

Market Research Surveys in the Marketing of Consumer Products

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To achieve commercial success, any skin care product having given functional properties will on the consumer market also depend on a high degree of attraction, comfort and effective marketing. To accomplish this, consumer surveys are necessary in the various stages of product development and the marketing process. A brief description of the latter is given and of the various types of related surveys. To illustrate certain product tests, examples are given of the relaunch of HTH in the nordic markets.

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INTRODUCTION

A successful consumer product in the skin care sector is dependent not only on certain functional characteristics but also on properties such as a high degree of comfort, attraction and effective marketing.

The marketing of consumer products can be regarded as a multi-stage process. At each stage the marketing manager needs information if he is to obtain good results. A short description of the various stages in the marketing process and the different types of survey which are linked to the different stages now follows.

An analysis of the present situation defines the market in terms of the people involved in it. A study is made of the competition and, perhaps first and foremost, the consumers. At this stage market information can be obtained via paper-

work research or customised consumer surveys in which the attitudes and behaviour of consumers towards the product category in question are studied.

Problems and opportunities are identified during the next stage. If consumers feel that there are problems related to a product or product category, it should be possible to find solutions in the shape of new products which solve the problem in question. Problem detection studies (PDS) are one type of study which can be used during this phase.

In stage three, product ideas are generated and tested on different areas of the consumer market. Qualitative surveys in the form of group discussions are often used to sift out the poor ideas and identify the good ones.

The next stage may involve defining the product concept, target group and the name of the product. Concept tests and name tests may be used. It is worth noting that the product itself may not even have seen the light of day as yet.

A marketing mix is defined and created prior to a launch. This mix consists of the actual product, the price of the product, possible versions (range), the packaging, advertising and other promotional activities. Product tests, price studies, range and packaging tests, together with pilot tests of advertisements, can be included in this stage.

The product is launched and a strong brand name can be created with the aid of a powerful marketing mix. Creating strong brand names is the ultimate aim of every professional marketing manager. Strong brand names generate more test purchases and greater consumer loyalty. Penetration and brand image studies are needed to follow the creation phase of the brand and its subsequent life on the market.

In 1989 and 1990, ScandInfo AB were involved in the relaunch of HTH skin lotion in the Nordic countries. Various

Table 1. The composition of the test products

HTH Skin Lotion Original old version	HTH Skin Lotion Original new version	HTH Skin Lotion Original new version (alt)	HTH Skin Lotion Light
Urea 10% Lactic acid 5% Betaine Tromethamine Propylene glycol Cetearyl alcohol Glyceryl stearate SE	Urea 10% Lactic acid 5% Betaine Tromethamine Propylene glycol Cetearyl alcohol Glyceryl stearate SE Ethylhexyl- ethylhexanoate Dimethicone Diethanolaminecetyl- phosphate	Urea 10% Lactic acid 5% Betaine Tromethamine Propylene glycol Cetearyl alcohol Glyceryl stearate SE Mineral oil Dimethicone Diethanolaminecetyl- phosphate	Urea 3% Lactic acid 1.5% Betaine Tromethamine Propylene glycol Cetearyl alcohol Glyceryl stearate SE Ethylhexyl- ethylhexanoate Dimethicone Polyethyleneglycol- 5 stearyl stearate Polyethyleneglycol- 21 stearylether Fragrance
Fragrance	Fragrance	Fragrance	

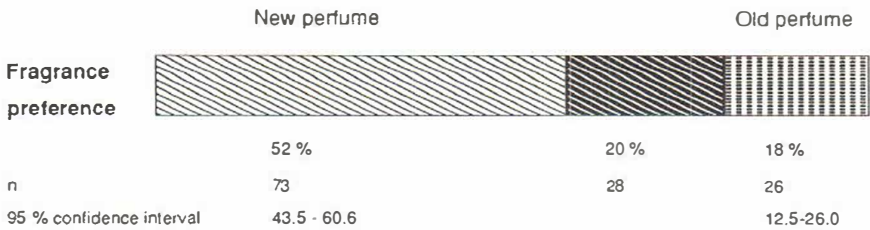


Figure 1.

market research surveys were conducted during the development process; they included different types of product test. This article is intended to give a brief description of different types of product tests and to present the results of some of the studies which have been conducted, using the re-launch of HTH as an example.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A product test is designed to evaluate the competitiveness of a physical product. If we are to evaluate the competitiveness of a product, we must define the *properties* which it is relevant to measure and the *rival products* with which we plan to compare our product. These properties can be both rational and emotional. It goes without saying that it is important for a skin cream to have a real function, such as making dry skin soft and smooth again. It may, however, be equally important for consumers to find the product pleasant and nice to use. In this context we are talking about properties like fragrance, that the product is not sticky and that it is pleasant and nice to apply. In addition to an assessment of various specific properties, the consumer is often asked to give an overall assessment of the product in which he or she summarises his/her overall impression.

