

# Coke Studio: unifying people through music and culture

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Coca-Cola is turning consumers to fans through Coke Studio, a global music marketing platform that spotlights emerging musicians. By merging its cultural clout and uniting people via sound, Coke is catering to the growing interest in experiences over things, and desires to discover artistic talent.

## AUTHORS

Jacqueline Salomé

**LOCATIONS:**  
INDIA

**SECTORS:**  
TECHNOLOGY  
MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT



## EXPERTS

Catherine Moore

Kevin Goodman

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** After launching in Pakistan in 2008, Coke Studio is going global and extending the brand platform to spotlight emerging artists worldwide
- 02** Coke Studio is offering additional brand value beyond just selling a product, uniting people through music experiences
- 03** By focusing on new talent, Coke is leveraging the small creators that consumers trust and giving people the diverse new music they want to hear

## DATA

- 77% of American consumers used music to cheer themselves up during the pandemic
- 74% of Americans value experiences over material things
- 77% of consumers have either selected or paid more for a personalised brand experience

## SCOPE

During the height of the pandemic, 77% of Americans used music to cheer themselves up—something that comes as no surprise, given that Americans rank music as the most important way to boost happiness, over television and exercise. [1][2] “[Music] provides happiness, silliness, comfort, shared sadness, a sense of common cause, a sense of common grief,” says Catherine Moore, music professor at the University of Toronto. [3] For Coca-Cola, which has long marketed its world-famous soda as happiness in a bottle, music partnerships have become a natural extension of its brand identity. After decades of music marketing and catchy song lyrics featuring in their ads, Coca-Cola is taking a fresh approach to music through the global launch of its emerging artist platform, [Coke Studio](#).

Wildly successful since its 2008 creation in Pakistan, the digital-first and always-on Coke Studio platform provides an opportunity for emerging talent to partner, create and deliver moments of musical magic to new audiences. Led by BETC London, Coke Studio’s expansion campaign kicked off with a [YouTube](#) film called The Conductor, in which lesser-known musicians from around the world covered Queen’s hit track “A Kind of Magic” in their own genre and cultural style. The song is a hat-tip to Coke’s new Real Magic brand platform, which shifted its marketing approach from generalised broadcast messages toward an “[ecosystem of experiences](#)” that unite people through joy – appealing to the 74% of Americans who value experiences over material things. [4]

In addition to the campaign, further Coke Studio content can be unlocked through the on-pack activation “Drink. Scan. Enjoy”, which sees packs of Coca-Cola turn into digital portals bringing consumers back to the Coke Studio platform where they can participate in contests for a chance to win concert tickets and explore new music. As people's music consumption has become digitally led, with new music discovery driven by apps and algorithms, what does Coke Studios' approach tell us about how brand partnerships can unite consumers through experiential joy, while spotlighting the new talent listeners are keen to discover?



Spotlighting global talent is a natural extension of the Coke Studio brand identity

Coke Studio (2022)

## CONTEXT

### MUSIC AS A UNIFYING COMMON DENOMINATOR

“Music is not bound by gender, geography, race, or religion. It doesn’t matter. Whether it’s a small community for an emerging band or a huge global community, music unites,” says Kevin Goodman, chief entertainment officer at Front Row Centre music marketing. [3] Music is the tie that binds us, especially in times of crisis like COVID-19 – eight in ten people said listening to music became more important amid pandemic-related stress, while 69% would give up their favourite social media account for one year over forgoing music. [2] At a time when the majority of American Gen Y and Z believe that we’re culturally more open to hearing diverse voices, and 59% are seeking content from more diverse creators, Coke Studio is bridging borders and cultures by platforming up-and-coming musicians. [5]

### EXPERIENCES OVER ADS

By moving away from traditional advertising models to offer consumers experiences instead, Coke Studio is giving consumers added value beyond simply being product purchasers. Cultural and travel experiences are top spending priorities for Gens Y and Z, especially after the pandemic, with event, show, and cultural attraction click-through rates

skyrocketing (they went up by 86% in 2022 over the previous year). [4]As 77% of consumers have either selected or paid more for a personalised brand experience, it's clear that customisation and experiences are the way to go for brands. [6] That's why [Netflix](#) keeps users engaged with personalised reviews and recommendations, while [Pollen](#) enables people to recommend and sell experiences to friends in exchange for free tickets and rewards.

## NOURISHING EMERGING GLOBAL TALENT

Coke has chosen not to work with global celebrities for this campaign, in hopes that it can nourish the emerging talent that people are looking for online. "A lot of people say they're interested in emerging artists, but they really don't know where to start," says Moore. [3] Alongside Spotify's diverse playlists that feature new tracks, Coke Studio makes it easy for consumers to find and discover new artists. For the nearly 25% of American adults who listen to music for over five hours a day while they work from home, this is quite helpful – at some point, they're going to want something different to listen to. [2]



Consumers trust smaller niche creators that reflect their tastes and values

Coke Studio (2022)

## INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### UNITE PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC

As 79% of people say that listening to music decreases loneliness, brands have an opportunity to unite people through music, cross-pollinating their consumer bases with band and artists fanbases. [2]Coke Studio proves that in-person music experiences translate well online, and can bring people together over shared interests in discovering cross-cultural sounds – important for the nearly 40% of Canadian youth who are seeking content from diverse creators. [7] Musicians themselves are doing the same. [Dua Lipa](#) connects to fans through cultural common ground on her [Service95](#) platform, sharing her favorite podcast, book and movie recommendations, similar to Solange's [Community Library](#).

## OFFER EXPERIENTIAL BRAND VALUE

As people are increasingly valuing experiences over material objects, brands can create offerings that combine a product's unique appeal with added experiential value. "One of my favourite things to do is put brands in the music space that have no business being there," says Goodman, referring to [FRC's Cottonelle toilet paper partnership](#) which offered an unexpected premium washroom experience at Canadian music festival Osheaga. [3] Alongside Coke Studio's experiential music marketing, brands like [Apple Music](#) are courting users with live-stream concerts, while [Sony](#) has explored immersive, digital concert experiences. As most people have social media accounts, cross-channel social experiences work well – even traditional music companies like [SiriusXM](#), [Billboard](#) and [MTV](#) are integrating interactive, trending TikTok content onto their own platforms.

## PARTNER WITH NICHE TALENT

Brands can tap into niche talent, from emerging artists to micro-influencers, to reach a wave of loyal consumers that they may not have access to otherwise. This helps a large brand like Coca-Cola return to its small business roots and exude the authenticity, relatability, and credibility that today's audiences value – and as 92% of consumers trust a micro-influencer more than a traditional ad or endorsement from celebs, while over 70 TikTok artists, including [Jxdn](#) and [Tayler Holder](#), signed major label deals in 2020, it's clear that social media can be a first stop to form these partnerships. [8][9]

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## SOURCES

1. Very Well Mind (January 2022)
2. Sound United (March 2021)
3. Expert interview conducted by the author
4. Microsoft Advertising Insights (March 2022)
5. Spotify (2021)
6. CBI Insights (May 2021)
7. Spotify (2021)
8. ANA (February 2020)
9. Music Business Worldwide (July 2021)

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