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# 1. Introduction

Coca-Cola is a well-accepted, long-established brand. It is a leader in the beverage industry with a history of over 100 years. Coca-Cola has become a household name in soft drinks. These are beverages which are sold across more than 200 countries (market.us, 2022). The brand has a strong presence in both developed and new markets (The Coca-Cola Company, 2025). In this report, the marketing of Coca-Cola will be discussed in the UK and China. Their socio-cultural environment and purchasing habits vary among these countries. The success of Coca-Cola can be seen in the alignment of the strategy and the local market. The UK is a full-fledged market with different preferences. Sustainability is also appreciated by the UK. On the contrary, China is a rising market. It possesses its cultural demands and consumption patterns (ChoZan, 2025). Coca-Cola operates on a nationalised approach by adjusting its approach to the needs of the countries. The forces that drive these strategies are the macroeconomic, political, and cultural factors. Coca-Cola adjusts to these factors to remain competitive. This report will compare Coca-Cola's marketing strategies in the UK and China. It will address such issues as brand positioning, product lines, and promotions. The report will also discuss the economic and cultural factors which impact such strategies. It will evaluate the success of Coca-Cola's strategies in terms of sales and brand recognition. The Coca-Cola marketing practices will also be addressed in terms of ethical concerns. Lastly, the report will also give recommendations on how the strategies in the two markets should be improved. This report will reveal the brand's global and local orientation by comparing Coca-Cola's methods.

## 2. Brand Overview



*Figure: Coca-Cola Logo, Source: (Domestica.com, 2025)*

Coca-Cola is a multinational beverage company. Dr John Stith Pemberton is the founder of the company, who established it in 1886 (The Coca-Cola Company, 2024). It was introduced as a medical drink, and it later became an international soft drink. Coca-Cola is also associated nowadays with a great variety of drinks. The brand's products are sodas, juices, teas, and waters. The company has its main office in Atlanta, Georgia, USA (Coca-Cola, 2025).

### Mission and Vision:

Coca-Cola strives to bring a fresh drink to the world. The mission is based on the establishment of actual shared value. The company desires to make people merry using drinks. It also endeavours to serve individuals and societies. Coca-Cola encourages change in a positive way by engaging in simple daily activities.

Coca-Cola has a vision of connecting the world and bringing a good future. The vision emphasises long-term growth driven by innovation. The company aims to establish powerful international relations. It seeks to provide sustainable market value. The vision helps Coca-Cola in the direction of taking a responsible leadership role in the world.

Coca-Cola is a worldwide recognised brand enjoying a strong presence. It has more than two hundred countries of operation. Its traditional iconic product accesses billions. Marketing and faithful consumers contribute to the growth of the brand (Kingsnorth, 2023). Coca-Cola aligns its strategies with local cultural expectations. The value of health-oriented beverage preference is high in the UK market. The Coca-Cola Zero and Diet Coca-Cola are becoming in demand. The message of sustainability also contributes to the UK market image (Pereira, 2024). The Chinese approach pays much attention to alignment with the culture. Coca-Cola

creates flavours based on the local taste preference (MarsHub, 2022). The company has low-sugar beverages and tea options. Advertisement in China places emphasis on togetherness and feasting. Another way by which Coca-Cola expands is through associating with local brands. That is why these partnerships accentuate national brand relevance and acceptance. An international approach is a combination of uniformity and national responsiveness. Essential brand values do not change in the global markets (iwebnext.com, 2016). Local modifications guarantee high interaction and future prosperity.

### 3. Macroenvironment Analysis (PESTLE)



*Figure: PESTEL Analysis, Source: (Adobe Stock, 2025)*

#### 3.1 Political

Coca-Cola is a subject of the UK government policy. Some of the main priorities in political attention are public health. This is because the sugar tax will influence how products and their marketing decisions will be developed (BeverageDaily, 2025). The reduction in levies further makes it an issue of political debate. These discussions exert greater demand on traditional Coca-Cola recipes. Political priorities are also determined by HFSS advertising regulations (Conway, 2024). These regulations limit the exposure of sugary drinks in the country. The advertisement of zero-sugar product options is promoted by political pressure. Political influence determines the market structure of beverages in China. Coca-Cola also has big state-owned collaborators such as COFCO. This alliance has regulatory goodwill and distribution coordination at the national level.

### 3.2 Economic

| Country        | GNP (USD)              | Local Currency      | GNP in Local Currency |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| China          | 18.617329 trillion USD | Chinese yuan        | ≈ 132.33 Trillion CNY |
| United Kingdom | 920.655 Billion USD    | British Pound (GBP) | ≈ 697.47 Billion GBP  |

*Table 1: GNP (2024) Comparison, Source: (ceicdata.com, 2025)*

China's national income indicates strong support for beverage consumption. According to ceicdata.com, the country has an annual 18.617329 trillion USD GNP worldwide (18.617329 trillion USD GNP 2008). The equivalent converted values are approximately 132.33 trillion CNYs countrywide. The high national income augments the expenditures on branded beverages. The purchasing power of Coca-Cola is stronger among urban consumers. Economical prowess enables it to expand via product diversification.

The United Kingdom is offering a weaker input base of national income. In the UK, the level of GNP internationally is reported to be 920.655 billion USD (ceicdata.com, 2025). Turned over values are approximately 697.47 billion GBP across the country. Value-driven purchasing behaviours are determined by an average level of income. Shoppers like multi-pack and low-price formats of beverages. Economic pressure prompts Coca-Cola to have competitive pricing.

Coca-Cola pricing, pack size, and value signs are motivated by economic conditions. The UK continues to face pressure on household costs of living. Inflation is four to five per cent for food and soft drinks. There is a continued increase in prices, but at a slower pace. Customers monitor their expenditure and seek more affordable sources of drinks (The Food Foundation, 2025). Affordability is thus justified by Coca-Cola with multipacks and price promotions. Simultaneously, Coca-Cola can raise prices to boost revenue. Recently, the increase in revenue was more due to pricing rather than volume. This indicates that Coca-Cola has not lost its brand pricing power. However, it should not take loyal UK buyers to extremes.