Rival products which are market leaders are often used as reference products. When product tests for consumer goods are designed, two different types of test, paired or monadic, are generally used. In a *paired test*, the respondent is asked to test two different products (the test product and a reference product). When the test period is over, interviews are conducted in which the respondent is asked to compare the two products as regards various properties. In a *monadic test*, the respondent tests one product and, at the end of the test period, he/she compares it with the product he/she normally uses. It would be generally true to say that monadic tests most closely resemble the real-life situation. This is their greatest strength compared with paired tests. However, in order to interpret monadic tests, one needs access to a reference bank and this means that at least one study must have been conducted previously for the same product group and target group. Paired tests are cost-effective and are particularly suitable if one has the same reference product (such as the market leader) throughout the product development process. Paired tests tend to "exaggerate" differ-

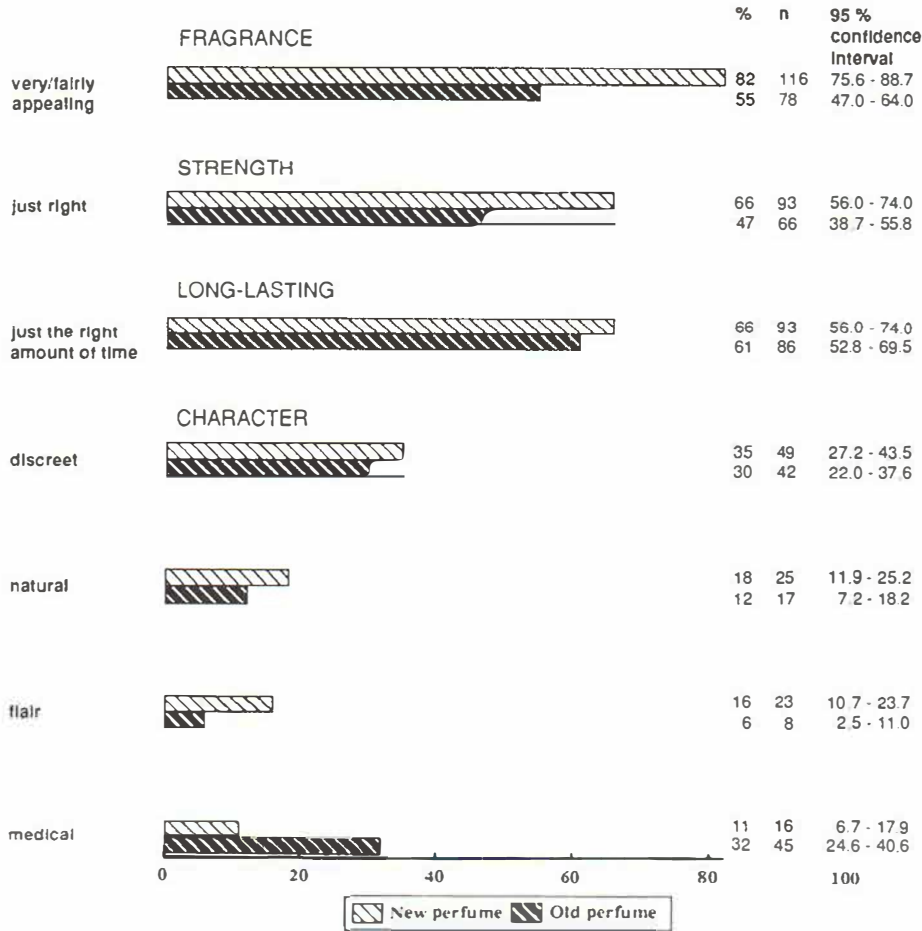


Fig. 2. The assessment of characteristics of the fragrance.

Fig. 3.



ences between the test products, but they are usually easy to interpret and present to people who are less familiar with market research surveys.

Product tests with the re-launch of HTH as an example

Three product tests were conducted in conjunction with the re-launch of HTH in 1990.

