MLCP of Red Bull

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Red Bull is a marketer and distributor of one of the first major sports drinks to be introduced into the world, called the same name: Red Bull energy. Since the inception of the drink in the mid 1980’s by Dietrich Mateschitz in Austria as an attempt to create an alternative to coffee, the drink and brand of the Red Bull organization have exploded into one of the most popular and recognizable organizations of all time. The brand pushes the idea of their product giving the greatest boost of energy, and their slogan “Red Bull gives you wings!” reinforces the idea to consumers; with their drink, anything is possible. This has encouraged the global love of Red Bull from consumers, and the drink is sure to be found anywhere you go from grocery stores to gas station convenience stores.

DESCRIPTION

As far as communication to the consumers goes, Red Bull leads the way. The Red Bull organization as of 2023 owns 15 professional sports teams across 11 different sports, i.e. FC Red Bull Salzburg, New York Red Bulls, Red Bull Racing (Formula 1) reaching hundreds of thousands of fans from across the world. Red Bull is also known for sponsoring insane extreme sports stunts such as the famous Red Bull Stratos jump done by Felix Baumgartner in 2012, at a height of 121,000 feet to a livestream of 8 million live viewers. Red Bull spent about 100 million dollars on advertising in the last year alone including the sponsorships and sports teams. Red Bull puts a lot of effort into marketing with their media company Red Bull Media House which is a multi-platform media company. They use Red Bull Media House to cover the extreme sports stunts whether it be snowboarding or surfing and post it all over social media. Although $100 million is a lot for advertising, the shares and likes of these posts on social media make that money back plus much more when viewers become consumers.

ANALYSIS

Some of the patterns I’ve been finding with Red Bull and their communication is the message that Red Bull = Extreme, and they sell that to the customer. Whether it be the slogan “Red Bull gives you wings”, or the extreme sports campaigns they do, or the owning of professional sports teams winning big games, they always sell the ‘extreme’ aspect. When someone thinks of Red Bull, they think big, exciting, fast paced. When you see an Instagram reel of a parasailer landing on a mountain with skis and traversing the steep banks with a Red Bull logo on his helmet, you want to be a part of that. Red Bull communicates the energy of their product through patterns such as that - showing the public what it means to drink Red Bull, promising them wings to compete at the highest level and seize the day.

INTERPRETATION

The basis of Red Bull’s communication strategy to their consumers is to promote the extremeness of their product which in turn gets their name back out there into the public sphere and equates their product with the extreme stunts they sponsor to advertise themselves. This is an
example of a communication as a verb-tension “organizations are maintained in and through communicative processes that recurrently reinstantiate their existence” from Schoeneborn et al. Communicative Constitution of Organization. (Dougherty, Chapter 3) An example of this again is the Stratosphere Jump from Felix Baumgartner which hit a record for live viewers on YouTube with over 8 million live viewers.

Red Bull is also a global organization with popularity in every country, proving its global communication with the ownership and sponsoring of multiple different sports organizations in multiple different countries which involves different cultures. Cultures as Communication (Dougherty, Chapter 3) can tie into this part of the interpretation because it shows the change of Red Bull in certain areas (such as supporting the popular sports teams of different countries) such as the different ways they use the culture to directly advertise for themselves based off popularities in certain cultures - Soccer in Europe, F1 racers in southern Europe, Skiers/Snowboarders in the U.S. which is mostly non-verbal communication through advertisement, showing the local communities they should associate Red Bull with their favorite hobbies.

The last part of Red Bull’s communication that I would like to focus on is Scheinenborn’s three layers of communication with artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions. For an artifact, Red Bull does its famous extreme stunts (Schoeneborn 2022). For espoused values, Red Bull focuses on promising its consumers with extreme energy and focus - giving them “wings”. Finally for basic assumptions, it is the unchanging belief that Red Bull will always give the consistent promise that their product will always give the consumers the energy boost they are looking for (Dougherty, Chapter 3, Keyton).

