

**ONLINE CASE 2.10 COCA-COLA RECALL IN EUROPE**

supplemental material to the text of

**Modern Marketing Research: Concepts, Methods, and Cases**

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In 1999, after 70 years of sales of Coca-Cola in Belgium, the country banned the soft drink. This ban came about due to multiple reports of head and stomach pain experienced by Coca-Cola drinkers. Dozens of schoolchildren were hospitalized, and Coca-Cola subsequently recalled 15 million cans and bottles. The company advanced several possible explanations, including fungicide contamination and a problem with the carbon dioxide used to give Coke its distinctive fizz.

France and Luxembourg quickly reacted by banning Coke in those countries as well. In the United Kingdom, Coke sales had not yet recovered from a scandal in which double the allowable amount of benzene was found in carbon dioxide used by Coca-Cola. The company's reputation in Europe was in serious danger. The product management team was under intense pressure to determine a course of action to resolve the quality assurance problems and save the brand's image. The team first asked for a test to demonstrate that the amount of contaminants (e.g., benzene) in the carbon dioxide used by Coke was well below the allowable levels; they wished to use the results of the test to reassure the public that Coke was safe to drink.

**Case Questions**

- 1 Prepare an experimental design that would allow management to determine the level of contaminants in Coke. Be sure to clearly identify test units, dependent variables, treatments, methods for control of extraneous variables, timing of measurements taken, selection of test units, and assignment of test units to treatments.
- 2 Display your design using the  $R$ ,  $\theta$ , and  $X$  symbols of experimental design.
- 3 Given brand management's statement of purpose for the research, how should Coke's marketing researchers state the objective for the research?

**Sources:** "Belgium Bans Coca-Cola." *BBC News*, June 14, 1999.

"Latest News: Leading Soft Drinks Withdrawn." *BBC News*, June 1, 1998.

Summary of Coca-Cola Quality Assurance Procedures.