



REAL GEOGRAPHY

EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

McGraw-Hill Higher Education

“Geography of Fast Food Restaurants” by Jon C. Malinowski, Ph.D.

The soft drink bottling industry is a good example of a market oriented firm. Market orientation, you'll recall, occurs when a company's final shipping costs are a relatively high proportion of the total value of a good.

In the soft drink business, the final product is usually a 12 oz, 20 oz, or one liter bottle of the beverage. This product is almost all water, however. Water is ubiquitous, it can be found all over the country. So, instead of delivering full bottles, companies like Coca Cola deliver the ingredients to regional and local bottlers who produce the final product.

In the case of Coca-Cola, the bottler must assemble sweetener, bottles, caps, labels, carbon dioxide (CO₂), and a concentrated form of the Coke



secret formula. These products are shipped to the bottling facility and weigh much less than the final weight of full bottles. Regular water can be acquired locally for little cost and no shipping.

At the plant, sugar is mixed with water and then is blended with the concentrated flavoring syrup. Then carbonation is

added and the bottles are filled. Capping and labeling occurs next, followed by coding, packaging, and shipping.

The distance to the market, because the bottlers are regional, is now much shorter than it would be if the product was packaged at one national plant. And, because the final weight is much higher than the

main ingredients shipped to the bottler, the company is reducing the distance it has to ship a heavy product.

The next time you pick up a national brand soft drink (soda, coke, or pop), take a look at the label and see if you can figure out where it was bottled. Chances are, it was nearby.

Further Research

1. What other businesses in your community are market oriented? Can you prove it by mapping the industry's location?
2. Surf over to the Coca-Cola "About Bottling" site listed on the right and take the Virtual Plant tour to get a fun look at how a soft drink is bottled.

Links:

- Coca-Cola "About Bottling" <http://www2.coca-cola.com/ourcompany/aboutbottling.html>
- Coca-Cola Enterprises <http://www.cokecce.com/srclib/index.html>
- Beverage Digest <http://www.beverage-digest.com/>
- Beverage Industry <http://www.bevindustry.com/>