EVALUATION

Red Bull targets communication with itself and potential customers through theories of non-verbal communication for the majority of its advertising. Instead communication is done through the hobbies of what their main demographic of customers would be partaking in. i.e. Skiing, skydiving, intense sports, normal sports, and athletic publicity stunts. The strategy of communicating is brilliant due to the fact that even people who have no care about sports or energy drinks will tune in to huge publicity stunts which will burn the image of Red Bull in their mind, and wondering what “Red Bull gives you wings” truly means. I believe that this strategy combined with the cultural differences in the areas where Red Bull is leading the energy drink market, (Europe, North America, UK) is brilliant - as they sponsor the teams and or organizations in these areas that are popular by putting the Red Bull logo on jerseys, racecars, and helmets. All of these serve as advertising along with the 5 second YouTube shorts with old-style stick figures and toucans which sing the phrase “Red Bull gives you wings” I believe in terms of communicating, Red Bull does it simplistically and uses the surrounding culture (popular sports teams/ events) and the basic human ‘want’ to have “wings” to do anything they set their mind to. Overall, from a consumer point of view, it’s hard not to want to try the drink at least once.
ENGAGEMENT

As an energy drink brand targeting athletes who seek the boost of energy to compete in extreme sports, I see that Red Bull does this extremely effectively by consistently associating their brand with extreme sports. When people think about where to get a perfect burst of energy from an outside source, Red Bull is usually the first thing people think about. I would like to make some slight suggestions at this stage to further improve the communication habits. This is again an example of Red Bull being a verb-tension organization. “Organizations are maintained in and through communicative processes that recurrently re-instantiate their existence” from Schoeneborn et al. Communicative Constitution of Organization. (Dougherty, Chapter 3) that was talked about in stage 3 of the process. I believe that Red Bull could do an even better job by sponsoring another big public stunt similar to the 2011 Strato-jump that Red Bull sponsored, as they mostly stick to Instagram reels and Tik Tok for publicity now.

I would also like to see Red Bull continue pursuing entering themselves and becoming part of other cultures as they have been doing with multi-national professional sports teams and the sponsorships/ownership involved. Cultures as Communication (Dougherty, Chapter 3) ties into this “because it shows the change of Red Bull in certain areas (such as supporting the popular sports teams of different countries) such as the different ways they use the culture to directly advertise for themselves based off popularities in certain cultures - Soccer in Europe, F1 racers in southern Europe, Skiers/Snowboarders in the U.S. which is mostly non-verbal communication through advertisement, showing the local communities they should associate Red Bull with their favorite hobbies.” - from Stage 3, but I recommend Red Bull begin this same strategy into other continents such as Asia or South America since they are mainly based in the U.S. and Europe/Middle East as far as sports sponsorships are concerned. I believe that buy purchasing a sports team in Asia, it would only help grow their brand even more multinationally and culturally.

Red Bull exceeds communication expectations using Schein’s three layers of communication with artifacts (visual organization), espoused values (strategies, goals), and basic assumptions (unconscious beliefs within the organization). For an artifact, Red Bull sponsors its famous extreme stunts which I believe they should get back to doing more often. (Schoeneborn 2022) For espoused values, Red Bull focuses on promising its consumers with extreme energy and focus - giving them “wings” which is a great slogan as it non-verbally enables and promises its consumers something. Finally for basic assumptions, it is the unchanging belief that Red Bull will always give the consistent promise that their product will always give the consumers the energy boost they are looking for. (Dougherty, Chapter 3, Keyton) If I were to change anything else about Red Bull, I would suggest they advertise their different flavors more - communicating that they don’t only rely on one specific flavor of energy drink but that they experiment with different flavors on nearly a monthly basis. I believe communication on social media through advertisements for summer flavors would help consumers who aren't into athletics choose Red Bull more often.
CONCLUSION

Red Bull boldly fronts the energy drink market with their top tier communication to the consumers about what their product provides and delivers upon what’s expected of them. The MLCP process shows me as a reviewer of Red Bull the levels of what goes on ‘behind the scenes’. The techniques of their advertising by using extreme stunts, the live streams, professional sports teams, all of it communicates what and who Red Bull is.
REFERENCES