The economic picture of Coca-Cola in China is different. The beverage market in China is still large and is expanding. Non-alcoholic beverages reached a value of over \$170 billion in recent years (Zacks Equity Research, 2025). In the case of urban consumers, they are ready to pay the price of a lifestyle and a high identity. The top luxury is backed by digital retail,

vending, as well as mini-programme loyalty. Special flavours and limited packs can be sold at a higher price than Coca-Cola. Nonetheless, China is also a very price-segregated region.

| UK                                                        |                                                                | China                                                     |                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Favourable                                                | Unfavourable                                                   | Favourable                                                | Unfavourable                                                         |
| Strong brand loyalty supports stable repeat purchases.    | Cost-of-living pressure increases overall price sensitivity.   | Large GNP supports wider consumer spending potential.     | Price segmentation increases pressure across income groups.          |
| Mature retail networks support wide product availability. | Consumers switch to cheaper private-label alternatives.        | Urban middle class supports premium beverage consumption. | Local beverage competitors dominate several fast-growing categories. |
| Premium variants maintain pricing power in some segments. | Volume growth remains limited in saturated soft-drinks market. | Strong distribution scale supports growth in new cities.  | Economic slowdowns can reduce discretionary lifestyle spending.      |

***Table: Economic Factor's Favourable & Unfavourable Comparison,***

***Source: (georank.org, 2020)***

### 3.3 Social & Cultural

#### *Social Factors*

The message of Coca-Cola in Britain is highly influenced by social trends. The awareness about health raises concerns about sugar consumption. The obesity decrease in obesity is associated with the decrease in sugar in the discussions of society (GOV.UK, 2024). Drinks with high sugar content are still on the agenda of public health. Tougher sugar levies are reviewed by the government on a national level. These issues contribute to the popularisation of zero-sugar options (Cobiac et al., 2024). British consumers are shifting towards using Coke Zero Sugar varieties. These alternatives are enjoyable without any effects of taxation and guilt. It is the social expectations, however, that promote responsible beverage communication at all times. Advertising of Coca-Cola advocates balance and moderation, as well as controlled pleasure (Thomas, 2024). Healthier practices are strengthened by social norms among most groups of consumers. Coca-Cola uses its storytelling to favour responsible lifestyles. It is the social influence which influences product selection and marketing priorities.

#### *Cultural Factors*

##### **Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions**

**Power Distance:** It is a dimension that shows an acceptance of unequal power distribution. High scores indicate accommodating high hierarchical structures.

**Individualism vs Collectivism:** It is a scale of group or individual identity choice. Strong ties at the community and family are endorsed through high collectivism.

**Masculinity vs Femininity:** This dimension presents competition or care orientation. Masculine cultures put a premium on performance and high-performance results.

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** This scale measures the acceptability of uncertainty and ambiguity. People with high avoidance like rules, structure, and expectancy.

**Long-Term Orientation:** This is a dimension that reflects concentration on long-term planning. High orientation values include persistence and future-oriented orientations.

**Indulgence vs Restraint:** This dimension is the craving to have fun or restrained behaviour. Extreme hedonism promotes play, liberation and acts of expression.

| Advantage                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Disadvantage                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Clear, Measurable Framework</b><br>Provides a clear, quantitative (scored) structure with six dimensions to easily compare and contrast national cultures.                                                           | <b>1. Oversimplification &amp; Generalization</b><br>The model reduces complex national cultures to a few dimensions, risking over-generalization and potentially leading to cultural stereotypes.                                     |
| <b>2. High Practical Application</b><br>Highly valuable in international business, management, and marketing for adapting strategies, improving communication, and reducing cross-cultural conflict (Hsu and Huang, 2017). | <b>2. Outdated and Limited Original Data</b><br>The original research was conducted using IBM employees from a specific time period (late 1960s-early 1970s), which may not be representative of the entire national population today. |
| <b>3. Increased Cultural Awareness</b><br>Helps individuals and organizations develop a basic cultural awareness to better understand different approaches to hierarchy, risk, time, and relationships.                    | <b>3. Assumption of National Homogeneity</b><br>Assumes that a nation is equivalent to a single culture, ignoring the presence of subcultures, ethnic, regional, and individual variations within a country (Lazarevic, 2020).         |
| <b>4. Foundation for Further Research</b><br>The model is one of the most cited and influential works, serving as a foundational and shared vocabulary for academic research in cross-cultural studies.                    | <b>4. Static View of Culture</b><br>Cultures are dynamic and change over time (due to globalization, economic development, etc.), but the original model may not fully capture these shifts.                                           |
| <b>5. Facilitates Global Collaboration</b><br>Enables more effective communication and collaboration in multinational teams and negotiations by predicting potential cultural differences (Shi et al., 2017).              | <b>5. Western Bias (Ethnocentrism)</b><br>The model's dimensions and the original survey may be inherently influenced by a Western perspective and may not fully reflect the complexities of non-Western cultures.                     |

***Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension,***

***Source:(Internet Public Library, 2020)***

### **Discussion according to Hofstede's Cultural model**

The model by Hofstede assists in the comparison of cultures on the basis of definite dimensions. It puts systematic sets of differentiation on national differences. Managers are guided in the formulation of culturally matching strategies. The model makes the cultural trends easier to apply in the business world. The model can, however, be insensitive to internal cultural diversity. It occasionally relies on historical information and presumptions.

There is no way that national averages will capture all individuals. The model must then be interpreted with pathos in marketing.

| Dimensions                        | UK Score | China Score                                           |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Power Distance Index (PDI)        | 35       | 80                                                    |
| Individualism (IDV)               | 89       | 20                                                    |
| Masculinity (MAS)                 | 66       | 66                                                    |
| Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) | 35       | 30                                                    |
| Long-Term Orientation (LTO)       | 51       | 87-118 (Varies slightly by source, consistently High) |
| Indulgence (IVR)                  | 69       | 24                                                    |

***Table: Hofstede's Cultural Score Comparison,  
Source: (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011)***

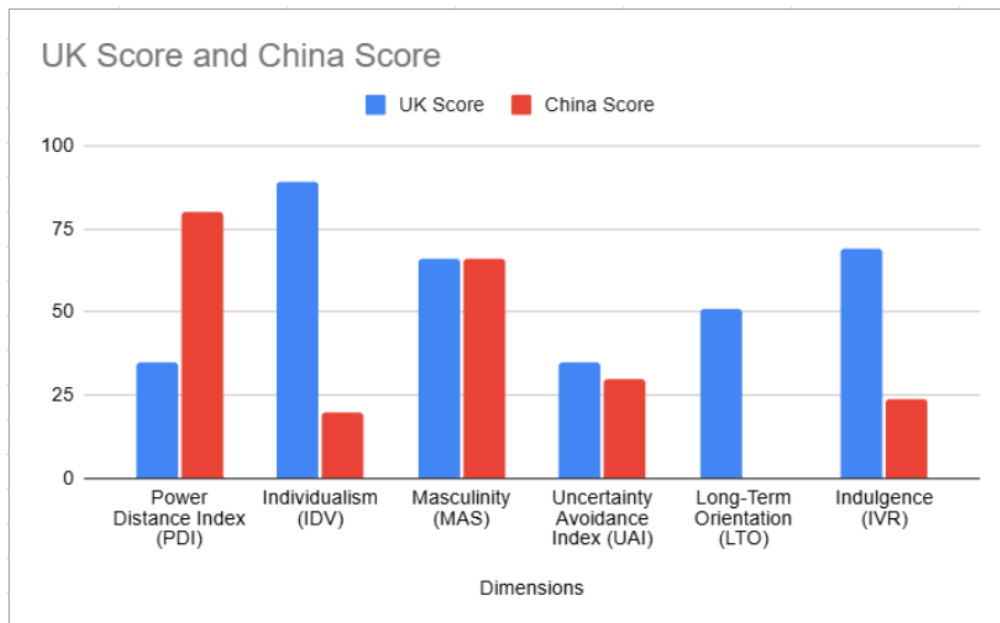


***Figure: Hofstede's Cultural Score Comparison  
Source: (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011)***

The UK is very individualistic, and power distance is low (Uta, 2021). The scores espouse individual choice and free communication. Coca-Cola advertisement likes responsible drinking and personal lifestyle. Flexible message adaptation because of low uncertainty avoidance. China is very collectivistic and has a high power distance. These dimensions promote family-related communication themes. Coca-Cola emphasises cohesiveness, togetherness, and festivities with dignity. China has a culture of long-term orientation, which favours long-term brand loyalty. The levels of indulgence vary, which manipulates emotional and festive communications.