1. New fragrance in HTH Skin Lotion Original
2. Change in the formula of HTH Skin Lotion Original
3. New version: HTH Skinlotion Light

1. New fragrance in HTH Skin Lotion Original

The first stage in the modification of HTH Skin Lotion was to develop a new fragrance. This change was justified for three main reasons:

- * When a product is re-launched, it is important that the consumer sees real product modifications. A new fragrance is a powerful way of emphasizing a change.
- * Criticism of the current fragrance had been noted in a previous market research survey.
- * The "attraction" dimension was an important factor in the re-launch of HTH. A new, more "attractive" fragrance was regarded as an important element in the positioning of the new product.

The intention was to be able to offer the consumer a more attractive fragrance which was still discreet. It was important that both current and potential users of HTH should find the new fragrance appealing and attractive.

This study was conducted in the form of a paired test. The target population comprised women living in the Göteborg region with the following age distribution.

aged 30-39:	68 women
aged 40-49:	45 women
aged 50-59:	20 women
aged 60-69:	8 women
Total	141 women

The selection criterion for the target population was that the subjects should feel that dry skin (though not facial skin) was a very serious or rather serious problem. The distribution was as follows:

Dry skin is a very serious problem:	10
Dry skin is a rather serious problem:	131

Each respondent was given two skin lotions, each of which was to be used for 10 days. The lotions were to be used in the same way as the skin lotion they normally used. The lotions were in neutral packaging (no brand name) - this is known as a "blind test". The products were

marked with colour codes to enable the respondents to identify them. Half of the selected group started with the skin lotion having the new fragrance, the other half started with the lotion with the current fragrance.

The only difference between the two skin lotions in this study was the fragrance. Otherwise the old version of HTH Skin Lotion was used.

2. Change in the formula of HTH Skin Lotion Original

Stage 2 in the development of the new HTH involved changing the formula. A change of this type was justified for the same reasons as the change of fragrance. The term attraction was defined in concrete terms in the following product characteristics:

- * Fine consistency
- * Is absorbed rapidly by the skin
- * Is pleasant and nice to use
- * Is not sticky

It is interesting to note that we focus on information associated with comfort properties, in other words properties related to the application of the product.

This study was conducted in the form of a paired test but using three test products. The target population was the same as the one in the fragrance study. 135 women were invited to participate in the test. Their age distribution was as follows.

aged 30-39:	55 women
aged 40-49:	59 women
aged 50-59:	11 women
aged 60-69:	10 women
Total	135 women

In view of the fact that the aim was to test a change in the formula of HTH, the selection criterion was altered slightly compared with the fragrance test. The aim was to have a sufficiently large base of HTH users in order to obtain some indication of the way this group would react to a change in formula. The distribution of answers to the question of whether dry skin on the body was a problem was as follows.

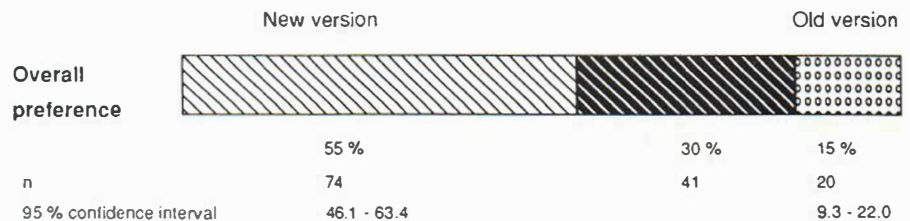


Figure 4.

