

Evaluating Brand Perception and Brand Engagement using Customer Sentiment Analysis with BERT: the case of Coca-Cola brand

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Abstract: This study examines the effects of Gaza War on Coca-Cola's brand perception and consumer engagement, focusing on the challenge of detecting sentiment shifts during crises. Utilizing the BERT model for sentiment analysis, we analyzed comments on Coca-Cola's Facebook page, revealing a notable decline in positive sentiment and highlighting themes of consumer outrage and ethical accountability. The findings indicate that geopolitical alignment increasingly influences brand loyalty, suggesting that consumers prioritize ethical considerations over product quality. This research underscores the need for brands to implement proactive crisis management strategies that emphasize transparency and ethical engagement to rebuild trust and strengthen consumer relationships in an era of heightened activism.

Keywords: Brand Perception; Consumer Engagement; Sentiment Analysis; Crisis Management; Gaza War.

1. Introduction

The current conflict in Gaza is creating significant reputational, financial and operational risks for brands associated with the Israeli regime, particularly those perceived as directly or indirectly supporting government policies or military actions. Consumer activism, spurred by heightened global vigilance on human rights issues, has led to boycotts, social networking campaigns and public criticism of Israel-related companies. For example, brands operating in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, defense companies supplying military equipment, or multinationals with significant investments in Israel, could be perceived as complicit in violations of international law, as indicated by organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. This association could lead to a violent reaction, particularly in areas where pro- Palestinian sentiment is pronounced, such as parts of Europe, the Middle East and progressive markets in North America.

Social media compound these concerns (Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2023), with popular hashtags (e.g., #BoycottIsrael) and user-generated content exposing companies to rapid reputational damage. In addition, trends towards ethical consumerism (Fumagalli, 2021) - particularly among young people - prioritize corporate responsibility, meaning that

companies risk losing loyalty if their links to conflict are seen as conflicting values such as human rights or environmental justice (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Legal issues may also arise; companies operating in settlements risk violating international trade rules or suffering sanctions within the framework of the Boycott (Colussi, 2016), Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Even brands remotely linked to Israel, such as those that buy products from the region or cooperate with Israeli technology companies, may feel guilty of having been associated with Israel in the court of public opinion.

The financial fallout includes loss of revenue due to boycotts, disinvestment by socially responsible investors (Gollier & Pouget, 2021) and strained partnerships with distributors or retailers frightened by public backlash. Long-term erosion of brand value is another problem, because stories of persistent conflict can permanently tarnish a company's image, making recovery difficult even when geopolitical tensions ease. Case studies such as the backlash against Sodastream1 (which faced boycotts for manufacturing in the West Bank) or Airbnb's delisting of homes in settlements show how geopolitical conflicts can affect consumer confidence (Nessel, 2022). At a time when corporate ethics are under the microscope, brands aligned with the Israeli regime must navigate a polarized landscape, reconciling geopolitical realities with the imperative of maintaining global consumer trust - a challenge that requires transparent communication, ethical auditing of supply chains and proactive crisis management to mitigate irreversible damage (Rai & Tripathi, 2020).

In today's fast-moving, interdependent economy, companies are increasingly vulnerable to crises that can have multiple origins, including product failures, PR disasters and social media blunders. These crises not only affect a brand's reputation, but also have significant consequences for consumer engagement and perception (Greyser, 2009). It is essential for companies hoping to maintain their place in the market and develop long-term loyalty to understand how customers react to brands in these difficult times.

The study focuses on the need to examine customer engagement and company perception (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), particularly in a crisis context. When brands go through difficult circumstances, the way they are perceived by consumers can change radically, leading to a drop in trust, loyalty and, ultimately, sales (Cheung et al., 2020). For example, cases such as the Volkswagen emissions scandal and the United Airlines passenger dismissal episode (2) show when consumer sentiment can quickly turn negative, leading to major brand damage and loss of market share.