### 3.4 Technological

The technology is also a factor that influences Coca-Cola's customer acquisition and retention. In the UK market, physical retail channels remain very dominant. The most prevalent touchpoints are still supermarkets, meal offers, and convenience fridges (Springham, 2023). Awareness is aided by digital, yet Britain is mostly offline in its buying.

A drastically different digital commerce environment for beverages is exhibited in China. Chinese consumers demand immediate buying using phones, codes, and mini-programs. In China, Coca-Cola has WeChat mini-programmes based on loyalty ecosystems (Swirecocola, 2024). These systems gather information, compensate for the scan, and lead to repeat purchasing. Consumers scan limited-edition cans during the Lunar New Year to experience. Fans receive digital red envelopes and AR family wishes. This is a combination of tradition, gift-giving, and virality across social media in China. Thus, technology individualises Coca-Cola in collective rituals.

The UK has been tech-focused, oriented towards brand storytelling experiences. They are presented through campaign QR codes, music platforms, and drops of experiences (Kelly, 2023). Nevertheless, convenience on a retail level continues to be more important than application-based conversion pathways. Generally, the marketing of China is transaction-based and native mobile. UK marketing is still an omnichannel approach, but is based on the solidity of physical presence (Feeley, 2024).

### 3.5 Environmental

The strategy of Coca-Cola is now under serious pressure from environmental and sustainability concerns. The issue of sustainability is both regulatory and social in the UK. According to Coca-Cola Great Britain, small bottles are made of fully recycled plastic (Coca-Cola, 2024). There is now a figure of caps and labels, which is omitted. There are now attached caps, which remain connected to enhance compliance nationwide (Pemberton, 2024). These graphic modulations of packaging serve Coca-Cola's environmental narrative in Britain. Opponents acknowledge that recycled plastic would, in the end, amount to waste and pollution (Quaglia, 2024). Such conflict compels UK messaging to walk the fine line between pride and humility. Coca-Cola boasts of progress on recycling but does not overpromise complete circularity.

China poses various sustainability challenges for Coca-Cola's packaging decisions. China increased the regulations on the green packaging of too much plastic. Regulators embrace

recyclability and life cycle systems of producer responsibility (Bioleaderpack, 2025). Other tests within China are rPET recovery and bottle-to-bottle recycling. Coca-Cola aligns with China's objectives for waste reduction and efficiency. Environmental pressure is used as a compliance demand and a brand narrative.

| UK                                                                |                                                                      | China                                                          |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Favourable                                                        | Unfavourable                                                         | Favourable                                                     | Unfavourable                                                   |
| Recycled bottles support stronger sustainability brand messaging. | Activist criticism increases reputational risk on plastic pollution. | Government pushes recycling and green packaging reforms.       | Compliance costs rise due to packaging redesign.               |
| National recycling systems support collection and recovery.       | Sustainability claims risk being framed as greenwashing.             | rPET trials support improved circular packaging systems.       | Large market scale increases total waste footprint.            |
| Environmental awareness supports demand for responsible brands.   | Regulatory changes can increase compliance and reporting burdens.    | Sustainability narrative supports trust among urban consumers. | Regulatory updates can change requirements with little notice. |

*Table: Environmental Favourable and Unfavourable Comparison,*

*Source: (Li and Hewitt, 2008)*

### 3.6 Legal Factors

Coca-Cola's operations are highly regulated by legal frameworks worldwide. The high-sugar beverages are legally the target of the UK sugar levy (BeverageDaily, 2025). In the near future, legal changes can decrease permissible sugar levels. These changes demand transformation and modified marketing strategies. The advertising regulations of HFSS place legal constraints on the freedom to promote within the country (Conway, 2024). Advertisements on the internet discourage the popularity of the traditional Coke. The laws of supermarketing also limit promotional exposure in a great way. It is these legal pressures that drive Coca-Cola towards the production of healthier mixes. In China, there is a high level of compliance requirements on behalf of bottlers under the law. Licensed partners have rigid regulations in production and distribution. Legal complacency promotes the stability of the market and long-term operations.

### Similarity and Difference – Legal Factors (UK vs China)

| Aspect                      | Similarity                                                | Difference – UK                                               | Difference – China                                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Regulatory Control</b>   | Both countries enforce strict beverage regulations.       | HFSS rules restrict advertising and digital promotion.        | Strong government oversight through licensing and state-linked partners. |
| <b>Product Requirements</b> | Both require compliance with national food laws.          | Sugar levy pressures reformulation of sugary drinks.          | Packaging laws require recyclability and rPET usage.                     |
| <b>Advertising Rules</b>    | Both regulate promotional content and consumer messaging. | Online advertising of HFSS drinks faces heavy limits.         | Cultural messaging must align with national guidelines.                  |
| <b>Market Entry Rules</b>   | Both require proper legal authorisation for operations.   | Retail placement laws reduce impulse marketing opportunities. | Foreign firms must operate through authorised bottling partners.         |
| <b>Compliance Costs</b>     | Both markets impose notable compliance obligations.       | Reformulation and advertising restrictions increase expenses. | Packaging upgrades and regulatory approvals add ongoing costs.           |

*Table: Similarity and Differences of Legal Factor (UK vs China), Source: (Tang, 2023)*

### 3.7 Favourable and Unfavourable Analysis for Coca-Cola in the UK

| PESTEL Factor        | Favourable for Coca-Cola                                                                      | Unfavourable for Coca-Cola                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Political</b>     | Clear regulations support transparency.                                                       | Sugar tax increases cost and limits demand.                        |
| <b>Economic</b>      | High disposable income supports premium products.                                             | Slow economic growth makes consumers price-sensitive.              |
| <b>Social</b>        | Growing health awareness increases demand for low-sugar drinks.                               | Health concerns reduce demand for regular sugary Coca-Cola.        |
| <b>Technological</b> | Strong digital infrastructure helps e-commerce growth. Coca-Cola uses technology effectively. | High competition in digital marketing creates pressure.            |
| <b>Legal</b>         | Clear labelling rules improve consumer trust.                                                 | Strict labelling laws require reformulation and packaging changes. |
| <b>Environmental</b> | Strong recycling culture helps Coca-Cola promote sustainability.                              | High environmental scrutiny increases pressure on plastic use.     |

