THE POWER OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES

HARNESSING CO-CREATION BASED INNOVATION FROM CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TO LAUNCH

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation is hard, consumers are complicated, and competition is fierce. This creates a challenging environment for successful innovation. A contributing factor to this is the separation of qualitative and quantitative research in the typical stage-gate process[1]. Qualitative approaches drive exploration and development stages, with large-scale quantitative research commonly reserved for validation[2].

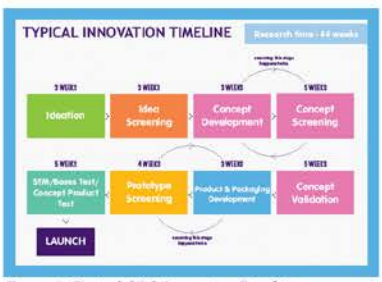

Figure 1: Typical CPG Innovation Timeline

However, in a bid to get to market quicker, many manufacturers look to combine research stages and gain fast, ongoing feedback from consumers. This can facilitate the formal stage-gate process, or even replace it altogether, which relies on consumers providing clear, consistent feedback throughout development.

This poster showcases how adopting an online community method throughout the innovation process, enables manufacturers to harness co-creation and put consumers at the heart of development.

METHOD

MMR has partnered with an online platform provider to develop a formalized approach to innovation communities. A community of target consumers is recruited at early stage NPD - when the idea is agreed prior to development commencing. The community interact online with a full-time moderator to guide conversations, get to know consumers and execute research (Figure 2).



Figure 2: The basics of an MMROC

A community is totally flexible and compatible with all standard research tools - both online and face to face - providing the ideal combination of quantitative rigor with qualitative exploration (Figure 3).

Integrating an MMR Online Community (MMROC) into the innovation cycle offers many advantages, notably instant feedback and a deeper understanding of the target consumer. This means manufacturers can develop products that are perfectly in tune with consumer expectations.



Figure 3: Research Tools used in conjunction with an MMROC

The following case study highlights how an MMROC put consumers at the heart of Walgreen Boots Alliance's (WBA) biggest brand launch in 20 years; YourGoodSkin™.

CASE STUDY: PUTTING CONSUMERS AT THE HEART OF YOURGOODSKIN™

MMR ran WBA's innovation community of 2,400 women (UK and US) over two and a half years. This fast became integral to the development of a 23 product range for brand YourGoodSkin™ - from idea to final execution.

The community was designed with both qualitative and quantitative functions to maximize insight. A full-time moderator ensured high engagement, responsiveness and planning to maximise learnings from a range of tasks and feedback.

WBA were able to constantly check in with consumers and rapidly test and refine at every step. In total, the MMROC provided 905 days worth of truly immersive feedback - feeding into every stage of YourGoodSkin™ development.

OUTCOMES

The WBA team learnt exactly what mattered to the target consumer and which equities to protect throughout the brand and full product range.

The YourGoodSkin™ range was launched in the UK and US in September 2017, followed by subsequent launches in ROI, Gulf, Norway and Thailand with imminent launches in France, Italy and Spain in September 2018.

The impact of the community on development of YourGoodSkin was far reaching, with two key case studies (Figures 4 & 5) highlighting its role.



Figure 4: MMROC Insights into Facial Cleansers



Figure 5: MMROC Insights into Acne Products

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

An MMROC poses unique respondent selection challenges, requiring specialist partners and comprehensive agreements for consumers to participate, resulting in set-up taking longer than usual to include the right consumers.

A hybrid approach is also needed to incentivize consumers, as pure monetary rewards can quickly become cost-prohibitive.

Multilingual communities provide the biggest challenge, as to maximize insight consumers need to interact in their own language. A community platform must allow consumers to interact in specified 'areas' to accomodate different languages.

CONCLUSIONS

Embracing consumers at the heart of innovation is a step into the future for market research.

Bringing a community into the development process allows for more agile NPD, and opportunities to align product, pack and brand, all driven by the target consumer.

'GETTING TO KNOW THESE WOMEN AND HAVING THEM INVOLVED IN OUR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS HAS GIVEN INVALUABLE INSIGHT ON THE CATEGORY, ALLOWING US TO REALLY TAILOR OUR OFFERING TO THE NEEDS OF REAL WOMEN'
- VICKY FLEMING, WBA PRODUCT DEVELOPER

References:

[1] Sakellariou et al., (2013) Managing the Global front end of NPD: Lessons Learned from the FMCG Industry, Journal of General Management, 39, 61-81.

[2] Spanjaard & Freeman, (2006) Is qualitative research always exploratory? ANZMAC