

# Health Status, News Portrayal and the Mission of Public Health: Implications for Public Health Branding

Maria Gilson Siström, RN MS PhD  
OHSU School of Nursing, Oregon MPH

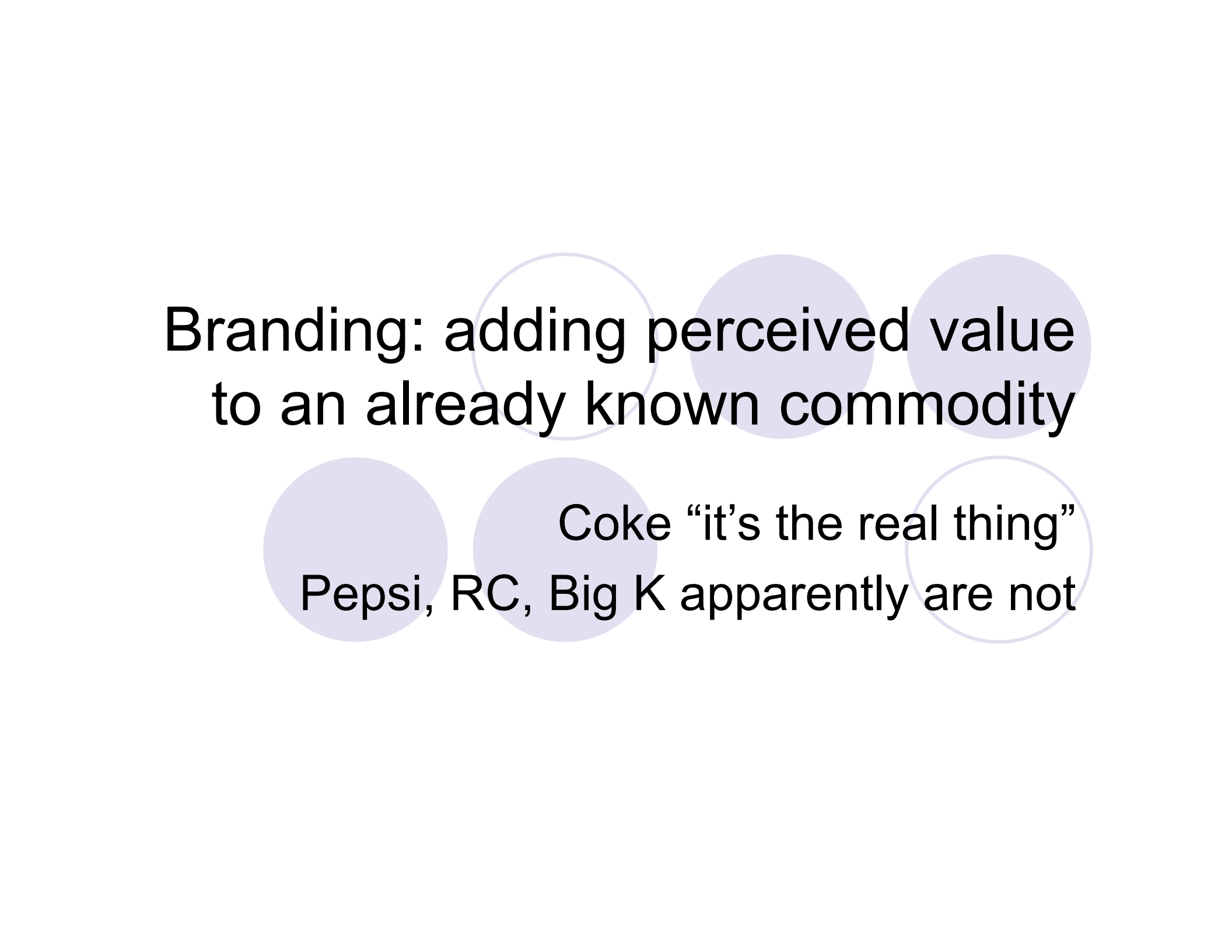
Chris Palmedo, MBA

Northwest Health Foundation

Liana Winett, DrPH

Portland State University, Oregon MPH

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Branding: adding perceived value  
to an already known commodity

Coke “it’s the real thing”  
Pepsi, RC, Big K apparently are not



# Public Health Branding

What is public health's  
'commodity'--population health?



# Public health branding

- Compare counties by population health to newspaper portrayal of public health
  - Do counties that have better population health see public health in a more positive light?
  - Are there clues to better PH branding in the newspaper?



**Relevance:**

**Policymakers read the papers.**



# Measuring population health

- CHSI database

- Counties over 1 million

- Plus Multnomah County (because it's my home)

- and Fulton County, GA (for comparison)

- Sort by indicators

- Select best and worst counties

# County Rankings: smoking, teen pregnancy, flu vax > 65

- Santa Clara County CA is represented in 2 of 3 top categories
  - replaced by San Bernardino when sorted by smoking
- King County WA is represented in all top three sort categories
- Hennepin County MN is represented in all top three sort categories
- Palm Beach Cty FL is represented in 2 of 3 top sort categories
  - replaced by Middlesex County MA when sorted by smoking
  
- Cook County IL, Wayne County MI, Philadelphia County PA, and either Bronx or Kings County NY are represented in 2 of 3 bottom sort categories
  
- When ranked by smoking, bottom counties change dramatically to the mid-west and Nevada (Franklin County, OH, St. Louis County, MO, Oakland County, MI and Clark County, NV)

# Papers selected

- Seattle Times (Seattle, King County)
- Star Tribune (Minneapolis, Hennepin Cty)
- Chicago Sun Times (Cook County)
- St. Louis Post Dispatch (St. Louis County)
- The Oregonian (Multnomah County)
- Atlanta Journal Constitution (Fulton Cty)



