
Final Report

London 2012 Legacy Transfer Report: Recycling Communications



London 2012 commercial partner case study: Coca-Cola's sustainability messaging and communications

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Written by: BioRegional



Front cover photography: Social media campaign photograph taken by Coca-Cola during the Olympics Torch Relay. It shows spectators sporting the recycling tattoos dispensed as part of the campaign. Photographs were downloaded from the Coke Zone website (www.cokezone.co.uk).

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Executive summary

This case study presents the lessons from Coca-Cola's recycling communications during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, written as part of WRAP's learning legacy objectives.

Coca-Cola built their recycling messages on the back of research over the past few years. This identified a target group of people characterised by good intentions not matched by their actions. Messages around environment and carbon were not found to be strong motivational drivers. Successful approaches were found to use fun, celebratory and uplifting messages, and maintained existing brand identity. In response to this, Coca-Cola's Games related recycling messaging adopted inspirational messages based on Olympic-related themes such as "Recycling: it's a team event" and "Feel like a winner: recycle".

Another key message was around Coca-Cola's bottle-to-bottle initiative. This pledged that PET bottles from Games recycling bins would be close-loop recycled in the UK and the rPET used to make new Coca-Cola bottles that would be returned to shelf within six weeks. This demonstrated how successful recycling messages need to be underpinned by a physical recycling infrastructure. Messaging was posted on menu boards, staff uniforms, vending machines, above waste / recycling stations and elsewhere at venues. Other messaging included a Recycle Beat vehicle travelling with the Olympic Torch Relay, recycling labels on packaging and waste bins, training staff as ambassadors, websites and press advertising. Coca-Cola's research estimates that 0.9 million people were exposed to Recycle Beat messages, 11 million saw messages at venues and Live Sites and 17 million saw the newspaper advertisements.

Two surveys commissioned by Coca-Cola¹, alongside anecdotal feedback, appear to show that general recycling messaging did raise the profile of recycling. 70% of spectators said they were more likely to recycle at home and 93% were encouraged to recycle 'on the go', though the percentage attributable to Coca-Cola recycling messaging specifically was not available.

Two key areas for learning were the branding of waste recycling stations and bins themselves, and the use of the PlantBottle (bio plastic) branding. These were the cause of some confusion, particularly where Coca-Cola stickers were placed on compostable waste bins that were not suitable for Coca-Cola's bottles.

Coca-Cola believes that by running this recycling communications campaign, they have raised the brand's environmental profile and will gain business benefit in the long term. The Games venues afforded a unique opportunity to control messaging with spectators at multiple points of interaction from purchase through to disposal, in part due to the amount of time spent at venues.

In terms of return on investment, survey figures and qualitative evidence suggest that recycling messaging worked well for Coca-Cola. One of the surveys found that 65% of consumers had been aware of Coca-Cola's support of recycling in the venues, with 80% feeling more positive towards Coca-Cola as a brand helping the environment. The cost of developing and implementing the messages was felt to be relatively small relative to overall sponsorship fees, and yet recycling messaging was given a central role to play.

¹ Coca-Cola, 'Helping to Deliver a Zero Waste Games: Coca-Cola Recycling Evaluation', 2012, carried out during the Olympics Torch Relay and follow up telephone calls one month after the Games (100 respondents), and Nielsen Consumer Research, 'Coca-Cola Olympic Experience', 2012, carried out during the Paralympics (222 respondents)

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Glossary

BOH	Back of house – this refers to staff-only areas at venues
FOH	Front of house – this refers to areas where the public could go at venues
LOCOG	London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
PET	Polyethylene
rPET	Recycled polyethylene

Acknowledgements

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1.0 Introduction

This case study was written as part of WRAP's support for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and contributes to learning legacy objectives. The aim of these objectives is to have a record of tools and best practice which will improve the performance of the UK events sector and its supply chain.

Commercial partners and sponsors can play an important part in recycling communications at events. The partner role could involve raising the profile of recycling generally and / or communicating practical information about how to recycle at the venue itself. This case study is about Coca-Cola, one of London 2012's main commercial partners. It outlines recycling communications they used, what worked well, what challenges were faced and what lessons were learned. The case study also highlights value added to Coca-Cola as a commercial event partner and business by using recycling messaging.

1.1 General recycling context at the Games

LOCOG stipulated a zero waste to landfill and 70% re-use, recycling and composting target across all venues for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. LOCOG implemented a recycling system involving three key waste streams: food and compostable packaging, recycling and non-recyclables (which would be taken to an energy from waste plant). They worked with food and drink suppliers to ensure packaging would comply with recyclable and compostable streams where possible, and developed, in partnership with WRAP, a Games-specific variant of the national "On Pack Recycling Label" (OPRL) scheme². OPRLs (whether the standard or the Games-specific variant) were strongly advised for all packaging at venues. A corresponding bin system was established, where bin icons, message and colours exactly matched the packaging label, making it easy for spectators to use the right bin. The recycling facilities at the Games meant that bins could also be matched with the national OPRLs.