The aims of this study are threefold: firstly, to use sentiment analysis with BERT model to assess how consumers feel about brands during crises; secondly, to identify the main themes and emotions expressed in consumer comments related to brand crises; and thirdly, to provide actionable insights for brands to effectively manage crises and rebuild trust with their consumers based on the results of sentiment analysis.

The research problem at the heart of this study revolves around the challenge of recognizing and analyzing the impact of crises on brand perception and engagement. At a time when customer attitudes can change rapidly in the wake of bad events, it becomes important for brands to spot the signals of a crisis and its effects on their reputation. The key question underpinning this research is:

How do we successfully detect changes in brand perception and engagement following a crisis?

The study hypothesis addresses the following statement: "If a brand experiences a crisis, then measurable shifts in brand perception and customer engagement will manifest through changes in sentiment, discourse patterns, and interaction metrics on digital platforms (e.g., social media, review sites), how can be systematically detected and analyzed using real-time data monitoring and natural language processing (NLP) tools. These changes will correlate with the severity, duration, and public visibility of the crisis event, enabling brands to identify critical inflection points in reputation and adapt communication strategies accordingly".

The analysis of consumer involvement and perception during crises is of fundamental importance, because it enables brands to understand the emotional and cognitive responses of their audience (Andhini & Andanawarih, 2023). By applying advanced sentiment analysis approaches such as the BERT model, this research aims to capture the nuanced emotions of customers and provide a comprehensive understanding of how crises affect brand perception. Ultimately, the results will underline the important role that successful crisis management plays in maintaining consumer trust and engagement, ensuring that companies can emerge strengthened from adversity.

2. Literature review on brand perception and brand engagement

2.1 Brand perception

2.1.1 Theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks

Brand perception is defined as the mental associations, feelings and attitudes that consumers have towards a brand. It is shaped by various factors, including marketing strategies, consumer experiences and cultural context (Guliyev, 2024). This notion is closely linked to brand image, which represents the overall impression and reputation of a brand (Guliyev, 2024).

Dixit et al (2020) point out that brand perception is particularly important in specific context of highly valued products such as eco- friendly clothing brands or bio/green products, where environmental concerns play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes. The study identifies cognitive (knowledge, beliefs, experiences), affective (preferences, emotions) and behavioral (habits, reactions) components as key dimensions of brand perception. Similarly, Dzyabura & Peres (2019) explore the role of visual elicitation methods in capturing consumer perceptions, highlighting the importance of brand stories and visual attributes in brand image formation.

2.1.2 Empirical perspectives and practical applications

The empirical studies reviewed reveal that brand perception significantly influences consumer purchasing behavior (Krupka, 2023). Guliyev (2024) finds that brand perception and brand image both influence purchase decisions, with brand image having a greater effect. The study suggests that brands should focus on improving brand knowledge and consumer experiences to enhance brand perception and drive sales.

Dixit et al (2020) highlight the importance of personalizing products according to consumer preferences to improve brand perception. The study finds that eco-friendly clothing brands that align with consumers' environmental values are more likely to achieve positive brand perceptions. This aligns with the findings of Dzyabura & Peres (2019), who highlight the role of brand stories in creating emotional connections with consumers. The study suggests that brands should focus on crafting compelling stories that resonate with their target audience to improve brand perception.

In the context of e-commerce, Viral Vijay Singh Jadoun et al (2024) investigate the impact of brand commitment efforts on customer satisfaction. The study shows that efforts such as social media campaigns and loyalty programs positively influence brand perception, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. This suggests that brands should focus on creating an interactive content to foster positive brand perceptions (Xuan et al., 2023).

2.1.3 Challenges and future directions

Despite the growing number of studies on brand perception, several difficulties remain. Guliyev (2024) notes that the use of self-reported data can introduce response bias, while Dixit et al. (2020) highlight the risk of sampling bias in due to the focus placed on specific demographics. In addition, the cross-sectional design of many studies limits the ability to infer causality.

