after. The research conducted is primarily secondary research. That secondary research is used to analyze the effectiveness of Coca-Cola’s social media presence and overall campaign success.

These methods were chosen to give a firsthand look at the campaigns in their entirety. Internet users are present on various platforms to fulfill wants and needs. These users expect to get something they deem useful out of his or her time on the Internet. Examining the campaigns on each platform they were active on gives the reader specific examples of engaging and conversational communication.
The study and findings presented in this paper are qualitative and only examines two campaigns within one company. This proves as a limitation as the scope of the study is small.
Literature Review

The uses and gratification theory focuses on why people use the Internet, and most often, how it fulfills a need or want. It is a psychological approach and has been examined in depth by scholars Katz, Blumler and Rubin. It is important for companies to market themselves through social media to become a want or a need by users and potential audience members. By becoming a want or a need, companies increase their brand awareness and appeal to users. Also presented in this literature review is research by scholars Li and Bernoff. They place social media users into six categories and explain the realities of companies engaging in social media. A focus on viral marketing campaigns best practices is examined and explained. Finally, best practices are formulated to help companies become a want or a need.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory can be used to explain an individual’s use of the Internet as well as social networking sites. Although this theory was originally developed to understand media in the realm of television, it is applicable for understanding social media. Like television, users can access and view the content he or she chooses when they wish to. Needs and wants are developed for television in some of the same ways that they are developed on the Internet. As defined by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, uses and gratifications theory is concerned with:

“(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities),
resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps unintended ones."¹

In short, the uses and gratifications theory examines how individuals use media from a psychological perspective. Five theoretical elements are present in the model:

“1. Media exposure is directed and consumed by what the media offers the audience member.

2. Individuals select communication vehicles to satisfy his or her needs and/or desires.

3. Media competes with other sources of need satisfaction whether they are social or psychological.

4. Individuals can recognize and report their interests and motives in specific cases.

5. Individuals can be more influential than the media in some instances.”²

Media use is determined by several essential elements, “people’s needs and motives to communicate, the psychological and social environment, the mass media, functional alternatives to media use, communication behavior, and the consequences of such behavior.”³ Gratifications can be obtained from three sources, media content, and exposure to the media and the social framework that characterizes the situation of exposure.⁴

¹ (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 2)
² (Katz et al., 1974, pp. 2-3)
³ (Rubin, 1994, p. 419)
⁴ (Katz et al., 1974, p. 6)
Scholars Stafford and Gonier identified sources of gratifications for Internet use amongst individuals in their 2004 study amongst AOL users. Their findings concluded that the Internet was used for searching and browsing activities, communication and information retrieval, learning and research and for socialization purposes.  

Using the Internet for socialization was the fourth factor in the analysis and can be associated with furthering interpersonal relationships. The findings within this factor associate using the Internet as a communication channel. Shortly after 2004, social networking sites began to be largely adopted by Internet users.

The Groundswell

Social networking sites have burst onto the Internet scene and captured the attention of Internet users worldwide. Platforms change daily, and what is used today could be gone tomorrow. Companies have begun to use social networking sites to communicate, build a relationship and market to their target audiences. These same companies must remain up to date on which networks resonate with which audience. Many users access companies’ social networking profiles on various sites to fulfill their needs. Many profiles include comments with product reviews and personal accounts of customer service experiences. Sometimes these SNS profiles can be more influential than the media itself.

Li and Bernoff note that every company is vulnerable when it comes to social media. Companies like Dell and Microsoft are riding the wave of social media and benefitting immensely from this emerging trend. They outline platforms in their book and how to communicate on each of them.

5 (Stafford & Gonier, 2004, p. 108)
6 (Stafford & Gonier, 2004, p. 110)
Platforms on social networking sites change rapidly. One thing that doesn’t change is the way to communicate with and reach consumers. “Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies,” by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff identify what social media can do for a company, good or bad, and offer strategy tips for companies implementing various social media platforms.

Li and Bernoff define the “groundswell” as “a social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations.”