1.2 The context for Coca-Cola

Sustainability has become a major focus for Coca-Cola globally due to diversification of communications channels and increasing third-party control of online discussion about brands.

People like to talk about something once they believe in it. That is why sustainability is so important. Consumers no longer vote for a product or buy a product because it tastes good. That is not enough any more. They want to essentially believe in the character of the company. They want to associate themselves with the character of the company. That is why sustainability is no longer a corporate social responsibility report.

Muhtar Kent, Chief Executive, The Coca-Cola Company

As a result, over the last few years Coca-Cola has had to strive harder to become a genuinely environmentally friendly company. In the UK, Coca-Cola identified recycling as an opportunity where it could make a contribution.

² OPRL is a long-standing national scheme by the British Retail Consortium and WRAP.

Coca-Cola's sustainability strategy for the Games was derived from a process of reviewing their own sustainability and brand building goals alongside LOCOG's framework for sustainability and Zero Waste Games Strategy. 'Health and Wellness', 'Carbon' and 'Waste' were identified as the priority areas for communications.

Sustainability messaging was one of the principal features of our sponsorship. We invested heavily against it and that's no accident – we tested the appropriateness of various potential sponsor activities five years ago. What we found was that recycling scored exceptionally well. We also believed that recycling wasn't working effectively in Britain yet and that there needed to be investment and education to fix the challenges faced.

Patrick McGuirk, Recycling Director, Coca-Cola Enterprises

The Coca-Cola recycling messaging at London 2012 was underpinned by an integrated recycling campaign which encompassed both physical infrastructure and behaviour change marketing. The key focus of this was the close-loop recycling (bottle-to-bottle) initiative where PET bottles recycled at the London 2012 venues were reprocessed into new Coca-Cola bottles which were returned to shelves within six weeks.

The establishment of the Continuum Recycling³ close-loop plastics plant was fast-tracked to ensure there would be enough recycled PET (rPET) available to make possible the '25% recycled plastic' claim on Coke bottles sold at the London 2012 Games venues.

The close-loop cycle depended on consumer action so Coca-Cola made encouraging recycling the main communications focus for the Games.

1.3 Building recycling messaging based on research

Coca-Cola developed an understanding of recycling behaviour from its previous three-year project co-funded by WRAP to create Recycle Zone Schemes⁴, alongside various targeted consumer initiatives. This was also combined with their strong marketing know-how built over 126 years of selling products.

Coca Cola derived its messages for the London 2012 Games from an intensive research process which was accompanied by a steep learning curve for Coca-Cola. Around May 2011, they carried out quantitative and qualitative research in a virtual lab at their headquarters, testing how well different messaging and colour schemes landed with consumer focus groups. The most successful messages were then further tested 'in the field' at sponsored music events throughout 2011.

³ Coca-Cola Enterprises and ECO Plastics joint venture. The factory is located at ECO Plastics' existing site in Lincolnshire, which, with the additional capacity, becomes the world's largest plastics reprocessing facility.

⁴ The Recycle Zones scheme (2008 – 2011) was launched when there were few recycling on-the-go facilities available in the UK. The scheme, supported by WRAP, set up Coca-Cola branded recycling stations in 130 high profile locations across Britain, providing consumers with the opportunity to recycle soft drinks packaging whilst "away from home". Further information is available here: http://www.wrapcymru.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/ROTG_Case_Study_Coca_Cola.pdf

Following these tests, Coca-Cola was selected as the obvious brand to lead on London 2012's recycling messaging. This was based on the fun, energising identity being judged a good fit for creating effective behaviour change marketing, as well as it being the biggest brand with the most assets (branded coolers, fridges and vending machines).

"Green casuals" was identified as the main target audience group. Green casuals are people who have the right intentions for recycling but this is not matched by their actions. They are ideal targets for behaviour change marketing. Families and older teenagers were the demographic sectors chosen. Coca-Cola's findings indicate that, contrary to previously held beliefs, mums are the family member typically driving recycling rather than children, who may say the right thing, even pestering their parents, but are in fact poorer recyclers themselves and can hinder recycling at home.

Previous testing had shown that switching from red to a green colour theme for sustainability messaging was considered by consumers as inauthentic. People knew, trusted and liked the established branding. Thus Coca-Cola stuck with traditional brand colours for sustainability and recycling communications.

Coca-Cola found that the big lessons on messaging were to avoid leading on carbon, the environment or being green as a driver, because "green casuals" do not feel responsible for environmental issues despite their good intentions. Instead the messages that were the most successful were characterised by being celebratory, uplifting and thanking people for recycling. These lessons were used in the messages that were eventually developed.

The cost of finessing the messaging and understanding how best to deliver it is pretty small compared to implementation cost. If we hadn't done the basic demographic identification, identified who we're trying to target to achieve what, and if we then hadn't tested it, both in real and virtual situations, it wouldn't have been successful.

