THE MARKET

Sprite is America's and the world's most popular lemon-lime soft drink and the third best-selling carbonated soft drink after Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

Sprite has been one of the fastest-growing carbonated soft drinks in the world for some years now. Other top markets for the beverage outside the U.S. include such diverse countries as China, Mexico, the Philippines, and Germany. The brand clearly has outstanding appeal to claim this kind of popularity in very different environments, and this indicates a highly successful future for it.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Sprite is the second-best selling soft drink of The Coca-Cola Company. It was the third brand to be introduced by the company.

In 1994, the brand made the leap from competing with other lemon-lime sodas to the soft drink mainstream after interviews with Sprite drinkers gave the brand's promotional style a new direction. Interviewers learned that drinkers liked Sprite not only for its lemon-lime flavor but also for its irreverent, unconventional attitude. The new Sprite slogan became, "Follow your instincts. Obey your thirst." and this, along with the relationship with the National Basketball Association, made it the fastest-growing brand of the day.

As a result of the repositioning, Sprite took the lead in the non-cola segment of the soft-drink market in the same year, incidentally also passing the one billion unit case mark worldwide, and it has not relinquished it since. Sprite is now sold in 188 countries worldwide.

HISTORY

There can't be many brands in the world where the name and the mascot pre-date the product itself by far. Sprite is such a brand. The name "Sprite" actually originated through the character of the "Sprite Boy," an elfin imp drawn by Haddon Sundblom that symbolized the life and sparkle of Coca-Cola and helped to convey the message that "Coke" means "Coca-Cola" and nothing else.

The first advertisement featuring the silver-haired Sprite Boy appeared in 1942, and he was used in magazine advertising and on signs, posters, cartons, clocks, napkins, and even toys. The Sprite Boy continued to be used until the late 1950s, around the time that The Coca-Cola Company began developing a light, tart, carbonated drink to compete with other non-cola products. Once the drink had been formulated, it was natural to choose the short, sharp, and memorable sound of "Sprite," and the name was bestowed on the new brand that would eventually become one of the world's leading soft drinks.

Once the Company purchased rights to the name, test marketing of the product began in August, 1960, in seven-ounce and 12-ounce bottles in Lansing, Michigan, and Sandusky, Ohio. The test marketing was a success, and in 1961 U.S. consumers were invited to taste the tingling tartness of this new soft drink called Sprite.

The lemon-lime beverage was introduced by the Fanta Beverage Company, then a division of The Coca-Cola Company. Up to that time, the only brands offered had been Coca-Cola itself and Fanta, an orange-flavored drink. Sprite was made available to all bottlers in 1961 in four bottle sizes ranging to 16 ounces, and in cans.

By October of the first sales year, Sprite was being produced by 214 bottlers and available in 40 states.

THE PRODUCT

Sprite is a tart, light, carbonated lemon-lime soft drink. The Sprite bottle design, bright green with refreshing bubbles decorating its surface,

is still considered one of the most distinctive in the soft-drink industry.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Helping Sprite's popularity with teens is a ground-breaking Internet promotion launched in late 2000. Sprite has joined forces with RocketCash, a leading online gateway featuring more than 100 e-tailers, to create Sprite.com, a portal dedicated to enabling teens to shop online and buy what they want without a credit card.

Teens are able to collect and redeem RocketCash codes found under the caps of 20-ounce, one liter and 500 milliliter bottles of Sprite. The codes represent the online currency that enables them to make purchases at Sprite.com. The brand is distributing more than a billion Sprite bottles marked with the special codes, or with an instant-win message for a free Sprite.

PROMOTION

The first ad campaign for Sprite was geared to the slogan, "Taste Its Tingling Tartness", but after a groundbreaking re-launch in 1994 the brand's marketing has switched to a more youth-oriented approach.

The current Sprite advertising campaign, which is based on the slogan, "Obey Your Thirst," employs a globally relevant concept that has a dual meaning, youth relevance, and a message that speaks to the core essence of what Sprite and young people are all about. It encourages teenagers to be self-reliant and to drink what tastes good when they are thirsty.

The ads use a straightforward approach, often incorporating irreverent humor, to reinforce the Sprite brand personality and encourage teenagers to trust their instincts.

The Sprite name is also kept highly visible in the United States through its role as the official soft drink of the National Basketball Association and the brand's association with snowboarding and skateboarding. The brand is also linked with Hip Hop music and its culture.

Similarly, the Sprite "Trust Your Instincts" campaign highlights moments of creativity in the player's game and encourages teens to express their individual styles. NBA stars like Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers and Grant Hill of the Detroit Pistons have been featured in Sprite advertising and promotions.

The essence of both snowboarding and skateboarding also closely fits the Sprite brand architecture. Each of those activities requires participants to trust their instincts, be true to themselves, have such qualities as self-confidence, individualism, freedom, a personal style, and an ability to express themselves.

BRAND VALUES

While Sprite has seen outstanding success as a brand among a diverse range of age groups and ethnicities, it has found its place primarily among teens. What makes it stand out for teenagers is only partly the taste; the brand's attitude, its irreverence and unconventionality have turned out to be equally distinguishing for the brand. Sprite's latest packaging reinforces this attitude with bold green and blue design highlighted by silver bubbles.

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT SPRITE

- The Sprite Boy, the character that embodies the soft drink, has strong links with two other brand names, Coca-Cola and Coke. His original mission was to introduce the name "Coke" as synonymous with "Coca-Cola."
- The Sprite Boy was drawn by Haddon Sundblom, the man who also created the modern image of Santa Claus for The Coca-Cola Company.
- There are 450 different soft drinks available on the U.S. market; Sprite is the third-best seller, and the best selling non-cola drink.
- Diet Sprite has been advertised by model Paulina Porizkova.
- It is interesting that Sprite has found its followers in the ranks of teenagers, considering that back in 1965, Sprite was promoted with the slogan, "Naturally tart for adult tastes."
- Market research has indicated that its drinkers like Sprite primarily for its irreverent, unconventional attitude. The taste comes second!