The Life Cycle of Bubble Gum

1. Research and Product Development

The first step in the lifecycle of a product is the research and product development. The company has to figure out what will work the best for each product with each set of circumstances. In the chewing gum market a lot of research is currently going towards cavity prevention and reducing waste in packaging. The major way that the process of chewing gum decreases cavities is by increasing the amount of saliva to wash away food and acid. Chewing gum companies are trying to enhance this effect and use sugar free sweeteners. The companies have to experiment with different artificial sweeteners to not sacrifice taste. To see if the finished product can be labeled with the American Dental Association seal of acceptance it must pass either a clinical trial or a surrogate trial. Clinical trials have a control group and a test group that chewed gum after every meal and the amount of cavities were compared. In surrogate tests the increase of saliva is measured along with pH of the saliva to see if the gum would be effective. Another big area that gum companies are putting their research money into is sustainability. Wrigley’s is trying to reduce waste in the packaging of their products. They stopped using foil wrappers in some of their products and are working towards reducing the amount of plastic in the containers.

2. Marketing

The environmentally friendly image that Wrigley’s is creating also helps them to market their products. In a world that is increasingly concerned with the environment, people are looking toward companies that share the same viewpoints as them. Wrigley’s advertises their eco-friendly products and consumers are more likely to buy them. Like all companies, chewing gum companies take advantage of the marketing mix of price, product, promotion, and place to maximize the amount of people that see and buy their products. The price needs to be set in such a way that profits are maximized. The price of the product needs to be low enough for consumers to buy it but high enough to make a profit. Since there are many competitor brands it is hard to set a price. The product itself must be eye-catching. Chewing gum packages are very colorful and have vivid imagery to describe the product. Words like “ice cool” “invigorating” and
“stimulating” are used for companies to convey a certain image about their product. Advertising is important to any company and common ways of advertising for gum companies are magazine ads and commercials. The advertisements focus on connecting fun and happy emotions to their products. Placement also affects the amount of people that see the product. A popular placement for gum is by the checkout at grocery stores. Gum is also sold at places you wouldn’t usually think of such as clothing stores. Samples of sugar free gum are out on counters at dentist offices along with information about the brand to advertise the benefits of chewing gum to prevent tooth decay. The US chewing gum market decreased by 3.5% from 2009-2013 mainly because of lowered teenage interest and the growing price of sugar. Efforts are focused toward marketing more sugar free gum and gearing their strategies toward teenagers again.

2. Manufacturing
Modern day bubble gum is made in a factory. The manufacturing process starts with a “gum base” which is made of rubbers and plastics. The manufacturers then mix the gum base with a color dye and a flavoring agent for about 20 minutes. As the ingredients mix, they pour in a sweetener, traditionally glucose syrup. They also add dextrose, a powdered sweetener, to the mix. During the mixing process, all the ingredients mix and fuse together.

The resulting wad of gum gets moved to a machine called the Pre-extruder, which squeezes the gum through several openings. This turns the wad into small strips, which then get moved to a machine called the Extruder, which shapes the strips like bubblegum. Depending on the manufacturer, the shapes are different, the most popular shape for gum is a thin flat strip. These strips are then passed through a cooling chamber to cool them off before being wrapped.

3. Packaging
Bubble gum is usually packaged in single pieces. During the manufacturing process, the cooled, completed lines of gum are passed through a machine commonly called the Cut and Wrapper. This machine cuts the continuous string of gum into small pieces and individually packages each piece. It can cut and wrap up to 900 pieces of gum each minute. Depending on the gum manufacturer, the gum is either packaged in small boxes or in tubs.

If the gum is packaged in boxes, the individually wrapped pieces get sorted in a machine that then places the whole arrangement in a box small enough to put in your pocket. If the gum is packaged in tubs, a counting machine counts how many pieces belong in each tub, then deposits them in the plastic container. After the gum is in the package, it is wrapped, usually in plastic, then shipped to the distributor.
4. Sales, Distribution, and Transportation
   a. Sales
      Last year the total sale of gum in the United States was 2 billion dollars. Gum sales have dropped 11% over the past 4 years. Gum market is down 20% in volume over the past 5 years. Leading gum brand is Wrigley’s Double Mint with 110.4 million in sales. The reason for the decrease in sales is that mints have gained popularity.
   b. Distribution
      Chewing Gum companies use two channels for distribution. One is through wholesalers, who supply retail stores. These retail stores include convenience stores, grocery stores, gas stations, newsstands, and restaurants. Another channel of distribution are vending machines which are stocked by distributors. The main goal for the distributors is to just allow consumers to have access to gum wherever they are. No matter how small the store or vendor they just want their products on the shelves.
   c. Transportation
      Use standard procedures to place their product around the world like automobiles, planes, or boats.

5. Consumer Use
   Consumers chew gum for a variety of reasons. Because there have been studies that proved the beneficial use of gum like, boosting mental performance, and decreasing the feeling of sleepiness, consumers decide to chew gum. There are also other reasons people decide to chew gum. To freshen breath, improve oral health, reduce symptoms of stress, improves memory, and improves digestion. The average person chews about 300 stick of gum per year.

6. Final Disposition
   The life cycle of bubble gum can end in a few different ways and there is actually a large problem raised over how to best dispose of it. The major problem is that doesn’t biodegrade as the gum base is made of plastic, rubber, or wax so if you just throw your gum on the street, it won’t ever go away and costs lots of money from the municipalities to remove it. You might think that since it is a food, you could just eat it, but because of the plastic base, no creature can even digest it and gum doesn’t provide any sustenance or nutrients anyway. Getting desperate, there has been lots of research into attempting to recycle used gum and reclaim the plastic. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to work as people wouldn’t be bothered to put their gum in a dedicated can as people already just like to spit it out and not even use a regular trash can. Lastly, there are scientists at Bristol University who have created a new type of sugar based gum that will dissolve after 6 months called rev7 which has received mostly positive reviews from retailers and gum chewers alike. Until the new dissolvable gum becomes popular and commonplace, the best way is to throw the gum in the trash. For those pieces that “miss” the
trashcan, there is a large job for the local governments to get rid of all of the black dots that cover a majority of sidewalks.
Work Cited