The biggest threat that the groundswell poses to any organization is that it is not regulated. Consumers and other companies are free to post any feeling he or she has towards a product, brand or service. This alone can serve as the storyline of a journalist’s next article. It creates a public relations crisis for the company involved if the accusations are of a certain magnitude. Most comments are jabs at a company that sometimes include inappropriate words and are forever on the Internet.

Another threat is the threat of a power shift within a company. Li and Bernoff note that consumers rely on each other for information via the Internet and many read reviews before purchasing a product, investing in stock, making a decision on the meaning of a company’s brand and even discussing the internal communication of policies within a company.

Positives include forming and maintaining a relationship with customers and gaining new customers in the process. The lines of communication are left completely open, allowing both the company and consumer to communicate directly. Another benefit of social media is the real-time results that would take a survey weeks to collect.

7 (Li & Bernoff, 2008, p. 9)
Many platforms are available at no cost, which is a plus. Participation in social media is key to success and good communication with a company’s audience can result in stronger brand positioning as well as engaged customers.

Li and Bernoff define users of social media into six categories with their social technographics profile:

*Creators:* These individuals publish blogs or articles online, maintain a webpage, or upload videos or audio to sites like YouTube.

*Critics:* Critics post comments on blogs and online forums, post ratings or reviews, or edit wikis.

*Collectors:* Save URLs and tags on social-bookmarking sites, vote on sites like Digg, or use RSS feeds.

*Joiners:* Individuals who are considered “joiners” often participate or maintain profiles on social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook.

*Spectators:* Being a spectator takes little effort—these users “consume what the rest produce” (blogs, online videos, podcasts, forums and reviews)

*Inactives:* These individuals are exactly as they sound, inactive within the groundswell.  

---

8 (Li & Bernoff, 2008, pp. 43-45)
Companies that engage in social media primarily use blogs, YouTube channels, Twitter, FourSquare and Facebook. The target audience can determine which platform(s) a company may use. Social networking sites are used to hold contests, engage in conversation, keep audience members updated on company progress, announce new products and have a presence on the Internet. Being active on several sites allows companies to interact with a surplus of audiences while also reaching members of the social network technographics profiles. Below are prevalent social networking sites that companies use to communicate with their audience. Prevalent sites were determined by which audience group were most active, allowing companies to reach a range of target markets. All data provided by Quantcast.

**Twitter:** Popular amongst 18-34 year olds

Sentiments are posted in 140 characters or less
Facebook: 13-17 year olds

User-generated profiles—users can join groups, upload photos, become “friends” with other Facebook users, write on group and friend “walls” and create events

FourSquare: 35-49 year olds

Using GPS recognition software, users can “check-in” to various establishments. Incentives for “checking-in” include status of “Mayor” of a certain location, badges and sometimes incentives through the check-in location

YouTube: 13-17 year olds

Users upload and view user-generated videos

Digg: 18-34 year olds

Flickr: 13-34 year olds

Users upload photos and create albums, photos can be shared with other users
Viral Marketing Campaigns

Viral marketing can improve brand advocacy as well as increase market brand awareness. Scholars Kirkby and Marsden outline three key factors that increase the probability of a successful viral marketing campaign:

- Specialist strategic planning to ensure that viral marketing is used to deliver tangible, measurable, ongoing brand benefits.
- Appropriate “wow” factor material that users want to seek out, talk about and pass on of their own freewill.
- Appropriate specialist seeding of the buzz story, to put the viral agent where it is best suited to spread and be seen as positive.

It is important to note that three factors will not determine the success of a viral marketing campaign, but it can make a difference. The second factor relates closely to the uses and gratifications theory, of users wanting to find information on a specific topic, brand or person. Viral marketing also allows a company the ability to promote the company in a positive light.

In a Digital Marketing Series sponsored by HubSpot, Lauren Drell via Mashable identifies nine digital marketing lessons in her article on the blogs website:

1. Be human.
   It is important to be part of the conversation but not control it. Also, establishing a tone with your audience is key. Having several people tweet from the same account can do this.

2. Know what you want.

---

9 (Kirkby & Marsden, 2006, p. 96)
10 (Kirkby & Marsden, 2006, p. 96)
Setting goals and objectives before you delve into social media is recommended. Do you want to measure engagement? Do you want to measure sentiment or numbers of tweets?