# Newspaper portrayal

- LexisNexis search
  - Regional papers from 2004-2006
    - Top and bottom counties by CHSI indicators
    - Search terms “public health” and “health department[‘s]”



# Categories and Codes (in vivo)

- **Positive**

- **Instructions**
- **Collaboration**
- **Emergency prep**
- **Outreach**
- **Information**
- **Legislation/regulation**
- **Schools of PH/Studies**
- **Progress/improvement**
- **Politics/gov't**

- **Negative**

- **Emergency prep**
- **Legislation/regulation**
- **Snafus/incompetence**
- **Paternalism**
- **Corruption**
- **Vaccines**
- **Politics/gov't**

# Major categories

	Seattle	Atlanta	St Louis	Oregon	Star T	Chicago	Totals	% total
<b>Positive</b>								
Instructions	154	85	130	40	96	75	580	19.3
Information	376	439	440	230	136	338	1959	65.1
Legislation/reg	94	40	122	46	90	76	468	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>3007</b>	
<b>Negative</b>								
Legislation/reg	21	13	13	8	9	9	73	15.3
Snafus/incomp	33	24	44	18	14	38	171	35.9
Vaccine	21	60	42	8	14	16	161	33.8
Politics/gov't	7	39	29	1	7	11	94	19.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>476</b>	
<b>N ARTICLES</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>5000</b>	
Missing/uncateg	206	300	180	101	245	397	1429	28.6

Do healthier places represent  
public health more positively?

Probably only in Minnesota

Are there useful clues to what  
a public health brand might  
be?

Top positive data categories:  
Instructions, information, regulation

The text is centered and surrounded by five light purple circles. One circle is behind the word 'commodity', one is behind 'population', and one is behind 'health'. Below the text, there are three more circles: one on the left, one in the middle behind the word 'brand', and one on the right.

If our “commodity” is  
population health

Our “brand” may be information



# Information as a brand

“The foundation of **public health** is sharing information, making it as widely available to individuals and local governments as possible.”

From one of the “bad health” papers: The St. Louis Times Dispatch.



# Food for thought:

Public health *is* known (if not understood).

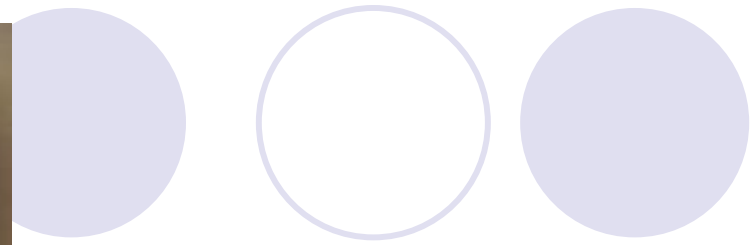
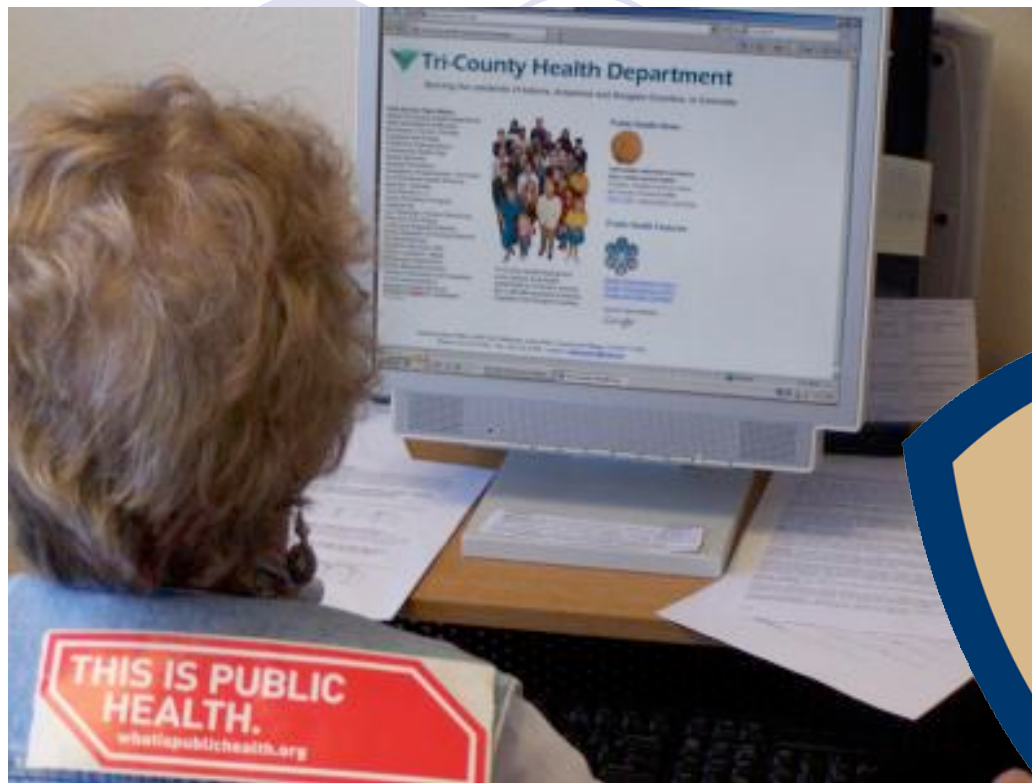
Does information as a brand “add perceived value to an already known commodity?”

Is population health a known commodity?

Can public health be effectively branded?

Philosophically, should *public* goods be marketed as commodities or products?

Are we barking up the wrong paradigm?



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.