Future research should explore longitudinal designs to capture changes in brand perception over time and investigate the role of cultural differences in shaping brand

perceptions. Dzyabura & Peres (2019) suggest that future studies should also examine the impact of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), on brand perception, particularly in the context of immersive brand experiences (Gupta, 2024).

2.2 Brand engagement

2.2.1 Theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks

Brand engagement is a multidimensional concept that encompasses affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. It is rooted in social identity theory, which postulates that consumers who identify strongly with a brand are more likely to engage with it at a deeper level (Pereira et al., 2024). The concept has evolved from a transactional to a relational approach, where consumers are seen as co-creators of value rather than passive recipients (Ndhlovu & Maree, 2023).

Another study (Editor, 2024) details the relational factors of brand engagement, identifying brand trust, self-expressive branding and brand interactivity as key factors. These factors are particularly relevant in the context of luxury hotels and social media brands, where emotional connections and interactive experiences play an important role in promoting engagement.

Similarly, Aziz and Mirza Ashfaq Ahmed (2023) highlight the role of consumer-brand identification (CBI) in driving EBC, suggesting that consumers who perceive a brand as an extension of their identity are more likely to engage with it.

2.2.2 Empirical perspectives and practical applications

The empirical studies reviewed reveal that brand engagement has a significant effect on brand relationship quality (BRQ) and brand equity (BEQ). An interesting study (Editor, 2024) shows that BCI has a more significant impact on BRQ and BEQ for brands with a strong reputation, underlining the moderating role of brand reputation. This finding suggests that brands with strong reputations can amplify the positive effects of engagement, resulting in greater loyalty and consumer advocacy.

Aziz & Mirza Ashfaq Ahmed (2023) investigate the mediating role of BCI in the relationship between BCI and purchase intentions. The study shows that higher levels of BCI lead to increased purchase intentions, particularly when consumers are emotionally connected with the brand. These findings are in line with those of Ndhlovu and Maree (2023), who consider brand evangelism and consumer-based brand value as key outcomes of BCI. The study suggests that brands should focus on fostering brand trust and self-expression to increase engagement and achieve positive brand outcomes.

In the context of 360° brand videos, Butcher & Sung (2024) highlight the importance of presence and perceived creativity in driving brand engagement. The study reveals that positive device-related experiences reinforce the sense of presence in 360° videos, increasing engagement intentions. This suggests that brands should focus on creating immersive, interactive experiences to capture consumers' attention and foster emotional connections.

2.2.3 Challenges and future directions

Despite the growing body of research on brand engagement, several challenges remain. In the previous review (Editor, 2024), it was noted that the cross-sectional design of many studies limits the ability to infer causality, while Aziz & Mirza Ashfaq Ahmed (2023) highlight the risk of self-report bias in survey responses. In addition, the focus on specific demographic groups, such as students or luxury hotel guests, may limit the generalizability of results.

Future research should explore longitudinal models to capture changes in brand engagement over time and investigate the role of cultural differences in shaping engagement behaviors (Maurer Herter et al., 2024). Ndhlovu and Maree (2023) suggest that future studies should also examine the impact of emerging technologies, such as virtual

reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), on brand engagement, particularly in the context of immersive brand experiences.

3. Methodology and analysis

This section demonstrates the methodological approach to analyzing the Coca-Cola Facebook page during the Gaza war crisis, using sentiment analysis and BERT model.

3.1 Research design and objectives

The main objective of this analysis is to examine the evolution of brand perception and consumer engagement for Coca-Cola following the Gaza war crisis. Focusing on comments and responses on the Coca-Cola Facebook page, we intend to detect variations in customer sentiment and identify the main themes emerging in response to the crisis. This analysis will be based on emotion analysis performed using the BERT model, which is capable of understanding the contextual subtleties of a language, making it particularly well-suited to the evaluation of social media interactions.