*Table: Favourable and Unfavourable Analysis for Coca-Cola in the UK,*

*Source: (Zhuang, 2024)*

### 3.8 Favourable and Unfavourable Analysis for Coca-Cola in China

| PESTEL Factor        | Favourable Factor                                       | Unfavourable Factor                                    |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Political</b>     | COFCO partnership strengthens regulatory access.        | State control limits strategic independence.           |
| <b>Legal</b>         | Strong licensing system supports stable operations.     | Strict regulations increase compliance costs.          |
| <b>Economic</b>      | Large GNP boosts beverage purchasing power.             | Local competitors create strong market pressure.       |
| <b>Social</b>        | Youth culture supports expressive brand engagement.     | Rural markets prefer cheaper beverage options.         |
| <b>Cultural</b>      | Festivals create strong seasonal sales opportunities.   | Overuse of cultural symbols risks backlash.            |
| <b>Technological</b> | Mobile commerce enables fast beverage purchases.        | High digital competition requires heavy investment.    |
| <b>Environmental</b> | The government supports recycling and rPET development. | Packaging regulations require costly redesign efforts. |

*Table: Favourable and Unfavourable Analysis for Coca-Cola in China,*

*Source: (Greeven and Liu, 2024)*

### 3.9 Similarities and Differences Between the UK and China (PESTEL)

| PESTEL Factor        | Similarities                                      | Differences (UK)                               | Differences (China)                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Political</b>     | Both markets influenced by government policies.   | Strong focus on health and sugar control.      | Strong state involvement through local partnerships.      |
| <b>Economic</b>      | Both markets experience price-sensitive segments. | Cost-of-living pressure influences buying.     | Large GNP and strong urban purchasing power.              |
| <b>Social</b>        | Consumers show shifting beverage habits.          | High health awareness and sugar concern.       | Strong value on social celebration and togetherness.      |
| <b>Cultural</b>      | Culture influences advertising themes.            | Focus on moderation and responsible enjoyment. | Focus on festivals, family unity, cultural symbols.       |
| <b>Technological</b> | Both use digital touchpoints in marketing.        | Offline retail still dominant in purchasing.   | Mobile commerce and digital loyalty dominate.             |
| <b>Environmental</b> | Both face rising sustainability expectations.     | Strong pressure from activists on plastic use. | Strict packaging reforms encourage recycling initiatives. |
| <b>Legal</b>         | Both affected by strict beverage regulations.     | HFSS advertising bans limit promotion.         | Heavy compliance demands and packaging rules.             |

*Table: Similarities and Differences with PESTEL factors, Source: (British Panda, 2023)*

## 4. Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP)



*Figure: STP Marketing, Source: (Kelvin, 2023)*

## 4.1 Segmentation

### VALS Framework

VALS is a model that analyses the way of life of consumers. It studies the manner in which individuals think and act in their day-to-day lives. The system associates personal values with purchases. It categorises the consumers into eight distinct groups. The various segments depict various motivations and needs. VALS assists marketers in establishing the reasons why individuals make product selections. It also expounds that attitudes determine purchase behaviours. The model advocates group-specific approaches.

| VALS Segment        | Lifestyle Characteristics                          | Psychological Characteristics                       | Consumer Characteristics                        |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Innovators</b>   | Live active modern lifestyle patterns.             | Confident thinkers with strong personal motivation. | Buy premium brands and new products.            |
| <b>Thinkers</b>     | Prefer calm organised lifestyle activities.        | Value knowledge and responsible decision making.    | Choose practical and durable purchases.         |
| <b>Achievers</b>    | Maintain goal-driven structured lifestyles.        | Motivated by success and stability.                 | Prefer reliable products showing status.        |
| <b>Experiencers</b> | Enjoy social energetic lifestyle activities.       | Seek excitement and immediate emotional rewards.    | Buy trendy items and new experiences.           |
| <b>Believers</b>    | Follow traditional family-focused lifestyles.      | Hold strong beliefs and predictable preferences.    | Prefer familiar brands with trusted reputation. |
| <b>Strivers</b>     | Live ambition-focused lifestyle patterns.          | Seek approval and desire visible success.           | Purchase stylish items within budget limits.    |
| <b>Makers</b>       | Practice practical self-sufficient lifestyles.     | Value independence and prefer functional choices.   | Buy durable goods supporting daily tasks.       |
| <b>Survivors</b>    | Maintain cautious low-resource lifestyle routines. | Risk-averse with strong need for security.          | Buy basic products meeting essential needs.     |

*Table: VALS Segmentation Characteristics, Source: (11 Atar Design, 2025)*

Segmentation simply involves breaking the entire market into small, distinct groups of consumers who share needs, characteristics, or behaviours (Kampamba, 2015). Coca-Cola is not addressed to a single audience. It develops the various consumer groups within each market. The UK's health-conscious adults are one segment. These are consumers concerned about sugar and calories. They remain fond of cola but are risk-averse. There is an active selection of Diet Coke and Coca-Cola Zero Sugar. To them, zero sugar is responsible

consumption and control. The other segment of the UK is everyday routine drinkers. These are individuals who purchase Coca-Cola either on their commutes or for lunch. Lifestyle image does not matter as much as convenience and price. Another segment in the UK is the emotionally nostalgic consumers. They associate Coca-Cola and family meals and weekends. Coca-Cola is their comfort and their familiarity.

Segmentation in China is based on the social setting and shared moments (Martins et al., 2016). In big cities, there is a large young urban population. These customers are using brands as a lifestyle statement and identity. Coca-Cola can be seen in dating, meeting friends, and taking photos. Celebration and gifting consumers are another Chinese segment. Lunar New Year is blessed and zodiacal through bottles (Blumberg, 2025). Giving presents is a demonstration of affection and family. A daily refresh segment appreciates flavour, convenience, and price. In China, therefore, segmentation is based on occasion, relationship, and cultural ritual.

## **4.2 Targeting**

Targeting is the process of analysing the appeal of each segment and selecting one or more to join (Ningrum and Hasmarini, 2024). Coca-Cola selects priority targets in every country after defining the segments. Coca-Cola in the UK is evidently aimed at the adult, health-conscious cola consumer. The eating habits of these consumers might be to reduce sugar and not cola. Coke Zero Sugar and Diet Coke appeal to this category, which promises happiness through pleasure and guilt-free indulgence (Wooddell, 2023). This helps Coca-Cola retain volume amid high health pressure. Coca-Cola appeals to mainstream British buyers who are also value seekers. Therefore, targeting in the UK is aimed primarily to protect loyalty and is unlikely to make a purchase.