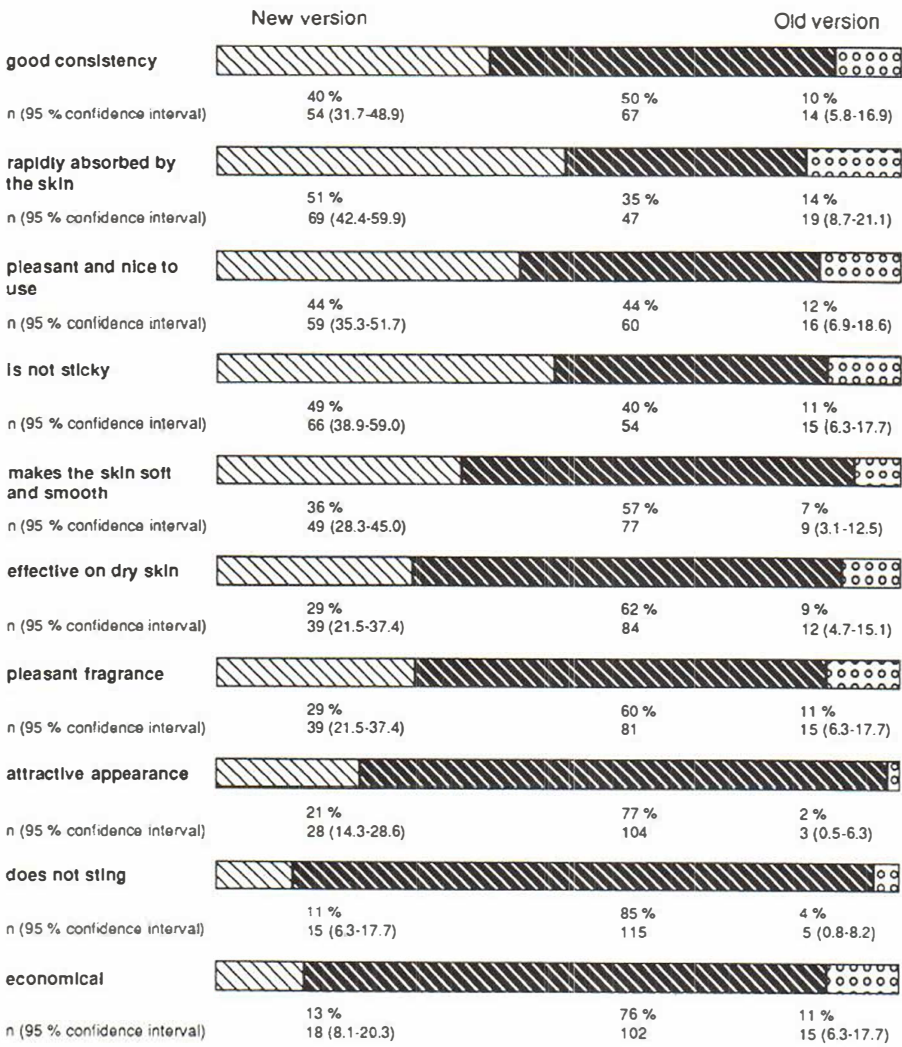


Figure 5.

	Entire group	HTH users
Very serious problem	5	1
Rather serious problem	95	25
Rather slight problem	31	31
Not a problem	4	4
Total	135	61

Each respondent was given three test products, each of which was to be used for 10 days. The skin lotions were to be used in the same way as the lotion(s) they normally used. One of the test products was the old version of HTH Skin Lotion Original and the other two were new versions (see previous table). The order in which the test products were used was noted. The products were in neutral packaging ("blind" test) and marked with different colours.

3. New version: HTH Skin Lotion Light

A line extension in the form of HTH Skin Lotion Light was planned with a view to extending the target group for HTH. The new product was intended for a target group for whom dry skin is only a mild problem – this constitutes the largest segment of the market. Two products which already dominated this area of the Swedish market and are of a high technical quality were defined. They functioned as the reference products during the development of HTH Light.

The aim was to develop a product which would achieve a consumer preference of the same magnitude as the two dominant products on the Swedish market.

The target population comprised women with the following age distribution and living in the Göteborg region.