3. Listen and respond.

“No one likes asking a question and not having it answered.” (Dell)

Developing a connection with users behind the scenes is key.

4. Diversify and pace your content.

Figuring out what to post should not be a headache. Paying attention to what your followers are sharing and talking about will help create conversations on behalf of the company. It is also important to pace your content, as Lauren Dell writes, “No one wants to hear from a brand more than they hear from their friends or family.”

5. Inject yourself into the conversation.

Focus on information pertinent to your company. If something exciting occurs such as a broken record or a new campaign—share it! Engaging conversation between the company and its followers creates a relationship, while increasing the brand's credibility.

6. Get feedback in real time.

Relaying information to the appropriate departments can prove to be extremely useful. This feedback can help the marketing team decide what is ‘hot.’ Also, social media can be monitored for growth patterns. Are the accounts getting more fans/followers and likes? Are users engaged?
7. Know your audience.

For many companies, audiences are diverse. Knowing the audience is key to creating a lasting social media presence. For global companies, it is also imperative to know where your audience is. Make sure users can all benefit from the content you post.

8. Know the platforms.

All social media platforms were not created equal. Knowing and understanding the various platforms your audience is active on helps you better relay your message. These users are savvy and pick up on it immediately if the company is not familiar with the platform.

9. Create a user-centric experience.

Marketing is not a one-way street anymore. Brands can actively engage in conversation with consumers. Make your presence about the consumer’s wants and needs. Those users that “like” your page and re-tweet tweets become brand ambassadors for your company. These users should be acknowledged.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) (Drell, 2011)
Coca-Cola

History

Atlanta based pharmacist John Pemberton invented Coca-Cola in 1886, and his bookkeeper, Frank Robinson, named the product after two ingredients, coca leaves and kola nuts.\(^{12}\) The beverage was readily available in the United States in 1891 after druggist Asa Candler acquired The Coca-Cola Company, and available in Canada and Mexico seven years later.\(^{13}\) In 1919, Coca-Cola went public after Asa Candler retired and his family sold the company to Atlanta baker Ernest Woodruff for $25 million.\(^{14}\)

Today, Coca-Cola is sold in 206 countries and is the world’s #1 soft-drink company.\(^{15}\) Coca-Cola headquarters is still located in Atlanta, Georgia. Coca-Cola makes or licenses more than 3,000 drinks and owns four of the top five soft-drink brands (Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Fanta and Sprite).\(^{16}\) "In 2010, The Coca-Cola Company bought out its leading bottler, Coca-Cola Enterprises and renamed it Coca-Cola Refreshments USA."\(^{17}\)

Past Marketing Campaigns

Since 1886, the company has had more than 46 advertising slogans with numerous marketing campaigns to go along with them.\(^{18}\) Campaigns have focused from sales of the product, quality of the product and moments in life in which Coke is present. The most recent, “Open Happiness,” focuses on finding the definition of happiness.


\(^{18}\) (Bodden, 2008)
Expedition 206 set out on a journey across the globe to find out what makes people happy.

Since 1931, The Coca-Cola Santa Claus has visited families every holiday season. He was joined by the Polar Bear in 1996 and the dynamic duo is synonymous with commercials around the winter holidays. Other marketing campaigns include a “Coca-Cola Day” celebration at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Fanta’s “Less Serious” campaign, Sprite Step Off, Uniting Teens Through Music and The Heart Truth Campaign.¹⁹

Coca-Cola has hit the ground running in terms of social media marketing campaigns. This paper will help to uncover how Coca-Cola is able to remain at the top of the list when it comes to digital marketing. The company has become a need and a want to many Internet users. These individuals voluntarily seek out Coca-Cola on various platforms and have become brand ambassadors for the company on a global scale.

¹⁹ (Coca-Cola, 2011)
Coca-Cola and Social Media

“In general, we are very supportive of buying media within those realms. It’s like fishing where the fish are. Social media is where our consumers are at the moment. There’s no better way to amplify your message. If you’re building a major campaign and putting a lot of time and energy into enabling social and interactive aspects, you have to make sure people know about it.