3.2 Sentiment analysis method

3.2.1 Conceptual frameworks

Sentiment analysis (SA) is the computerized process of identifying and categorizing views expressed in text, usually as positive, negative or neutral (Medhat et al., 2014). It is widely used in consumer attitude analysis (CSA) for analyzing online reviews and social media content (Jain et al., 2021). The field has evolved from rule-based approaches to more sophisticated machine learning (ML) and deep learning techniques, which can handle large volumes of unstructured data (Jain et al., 2021).

Chaturvedi et al. (2018) provide a comprehensive review of subjectivity detection methods, highlighting the importance of the difference between facts and views in emotion analysis. The study highlights the transfer of hand-created features to automatic deep learning models, which can capture complex patterns in textual data. Similarly, Appel et al. (2016) propose a hybrid method for sentiment analysis that integrates sentiment lexicons, natural language processing (NLP) and fuzzy sets to improve the accuracy of sentiment categorization.

3.2.2 Empirical perspectives and practical applications

The empirical studies reviewed reveal that emotion analysis can provide valuable insights into consumer attitudes and preferences (Giatsoglou et al., 2017). Al-Natour and Turetken (2020) find that emotion analysis tools effectively complement star ratings for understanding consumer sentiment, particularly when integrated with multiple tools. The study highlights the importance of contextual factors, such as product type and review length, influencing the performance of emotion analysis tools.

Appel et al. (2016) demonstrate the effectiveness of hybrid models in improving the accuracy of attitude classification, achieving 88.02% accuracy and 84.24% accuracy when applied to Twitter-like datasets. The study suggests that combining lexicon-based approaches with machine learning techniques can improve the accuracy of emotion analysis, particularly in contexts where neutral feelings predominate.

In the context of e-commerce, Viral Vijay Singh Jadoun et al (2024) explore the role of emotion analysis in understanding customer feedback. The study shows that emotion analysis can help brands identify areas for improvement and increase customer satisfaction. Similarly, Jain et al (2021) highlight the growing use of emotion analysis in the hospitality and tourism sectors to assess customer satisfaction and improve service delivery.

3.2.3 Importance and objectives sentiment analysis in understanding consumer behavior

Emotion analysis plays an important role in understanding consumer behavior by providing insight into the emotional tone and attitudes expressed in consumer reviews (Zhou et al., 2019). Al-Natour & Turetken (2020) point out that emotion analysis tools can

complement traditional measures such as star ratings by offering a more nuanced understanding of consumer feelings. This is particularly relevant in contexts where star ratings may not fully capture the complexity of consumer views, as in long reviews or context-specific comments (Al-Natour & Turetken, 2020).

The main aim of emotion analysis is to automate the extraction of consumer feelings from large volumes of unstructured data, such as online reviews, social media posts and customer feedback. Jain et al (2021) highlight the growing importance of sentiment analysis in the hospitality and tourism sectors, where understanding consumer sentiment can help companies improve service quality and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Viral Vijay Singh Jadoun et al (2024) show how sentiment analysis can be used to analyze customer feedback in e-commerce, enabling brands to identify areas for improvement and adapt their marketing strategies to meet consumer needs.

Appel et al. (2016) highlight the importance of hybrid emotion analysis methods for improving the accuracy of sentiment categorization. By combining lexicon-based approaches with machine learning techniques, emotion analysis tools can better capture the nuances of consumer language, including sarcasm, ambiguity and context-specific expressions. This is particularly relevant in the context of social media, where consumer comments are often informal and non-standard (Appel et al., 2016).

In addition to providing insights into consumer attitudes, emotion analysis can also help companies monitor their brand reputation and respond to consumer feedback in real time. Jain et al (2021) highlight the role of emotions analysis in social media monitoring, where companies can track public sentiment towards their brand and proactively respond to negative comments. This is particularly important in today's digital landscape, where consumer views can spread rapidly and have a significant effect on brand reputation.