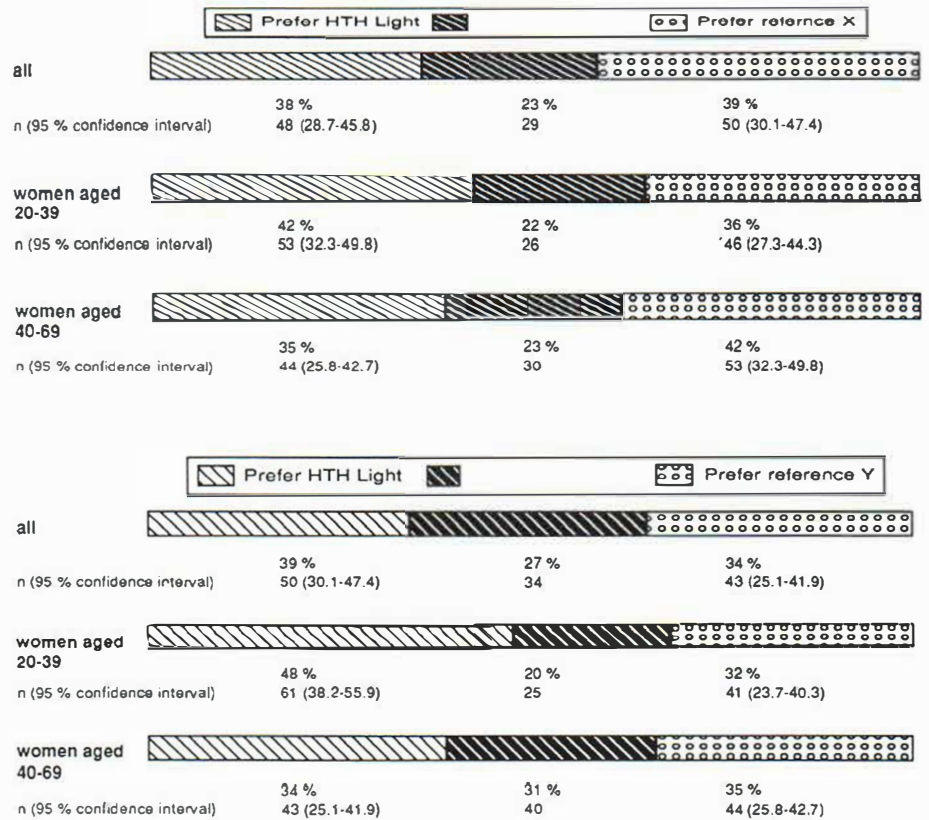
Aged 20–29:	23 women
Aged 30–39:	27 women
Aged 40–49:	30 women
Aged 50–59:	23 women
Aged 60–69:	24 women
Total	127 women

The selection criterion for the target population was that they should use skin creams or skin lotions regularly. The distribution of answers to the question of whether dry skin was a problem was as follows:

Very serious problem	5
Rather serious problem	33
Rather slight problem	72
Not a problem	17
Total	127

This study was conducted in the form of a paired test in which each respondent was asked to use three test products, each for a period of 10 days. One of the test products was HTH Light, and references x and y were the two reference products. The respondents were asked to compare HTH Light with references x and y (two paired comparisons). The study was conducted in the form of a "blind" test.

Figure 6.



RESULTS

1. New fragrance of HTH Skin Lotion Original

The target population was asked to answer questions about their overall preference for the two skin lotions they had tested and to assess their properties, such as feeling, effectiveness, ease of use, fragrance and so on.

The distribution of answers to the question about which fragrance they preferred, is shown in Figure 1:

The target population was also asked to answer questions about the characteristics of the fragrance (see Fig. 2). Their assessments of characteristics such as discreet, natural, a perfume with flair, and medical, were considered particularly interesting for this type of product.

The preference for the new perfume also produced a tendency towards overall preference (see Fig. 3) even though the formula was the same.

2. Change in the formula of HTH Skin Lotion Original

The respondents were asked to compare two new alternative formulas with the old version (two paired comparisons). A summary of the results is given below. The better new alternative was compared with the formula of the old version. Both formulas contained the new fragrance.

A higher overall preference was achieved by the better new version compared with the old version (see Fig 4).

The following results (see Fig. 5) were obtained following a breakdown of the way in which different characteristics were experienced.

It is worth noting that the fragrance preference followed the

overall impression, even though the fragrance is the same in both.

3. New version: HTH Skin Lotion Light

The following results (see Fig. 6) show the overall preference of the total target population and a breakdown of a younger and an older population.

An overall preference of the same magnitude as for the two dominant products on the Swedish market was obtained. There was also a slight tendency towards a greater preference for the test product among the younger population than among older women.

DISCUSSION

This article has briefly described the different phases of market surveys in the marketing and development of products for the consumer market.

In the product development of a skin care product it is obvious to conduct clinical tests or animal-tests for functional properties and for product safety reasons. For any product on the consumer market it is also obvious to test consumer reactions to changes already made. The degree of comfort and attraction more often affects the decision regarding test purchase and consumer loyalty than do functional properties, such as moisturizing, or product safety. The latter properties are in general considered as a matter of course.

To illustrate some product tests, examples were used from the re-launch of HTH Skin Lotion in the Nordic countries. From the testing of a new fragrance it is seen that the fragrance preference most likely leads to an overall preference. The test

of a change in the formula of HTH shows that consumers can note even small differences in the formulations. The fatty phase was increased from 3.5% to 5.5% with two oils, which led to a significant preference in several characteristics of the

properties. The fragrance preference in this test followed the overall impression, even though the fragrance was the same in both products.