Coca-Cola markets in China are very direct to young urban consumers. This is a social, digital, expressive, and trend-sensitive group (Long, 2017). Coca-Cola addresses them through colour, humour, and emotional narration. Thematic and flavour differences and personalised wrapping are made for us. The drink becomes their identity in social life. Another type of audience that Coca-Cola is aiming at is family outings by multiple generations during a holiday. Coca-Cola is promoted as something one can carry to reunions. The brand characterises itself as a luxurious, loving, celebrity gift. In China, targeting helps foster a sense of belonging to the culture and an apparent emotional bond.

### 4.3 Positioning

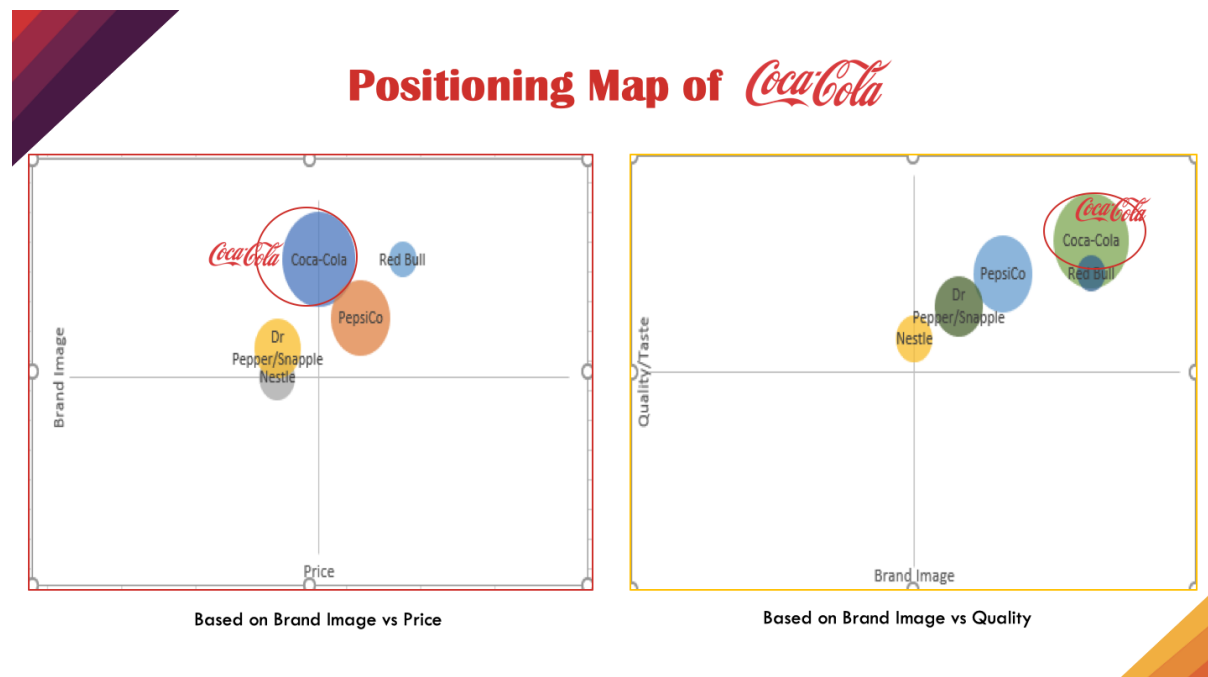


**Figure: Positioning map of Coca-Cola, Source: (Sajid, 2022)**

Positioning is the process of defining a product's clear uniqueness and desirability in the minds of target consumers (Darmawan, 2024). This includes developing a unique selling proposition and a message about the brand's value. Coca-Cola's desired perception is achieved through positioning. Coca-Cola positions itself as a classic that is responsible in the UK. It informs consumers that they can relish the Coca-Cola moment. There is also the option of zero sugar and remaining in control. The brand associates itself with common British recreational activities, such as football evenings, theatre trips, and chill weekends (Coca Cola Company, 2024). The tone is soothing, adult, and acceptable to others. It is a message of pleasure, although it is reasonable to take it in moderation. Coca-Cola transforms into a contemporary delight with responsibility, and not wanton sugar.

Coca-Cola presents itself as an object of mutual happiness and unity in China (Smartling, 2025). The brand voice is dramatic, joyous, and sociable. Coca-Cola is featured in videos about friendship, dating, college life, and nightlife. It also features in the lunar new year reunion narrations and gift offerings. The drink becomes a source of good fortune, warmth, and companionship. Bottles bring blessings, good wishes, and celebratory identity. Coca-Cola is a contender on nearly a cultural level. It is the beverage that people carry when they care.

## 4.4 Similarities and Differences in Segmentation

| Segmentation Aspect   | Similarities                                   | Differences (UK)                                   | Differences (China)                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Demographic</b>    | Both target broad age groups.                  | Focus on adults seeking low-sugar drinks.          | Focus on young digital-active urban consumers.             |
| <b>Psychographic</b>  | Both use lifestyle-based segmentation.         | Health-conscious and value-driven consumers.       | Social, expressive, and festival-oriented consumers.       |
| <b>Behavioural</b>    | Both offer options for frequent buyers.        | Preference for zero-sugar and value packs.         | Preference for seasonal flavours and gifting packs.        |
| <b>VALS Segments</b>  | Both markets include innovators and achievers. | Thinkers and believers prefer responsible choices. | Experiencers and strivers prefer expressive branding.      |
| <b>Occasion-Based</b> | Both include daily and leisure consumption.    | Linked to routine meals and daily convenience.     | Linked to gatherings, reunions, celebrations, and gifting. |

*Table: Similarities and Differences in Segmentation, Source: (Chen, 2023)*

## 5. Marketing Mix (7Ps) Comparison



*Figure: Marketing Mix (7Ps), Source: (Adobe Stock, 2025)*

### 5.1 Product

A product is what a company offers to meet customer needs (Tabelessy et al., 2024). Coke, the core of Coca-Cola, is sold globally. The product strategy, however, varies in the UK and China. Coca-Cola also emphasises its low and no-sugar products in the UK. Coke Zero Sugar and Diet Coke are intensively advertised as usual options. Such products respond to health concerns and the sugar tax impetus. The message is: Coca-Cola feeling, no sugar, and no calories. Classic Coca-Cola is still there, but it has more restrictions and criticism

(Moorhouse, 2025). Coca-Cola drives diversity, newness, and effectiveness in China. It offers limited-edition designs inspired by Lunar New Year moments. Bottles have zodiac signs and symbols, good fortune, and blessings of the family. They also have seasonal flavours and special taste experiments for the local palate. The Chinese strategy is as follows: Coca-Cola suits any event and any relationship (MarsHub, 2022). Thus, the UK has an interest in reassurance of its health, whereas China is interested in cultural exhilaration.

