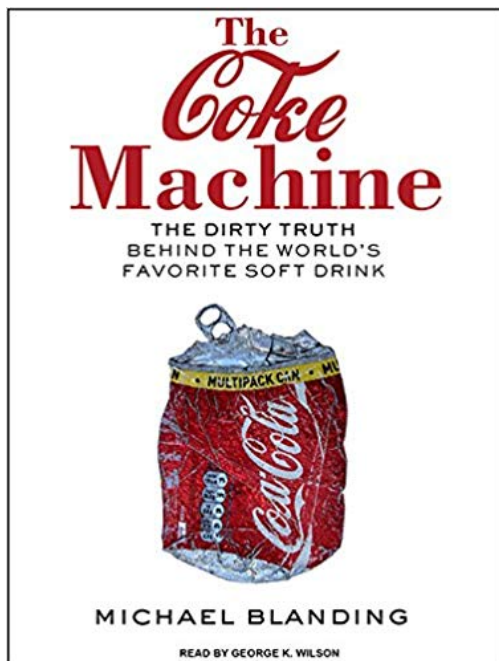


The Coke Machine: The Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink *by* George K. Wilson, Michael Blanding



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Ever since its "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" commercials from the 1970s, Coca-Cola has billed itself as the world's beverage, uniting all colors and cultures in a mutual love of its caramel-sweet sugar water. The formula has worked incredibly well, making it one of the most profitable companies on the planet and Coca-Cola the world's second-most-recognized word after hello. However, as the company expands its reach into both domestic and foreign markets, an increasing number of the world's citizens are finding the taste of Coke more bitter than sweet. Journalist Michael Blanding's *The Coke Machine* probes shocking accusations about the company's global impact, including: -Coca-Cola's history of winning at any cost, even if it meant that its franchisees were making deals with the Nazis and Guatemalan paramilitary squads -How Coke has harmed children's health and contributed to an obesity epidemic through exclusive soda contracts in schools -The horrific environmental impact of Coke bottling plants in India and Mexico, where water supplies have been decimated while toxic pollution has escalated -That Coke bottlers stand accused of conspiring with paramilitaries to threaten, kidnap, and murder union leaders in their bottling plants in Colombia A disturbing portrait drawn from an award-winning journalist's daring, in-depth research, *The Coke Machine* is the first comprehensive probe of the company and its secret formula for greed.



Reviews of the **The Coke Machine: The Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink** by George K. Wilson, Michael Blanding

Vudozilkree

Some of the chapters start out or include smutty little portions which should have been part of a grocery store tabloid rather than a history of the company with the most-recognized trademark in the world. Maybe this portions belong in the story; the reader must form his/her own opinion. The book is pretty much a no-holds-barred collection of anecdotes and characters who have made the company what it is today. It includes the Pepsi wars and fights for survival as America's and the world's tastes have demanded. Many readers, including this one, were probably not aware that Coke had bottlers in Nazi Germany when WW II was in full swing. Other revelations may strike the reader as reasons enough to drink only distilled water.

With its many twists and turns, it constitutes a readable and interesting yarn, not among my top ten or even 100, but still a pretty good book.

Gogul

A well researched, well written book about what is arguably the world's most recognizable brand. The author provides a glimpse corporate history as to how they achieved that pinnacle of success, and more importantly the lengths they go to in protecting that brand.

energy breath

You know what I found compelling about this book? Even my 12 year old grandson was interested in it's content. This is a great read for adults and adults who would like to educate their children about the REAL story behind Coke!

Shou

I don't drink Coke bc of this book.

Just an awful company

Perongafa

Great book.

Detenta

After reading this book, I'm glad I do not drink this stuff.

you secret

I went in to this book hoping to get more detail regarding Coke's behavior in the world regarding third world water supplies. This is a topic covered toward the end of the book, but is by no means a dominating theme. Most of the book examines capitalism itself and uses Coca-Cola as the poster boy for the economic system. It usually does not shine a favorable light on the subject.

The first section is a summary of the companies first years and how exactly it came about. This part is very interesting and it is especially nice to have a concise version of events not sanitized by the marketing drones in the corporation. The author leans heavily on more substantial volumes regarding the subject and is very up front about that at all times. I found the story quite fascinating, but was happy to read the abridged version. I may grab one of the references mentioned to have on the bookshelf at some point.

After the history lesson, which really does help to understand later decisions, the book heads right into labor relations and the inevitable conflicts. It feels like almost any corporation doing business in third world countries could be substituted here for the same effect. I'm not saying that this is bad material or that this isn't a very worthwhile discussion. But if a reader is looking for Coke specific behaviors I think this will be a disappointment. Again, the issue the author seems to be making is that multi-national corporations are difficult to hold to any degree of accountability and Coke is used as the example.

The book then discusses the obesity issue and the link to Coke. This is more on target for the books title. But again, Coke has lots of company on this issue. The more interesting facet to this section is the legal and public relations battles fought over pouring contracts in schools. This is an area unique to soft drinks and dominated by Coke. Although this was not the issue that made me order the book, I found this to be very interesting and relevant. In the end though, it read like any other tale of activism versus a big companies PR/legal dynamic duo. Every victory for the little guy was hollow at best and often furthered the agenda of the very company they faced. It reminded me of Microsoft a great deal.

The last section delves into the territory I was most intrigued by from the beginning. The role Coke plays in local water supplies in third world countries has been questioned by multiple reporting sources. I found this to be disappointing as well. The writing treats this issue like any other environmental issue focusing on how much water is consumed and how much waste is returned to the ecosystem. This isn't unique to Coke at all and can be studied using so many players it could be a book itself. The one strange twist was the idea that bottling plants appear to have been selling the poisonous sludge to local farmers as fertilizer. That was creepy. But again, the author seemed to be using Coke as the example for very common problems. I was looking for more about the reported instances of Coke making back room deals to secure all water rights and then pricing Coke product cheaper than clean water. The text touched on these ideas, but they were never the main thrust of the writing.

I don't want to come across as dismissive of this book or the ideas inside. They are incredibly important questions to be asking in this day and age. And the book is very well written and impeccably documented. But I just felt a little bait and switched coming in to read about the Coca-Cola company and finding the very real dark side of capitalism and multi-national corporations instead.

I discovered this book through my advertising industry newsletter. Most people in advertising are familiar with Coke's powerful branding being responsible for their lead in sales over the years, despite taste-test preferences toward Pepsi. I read the book with plans to delve deeper into the history of their advertising over the years, but also because I have an interest in health and nutrition, especially the fight against child obesity.

This book certainly shed insight into both topics, purportedly referencing other historical or nutritional accounts of Coke. Most of the book addresses Coke's modern history in terms of unions and environmental impacts within two countries, then American's response to international human rights affairs. It was part of the story I didn't find as interesting, yet the book was heavily developed in these sections.

Overall insightful, full of unflattering data which has probably been somewhat manipulated for effect. Don't read it as fact, read it as an editorial essay.

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