

### ONLINE CASE 3.11 COMFIMAX TAMPONS

supplemental material to the text of

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

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Tampons were invented by Dr. Earle Cleveland Haas, a general practitioner, whose inspiration came from observations of the discomfort of his wife and of his female patients who wore bulky external pads. The idea for the tampon was patented by Haas in 1931 and commercialized by a Denver group of investors in 1934. Since then, the tampon market has experienced extraordinary growth, reaching its maturity phase in the intervening decades throughout the United States, Canada, and much of western Europe, where about 70 percent of women regularly purchase tampon products.

The tampon market itself is divided into two sub-products: tampons with and without applicators. ComfiMax S.A. is a well-established tampon manufacturer whose products, which have applicators, are branded under the ComfiMax company name. Recently, a new management team was appointed to lead the ComfiMax Tampons Business Unit. The new five-year strategic plan, approved under the new management, posed as the key goal for the ComfiMax tampon division “to achieve a leading market share in the tampon product category.” Despite the brand’s dominant market share in the applicator tampon segment, it was obvious that it had to expand into the non-applicator segment to make the five-year goal possible. The task of expanding the product portfolio was assigned to Peg Buddox, the marketing manager of ComfiMax applicator tampons, and her team.

From previous studies conducted on tampon use, Buddox knew that consumers’ perceptions and attitudes differed between the applicator and non-applicator user segments. Her judgment suggested that information available from these studies was not sufficient to proceed with the non-applicator tampon launch. Therefore, Buddox decided to commission a new study that focused on those users who preferred the non-applicator form of the product. She requested from her team a briefing document about the project and its intended scope and information needs and planned, after reviewing it carefully, to communicate its findings to the account executive of the firm that was handling ComfiMax’s research projects.

The briefing document described the study’s objective as acquiring information about the non-applicator tampon user segment that would enable ComfiMax to successfully launch a non-applicator product and achieve 15 percent market share with a five-year time horizon.

Specifically, ComfiMax sought to answer the following questions:

- Should the non-applicator product be launched under the ComfiMax umbrella brand name or under another, presumably new, name?
- On the one hand, ComfiMax enjoyed almost 100 percent brand awareness among tampon users overall. On the other hand, management was understandably concerned about extending this name into a new segment, for two reasons. First, there was the issue of cannibalization; perhaps using the same brand name would erode demand for its core applicator tampon product. Second, management felt that it was crucial to communicate the non-applicator nature of the new product, and it seemed that using the same name might impede them in that goal.

- How can we best understand the decision-making process of the consumers in the non-applicator tampon segment? What spurred these users to buy in the category at all? And, once decided, how did they choose a brand?

The ComfiMax team split the decision-making process into three phases (pre-purchase, point-of-purchase, and post-purchase) and requested that the survey be performed in a manner reflecting these distinct phases. The team asked the following questions, broken out by phase:

*Prepurchase:*

- What degree of category loyalty is typical among non-applicator tampon users? Do they use other products in the feminine hygiene category (tampons with applicators, pads)?
- Which pre-purchase sources help inform the decision about which brand to purchase? What is the relative importance of such sources?
- What degree of brand loyalty is typical among non-applicator tampon users? Do some brands generate much greater loyalty than others? Can promotion help dislodge users from one brand to another?
- What factors increase the trial likelihood for a new non-applicator tampon brand? What does it take to “convert” a loyal user?
- How do we effectively reach those who are not opposed to the idea of a new non-applicator tampon, and, secondarily, the “aware rejectors”—those who have previously tried, but decided against, a non-applicator tampon—and convince them to try the new ComfiMax non-applicator brand? Can they be convinced that ComfiMax is “new and different” and persuaded to try the category once again?
- Who, what, how, and where should we target? What psychographic and geodemographic characteristics should we be on the lookout for?
- What is the correct message to drive the business for the new product? To whom should it be aimed (over and above consumer segments, e.g., influencers such as gynecologists)? Through what channels?

*Point-of-Purchase:*

- Is the brand decision made before or at the point of purchase? What is the relative proportion of those who decide in advance and those who decide when in the store? What are the typical profiles of each type of consumer?
- For the “point-of-purchase” segment, which factors affect the brand decision most effectively (e.g., packaging, “regular” price, discounts, other promotions)?
- Can cross-channel/cross-product promotions help induce trial of the new non-applicator tampon? What sorts? Will they have to be done jointly with other manufacturers?
- When there are (inevitable) stock-outs, what do both loyal and non-loyal users do? Do they switch brands, wait, switch formats (application vs. non-), visit another store?

*Postpurchase:*

- Which factors most affect users’ post-purchase recalled experience and satisfaction levels?
- Which factors help drive repurchase in the category, as opposed to purchases of other, competing products (e.g., pads, applicator tampons)? Which factors help drive repurchase of specific brands, ComfiMax in particular, within the non-applicator market?

- Do satisfied users recommend their favored brands to others? Is this a positive market trait?
- What are current satisfaction levels among existing non-applicator tampon brands? How do these brands score on the product features that affect users' repurchase decisions?

Clearly, ComfiMax wanted a great deal of information. The key issue would be how to obtain it all in a timely, cost-effective, and accurate manner.

### Case Questions

- 1 Write a survey proposal appropriate for ComfiMax's objectives and information needs. Be specific about the details that would be needed to implement the study (e.g., sampling procedure, type of interviews).
- 2 Design a questionnaire that would address the information needs stated in the briefing document, and prepare a coding manual for it.
- 3 ComfiMax seems to want to know pretty much everything one *can* know about the non-applicator market and user segments. Is all this information truly necessary at this stage of the decision-making process? Specifically, divide the company's wish list (the pre-, point-of-, and post-purchase questions) into those that are critical and those that can wait until after the launch. For the "critical" set, prioritize and order them explicitly. Are any likely to be especially extensive (and, by implication, costly)?
- 4 Do you believe that this explicit division into pre-purchase, point-of-purchase, and post-purchase is an appropriate framework for understanding market and segment dynamics? Because ComfiMax's non-applicator product has not even been introduced, are any of the stated information needs premature? Which in particular are necessary for the sort of break-even and other financial analyses typical in making early-stage, go/no-go decisions?
- 5 What kind of statistical analyses would you recommend to ComfiMax's marketing manager? Provide specific details about the value of each analysis that you propose.

**Sources:** <http://www.tampax.com>  
<http://www.stayfreemagazine.org>