History of the Coca-Cola Company

What has made Coca-Cola Company the powerful successful brand name that it is today, and how has the company changed or developed over the years. I did research in the history of the company to identify the development of this worldwide favorite. It was interesting to see just how fast the company grew from such humble beginnings and staggering to see it have such a large impact throughout the world. I think coke is very interesting to look at because the name is known worldwide and it seems like everyone has at one time tried a Coca-Cola Company product. It was neat to see the many the different techniques the company used to get their product out there and what marketing strategies proved to be extremely successful for them. I think this company is an excellent example of a properly run successful business and its model should be one that can be examined for years to come in the food and business world.

Summary of Findings

Coke was originally invented by Dr. John Pemberton on May 8th 1886. Pemberton was a pharmacist who had a rather inventive side, always trying new formulas for medicine in his pharmacy. He concocted the syrup in his Atlanta, Georgia pharmacy by accident while attempting to make cold medicine. After tasting the sweetness of the syrup Pemberton thought he might have something. He brought it down the street to the Jacobs Street Pharmacy, where it was mixed with carbonated water and deemed excellent upon first sample. It was put on sale for five cents a glass at the pharmacy’s check out counter. Coke was originally advertised as a “intellectual beverage” that can be used as a cure for common ailments such as cold, head-ache, hysteria, and melancholy. However this has not proven to be the case, Coke is actually a rather unhealthy beverage loaded with calories and sugar. Sales were slow in the first years the only nine glasses sold per day on average. Much of this had to do with the minimal advertising and the fact that you could only buy it from a few pharmacy counters around Atlanta. Pemberton never really realized the true potential in his Coke Company and after the not so promising first year, he went on over the next year selling parts of the company to other businessmen in the area. After selling small parts of the company to other men, he sold the remainder of his share to Asa G. Candler in 1888. Candler was an extremely savvy businessman and realized the true potential of the company. He soon acquired the remainder of the shares of the company, costing him a total of only $2300.
Candler was an expert promoter, and he went on to increase Coca-Cola advertising and grow the company’s name. He did this by basically getting the general public to become familiar with the brand through promotion and actually sampling coke. He gave out coupons for free glasses of Coca-Cola, fans with the company’s logo on it, calendars, clocks, toys, pictures, paintings and numerous other novelties all with the trademark Coca-Cola logo. His advertising work and the company continued to grow. He patented the product in 1893; at that time it was the first patent for a carbonated soda beverage. In 1894 the first syrup manufacturing plant outside Georgia was opened in Dallas, Texas. By 1895, additional plants had opened and coke was becoming well known and widespread, in fact Coca-Cola could claim that their cola was being consumed in every state in the U.S.

The Company continued to grow and word began to spread about it’s success and delicious carbonated beverage. In 1899 Benjamin Thomas and Joseph Whitehead from Tennessee bought the exclusive rights to bottle Coca-Cola in most of the U.S. The men joined up with John Upton and began what is known today as the worldwide Coca-Cola bottling system, opening the first bottling plant in Chattanooga later that year. Over the next 20 years, the company expanded to more than 1,000 bottling plants. In 1916 the designers at the company made the uniquely contoured glass coke bottle that has remained infamous with the company throughout the years. In 1919 Ernest Woodruff headed a group of investors that purchased the company for $25 million, and 500,00 company stocks were made available to the public. Four years later, his son Robert Woodruff became president and began to push the Coca-Cola Company into the future. He increased the advertisement budget and pushed for more bottled coke sales. In the early 1920’s the company invented the six carton case for bottles, this made it much more convenient for families because they could pick up a pack of Coke at the grocery store as opposed to buying individual bottles or fountain drink. As a product of this, the sales of bottled of coke outnumbered the sales of fountain drinks for the first time in 1928. Woodruff had great success with the company both within the U.S. and outside it. His most notable achievement was bringing the company to the world by encouraging international expansion. In 1926 he established the foreign part of the company, which was responsible for the promotion of coke products overseas. It later became the Coca-Cola Export Corporation. This emphasis on foreign markets was never really seen from an American food company or any company before in the U.S., which shows just how innovative some of the company’s advertisement and marketing techniques, were. The company partnered with the Olympic games in the summer of 1928 in hopes of spreading the companies name and product to athletes and citizens throughout the world, which would in turn help grow the company’s influence and success in foreign markets.

In the onset of WWII, Coke had already established itself as one of the best-known brands in the U.S. and was a favorite of adult and children alike. The company was able to identify with the American public by appealing to traditional families values and pastimes. This helped establish many loyal customers who would become coke drinkers for life. At this time, Coke had bottling operations in 44
countries around the world. President Woodruff famously said that he wished “to see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for 5 cents, wherever he is and whatever it costs the company” The following effort by the company to make this happen was enormous. Throughout the war 64 bottling plants were set up in proximity to war zones and over 5 billion bottles of coke were consumed by military personnel. The presence of Coca-Cola in the War efforts gave many people the opportunity to try coke for the first time overseas and continued to grow the brand in America where it was now associated with patriotism and the pride of the people. Upon the end of the war more people had tried coke then ever before and the company was positioned for great success. From the mid 1940’s to the 1960’s, the number of coke bottling plants in other countries had doubled, and the company continued to flourish.

In 1955, Coke first introduced 10, 12, and 26 ounce bottles and in 1960 they introduced the first metal can for Coke, followed later by the plastic 2-liter bottle in 1977. These new inventions in terms of product packaging in part lead the way for packaging techniques that are used today for all sorts of beverages. In the 60’s coke began to sell additional brands of drink such as Fanta, Sprite, Tab, and Minute Maid juices. These new products were hits in the U.S. markets and foreign markets alike. Fanta today is still one of most drunk sodas in the world. In 1982, Coke introduced Diet Coke, which become the number 1 selling diet pop in two years. In 1988. Coke was recognized by 3 independent surveyors as the best known, most admired trademark in the world. Coke now operates in more than 200 countries and has nearly 450 different brands.

**Conclusion**

It was very interesting to examine the history of one of the most successful companies in the world. Something that surprised me was just how fast the company began to expand from such humble beginnings. After only 7 years of existence, their product was being consumed in every U.S. state. Much of this can be credited to the company’s history of extremely smart owners and their marketing and promotion prowess. The company was able to position itself as an American favorite by identifying itself with things that we value such as athletic competition, traditional family values and patriotism. This helped grow their popularity first in the states and eventually on a worldwide scale, eventually becoming the most recognized brand in the entire world.

**Sources**
