

Market research in action

How did an apparently 'me-too' brand like Lundbeck's Cipramil make such a big impact on the market? A well-applied market research campaign led the way.

BY ANDY REEVE

Market research is to marketing as water is to life. This deeply held view is rooted in the personal belief that the customer is at the centre of what we do as marketers. Feeling the customer's pulse and understanding the ebb and flow of their needs and desires lies at the very heart of the marketing process.

When identifying and satisfying customer needs we must look beyond product features and pseudo-unique selling points. A 'need' which is already met by our competitors is of no use to us in our pursuit of the marketer's Holy Grail: sources of competitive advantage which are differential, sustainable, inimitable and supported by the resources and capabilities of the organisation. We need to reflect deeply on the true character of our brands in order to discover this elusive ideal.

Finding the path to that ideal is dependent on sound answers to three core questions: Who is the customer? What do they want? How will the brand and the firm survive competition? Whilst intuition plays its part and all marketers believe that they 'know' their customers, brands and markets, it would be supremely arrogant to assume that we can answer these questions without even bothering to ask the customer.

In a world where the only constant is change, our valued insight and internal knowledge may become a liability, falling out of step with an external environment which has moved on and left our world view behind. Market research provides a basis for informed decision-making by bridging the gap between the marketer's perceptual paradigm and where the customer really is.

The power of market research

The practical power of market research was demonstrated many times during my work with Cipramil, Lundbeck's first SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) brand, launched in the UK during 1995. Cipramil challenged the conventional wisdom that first-mover advantage is a critical success factor.

Entering the market as the UK's sixth SSRI, Cipramil's prescription share growth curve had the surreal look of an over-optimistic forecasting model. Cipramil's success was all the more extraordinary in the light of pre-launch research findings which revealed the customers' belief that they already had plenty of effective antidepressants to choose from and saw no need for yet another.

How then did an apparently me-too brand become so popular with customers, and leave supposedly omnipotent corporate giant competitors scratching their heads in bewilderment and asking 'how on earth did they do that?'.

Cipramil's unprecedented success was due to a wide range of factors, each worthy of a business case study in its own right. A common theme, however, was the intelligent application of qualitative and quantitative market research insights to inform critical business decisions taken at strategic, tactical and fundamental brand development levels.

Developing brand advertising

The development of Cipramil's brand advertising provides one example of the power of well-applied market research. Cipramil's advertising from 1995 to 1999 had a somewhat bizarre and convoluted history. During 1999 we wanted to capture the essence of the brand more effectively and

HE GOT LOST AND FELL ASLEEP IN THE WOODS. NOW HE HAS THE HEAD OF AN ASS AND THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES WANTS TO MARRY HIM.

THE LAST THING HE NEEDS IS MORE COMPLICATIONS.

Do you dream of an uncomplicated antidepressant? Chances are you're dreaming of Cipramil. It's effective,* well tolerated** and associated with a low risk of drug interactions* In other words, Cipramil helps to make treating depression or panic disorder less of a performance.

Cipramil
citalopram

Antidepressant not antipatient

Antidepressant prescribing information. Paroxetine: Cipramil tablets 10 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40 mg, 50 mg, 60 mg, 70 mg, 80 mg, 90 mg, 100 mg, 120 mg, 150 mg, 200 mg, 250 mg, 300 mg, 350 mg, 400 mg, 450 mg, 500 mg, 600 mg, 700 mg, 800 mg, 900 mg, 1000 mg, 1200 mg, 1500 mg, 2000 mg, 2500 mg, 3000 mg, 3500 mg, 4000 mg, 4500 mg, 5000 mg, 6000 mg, 7000 mg, 8000 mg, 9000 mg, 10000 mg, 12000 mg, 15000 mg, 20000 mg, 25000 mg, 30000 mg, 35000 mg, 40000 mg, 45000 mg, 50000 mg, 60000 mg, 70000 mg, 80000 mg, 90000 mg, 100000 mg, 120000 mg, 150000 mg, 200000 mg, 250000 mg, 300000 mg, 350000 mg, 400000 mg, 450000 mg, 500000 mg, 600000 mg, 700000 mg, 800000 mg, 900000 mg, 1000000 mg, 1200000 mg, 1500000 mg, 2000000 mg, 2500000 mg, 3000000 mg, 3500000 mg, 4000000 mg, 4500000 mg, 5000000 mg, 6000000 mg, 7000000 mg, 8000000 mg, 9000000 mg, 10000000 mg, 12000000 mg, 15000000 mg, 20000000 mg, 25000000 mg, 30000000 mg, 35000000 mg, 40000000 mg, 45000000 mg, 50000000 mg, 60000000 mg, 70000000 mg, 80000000 mg, 90000000 mg, 100000000 mg, 120000000 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Survival tips for productive client/agency relationships

Clients should:

- Provide written briefs; be clear what you want. If you can't write it down then you probably don't know what you want; if you don't know, what hope has your supplier?
- Never shoot the messenger. Good or bad results, they are what they are, don't blame the supplier.
- Take actions based on research results (otherwise, why commission the research?)
- Remember that the customer is king.
- If you're going to do it anyway, challenge yourself on the need for any research.
- Only test what you are willing to use. If it's rubbish going into research, it will still be rubbish when you get the results. Don't make customers select the best of a bad bunch for you.
- Realise that it's your (client) decision; don't let the customer 'decide' for you.