Patrick McGuirk , Recycling Director, Coca-Cola Enterprises

2.0 Summary of marketing communications activities

Table 1 presents a brief overview of Coca-Cola's main sustainability marketing communications initiatives. The following sections provide more details on how these went, the knowledge gained, as well as qualitative and quantitative feedback where available.

Table 1 Summary of Coca Cola's messaging

Initiative	Summary
Recycle Beat - Olympic Torch Relay (OTR)	<p>During the 70 day relay, the recycling message was spread by an interactive project called Recycle Beat – a hybrid vehicle for collecting used Coca-Cola bottles. The vehicle would arrive a few hours before the torch to warm up the crowds, and was also present at 66 evening celebrations throughout the country. Sensors connected to a sound system enabled members of the public to remix Coca-Cola’s Games-time anthem “Anywhere in the World” each time a bottle was recycled. At the back of the vehicle, members of the public could get a sticker tattoo with a recycling message, and photos were taken. These were given a Coca-Cola branded frame plus a recycling message and made downloadable on the Coke Zone website, where people were encouraged to share them on Facebook and Twitter along with a pledge to recycle.</p>
Inspirational messaging at venues	<p>Coca-Cola UK had created a new visual identity system around recycling in late 2011, based on the message “keep happiness going: recycle”. This system was first introduced to a wide audience primarily inside the London 2012 Park and venues.</p> <p>Messages</p> <p><i>Inspirational Olympic themes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “keep happiness going: recycle” • “recycling: it’s a team event” • “feel like a winner: recycle” <p><i>Close-loop recycling:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “we aim to turn every soft drink bottle you recycle here into a new one within 6 weeks” <p><i>New bio-plastic bottle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “say hello to our new 100% recyclable PlantBottle™ range” <p>Communication Media</p> <p>This messaging was displayed across the venues and Park, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • above-bin signs in prominent areas near busy catering outlets • 1000 menu boards • drink vending machines and coolers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displays on the walls of the press and media centre <p>Target audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By far the largest target audience for this was the ticket-holding spectators. • Smaller groups included Coca-Cola’s 5000 hospitality guests (competition winners, as well as retailers and suppliers)⁵. • Behind the scenes, kitchens and staffrooms also reinforced the same messaging for staff.
On-pack labels	<p>All Coca-Cola bottle labels stated that the packaging contained 25% recycled material, 22.5% plant material and was 100% recyclable.</p> <p>The majority of the Coca-Cola brands distributed at the Games included the “On Pack Recycling Label” (OPRL). Coca-Cola had signed up to OPRL shortly before the Games. While Coca-Cola did not use the OPRL variant that had been developed specifically by LOCOG for London 2012, the national scheme used did match the bin segregation system at venues as the latter also had labelling matching OPRL.</p>
Branding of bins	<p>Bins were designed and labelled to facilitate recycling by spectators, using consistent recycling symbols and colours corresponding with the Games-specific waste stream logos found on catering packaging at the Games.</p> <p>Through their world-wide sponsorship Coca-Cola have branding rights to the bins at the Games. They added their logo on both the body and the lid of each stream of the main type of bin used front of house (FOH) at the Games. Coca-Cola also provided a small amount of additional funding to upgrade the FOH bins at the London 2012 Games to a more user-friendly design selected jointly by Coca-Cola and LOCOG.</p>
Staff as ambassadors	<p>Coca-Cola had 1200 Games-time staff comprising about 1000 operations staff, with the remainder working on the Torch Relay and “Showcasing”. Staff effectively functioned as personal channels for recycling messaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Games-time staff received sustainability training, including how to engage spectators on how to recycle at the Games.

⁵ Guest messaging also included a 10 minute video on Coca-Cola’s Games-related carbon reduction and social programme including one and a half minutes specifically on recycling. For those on overnight stays each bedroom had its own clearly labelled recycling bin. Guests received amenity packs containing rPET merchandise and information and rPET table decorations and vases were clearly marked “made with rPET”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff were made aware of Coca-Cola’s recycling objectives and how they were being met by the bottle-to-bottle initiative. • Staff wore “recycle” pin badges and their uniforms, incorporating rPET, stated on the sleeve how many bottles they were made of. This gave a starting point for a conversation about recycling, backed up by staff equipped to respond. <p>Coca-Cola also had teams of ‘Showcasing staff’, based at the Coca-Cola Beatbox Pavilion on the Olympic Park, who roamed the Park, spontaneously engaging with spectators. Part of their entertainment comprised celebrating spectators recycling by performing a short dance and song. The estimated total performance time for the duration of the Games on the subject of recycling was 10 – 15 hours.</p>
Advertising	Coca-Cola’s Sparkle Campaign ran advertisements in the national press including the Telegraph, the Financial Times and Metro, focussing on various sustainability issues, including recycling.
Websites	<p>Games sustainability initiatives were featured on both the general UK Coca-Cola website (www.coca-cola.co.uk) and the Coke Zone prizes and rewards website (www.cokezone.co.uk). After the Games, various policies and short promotional videos were uploaded onto the site, so they could be accessed by any member of the public interested in this.</p> <p>Additionally, a Zero Waste Events website (www.zerowasteevents.org) endorsed by WRAP was set up specifically for stakeholders within the events, waste and related industries.</p>

3.0 Measuring the coverage and impact

Coca-Cola’s integrated recycling initiative during London 2012 represents their biggest ever consumer-facing recycling campaign, both in terms of the spend and scale of people reached.

