Innovative consumer research method to provide early and holistic product formulation guidance

Valerie Mialon, Christine Barnagaud & Evelyn Joslin
Success in today’s market is about more than having a product that people like.
Success in today’s market is about more than having a product that people like.

It comes through a coherent product, brand, pack strategy that targets genuine emotional and/or functional needs.
How do we find out which sensory characteristics cue the targeted equities and determine the ideal sensory profile?
Case study on facial moisturizers
Key research steps:

1. Immersion
2. Consumer screening and selection
3. Workshop
Key research steps:

1. Immersion
   - All stakeholders
   - Concept refined
   - Product parameters selection

7 test products from a matrix of key formulation parameters: appearance, fragrance, on and off skin aesthetics
Key research steps:

1. Immersion

2. Consumer screening and selection
   Screening on sensory acuity, articulacy and brand engagement:
   - Homework
   - Identification and ranking exercises
   - Discrimination tasks
   - Articulation check

70 target users screened
20 consumers selected to attend the workshops
Key research steps:

1. Immersion

2. Consumer screening and selection

3. Workshop
   Understand how consumers experience products and link back sensory properties of products to the expectations generated by the concept

- Marketing & R&D interact with consumers
- Expert qualitative AND sensory moderators
Workshop:
Understanding what the concept meant to consumers (detailed) and what product attributes cue this (top line level)
Inappropriate color and fragrance took the product from youthful to childish.
Workshop

Getting a clear read on liking (important not to trade this off too much) and fit to concept

Supporting the clients belief that the current product wasn’t optimal for the new position

Prototype 1 worked brilliantly - offering a small improvement in both liking and fit to concept
Workshop
Establishing how to achieve high product-concept consonance

While Prototype 1 was an excellent start point, by linking conceptualizations with sensory properties it was possible to identify some areas for improvement.
Workshop

A product brief, that ensures success is built in from the start of the development process.

Start with Prototype 1 and make some tweaks

- Significantly increase the wet skin feel - help cue enlivening and youthful
  No perfect reference

Slightly reduce the brightness of color - ensuing youthful but not childish
  Aim for Proto 1 levels

Proto 1

Increase the fragrance complexity (esp. initial on skin)
  Aim for Proto 2 or 4

Concept guidance was also provided to enhance positives and help shape comms and pack design briefs
  Aim for Proto 1 levels
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Should be</th>
<th>Like...</th>
<th>Conceptualization</th>
<th>Should not be</th>
<th>Like...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Pale coloured</td>
<td>Proto 1</td>
<td>Efficacious</td>
<td>Brightly coloured</td>
<td>Proto 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroma</td>
<td>Complex fruity (modern)</td>
<td>Proto 4</td>
<td>Has a job to do / modern technology</td>
<td>To floral or sweet (old fashioned)</td>
<td>Current Proto 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinfeel during application</td>
<td>Light, cooling</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Deep moisturizing for young skin</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>Proto 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>Proto 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dry</td>
<td>Proto 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption</td>
<td>Absorbs well</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Efficacious</td>
<td>Completely absorbed</td>
<td>Proto 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinfeel after application</td>
<td>Little residue</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Complements young skin type</td>
<td>Oily / greasy residue</td>
<td>Proto 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building success from the start

Involving switched on consumers interactively with Marketing and R&D specialist a co-moderated product development session:

- Concept feedback to understand emotional and functional benefits product needs to deliver
- Consumer focused product feedback beyond hedonic
- Clear understanding of which sensory properties cue which emotional and functional conceptualizations
- Detailed rulebook of success: considering both liking and consonance