### **1. Product Branding Strategy in the UK**

Coca-Cola can use an umbrella brand strategy in Britain. It retains the master brand, Coca-Cola. There are also sub-brands Coca-Cola Zero Sugar or Diet Coke. This market plan would suit the UK health-oriented market scenario. Customers desire reduced sugar without having to lose brand recognition (Ogundijo and Tas, 2025). The master brand is a promise of reliability and added uniformity. Zero forms safeguard the brand in sugar laws. Shelf visibility between retailers is also a strategy in which this one assists. One of the opportunities is a good brand equity transfer. The other benefit is that there is an easier promotion between the product variants. One of the negative aspects is reputational risk due to sweet affiliations. The other weakness is the low levels of differentiation among competing colas.

### **2. Product Branding Strategy in China**

Coca-Cola employs glocalisation of product branding in China (Diez, 2025). The master brand will remain the same on all the packaging. Localised designs however are based on festivals and cultural indicators. The strategy is applicable in collectivist and party-oriented consumption behaviours. Gifting format and symbolic seasonal packing is important to the consumers. Observable social sharing as well as novelty is created with limited editions. Coca-Cola is relevant to unity and family events through branding. One of the benefits would be enhanced cultural relevance and involvement. The other opportunity is boost in sales during seasonal highs. One of the pitfalls is an increased cost of design and production. Cultural commodification has another drawback, the risk of backlash.

## 5.2 Price

Price is what the customers pay for the product (Anjani et al., 2018). Price is an aspect Coca-Cola uses to protect its market share and revenue. Price elasticity prevails in the UK due to the pressure of the cost of living. Customers are willing to have branded drinks, but in forms of value. Promotion and sales of multipacks and meal-deal bundles contribute to keeping perceptions of affordability. Supermarkets encourage family packs to be consumed and used during family gatherings. Nevertheless, Coca-Cola employs the premium prices on some variants as well. Special and zero-sugar lines may allow slightly higher prices. Coca-Cola also addresses the issue of sugar tax using product mix. The price structure in China is distributed across levels and areas. Lifestyle positioning can be costly for consumers, and urban consumers are more likely to pay higher prices (Nelson, 2024). Cold bottled teas that are sold in convenience stores can be sold at a high price. Meanwhile, Coca-Cola also retails cheaper SKUs to a large number. Low-end ones attract coverage in low-income and less urban settings. Therefore, the UK trade-off is between value and tax pressure. China finds a compromise between the aspirational high-end and the national mass market.

## 5.3 Place / Distribution

Place is the location where the product is made available (Komari et al., 2020). In both countries, Coca-Cola relies on an extremely powerful distribution network. The beverage is ubiquitous in physical retailing in the UK. Volume is promoted by supermarkets, fast food chains, petrol stations, and meal deals. Coca-Cola can also be seen in restaurants and other entertainment facilities. Distribution underscores offline, habitual, and everyday purchase situations in the nation. Distribution in China is diffuse but more digitally interwoven. The Coca-Cola image is everywhere on delivery apps and grocery websites. Coca-Cola can be added as a takeaway and group orders by consumers. Transport hubs and campuses are also reached through vending machines and mini coolers. Traditional retail is still important in smaller towns and neighbourhoods. China is an omnichannel distribution model, heavily supported by mobile orders (Riethmueller, 2024). The UK is everywhere, from retail outlets to the hotel industry. China occupies every single shelf, both in stores and on smartphone shopping apps.

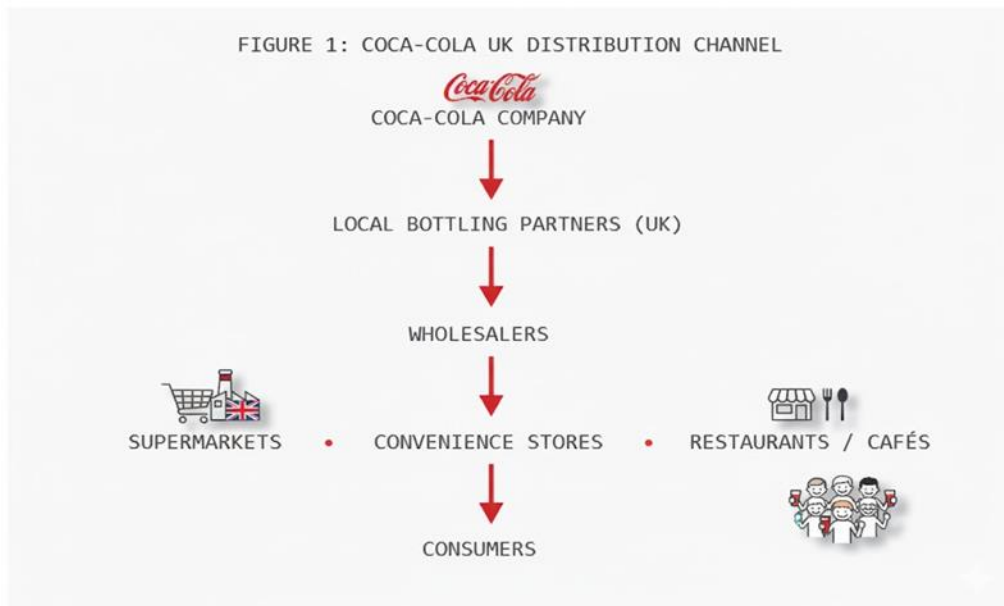


**Figure: Distribution Channel of Coca-Cola in the UK**



**Figure: Distribution Channel of Coca-Cola in China**

### Market Entry Method

## 1. Market Entry Method – United Kingdom

Coca-Cola joined the UK industry through franchising bottling agreements. Production was done locally to be distributed nationally by local bottlers. The franchise partners aided expansion within the retail channels. This approach minimised entry risks to the foreign

market (Alonso, 2024). Supplier bottlers checked that there is compliance with UK regulations. The system was flexible in operational decision-making. Coca-Cola controlled brand names by use of licensing conditions.

## **2. Market Entry Method - China**

Coca-Cola has ventured into China by using joint ventures. COFCO and Swire assisted in the national bottling activities. Joint ventures were used to ensure that the regulatory requirements were met (Mok, Dai and Yeung, 2022). Local alliances enhanced the availability of distribution channels. The tactic of cultural alignment enhanced the future embracement of the market. The firm was created by increasing manufacturing by investing in regional factories. Domestic contracts enhanced effective logistics and supply within the country.

## **5.4 Promotion**

The means by which communication and customer conviction occur is through promotion (Išoraitė, 2021). The promotional styles adopted by Coca-Cola in the UK and China are very different. The brand has a friendly and familiar flavour in the UK. This message states that one can drink Coca-Cola responsibly and with confidence. The use of health language in the UK has become common in communications. Coke Zero Sugar and Diet Coke are the two brands featured in the brand's campaigns. The concept is straightforward: identical to Coca-Cola, minus the sugar. This corresponds to social pressure concerning health and moderation. The UK does the same through national cultural moments. In Britain, Christmas campaigns are so essential to Coca-Cola (Matco, 2023).