Two pieces of research were undertaken to measure the impact with spectators. The first took place during the Torch Relay with follow-up telephone calls one month after the Games (100 respondents)⁶. The other was carried out at London 2012 venues during the Paralympic Games (222 respondents)⁷. This section presents headline results from both surveys.

However, any conclusions drawn need to consider the following limitations:

- the relatively small number of respondents compared to the target audience of 11 million,
- in some cases, lack of sub-divisions separating effects of all recycling messaging from Coca-Cola recycling messaging,
- venues surveying only during Paralympics, and most importantly
- survey participants bias to over-report their good intentions compared to their actual behaviour.

Table 2 presents the estimated scale and impact of the marketing communications initiatives⁸.

Table 2 - Scale and impact of marketing communications

Communications area	Opportunities to see⁹	Direct interaction¹⁰	Change in recycling behaviour
Recycle Beat (Olympic Torch Relay)	0.9 million	54 thousand	5 thousand ¹¹
Olympic and Paralympic initiatives at venues	11 million ¹²	7.6 million	335 thousand ¹³
Newspaper advertising	17 million	n/a	n/a

Data from the second piece of research is presented in Table 3. This suggests that messaging positively contributed to increasing recycling, alongside improved perception of the brand.

⁶ Coca-Cola, 'Helping to Deliver a Zero Waste Games: Coca-Cola Recycling Evaluation', 2012

⁷ Nielsen Consumer Research, 'Coca-Cola Olympic Experience, 2012

⁸ Figures for the Torch Relay and venues are from the surveys conducted. 'Opportunities to see' are derived from newspaper readership figures.

⁹ 'Opportunity to see' represents the number of times an element was viewed.

¹⁰ 'Direct interaction' at Recycle Beat comprised of the number of people to recycle a bottle. 'Direct interaction' for the venues was derived using a formula to estimate how many people had interacted at least twice with the recycling message for example at purchase and disposal point.

¹¹ Figure based on 9% of direct interaction. Percentage derived from follow-up phone survey responses (1 month after the Games) with those who had originally described themselves as "non-recyclers" and "sometimes recyclers" when originally surveyed.

¹² Based on 9m at venues plus those attending Live Sites, and includes opportunities to see inspirational messaging and labelling on packaging and bins.

¹³ Figure based on 4% of direct interaction.

Table 3 - Successes from recycling communications

Survey statements about consumers	% of consumers surveyed
Spontaneously named Coca-Cola as the brand supporting recycling	34%
Aware of Coca-Cola's support of recycling in the venues	65%
After learning of Coca-Cola's support of recycling, feeling more positive towards Coca-Cola as a brand which is encouraging people to recycle	81%
After learning of Coca-Cola's support of recycling, feeling more positive towards Coca-Cola as a brand which is helping the environment	80%
More likely to recycle at home as a result of the recycling messaging ¹⁴	70%
More likely to recycle while 'on the go' at the venue as a result of the recycling messaging ¹⁴	93%

4.0 Lessons on inspirational recycling messaging

This section focuses on the inspirational recycling messaging which Coca-Cola developed for the Games; based around the theme "Keep happiness going: recycle". It was developed from the research described in section 1.3. This section presents the learning about choice of wording, as well as the importance of making messaging context-specific – in this case linking in with the LOCOG recycling infrastructure at venues.

4.1 Choice of wording

The most successful messages were "Recycling: it's a team event" followed by "Feel like a winner: recycle". Figures 1 - 3 show examples of how the messages were displayed in situ.

Figure 1 - Inspirational messaging on vending banks



¹⁴ This refers to the entire recycling communications at the Games, i.e. not specific to Coca-Cola

Figure 2 - Inspirational messaging on the wall in the Media Centre



Figure 3 - Inspirational messaging banners above waste / recycling stations



Table 4 shows which messages were most memorable to consumers overall. The most remembered items were the physical recycling bins (63%) and vending machines (44%). However, the top “inspirational” messages were recalled by 20% and 18% of people respectively ¹⁵.

¹⁵ Nielsen Consumer Research, 'Coca-Cola Olympic Experience, 2012

The opportunity to engage with whole families is fairly unusual and was treated as a rare opportunity to directly engage a group that is seen as critical to driving behaviour change.