Agencies should:

- Offer expert advice; be an impartial expert.
- Suggest the most appropriate methodology; if you can't do it or someone else's product or service is better, then say so.
- Be honest – good or bad results, tell it how it is.
- Present objective results; don't extrapolate too far.
- Provide accurate costing up-front; no-shocks accounting.
- Be completely confidential.
- Reach conclusions and say what you would do next if the decision were yours.
- Know who the main customer is and send them the results first; they may need to put results into perspective for colleagues and it helps to see it before they do.
- Be a valued member of the client's extended team; but don't get too friendly with the client. If they are looking for new best friends then they'll get a hobby or join a club.
- Keep out of client politics. That's their issue and you are likely to get burned.
- Don't assume that the client knows what they want and need.
- Walk carefully within the continuum from 'useful guidance' to 'patronising the client'.
- Be challenging, but know when to give up.

None of these felt right for the Cipramil brand. Months of work generated dozens of concept themes, which were all consigned to the bin; attempts to visualise 'clean' using patients seemed doomed to failure.

Non-patient themes saw concepts involving plastic ducks in the bath, cotton wool balls, kittens and a plethora of shiny objects, none of which fitted the brand character. The images certainly portrayed 'clean' but they also suggested 'weak' and 'ineffectual', which created the false impression that Cipramil was not an effective treatment choice.

That 'eureka' moment from customer feedback

We knew that the solution must lie within our reams of feedback, about what Cipramil the brand meant to the customer. So we took another look at the market research results and we found a previously overlooked insight contained within a single comment made by just one of our Cipramil users. This customer saw depressed patients as a tricky and sensitive group to treat and she wanted to help them without adding to their complications.

The eureka moment came by extrapolating this single insight into a customer need for an uncomplicated therapy, then replacing the word 'clean' with 'uncomplicated' within the key selling idea. This unleashed a new line of creative thinking, leading to three strong concept lines, which were developed further and tested.



Lundbeck boosted the impact of the work that had gone into branding Cipramil by backing up the product's proposition with a judicious use of market data

All three creative routes did well and had the 'legs' to make it as successful advertising campaigns.

The strongest theme and overall winner was the 'Shakespeare' concept line, which went to press as a series of three advertisements (see main picture left) very true to the concepts used during testing.

Market research is to marketing as water is to life

Quantitative data is equally powerful in its practical support of my adage that market research is to marketing as water is to life. Drawing further on Cipramil examples, there have been many occasions where using data, naturally with the supplier's prior permission, proved to be a critical success factor in dealing with live promotional issues in the field.

For example, to support Cipramil's 'antidepressant not anti-patient' theme, we used adapted duration of treatment data from CompuFile's DIN-LINK patient database, to illustrate that Cipramil patients had above average compliance compared with patients taking other frequently prescribed SSRIs.

The WHO recommends that depression drug treatment continues for a full six months following remission of depressive symptoms. At the time we used this approach, based on November 1999 data, the average treatment duration for depression was between three and

In a world where the only constant is change, insight and internal knowledge may become a liability, falling out of step with an external environment which has moved on and left our world view behind

four months. This fact shocked our customers, who could all recite the WHO recommendation like a mantra yet had no idea that actual compliance levels were so poor compared with the ideal.

Differentiate yourself from the competition

By using data in this way, we cemented a differential competitive advantage for Cipramil in our customers' minds and opened the door to achieving greater sales through longer duration of treatment for our brand.

Another quantitative example was driven by the tactical need to address competitor activity in the field. Competitors were suggesting that Cipramil was relatively ineffective and therefore most often used in a 40mg once-daily dosage.

At a 40mg OD dosage, Cipramil would have been a relatively expensive drug treatment. Once again using Compufile patient data, we were able to show that in reality 88% of Cipramil prescriptions were written for daily dosages of up to 20mg daily, based on the 81% of prescriptions in the database where the dosage used was stated.

Coupled with a cost comparison based on the actual most frequently prescribed daily dosages for competitor products, we demonstrated that Cipramil 20mg OD was in fact the least expensive SSRI brand. We successfully dealt with the issue head-on by using quantitative data to present the facts, then disseminating the message via several different elements of the marketing mix.

Market data has proved an effective tool in addressing many more examples of internal and external issues. One interesting internal example was to turn around the mindset of the Lundbeck sales team when they were performing way above their Cipramil sales targets. The belief was: 'my customers are saturated, they can't possibly prescribe any more Cipramil'.

Educating sales team for enhanced growth

The reality was that Cipramil had huge scope for further growth as evidenced by a wide range of market data, the most compelling of which was a comparison of average scripts per GP per quarter. In October 2000, Cipramil had 22 scripts per GP per quarter and was ranked third; the market leading SSRIs had figures of 32 and 34, respectively.

By sharing this data with the Lundbeck sales team, we managed to turn their mindset around by creating a shared vision of where Cipramil's future growth would come from.

I was recently asked to comment on what I, as 'the customer', wanted from business information and market research for a BHBIA training course audience of rookie market researchers and agency-side delegates.

My reflections touched on survival tips for how the customer and agency should behave in order to achieve a productive working relationship. Some of these personal views are captured in the Table left.

Don't suffer paralysis by analysis

We end as we began, with my opinion that market research is to marketing as water is to life. However, in an information-rich world we run the risk of suffering analysis paralysis. The problems we face as marketers rarely have straightforward 'right' or 'wrong' answers, rather a range of potential solutions of which many will be suitable and feasible for the situations we face. Used without a well-focused process, market research opens up a potentially infinite iterative process.

We have to make decisions without perfect information. During one marketer's board meeting presentation a frustrated managing director is alleged to have banged the table whilst uttering the immortal words: "How can you *assume* when you don't *know*?"

In a competitive world the commercial imperative marches on and demands action, whether or not we feel adequately prepared for it. We need to strike a practical balance between analysis paralysis and informed decision-making and also be aware of my maxim's dangerous corollary: you can lead marketers to water, but you can't make them think.

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