In China, the tone is more positive and emotional. Coca-Cola emphasises friendship, love, and collective joy. It does not say be healthy, but be together. The brand is social and youthful, leveraging influencers and idols. It is shown in dating and hangout scenes. Especially in China, Lunar New Year campaigns are significant. Bottles bring curses and good sayings. The drink is used to portray the continuation of unification, love, and festive celebration.

## **5.5 People**

People refer to the human touchpoints that shape the brand experience (Xiong, 2025). These touchpoints in the UK primarily include service and retail-oriented. The fast food and restaurants serve Coca-Cola. It is distributed at coffee booths, in theatres, and stadium stands.

The availability of staff strengthens Coca-Cola as a regular soft drink. The perception is that this is routine, reliable, omnipresent. In the UK environment, field merchandisers are also relevant. They deal with chillers, refilled shelves, and front displays security. Sports and music team events assist in sponsorships. All this hedges against habit, routine, and national recognition of the brand.



***Figure: Number of employees, Source: (Coca Cola China, 2025), (Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, 2025)***

Promoters, livestream hosts, and local ambassadors are also classified as people in China. The influencers position Coca-Cola as a lifestyle and personality. Time and place salespersons, delivery drivers, campus representatives, and fair booth workers. The message they pass across is that Coca-Cola means fun and connection. The key to presenting the beverage is quite social and not very subtle. It does not just have to be purchased. It is something to give and demonstrate. In the UK, individuals express trustworthiness and a daily routine. Excitement, identity, and cultural belonging are the messages that are communicated in China (Cendrowski, 2014).

## **5.6 Process**

A process is a series of actions by which a product or service is conveyed (Kusdiana and Yulita, 2024). Process describes how the Coca-Cola experience actually happens for the consumer. In the UK, the process is mainly physical and immediate. People may walk into a supermarket, cinema, petrol station, or takeaway. See Coca-Cola, cold and visible, already on its normal path. They pick it up, pay quickly, and keep moving. It feels consistent,

predictable, and low effort in the UK. Availability is the promise. They never have to search hard for it. The buying flow is simple, familiar, and basically the same everywhere.

In China, the process is more connected to digital behaviour (Smartling, 2025). Ordering Coca-Cola through delivery platforms is completely normal. People add Coca-Cola to the food order on their phone. They receive the meal and the drink in a few minutes. This is supported by QR codes, scan-to-join experiences and loyalty mini-programs. The purchase process involves interaction and incentives. They are not merely being served with a drink. They are getting into a mini-branded experience on their phone. In the UK, therefore, access and convenience in physical space is the process. The convenience and interaction in the digital space are processes in China.

## 5.7 Physical Evidence



***Figure: Physical Evidence of Coca-Cola in the UK (self-made)***

The physical evidence refers to what the buyer can physically observe in the brand (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2015). In the UK, physical evidence appears consistent, traditional, and highly recognisable. The consumers encounter the Coca-Cola red branding on refrigerators, menus, and fountains. They view it on movie cups, football sponsorship boards, and chillers at meals. UK packaging tends to remain close to international standards. It does not affect the basic identity, which is seasonal changes. It is the sensation of ordinariness. Coca-Cola is a part of a normal routine.



***Figure: Physical Evidence of Coca-Cola in China (self-made)***

Physical evidence in China is different. The packaging varies due to cultural events and holidays. Animals, signs of good fortune, blessings, and kind words are transported by bottles. Special gift packs appear for Lunar New Year gatherings. These packs are arranged almost like respectful offerings to the family. Branded vending machines, pop-ups, and festival booths feel colourful and social. They send the message that Coca-Cola is part of the celebration. The drink becomes a visible piece of culture, not just a refreshment. So, in the UK, physical evidence supports reliability and heritage. In China, physical evidence supports celebration, identity, and emotional meaning.

## 5.8 Similarities and Differences According to Marketing Mix

| 7Ps Element              | Similarities                               | Differences (UK)                                        | Differences (China)                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Product</b>           | Core Coca-Cola remains available in both.  | Strong focus on zero-sugar variants.                    | Seasonal flavours and festival packaging dominate.       |
| <b>Price</b>             | Both use multi-tier pricing strategies.    | Price promotions and value packs important.             | Premium pricing accepted in urban markets.               |
| <b>Place</b>             | Both have broad distribution networks.     | Dominated by supermarkets and offline retail.           | Dominated by mobile platforms and delivery apps.         |
| <b>Promotion</b>         | Both use emotional messaging in campaigns. | Focus on responsibility and health moderation.          | Focus on unity, gifting, and cultural storytelling.      |
| <b>People</b>            | Both rely on retail and service workers.   | Emphasis on consistent retail experience.               | Influencers, hosts, and festival promoters important.    |
| <b>Process</b>           | Both aim for smooth, easy purchasing.      | Simple offline purchase flow for consumers.             | Digital interactions through QR codes and mini-programs. |
| <b>Physical Evidence</b> | Both maintain strong brand visibility.     | Traditional packaging with subtle seasonal adjustments. | Highly decorated packaging during festivals.             |

*Table: Similarities and Differences According to Marketing Mix, Source: (Becker, 2025)*

## 6. Performance Evaluation

### 6.1 UK Performance

In the UK, Coca-Cola is maintaining its position, but at a cost. The UK soft drink segment is still high and worth. The brand remains among the popular ones in the supermarkets, cinemas, and fast-food restaurants. Visibility and always being available in those channels contribute to the loyalty. Nevertheless, original full-sugar cola is being pressurised. Consumers in the UK have been bombarded with messages about sugar, calories, and the danger to health (Elliott-Green et al., 2016). A large number of customers are shifting to low- or no-sugar beverages. Coca-Cola is trying to make this shift rather than oppose it. Coke Zero Sugar and Diet Coke have been pressured as the regular options. Coke Zero Sugar is expanding at a rapid pace in Europe and other parts. It has been recording more than 10 percent volume increases in the world market in the last quarter (Gelski, 2025). This provides Coca-Cola with a solution to hold on to its already existing drinkers. Consumers can switch

to a different Coca-Cola, but cannot abandon Coca-Cola. Meanwhile, consumers in the UK are under pressure due to rising costs of living. Numerous households are spending more on groceries. Coca-Cola protects its market through multipacks, packaged prices, and meals. This inhibits the risk of low-cost generic colas. Thus, the UK performance appears rather defensive yet stable. It is planned to keep the volume, secure loyalty, and be flexible in messaging. To mitigate the decline risk of sugared cola, the brand will shift product demand toward the zero-sugar cola range and value-based forms (Tabassum, 2025).