Our strategy is to be everywhere our consumers are, but as a member of the community. That’s not to say that we think there’s anything wrong with big billboards in Times Square or Super Bowl commercials. There’s a time and a place for that. Within the social media marketing realm, our approach is to be a strong member of the community that’s enabling consumers to celebrate manifestations of the brand.”

Michael Donnelly,
Coca-Cola’s Group Director of Worldwide Interactive Marketing20

---

20 (Fredricksen, 2009)
Snapshot of Social Media

Coca-Cola is active on numerous social media platforms. On the company’s website, there are direct links to take the viewer to each social networking site the company is involved with. Once a viewer travels to any of those pages, there are links and buttons to direct the viewer to other Coca-Cola social media pages.

Currently the homepage has ‘buttons’ that link viewers to Coca-Cola’s profiles on Flickr, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Fans, Friends and Followers*

Flickr: 116 sets of photos

Twitter: 248,953 “followers”
26,422 tweets
65,813 following

Facebook: 24,595,148 “likes”
12,731 photos

YouTube: Joined January 1, 2006
25,897 subscribers
18,740,566 total upload views
5,197,822 channel views

*Statistics are accurate as of April 12, 2011. Counts grow daily and reader is recommended to assemble new data.

Posts on Twitter and Facebook are conversational, engaging and rarely have a promotional feel. Interaction via YouTube is daily, new videos are updated frequently. Flickr photos are updated at events Coca-Cola holds or sponsors, the most recent being the 24-hour session with Maroon 5. On Facebook, Coca-Cola attempts to lessen the effects of the unregulated nature of the groundswell by establishing “House Rules” for those wishing to interact with Coca-Cola on the page:
More companies are beginning to adopt social media policies within their organization to monitor employee use, but also externally to help regulate spam and offensive content.

Below is Coca-Cola’s social media activity for Monday, March 14, 2011. Since March 14th, Facebook “likes” have grown by more than one million and Twitter “followers” by more than 20,000.
A day in Social Media

[3/14]

Coca-Cola is a market leader in the food and beverage industry and is known for its high sales and community involvement. The company is actively involved in several social media platforms and their engagement as a global brand can be learned from, as they are more active than their competitors. Each tweet and Facebook post has been inspected and (if needed) translated. Coca-Cola was also mentioned 7,650 times in blogs in regards to recipe ingredients to new social initiatives the company is taking.

There is a large influence from the Spanish and Portuguese cultures across Facebook and Twitter. All tweets and Facebook posts are mainly positive and have a direct correlation with the projects Coca-Cola is currently globally involved with and contain various facts and history about Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola follows a number of their followers and responds to tweets in a timely, conversational and personable manner.

Twitter Trends

New Global Ad to Unite Teens Through Music—56 mentions
"Coca-Cola Music", is an original new music program targeted towards teen music lovers.

DISD Coca-Cola Basketball Tournament—33 mentions
Coca-Cola sponsors Dallas Independent School District basketball tournament.

Coca-Cola Enterprises seeks secondary stock listing in Paris—23 mentions
The secondary listing will complement Coca-Cola’s primary listing on the New York Stock Exchange.

Coca-Cola Beach—19 mentions
Spring Breakers from across the U.S. have enjoyed Coca-Cola Beach on South Padre Island for the past 15 years.

www.google.com

Coca-Cola’s Involvement

- Both the Facebook post and Twitter post are conversational and engaging
- Replies are personal and in a timely manner
- Coca-Cola has more than 20 million more followers when compared to Pepsi and more than 4,000 more blog mentions.