Table 4 - Awareness of Coca-Cola messaging

Which messages do you remember seeing around the venue?	% of total
Waste / recycling stations	63%
Coca-Cola / Coca-Cola Zero vending machines	44%
Coca-Cola brand on the waste / recycling stations	25%
Messages asking you to recycle	21%
"Recycling: it's a team event" message	20%
Coca-Cola bottles are 100% recyclable	18%
"Feel like a winner: recycle" message	18%

4.2 Making messages context-specific

Coca-Cola felt that an important lesson was to play to the specific event, whether that is a music festival, a cultural or a sporting event. Hence Olympic-themes were chosen in the hope that people would be particularly receptive to these.

In practical terms, recycling as a theme for sustainability messaging is only appropriate in environments where the underlying infrastructure exists – for example, recycling messaging for Rio 2016 would make most sense if the waste sector is geared up for it. In the UK, infrastructure generally exists but there is a behaviour challenge around consumer recycling both at home and on-the-go.

The six week close-loop recycling and Olympic-themed messages were very specific to this context, although they could be used at future sporting events, or where rPET recycling facilities exist in other locations. Figure 4 Example of the six week message shown in a cold room.

Figure 4 Example of the six week message shown in a cold room



4.3 The importance of aligning the value chain

Coca-Cola felt that the bottle-to-bottle initiative and messaging worked well. The message relied on the existence of the Continuum Recycling plant, alongside effective consumer guidance on separation of their waste, highlighting a value chain from consumer separation, waste collection, sorting and processing, to final reuse. Coca-Cola believe that a transparent UK-based infrastructure and the six-week turnaround pledge generated the credibility necessary for consumers to trust that recycling is an effort worth making. This was deemed particularly important in the UK, where people are often suspicious about recycling waste being shipped abroad, with potential for unethical practices.

4.4 Working with partners for integrated recycling messaging

In the run up to and during the Games, LOCOG ran a recycling communications campaign of their own, which focused on identified key audiences: spectators; workforce; press and broadcast; and athletes and officials. The key messages of this campaign were motivational messaging about the parts that everyone had to play in reaching the Games Zero Waste to landfill target and instructional messaging around how to recycle at the Games, including matching waste stream logos on packaging with coloured bins. Communications materials included: messaging in the spectators guide given to all ticket holders; venues maps; tweets; PA announcements; workforce training; motivational and inspirational back of house (BOH) posters; and messaging within audience-specific newsletters and magazines.

Coca-Cola's inspirational messaging helped to feed into the functionality of LOCOG's venue waste system by reminding and motivating people to recycle, and hence increase segregation rates on site. As mentioned previously (Table 3), 93% of people surveyed said they were more likely to recycle at venues after seeing recycling messages, although no figures were available for the proportion influenced by Coca-Cola messages specifically.

The close-loop recycling message for PET bottles was a powerful one, but it also has the potential to raise questions about what happens to the rest of the recyclable and compostable waste produced. Future events may wish to extend this level of transparency over the end destination to cover more or perhaps all of the waste types disposed.

Coca Cola did work with LOCOG's sustainability team to incorporate a QR code on their above-bin signs, which linked to the recycling specific page of the London 2012 Website. This page, part of LOCOG recycling communications campaign, provided messaging on the Games waste targets, how to recycle at the Games and what happens to waste collected from the Games. However, Coca Cola and LOCOG could have worked together from an earlier stage to maximise the potential for crossover of event-specific operational recycling messaging into Coca Cola's messaging channels, which may have led to menu boards and vending machines being utilised for integrated messaging that is both inspiring and informative, guiding spectators on exactly what can and cannot be recycled. This could incorporate an intermediate level of messaging, informing people about the venue waste system. For example, advertising the event's overall recycling target and explaining that OPRLs match the corresponding bin types provided.

5.0 Other lessons learned

This section presents the more general lessons learned from on-pack and bin labelling, making recycling fun, employees as ambassadors and the “multiple touchpoint opportunity”.

5.1 Effectiveness of on-pack labels and waste bin labelling

Although there was inspirational messaging positioned above some of the waste / recycling stations, the bin and bottle messaging in this section refers to the practical instructions to consumers on where to place their waste.

5.1.1 On-pack labels on Coca-Cola bottles

On-pack statements in small font explained that bottles contained 25% recycled material, 22.5% plant material and are 100% recyclable.