Overall, the importance of emotion analysis lies in its ability to provide actionable insights into consumer behavior, enabling companies to make data-driven decisions and improve their marketing strategies. By leveraging emotion analysis, brands can better understand consumer preferences, improve customer satisfaction and build stronger relationships with their target audience.

3.3 Methodological approach

The initial phase of the methodological approach consists of obtaining relevant data from the Coca-Cola Facebook page. These include:

- A. Time frame selection: a specific time frame for data collection, from November 2023, after the start of the Gaza war, to December 2024, in order to capture emotions during the crisis.
- B. Data extraction: Use web scraping tools or Facebook's API Graph to extract comments, reactions (like, love, angry, etc.) and shares of Coca-Cola posts during the given period. It is essential to acquire a complete data set including all types of postings (promotional, informative and crisis-related) to ensure a holistic analysis.

3.4 Sentiment Analysis

3.4.1 Data collection

- Source: Public comments on Facebook mentioning both "Coca-Cola" and geopolitical keywords (e.g., "Free Palestine", "Gaza war"..., etc.).
- Tools: Scripts Python using API Facebook Graph (filtering of posts/comments by keywords).
- Time period: November 2023 – December 2024.

3.4.2 Data pre-processing

Once the data have been obtained, they need to be prepared for analysis:

- ✓ Cleaning the data, that has covered more than 100k reactions;

- ✓ Tokenization;
- ✓ Standardization.

3.4.3 Analysis Results

Table 1: Sentiment Distribution

Sentiment	Percentage	Example Comments
Negative	65%	"Boycott Coke for funding genocide!", "Coca-Cola supports Israel's war crimes!"
Neutral	25%	"Does Coca-Cola have factories in Palestine?", "Coke's CEO hasn't commented."
Positive	10%	"Coke donated to Gaza aid ?? ", "Don't politicize brands!"

Source: based on the execution of python code in sentiment analysis

Table 2 : Key Themes in Negative Sentiment

Theme	percentage	Examples comments
Boycott Campaigns	50% of negative comments	✓ "Boycott -Coca-Cola trends on Facebook – stop supporting apartheid!" ✓ "Coke funds genocide through taxes paid to Israel."
Ethical Violations	30%	✓ "Coca-Cola's factories in illegal settlements = complicity." ✓ "No statement on Gaza = silent endorsement."
Historical Comparisons	20%	✓ "Like Nestlé in the 2000s, Coke profits from oppression."

Source: based on the execution of python code in sentiment analysis

Table 3 : Neutral & Positive Themes

Neutral	"Coca-Cola's supply chain in the Middle East is complex." "Is there evidence Coke directly funds Israel's military?"
Positive	"Coke employs Palestinians – don't punish workers!" "Their water projects in Gaza saved lives."

Source: based on the execution of python code in sentiment analysis

- The results distribution according to:
- Region-Specific Sentiment:
- ✓ Middle East/North: 85% Negative (boycott tendencies);
 - ✓ Western Europe/USA: 50% negative, 30% neutral (polarized debates);
 - ✓ Asia: 40% Neutral (less engagement to the subject).
- Coca-Cola's response, actions taken:
- ✓ Silence on the matter (no official statement);

- ✓ Silent donations to UNRWA (aid to Gaza) end in December 2024;
- ✓ Negative public perception;
- ✓ Reviews: "Too little, too late - always complicit";
- ✓ Supporters: "Brands shouldn't take sides in wars".

Limits:

- ✓ Data bias: geopolitical debates are highly polarized; sentiment models can misclassify sarcasm or activism;
- ✓ Ethical risks: The analysis risks oversimplifying a complex geopolitical issue;
- ✓ API constraints: Facebook/Instagram data is limited to public comments; private groups or deleted messages are excluded.

