

# Corporate Identity and Branding

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This essay intends to explore the development of the Coca Cola brand over the past century. This investigation will consider the succession of products following the initial invention of the Coca Cola 'syrup' mixed with carbonated water; and the promotional campaigns that ensued, which helped to create the internationally renowned brand Coca Cola.

***A discussion into how  
and why the Coca  
Cola brand has  
developed its brand  
image***

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1506 Words.

*"After 'OK', Coca-cola' is the most universally recognized word on earth..."*  
Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 626).

This essay intends to explore how Coca Cola evolved into an internationally renowned beverage through an investigation into the founding and evolution of the brand, Coca Cola. The brand Coca Cola began with the invention of a soft drink that was first developed in Atlanta by Dr John Stith Pemberton in 1886.

During its first year the product sold an average of just nine drinks a day in comparison to the 1.4 billion sold today, according to The Coca Cola Company (2008). With minimal research, it was soon found that the regular advertising campaigns have kept this brand afloat, establishing new ways of looking at the product, constantly tapping into the zeitgeist.

The first significant milestone after the creation of the beverage commenced following Pemberton's death in 1888 when Asa Griggs Candler secured rights to the business, becoming the first president of the company, The Coca Cola Company (2008). Candler saw the potential of the product and played a big role in the transformation from a simple invention to an international business. At first Candler decided to promote a better awareness of the company. He did this by giving away coupons for people to try the product at no charge to them. He also advertised the product subliminally, placing the recognisable logo in the public eye in places such as on clocks in pharmacies. The business flourished.

By 1911, Candler had invested more than \$11 million in "*creating public demand for his drink*" and Coca-Cola was considered to be the "*best-advertised single product in the world*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 462-463). He hired sign painters who covered '5 million square feet' of America with the red and white logo, and in 1913, "*the company issued over 100 million novelty items with the logo prominently displayed*" such as thermometers, calendars, matchbooks, blotters and baseball cards, Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 463). It was once rather colourfully stated that, "*The Coca Cola Company is like an elephant's ass. You throw a rock in any direction and you*

*are likely to hit it*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p.454), thereby suggesting that the brand is successfully widespread.

In the early 1900's other companies became consciously aware of the success of the company and began to imitate Coca Cola. Here stemmed the campaign that was focused on safeguarding the brand: slogans such as "*Demand the genuine*" and "*Accept no substitute*" were used and a bottle was designed specifically for the company. "*Aggressive*" lawyers were also employed, Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 465). The distinct shape of the bottle reassured customers that the product was not fraudulent and gave Coca Cola an original and refreshing new look whilst again promoting the product, The Coca Cola Company (2008).

After selling the company to Woodruff a new approach was adopted to globalise the company. Whilst Candler concentrated on conquering the US, the new president had fresh ideas to expand the company further, endeavouring to place Coca-Cola "*within arms reach of desire*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 462). Woodruff soon saw a business opportunity in the Olympics, 1928. New and innovative ways of transporting and carrying the product were developed taking into consideration the ergonomics of the product and what people wanted, thus generating a further accomplishment for the company.

During Woodruff's time with the company he employed an 'inspiring' advertising artist to renovate the image of Father Christmas by "*giving him a broad smile and a Coca Cola red suit*", Greising, D. (1998, p. 27). This was revolutionary and made a massive impression on how millions of children perceive the infamous character today.

The annual and now expected Christmas campaigns made the company appear dependable and trustworthy in their continuing success. The latest Christmas advertisement to appear on television in 2008 was of a young child and her mother, who reminisced about when she was passed a Coca Cola when she was a child in an earlier advertisement. This signified yet another era of Coca Cola as well as its associations with Father Christmas.

Woodruff also allowed for experimentation with new flavours that would '*complement Coca Cola*', Greising, D. (1998, p. 27), hence the creation of flavours such as Fanta that served to broaden the choice available to the consumers surpassing the expectations of the current Coca Cola brand.