Evaluating Success

- Multiple posts per day on Facebook and Twitter to further engage fans
- Include a guest blogger to write for Coca-Cola.
A day in Social Media Cont. [3/14]

Facebook "Likes"
23,402,976

Wall posts: 259
Positive: 230
Negative: 13
Asking a question: 9
Unknown: 7

Twitter Followers
221,124

Do you hate Sundays more than excessive blatant center screen Coca Cola product placements?
-T_FUTURIST

Mentions: 1,495
Positive: 1,482
Negative: 13
@replies: 51

Coco cola is the best
-CodeK

I love the Coca Cola advert. It makes me wanna get up and dance on my table.
-nonnahsveevers_

RT @AvrilxBieber:
Drinkin' Coca cola, I love it ! ! <3 , @docpemberton
-docpemberton

https://www.facebook.com/cocacola
http://twitter.com/#!/CocaCola

Coca-Cola
Fill in the blank: My favorite Maroon 5 song is ________.
Monday at 9:00am · Like · Comment
4,646 people like this.
View all 6,531 comments
Write a comment...
Expedition 206

Background

The Coca-Cola Co. launched a social media initiative in January 2010, dubbed Expedition 206. This social media push sent three bloggers on an all expense paid trip to 206 countries, or as many as they could visit in a year. The number 206 is significant because Coca-Cola products are sold in 206 countries.\(^{21}\) The goal of the campaign was to uncover what makes people “happy” as part of Coca-Cola’s “Open Happiness” campaign.\(^ {22}\) Expedition 206 involved blogging, posting videos to YouTube and posting updates on Twitter. Part of the campaign involved the team taking part in events such as the Winter Olympics in Vancouver and meeting locals in various countries.\(^ {23}\)

Finding the three “Open Happiness” Ambassadors began when Coca-Cola reached out to its agencies for social media connoisseurs already within its fan base.\(^ {24}\) The search began with 60 candidates, which was narrowed to 18. Those 18 candidates were brought to headquarters in Atlanta for interviews, which were then narrowed into nine and placed in teams of three, and were faced with the task of promoting themselves to users, who ultimately determined the winning team.\(^ {25}\) The three bloggers were chosen in an online vote, which ended November 6, 2009. The contestants used Twitter and Facebook to garner support. The three bloggers, two men and one woman represented the United States, Belgium and Mexico.\(^ {26}\)

---

\(^{21}\) (S. H., 2009)  
\(^{22}\) (S. H., 2009)  
\(^{23}\) (S. H., 2009)  
\(^{24}\) (Zmuda, 2009)  
\(^{25}\) (Zmuda, 2009)  
\(^{26}\) (“EXPEDITION 206- About the Ambassadors,” 2010)
Adam Brown, director of Coca-Cola’s Office of Digital Communications and Social Media said that the main goal of the campaign was not to have the Coca-Cola brand front and center, but rather to focus on optimism and joy, the attributes of what Coca-Cola is about. The idea of the campaign stemmed from Clyde Tuggle, the senior vice president of Global Public Affairs and Communications for Coca-Cola. Tuggle also said that consumers own the Coca-Cola brand and “reiterated the importance of authenticity, accountability and transparency when communicating with customers and is committed to making sure those are key parts of the Expedition 206 adventure.”

365 Days. 206 Countries. 1 Mission

http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/press 1

The trip began January 1, 2010 in Madrid, Spain and concluded December 31, 2010 at the company headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Bloggers spent no more than three days in the same country and were escorted by Coca-Cola representatives in

---

27 (S. H., 2009)
28 (Warren, 2009)
29 (Warren, 2009)
certain countries.\textsuperscript{30} The team participated in events such as the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, and the World Expo in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{31}

The campaign was active on its own website (www.expedition206.com), Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Typepad, a blogging site. The website www.expedition206.com has ‘buttons’ allowing users to access each social networking site the expedition was active.

The team blogged, posted updates on Twitter and took photos at every location, including when they were delayed in the airport. Limitations of the campaign included weather delays, lack of infrastructure in certain countries, rules and regulations as ‘journalists’ and ‘reporters’ and health concerns.\textsuperscript{32}

Videos, photos and Twitter posts kept those following the campaign updated with the team’s journey. Videos were posted interviewing the locals about what happiness meant to them. The team discovered that happiness was found in the little things like the view of a landscape, sports, music, a pizza and a Coke and spending time with friends and family. A multitude of cultures were represented and the team had the privilege of learning and spending time with the locals.