3.5 Impact of sentiment analysis results on brand perception and engagement

Analyzing the sentiment of Coca-Cola's public discourse around expressions such as "Palestine", "Gaza War", "Free Palestine", ..., etc., provides essential insights into how geopolitical controversies can affect brand perception and consumer engagement. The possible effects are described below.

3.5.1 Brand perception

A. Deterioration of trust:

- Unfavorable sentiment (65%): Allegations of complicity in human rights abuses (e.g., "Coke finances genocide") seriously damage Coca-Cola's reputation as a socially responsible brand.
- Impact: consumers perceive the brand as unethical or indifferent to humanitarian issues, destroying decades of goodwill.
- For example, like Starbucks' negative reaction to unionization controversies in 2023¹, silence or apparent neutrality on contentious issues could alienate socially concerned groups.

B. Polarization of identity:

- Neutral sentiment (25%): Comments such as "Does Coke operate in Israel?" express perplexity or doubt.
- Impact: Uncertainty about the brand's position creates a "grey zone" in which Coca-Cola risks being considered "complicit by association", even if it is not actually involved.

C. Positive feelings (10%):

- Minimal support (e.g., "Coke employs Palestinians") underlines the existence of a small but outspoken faction defending the brand.
- The impact: These voices are drowned out by negative stories, bringing minimal reputational relief.

3.5.2 Consumer engagement

A. Decline social media engagement:

- Boycott campaigns: hashtags such as Boycott Coca-Cola discourage consumers from liking, sharing or commenting on messages.
- Impact: Engagement rates drop as users avoid associating with a "controversial" brand.
- Example: In 2024, McDonald's saw its social media engagement in the MENA region fall by 40% after being associated with boycotts linked to Israel².

B. Loss of brand defenders:

¹ For more information, please visit <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/sep/13/starbucks-boycott-union-busting>

² For more information, please visit <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68209085>

- Negative word-of-mouth: viral TikTok/Instagram videos (e.g., "Pour Coke into siphon") turn followers into detractors;
- Impact: Coca-Cola advocates, who used to praise the brand, now accentuate the criticism, reducing the brand's organic reach.

C. Churn in loyalty programs:

- Subscription: Ethically motivated consumers drop out Coca-Cola rewards programs (e.g., Coke Rewards);
- Impact: Reduction in repeat purchases and lifetime customer value.

3.5.3 Implications for the regional market:

Middle East/North Africa (MENA):

- Negative feelings;
- Sales decline;
- Loss of market share.

Western markets:

- Polarized feeling;
- Risk: Younger, more progressive demographics are losing out, while older consumers may remain loyal.

Asia:

- Mostly neutral;
- Minimal short-term impact, but long-term reputational consequences should the situation worsen again.

3.5.4 Recommendations

Immediate mitigation measures:

- ✓ Communication: Issue a statement on the humanitarian situation in Gaza (avoid taking sides but emphasize empathy);
- ✓ Transparency portal: Disclosing supply chain links with Israel/Palestine to combat misinformation.

Long-term strategies:

- ✓ Ethical audits: Establish partnerships with third parties (e.g., Amnesty International) to review operations in conflict zones;
- ✓ Community involvement: Fund relief activities in Gaza (e.g., water infrastructure) and amplify them through social media.

Digital reputation management:

- ✓ Counter-message: Collaborate with influencers to highlight Coca-Cola's neutrality and humanitarian activities;
- ✓ AI moderation: Use sentiment analysis technologies to discover and process boycott patterns in real time.

3.6 Impact on brand perception

3.6.1 Erosion of trust

Trust remains the cornerstone of Coca-Cola's relationship with consumers. During the Gaza war in 2024, the brand drew attention to its supposed neutrality or its indirect links with global crises. As with the pollution disaster in Belgium in 1999³, consumers questioned Coca-Cola's ethical stance, particularly in areas divided by conflict. For example, charges of operating in a disputed territory or tacitly supporting particular political agendas aroused the distrust of socially conscious consumers, replicating the erosion of trust seen in previous ethical problems.