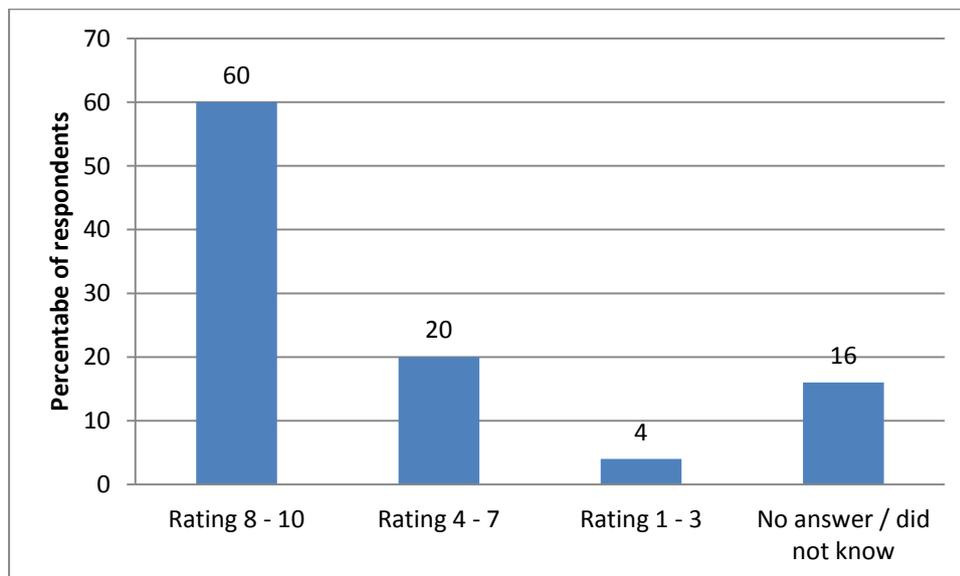
Some people assumed the plastic ‘PlantBottles’ were compostable due to the visual messaging boards, suggesting that bottle labels using bioplastics must be extremely clear for which waste stream they are suitable.

Due to the addition of the national OPRL on their products, for the first time, label design omitted the long-standing ‘Keep Britain Tidy’ symbol as the latter was judged to detract from the OPRL, leaving just a single symbol to match to the corresponding bin.

5.1.2 Waste bin design and labelling

Generally the shape, style, position and signing of bins are considered to have optimised clarity for the public and encouraged the prioritisation of the recyclables waste bins. LOCOG conducted a spectator survey asking spectators to rate the ‘ease of recycling’ from 1 to 10¹⁶. The results are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5 – Chart showing spectator ratings for ‘ease of recycling’, where 10 is extremely good and 1 is extremely poor



¹⁶ Spectator survey, LOCOG, 2012. Results are for Olympic Games only.

There were unexpectedly high levels of cross-contamination early on during the Games. This was thought to be the result of Coca-Cola branding being visible on every waste stream bin, with people thinking Coca-Cola products could be thrown into any bin sporting the Coca-Cola logo.

As a result, during the Games, LOCOG put additional stickers on the bins – a “no plastics” one on the compostables bin and a “no food” on the recycling bin – see Figure 5.

LOCOG also removed Coca-Cola branding from the compostables and non-recyclable bin (but left on the recycling bin) which seemed to help. At future events, careful consideration should be given before sponsor communications are placed directly on a bin not suitable for their packaging.

Other possibilities for improving bin design included Coca-Cola’s suggestion of considering a printed photo around the bin shell rather than using a clear shell (to prevent further contamination once already contaminated). Positioning recycling labels on bin lids was found to be more effective than labelling the sides only.

Out of the 18 million bottles purchased, an estimated 10 - 13 million were recovered on-site. Some bottles are thought to have been taken home with spectators (either to finish the drink or as souvenirs) and some were placed in the wrong waste stream.

Figure 5 - Recycling and compost bins, showing additional stickers



5.2 Making recycling fun

Anecdotal feedback on the Recycle Beat suggested the initiative was received as a fun and playful way of promoting recycling. This was in part attributed to it being less transactional than a previous approach tested at music festivals, where people could exchange an empty bottle for a recycled PET t-shirt. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the Recycle Beat vehicle in use.

Figure 6 - The Recycle Beat vehicle



Figure 7 - A member of the public recycling a Coca-Cola bottle



Although the collection of 30,000 bottles (23 tonnes) was a relatively insignificant proportion of the total distributed during the Torch Relay, many were probably disposed of in the other recycling facilities at the events or taken home as they were viewed by the public as keepsakes (evidenced by the fact many were being sold on eBay). The main aim of Recycle Beat was to raise the profile of recycling as being fun and making people feel good about recycling, seen by Coca-Cola as key in kicking off behaviour change at home.

This message is thought to have exceeded the audience physically present at Recycle Beat by dissemination via local press and social media. Photos taken by Recycle Beat and downloaded by consumers from the Recycle Zone website resulted in 7,000 pledges being made and 180,000 Facebook feeds. This number of feeds was surprisingly high, however

figures do not necessarily reflect actual behaviour change success, as social media has questionable effectiveness in achieving this¹⁷.

Recycling can be perceived as a really dull topic – it's about what you do with your waste – so it was something that Coca-Cola was well placed to bring a little bit of energy to.