\textbf{Results}

Before the campaign even began, it was considered successful internally. The campaign triggered collaboration between the communications, public relations and marketing teams and was the company’s biggest social media project to date.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} (S. H., 2009)
\textsuperscript{31} (Warren, 2009)
\textsuperscript{32} (Zmuda, 2009)
\textsuperscript{33} (Zmuda, 2009)
Externally, the campaign was extremely successful as well. The outcome of the campaign resulted in “650 million media contacts and billions of individuals involved both online and offline.”34 Anne Carelli, senior manager of digital communication, said that the “program created more visibility for the Coca-Cola brand in key markets like China.”35 In some countries, this campaign was their first interaction with social media itself. Overall, the company’s goal was to increase the use of this marketing tool across the globe. The team, dubbed “Team MIX” visited 186 countries and traveled more than 275,000 miles.36

34 (Bachfischer, 2011)
35 (Bachfischer, 2011)
36 (www.expedition206.com, 2011)
24-Hour Session with Maroon 5

http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/dynam 1

Background

Coca-Cola and Maroon 5 set out to make music history live from London on March 22, 2011. The band and fans we brought together to write a song in 24 hours via social media. During the 24-hour session fans were asked to send in words, pictures and comments to motivate the band, as well as ask questions and vote for different options for the song.³⁷

The 24-hour session was part of an innovative new music program, “Coca-Cola Music,” created by Coca-Cola to allow teens to have a behind the scenes look at the music industry.³⁸ It was promoted across Facebook and Twitter along with help from bloggers across 20 countries.³⁹ All tweets were posted on a 3D interactive wall in the studio.

Limitations of the event include spammers, inappropriate messages and Internet browsers crashing. As stated in the literature review, a downfall of participating in the groundswell is that it cannot be controlled.

³⁷ (Coca-Cola, Corporate, 2011)
³⁸ (Coca-Cola, Corporate, 2011)
³⁹ (Coca-Cola, Corporate, 2011)
Facebook and Twitter posts leading up to and during the 24-hour session were engaging and conversational. Facebook posts are below, followed by Twitter posts.

Coca-Cola
What do you get when you put Coca-Cola and Maroon 5 in the studio, invite the world to join and try to write a new song in 24 hours? We don’t know, but it’s going to be fun. RSVP here: http://CokeURL.com/4ect

Maroon 5: 24 Hour Session
Location: Streaming Everywhere LIVE NOW: http://CokeURL.com/skyh
Time: 5:00PM Tuesday, March 22nd

March 10 at 8:17am · Like · Comment · Share

4,741 people like this.

View all 430 comments

Write a comment...

Coca-Cola
Fill in the blank: My favorite Maroon 5 song is ________.

March 14 at 9:00am · Like · Comment

4,704 people like this.

View all 6,576 comments

Write a comment...
Sample Twitter Posts

Coca-Cola
We've been taking our own pics in the studio with Maroon 5.
http://CokeURL.com/2ryv

Coca-Cola: Maroon 5 24 Hour Live Session Photos
6 new photos

March 23 at 2:16am · Like · Comment · Share

4,281 people like this.

View all 222 comments

Write a comment...

Coca-Cola
Ok, this is it. Maroon 5 is finishing up their epic 24 Hour Session in the studio. They need your help.

Join now because the clock is ticking.

Coca-Cola: Maroon 5 24 Hour Session
CokeURL.com
Join Maroon 5 and Coca-Cola as they tear down the virtual walls of the recording studio and invite you to help create an original song, from start to finish, in just 24 hours.

March 23 at 6:16am · Like · Comment · Share

3,332 people like this.

View all 199 comments

Write a comment...

(Sample Twitter Posts)
The song, titled, "Is Anybody Out There" is available for a free download on Coca-Cola’s music website, www.cocacola.com/music. For the first 100,000 downloads Coca-Cola made a donation to Replenish Africa Initiative (RAIN) to help provide access to safe drinking water to communities in Africa.\(^\text{40}\)

**Results**

"More than 350,000 views were logged onto the Coca-Cola live stream throughout the duration of the session and more than 25,000 fans tweeted their ideas and messages of support to @cocacola using the hashtag #withMaroon5 to the band in the studio.”\(^\text{41}\)