Rivalling the company, the brand Pepsi-Cola established a competitive edge for the Coca-Cola brand and Roberto Goizueta, a more recent president of the Coca-Cola company, once stated that, "*If Pepsi-Cola didn't exist, I would try to invent it...It keeps us and them on our toes and keeps us lean*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 462). Rather oxymoronic, Coca Cola recognises that Pepsi has been "*good for Coca-Cola*" and that the publicity caused by "*fierce competition is good for sales*" and is divulged by both companies; not just the company that appears to be winning.

Furthermore, a more calorie conscious era of the fifties sought a new attitude from Coca Cola who had previously ignored the potential diet market on account that it "*threatened its sweet, quick-energy drinks*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 277). However, with market research showing that in 1961 "*28 percent of the population were watching their weight*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 277), and with competition rising, Coca Cola introduced 'Project Alpha'; otherwise known as TaB. In magazine advertisements for the new product, Coca Cola strongly differentiated that "*TaB was not Coca Cola*" as the more modern name, "Diet Coke", evokes.

At that time, 1964, the company made clear to bottlers that they did not want to "*injure its existing Coca Cola business*" and that they were "forced" to offer a dietary alternative due to its competitors, Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 278). Perhaps due to their own uncertainty and lack of confidence in their product, TaB only served to hold a ten per cent share of the weight-watcher market. However, a year later in 1965 arch-rival Pepsi released Diet Pepsi, arguably less 'tradition-bound' than coke, which "*grabbed even more of the segment*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 278)

With it's universal appeal, 'I'd like to buy the world a coke', You Tube (2007), was one of their most impressionable campaigns, presenting to the consumers it's

international success; in 1971 a commercial was aired showing people from all over the world come together on an Italian hilltop singing along to the memorable song 'I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing'. This gave the brand positive and friendly connotations whilst highlighting their conquests. Coca-Cola was widely available and affordable to a large market of people. Moreover, by promoting good causes worldwide through, "*philanthropy, support of minority programs, educational innovation, and relief aid in troubled countries*", the 'halo effect' ensued for the company who stated that, "*It's the right thing to do, and it's very right for business too*".

It could be argued that Coke advertiser, Archie Lee was responsible for the way in which Coca-Cola is advertised today, with his recognition that "*It isn't what a product is, but what it does*" having watched his "*daughter and her friend fighting over a old stuffed Pooh Bear*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 463). Prior to his ideals in the mid-twenties to thirties, the Coca Cola brand was focused heavily on the medicinal qualities, "*touting the beverage as a nerve tonic which would perk up 'brain workers...provide solace for hangovers and headaches...prove a 'boon to mankind'*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 463). However, avoiding any potential lawsuits against the company having made these claims, and appealing to a wider target market, the company recognised that they could market the product as simply a soft drink rather than it serving any medicinal purposes

Many advertisements throughout the century have been based on negativity; claiming that, "*buying hand creams...avoid unsightly wrinkles*", whereas Coca Cola saw the potential in selling "*smoke...they're drinking the image not the product*", thus 'selling' the ideals of the product and what the company stands for. Somewhat adverse to the norm, Coca Cola seemed to promote the "gracious" image of the brand rather than the product itself. Connotations such as "*popular...happy, energetic, wholesome...friendly*" can all be associated with "*The pause that refreshes*", Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 463). Consequently, though the products infamous secret 7X formula created an air of mystery for the company, Coca Cola's secret formula now serves little purpose and has been published in books, the recipe is readily available and can be found in Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 457).

One member of the company claims that the success of the product is based on “brand equity” and thinks that people would “*Accept no substitute*” if it were to be reproduced, Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 462). Coca-Cola planned for the long haul and having spent over “*100 years and untold amounts of money*” on developing its brand image, it would be difficult to duplicate the product successfully, Pendergeist, M. (2000, p. 460). Imitators would have to charge more for the product than the ‘Real Thing’; therefore the product and its brand are secure.

## References

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