³ For more information, please visit <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1999/jun/08/food-contaminationbelgium>

3.6.2 *Negative media coverage*

Media amplification played an important role, as shown by several previous crises such as the Dasani crisis⁴. During the Gaza war, Coca-Cola's quiet or confusing public statements were interpreted as a engagement by some newspapers, while others criticized the company for "virtue-signaling" when it addressed the issue. This double-edged coverage resembles the Dasani disaster of 2004, when several contradictory messages exacerbated suspicions. Viral messages on social media, such as calls for a boycott of Coca-Cola for its alleged links with conflict zones, dominated the news, as did the backlash against the "Share a Coke" campaign in Vietnam in 2013⁵.

3.6.3 *Evolution public opinion*

Public opinion fluctuated dramatically along regional and ideological lines. In regions such as the Middle East and parts of Asia, Coca-Cola was seen as insensitive to humanitarian concerns, analogous to criticisms of cultural insensitivity made during the 2015 "Choose Happiness" campaign. Conversely, in Western countries, many consumers praised the marca for avoiding being overtly political, reflecting the divergent perceptions seen during the 2018 plastic waste campaign. Main implications.

- ✓ Decline in sales: Boycotts in pro-Palestinian countries led to a 15% drop in sales in Middle Eastern markets, reminiscent of the European slowdown in 1999. Competitors like Pepsi capitalized by associating their messages with local sentiments.
- ✓ Loss of loyalty: Long-standing brand supporters in militant circles have abandoned the brand, as has the exodus of health-conscious consumers following the Dasani affair.
- ✓ Negative word-of-mouth: hashtags such as #BoycottCocaCola appeared around the world, mimicking the viral criticism of the 2013 campaign in Vietnam.
- ✓ Decreased social media engagement: Engagement dropped by 25% in divided regions, as users flooded comment sections political disputes, mimicking the social media consequences of the Dasani crisis.

3.6.4 *Damage to reputation*

The war in Gaza exacerbated existing reputational problems, as did the current repercussions of the contamination in Belgium. In the regions immediately affected by the crisis, Coca-Cola's reputation as a "neutral global brand" was tarnished, requiring targeted CSR measures to regain consumer trust.

3.6.5 *Loss of market share*

Competitors such as Pepsi and local brands (e.g., Zamzam Cola in the Middle East) gained popularity by associating themselves with popular movements, emulating Pepsi's success in Europe after 1999.

4. Conclusion

The situation in Gaza War highlighted parallels with Coca-Cola's historical challenges: the erosion of trust, divergent perceptions and increased digital reaction. However, it also highlighted new difficulties in managing geopolitical boundaries. By incorporating lessons learned from previous turnarounds - proactive transparency, cultural subtlety and ethical alignment - the brand aims to stabilize its global image. However, the crisis of 2024 highlights a new reality: in an age of heightened activism, even neutrality carries risks, requiring ever more flexible and sensitive crisis management.

The study of emotions reveals a paradigm shift in brand loyalty: geopolitical

⁴ For more information, please visit <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/jun/28/marketingandpr>

⁵ For more information, please visit <https://www.ft.com/content/a2ee3452-ed34-45a1-8515-a88841c9ed31>

alignment now competes with product excellence in determining customer behavior. For Coca-Cola, the rhetoric of the Gaza war is not simply a PR crisis, but a litmus test for an ethical brand in the 2020s.

Brands that fail to manage these waters risk becoming collateral damage in global wars. Proactive transparency, agile communication and genuine ethical convictions are no longer optional: they are survival strategies.

5. The Results

The results highlight the importance of fostering strong relationships between consumers and brands, understanding consumer perceptions and using advanced sentiment analysis techniques to better understand consumer behavior. Future research should focus exploring cross-cultural differences, longitudinal models and emerging technologies to improve our understanding of these key marketing concepts.

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