\(^\text{40}\) ("Is Anybody Out There' by Maroon 5 featuring PJ Morton now available for free download," 2011)
\(^\text{41}\) ("Is Anybody Out There' by Maroon 5 featuring PJ Morton now available for free download," 2011)
Fans tweeted and posted on Coca-Cola’s Facebook wall in support of the band as well as the song. Maroon 5’s lead singer, Adam Levine commented, “This has been an amazing and entirely unique experience. It was 24 hours of creativity, brought to you by Coca-Cola. We’d like to thank all our fans for their Tweets of support, ideas and inspiration throughout a really productive and intense 24 hours.”

\[42\] (Cook, 2011)
Summary of Findings

Expedition 206

Keeping fans engaged for the amount of time that Coca-Cola did is nothing short of remarkable. Although the team did not travel to all 206 countries, they still captured valuable information while keeping fans excited for their next move. The results alone speak for the success of the campaign, but the conversation and impression the campaign created will last for years to come. The campaign was left almost entirely in the hands of the team, which involves a substantial amount of trust on Coca-Cola’s part. The campaign also involved several social media platforms, reaching a plethora of audience members and allowing groundswell users to monitor or engage in the team’s yearlong journey. Expedition 206 was not only the company’s largest social media venture, but arguably one of the most successful.

24-Hour Session with Maroon 5

Fan engagement was not limited to the 24-hour songwriting session with Maroon 5, but it was endorsed for about two weeks before. As the Facebook and Twitter posts signify, employees on behalf of Coca-Cola were promoting the event but also involving the band’s success by asking “followers” and “fans” which Maroon 5 song was his or her favorite. Again, any member of the groundswell could follow the campaign and participate if he or she chose to. Coca-Cola was accessible to the fans throughout the campaign from inception to well after the conclusion of the event.

Conversation was created by Coca-Cola and maintained by the fans on both Facebook and Twitter. Posts were made by Coca-Cola regularly and had a high response rate. Not all comments were considered positive or related to the subject, but
that is a result of the inability to regulate the groundswell. Overall, there was little to no spam posted.
Discussion

In both social media marketing campaigns, Coca-Cola followed all nine best practices. They were human, knew what they wanted out of each campaign, listened to fans and followers and responded to many and paced their content so they were not overwhelming them. They injected themselves into the conversation, got feedback in real time, knew the audience and the platforms and created a user-centric experience.

Coca-Cola created these campaigns to appeal to all users of the groundswell. Fans, friends and followers could fall in between a creator or a spectator and still benefit from viewing or participating in the campaign in some way. Creators could blog about aspects of the campaign he or she liked best and spectators could sit back and watch the campaign grow and develop at his or her own pace.

Expedition 206 and 24-Hour Session with Maroon 5 are successful viral marketing campaigns. Both campaigns are still accessible on the Internet, which deliver ongoing brand benefits. Also, the “wow” factor of the campaigns involved both the size of the campaigns, and the star power. Traveling around the world in a year is a large feat and Maroon 5 is a popular pop band in American culture. By placing these campaigns on Facebook, Twitter and blog sites Coca-Cola was able to place the buzz story about each campaign and watch it grow as well as access several target audiences.

By creating the buzz, Coca-Cola gave fans, friends and followers a reason to visit their sites. In essence, the company created a “need” for users to search the sites for information regarding campaign status and progress. Users benefitted from visiting the
sites and communicating with Coca-Cola and Maroon 5 by feeling as if they had formed a relationship and were part of something unique.
Conclusion

Coca-Cola’s social media presence and engagement with consumers can serve as a model for large organizations to follow. This paper explored social media marketing and featured case studies from Coca-Cola. The uses and gratifications theory was observed, as well as the theory of the groundswell. Best practices for communicating on social media as well as strategies for successful viral marketing campaigns were also examined. These theories and strategies were then analyzed by looking at Coca-Cola’s social media presence and involvement with two recent social media marketing campaigns.

Future research that can be conducted could be a detailed description of Coca-Cola’s presence on a daily basis, and not just large campaigns. Only one day is analyzed in this paper, but more would be beneficial. This research could help predict trends like when the most users are active on social media and if that is the best time to reach them, when users have the most complaints or issues regarding a product and if the company is responding more one month than the other.
References


