Coca-Cola’s History

The Coca-Cola symbol has been a recognized trademark in the US for almost a century, and the name has been a household word for a long time. Both the name and the product are known to millions of consumers in more than 195 countries. In fact, it is said that Coca-Cola is the most recognized trademark in the world.

5 A pharmacist, John Styth Pemberton, first introduced Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia after inventing caramel-colored syrup in his backyard in May, 1886. Pemberton originally thought of his drink as a medicinal tonic. Based on the ingredients in the drink, coca leaves and the African kola nut, Dr. Pemberton’s partner and bookkeeper, Frank M. Robinson, suggested the name. But rather than using “K” for kola nut, he used the letter “C” because it was believed the two “C’s” were more attractive from a marketing point of view. Robinson then wrote it in the elegant script, which is famous today.

Pemberton sold twenty-five gallons of Coca-Cola and grossed fifty dollars his first year, which did not cover the advertising costs. Because of his bad health, Pemberton decided to sell the company. In 1891, Asa G. Candler, a businessman from Atlanta, was able to gain ownership, and with his knowledge of marketing, introduced Coca-Cola throughout the United States.

The first marketing efforts in Coca-Cola history were executed through coupons promoting free samples of the drink. Considered an innovative tactic back in 1887, couponing was followed by newspaper advertising and the distribution of promotional items bearing the Coca-Cola script to participating pharmacies. In addition to newspaper advertisements, the company began putting its trademark on a wide variety of things, including painted wall signs, barn signs, paperweights, calendars, serving trays, bookmarks, and streetcar cards. In addition, a new bottle was designed for the product, one that was different from those of its competitors. The result was the unique hourglass-like bottle the company used in the past.

In the 1970s, Coca-Cola’s advertising started to reflect a brand connected with fun, friends and good times. The 1980s featured such memorable slogans as “Coke is It!”, “Catch the Wave” and “Can’t Beat the Feeling”. In 1993, Coca-Cola experimented with computer animation, and the popular “Always Coca-Cola” campaign was launched in a series of ads featuring animated polar bears. The bears were, and still are, a huge hit with consumers because of their embodiment of characteristics like innocence, and fun.

30 In 2009, Coca-Cola globally unveiled “Open Happiness” campaign. The central message of “Open Happiness” is an invitation to billions around the world to pause, refresh with a Coca-Cola, and continue to enjoy one of life’s simple pleasures. The “Open Happiness” message was seen in stores, on billboards, in TV spots and printed advertisement along with digital and music components.

35 Although in 1886 Dr. Pemberton sold, on average, nine drinks of Coca-Cola per day, Coca-Cola has grown to be the world's most universal brands, with more than 1.6 billion drinks sold each day. Now well into its second century, the company's goal is still to provide magic every time someone drinks one of its more than 400 brands.