Katherine Symonds, Head of Sustainability, London 2012 team, Coca-Cola

5.3 Seizing the multiple touchpoint opportunity

It is commonly thought that behaviour change requires an even higher number of 'touchpoints'¹⁸ than is required to influence buying behaviour.

According to Coca-Cola, the Games venues provided a unique opportunity to control messaging and increase the recurrence of consistent messages (touchpoints) across a consumer's journey as these were enclosed areas where high volumes of people spend significant time. The key touchpoints were:

1. Display boards and on-park entertainment;
2. menu boards, staff clothing and vending machines;
3. labels on product packaging; and
4. labels and signs on bin and recycling station displays.

Figure 8 shows a graphic of menu boards used comprising an example of touchpoints.

Further touchpoints were created with hospitality guests at the accommodation, on transport and in hospitality tents. Coca-Cola's previous experience had shown that a singular focus works better than targeting guests with multiple messages. Guest feedback forms contained a question asking what they had learned about Coca-Cola Games-related sustainability efforts. Many cited recycled products or merchandise they had noticed, and expressed an appreciation for how much energy Coca-Cola had put into their recycling programme. One guest said on their feedback form: "I didn't know just how much Coca-Cola is recycling, great job. Was inspired with all the recycling efforts that are being made. Clear message from Coca-Cola that they are serious about this."

¹⁷ Coca-Cola believes this is because those passionate enough to be interested are likely to already be recycling, whereas those who sometimes or never recycle are unlikely to be excited or motivated enough about the topic to follow any recycling topics on social media.

¹⁸ Touchpoints are the series of contact points between a brand or product at all stages of the customer journey including before and after a transaction.

We talk about connection plans in marketing terms to sell Coca-Cola. We applied the same logic to recycling. So the idea is that at different points on the consumer journey, between buying Coca-Cola and disposing of the bottle, you were getting cues around recycling. So at the point of sale, the person manning the concession was wearing a badge saying please recycle, there was recycling messaging up above, it got more specific as you got towards the bins. It was about choosing the message to trigger the right behaviour at the right point.

Katherine Symonds, Head of Sustainability, London 2012 team, Coca-Cola

Figure 8 - Graphic showing inspirational recycling messages on two of the menu boards.



5.4 Employees acting as ambassadors

Coca-Cola consciously used employees as an interface with the public. This appeared to have a positive effect both among the staff and in terms of spreading the recycling message, in particular the practical message around recycled uniforms.

It was lovely that our staff were so interested in the Games and by our general sustainability plans. We got a lot of feedback about people feeling proud of how much Coca-Cola was doing for the Olympics, and that was good for staff engagement and morale, and it was good for getting messages out to the wider public.

Olivia Knight-Adams, Sustainable Games Project Co-ordinator,
London 2012 Team, Coca-Cola

Consumer engagement, specifically by the roaming performer teams, received positive feedback – see Figure 9. This was attributed to the amount of linger time spectators had at the Park, which enabled this activity to be compelling at the same time as creating an

association between fun and laughter and recycling. LOCOG have commented that the recycling content of the roaming crews could have been even greater.

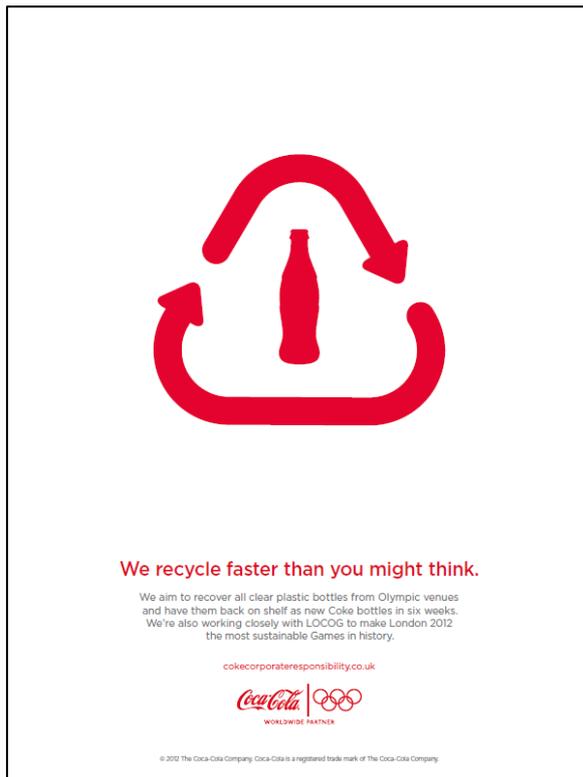
Figure 9 - Performance by a roaming team on the Olympics Park, celebrating a spectator recycling.



5.5 Lessons from other communications channels

The advertising campaign had the widest reach in terms of 'opportunity to see' – and served to cascade venue-specific messages to the wider public and capitalise on efforts being made, both in terms of branding and the behaviour change piece. Figure 10 shows a copy of the recycling advertisement used. Aside from the readership figures shown in Table 1, there was no specific feedback.