## **6.2 China Performance**

Coca-Cola's performance in China is more expansionary than defensive. The Chinese cities have a high level of distribution. The brand is found in convenience stores, delivery applications, vending machines, and restaurants. This outlet enhances recurring purchases in daily events. Young city consumers hold a similar view and take Coca-Cola as their lifestyle brand. The beverage is placed as social, expressive, and emotionally significant. The positioning helps counter stiff competition in local drinks. Home tea beverages and flavoured drinks are strong competitors. Coca-Cola responds to that with localisation, package seasonality, and festival narration. The brand is selling not only refreshment. It is selling cultural relatability and unity in reunions. China is adding significant financial growth to the system. Swire Coca-Cola, which was an arranging bottling company in Mainland China, reported a rise in profits and revenue, with Mainland China reporting an increase of about 8% in the first half of 2025 (swirepacific.com, 2025). This implies that China continues to provide profitable demand despite the reduced macro signals. Coca-Cola is hence not merely defending its ancient territory in China. It continues to create emotional attachment in the young and urban consumer on a long-term basis.

## **6.3 Social Media Engagement**

The UK audience is increasing with the own social networks of Coca-Cola. The reach and campaign stories are always supported by Instagram followers. Platform-native activations are essential in the interaction in China. It was a Weibo partnership that brought massive impressions within a short time of time in the country (VEROT, 2021). It has been strongly interacting with what Gen Z resonated with. These indicators are a successful digital localisation among Chinese viewers.

## **6.4 Customer Reviews**

On average customer reconsiderations display different results; average to positive across the entire markets. Diverse preferences of the tastes are essential in UK Tesco ratings (Pereira, 2023). There are reviewers who like value and taste others who do not like sweetness. Report Positivity is very high in China (Long, 2017). The volumes of reviews indicate high levels of repeat purchases. Feedback of e-commerce underpins satisfaction on the quality of core products.

## **7. Ethical and CSR Considerations**

### **7.1 Health & Responsible Marketing**

Coca-Cola experiences ethical conflict in the UK health situation. In the UK, the general discussion associates obesity with the consumption of sweetened beverages. The regulators and health groups are requiring reduced sugar content and better messaging of responsibility (Dhuria et al., 2025). Coca-Cola is now aggressively marketing Coke Zero Sugar and Diet Coke. The message insinuates personal control, balance, and better choices among adult people. This minimises harm framing, although it still makes people consume cola. Critics contend that this makes constant cola use justifiable in a new formula. Responsibility messaging is also a retention strategy and not a sacrifice. Coca-Cola usually moves towards young people, image-conscious, and social consumers in China. Such a strategy begs the question of how to influence the youth's habits by means of lifestyle aspiration.

### **7.2 Sustainability / Environment**

Coca-Cola captures the objective of recycling, redesigning the packaging, and reducing plastic in a public manner. There are high percentages of recycled plastic in bottles in certain markets. Bottles are occasionally fitted with caps to promote good recycling. The firm also emphasises water reporting and water stewardship. These assertions are meant to show the world how Coca-Cola can be seen as being environmentally friendly. Nevertheless, Coca-Cola is still considered a significant polluter of plastic by critics. Activists believe that recycling places the responsibility on individual consumers. According to them, the level of packaging is still very high in real terms. The moral dilemma is thus between sincerity and

the guard of brand image. The fact that environmental responsibility is discussed in high tones, yet the make-or-buy issues are still discussed.

### **7.3 Cultural Sensitivity / Localisation Ethics**

Coca-Cola localises its messages both in China and the UK. In the UK, the tune is based on tradition, nostalgia, and cosy daily life. It does not attempt to glorify false pleasure, leaning towards health. That demonstrates a cultural sensitivity to sugar and the national well-being controversy. In China, Coca-Cola adopts reunion, respect, harmony, and Lunar New Year emblems (Ananchik, 2024). Bottles are blessed, an hieratic, emotionally celebratory language. This may be respectful, culturally endowed, and locally appreciative. However, some viewers may doubt the emotional appeal of national holidays. Is Coca-Cola glorifying culture, or making money on profound cultural connections? Comprehensively, the brand, respect, and profit are balanced, but there remains a continuous ethical conflict.

## **8. Recommendations**

### **8.1 Recommendations for the UK**

The UK market of Coca-Cola faces intense health pressure. The control on sugar and advertisement continues to narrow every year. As a result, Coca-Cola must focus on its no- and low-sugar lines. The new normal experience of Coca-Cola should be Coke Zero Sugar. It is a framing that safeguards obedience and conformity to health. The brand is also to broaden flavour innovation in the zero-sugar format. The new flavours will prevent customers from shifting to flavoured water or energy drinks. That secures market share without reliance on conventional full-sugar colas.

Coca-Cola needs to promote health responsibility, emphasising truth and balance. Messaging should be supportive and not defensive and not performative. This has the ability to reduce the accusations of manipulation or unhealthy brands. Sustainability initiatives to be observed in the company should also be visible. The improvements in the packaging should be observed both on-pack and in-store. This takes accountability near the purchasing decision (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2025). It is also necessary that Coca-Cola protects its low cost through retail partnerships. Multipacks and meal deals should be consistent and available. Lastly, Coca-Cola needs to protect the brand and remain contemporary and responsible.

## 8.2 Recommendations for China

Coca-Cola China is in a rapidly evolving market. Consumption is being fueled by social connection and celebration rather than thirst. As a result, Coca-Cola ought to localise its flavours and packaging to better align with local culture. Special issues with festivals and signs of the zodiac need to be maintained. Nonetheless, they should not engage in the typical superficial symbolism devoid of sincerity. Culturally based storytelling ought to possess truthfulness, family respect, and nurturing. This safeguards the credibility and does not make one commercially opportunistic. Coca-Cola should also use shared moments to position youth. The beverage ought to be featured in friendship, dating, and self-expression scenes. This creates a strong connection between young urban consumers and the brand.

China's purchasing process is highly digital and interactive. Mobile loyalty programmes and QR codes should be enhanced by Coca-Cola (Hossain et al., 2018). Rewards should be worth something, not quite cheesy or cheap. These may contain social badges or season access. Sustainability is another aspect that the brand should better explain. Refill system, recovery, and recycling should be demonstrated. This puts Coca-Cola in a position of increased environmental expectations. On the whole, Coca-Cola in China ought to be an expanding, proven responsibility, but emotion-oriented organisation.

## 9. Conclusion

Coca-Cola is not a single strategy applied everywhere. The UK requires health responsibility, value protection, and regulatory congruence. China is seeking cultural association, social sentiment, and online assimilation. Zero-sugar normalisation is used in the UK, where Coca-Cola defends its loyalty. It also safeguards domestic entry with bundles and multipacks. The brand voice in the same should be mature and responsible. Coca-Cola expands in China based on joint moments and identity during festivals. It places itself within the customs of friendship, reunion, and gift-giving. Online interactions make every purchase a relationship-building opportunity and a driver of customer loyalty. The UK has been performing well, hence the stability, and China has been performing well, hence the expansion. That is mostly defence and compliance work in the UK. China remains an opportunity; however, it is also fast and competitive. Cultural fit, ethical credibility, and trust are the result of future success. Coca-Cola will have to continue demonstrating its health-consciousness and being environmentally responsible. The likelihood of its international marketing will depend on that evidence.



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