Figure 10 - Coca-Cola's Games related recycling advertisement.



The websites also were used to cascade messages although their role was relatively low profile. Notably, website stats showed that an infographic demonstrating the bottle-to-bottle journey on the Coca-Cola website had in most cases been watched to the end.

The Zero Waste Events website (see Figure 11) with its aims of spreading messages and learning into the wider waste community currently has 600 – 700 members. In the first few months after inception it had 2,000 LOCOG protocol downloads and 13,500 page views, as well as being linked in to various other websites and message boards. The website is a long-term resource and membership is expected to grow.

Figure 11 - Screen shot of the WRAP / Coca-Cola Zero Waste Events legacy website



6.0 How sustainability messaging added value to the business

It is important for commercial partners to support event recycling systems and messaging; and this would not happen if they did not gain some form of value as a business. This section highlights how Coca-Cola's recycling messaging generated benefits for the business.

It is not possible to attribute tangible financial return on investment for Coca-Cola's Games recycling messaging. While the empty venue bottles bought back from the waste management partner (SITA) as part of the bottle-to-bottle initiative did have monetary worth, they could have been sourced cheaper elsewhere.

Coca-Cola believes the whole Olympic partnership including recycling messaging was about building belief in the quality of the product and trust in the brand long term, rather than direct financial return. Therefore, Coca-Cola was pleased with the figures attained from the surveys (Table 2,3) as well as the level of positive anecdotal feedback.

It is to be noted that investment in the Continuum Recycling plant was a stand-alone business decision based on financial returns over a defined period.

While the research and development of messaging was extensive, it only comprised a small cost in comparison to the total sponsorship budget. Despite this, it played a fundamental role in capitalising on the sponsorship opportunity.

As well as value added to the brand, sponsor support of recycling appears to be a consumer expectation. The Nielsen survey¹⁹ showed 50% of consumers thought support of recycling and making 2012 the most sustainable Games should be an integral part of the sponsor's role. The only sponsor role that scored higher was paying a fee (62% of respondents).

The knowledge and lessons learned are being shared across Coca-Cola's worldwide operations, and are likely to influence how the business shapes and delivers behaviour change initiatives in the future.

7.0 Coca-Cola's recommendations for improving recycling

Coca-Cola advocates a more consistent government approach to on-the-go recycling and highlights the need to ensure the same recycling model is used for municipal waste, in order for consistent behaviour to become embedded²⁰.

Coca-Cola has commissioned work with the University of Exeter to better understand home recycling behaviour. This will include primary research from observing and monitoring real recycling behaviour in the home.

¹⁹ Nielsen Consumer Research, 'Coca-Cola Olympic Experience, 2012

²⁰ For example, in Belgium, private organisation Fost Plus co-ordinates the collection, sorting and recycling of municipal and kerbside waste providing a consistent national system (see http://www.fostplus.be/about_Fost_Plus/Pages/default.aspx). As a result, recycling rates are among the highest in Europe (see <http://www.letsrecycle.com/news/latest-news/waste-management/uk-creeps-up-european-recycling-league-table>).

8.0 Conclusions

The positive, inspirational and Olympic-themed nature of Coca-Cola's recycling messages does appear to have successfully raised the profile of recycling at the London 2012 Games. Spectators' intention and motivation to recycle appears to have been increased, with estimated figures for exposure to the messaging in the tens of millions and a very high percentage of people surveyed saying they were more likely to recycle at venues as a result of the messaging.

There are opportunities for future events to better integrate inspirational messaging with the recycling infrastructure at venues; for example ensuring branding on waste bins does not confuse consumers. Removing some branding and using additional stickers to clarify waste streams did appear to reduce the initial ambiguity. Final LOCOG spectator survey figures on 'ease of recycling' were positive and there was a relatively high rate of bottles returned for the closed loop initiative.

Coca-Cola's recycling messages were highly integrated across its own communications channels – during the Torch Relay and across venues. However use of websites was secondary and inspirational messages were not used, as these were targeted at those physically attending the Games. The nationwide newspaper advertising campaign had the largest reach in terms of 'opportunity to see', and generally contributed to promote Coca-Cola's recycling efforts but more specific impacts were difficult to identify.

The value of using staff as ambassadors was shown to work very well, both in terms of the interest generated by roaming team performances and feedback from dialogue between staff and spectators about recycling.

Recycling messaging formed a key component of Coca-Cola's Games sponsorship. Messaging authenticity, based on investment in recycling infrastructure, worked well for them and they were pleased with its contribution to their positioning and brand value. This demonstrates how running a recycling communications campaign can successfully raise the environmental profile for a sponsor.

A final lesson is of the importance of combining a sponsor's own messaging objectives with the specific recycling system in place at an event. Event organisers, waste managers and the sponsors need to work together from an early stage to ensure the maximum value from the recycling messaging is achieved.

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