

Canadian Advertising Success Stories 1999

becel Margarine

Agency: MacLaren McCann

Authors: R. Bolhuis, M. Welling, J. Mollenhauer, C. Spriet, D. Bloom, D. Parsons; C. Coulson, A. Richardson, A. Laudenbach, D. Malcom, C. Stothers, I. Kiar

Executive Summary

becel was launched in 1978 to a population that seemed primed for its positioning: the best margarine for heart health. Heart disease, the link between diet and health, and programs to better health and well-being were heavily covered by the media throughout the 80s. Yet, some 12 years after its launch, becel was suffering slow growth and flattening share. becel was given one more chance to prove itself. Price cuts, repositionings, or dramatic increases in advertising spending were ruled out. It was up to new advertising.

One insight made all the difference—that everyone wants to live a life that is young at heart. This crosses age, gender, nationality and race. People want to be liberated from fears of poor health and a short life, and live a life that is physically and emotionally rewarding. In effect, consumers were saying: tell me that your brand will help me live a life that is young at heart and I will buy your brand loyally.

New advertising met this challenge. Its emotional message was delivered by moving into television, after several years of rational print. Meanwhile, the facts about becel (heart health and why becel is the smart choice) were delivered through print and a website, together with a professional program.

Six years of Young at Heart advertising have netted Lipton dramatic growth and profit:

- becel is the market leader by far.
- tonnage and dollar growth has been double-digit every year since 1992.
- tonnage share is up from 8.6% to 20.6%. Dollar share from 17.7% to 30.5%.
- becel has successfully repelled competitive launches, and negative press about fat in the diet.
- Advertising has taken becel's health to heart.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

becel was launched in 1978 as a premium priced heart-health margarine. Its unique formulation let consumers enjoy margarine while still complying with their doctor's heart-health advice. Hard-hitting, scare-tactic television ads launched becel with terms like 'saturates', 'polyunsaturates' and 'non-hydrogenation'. The ads used heartbeats, heart-shaped clocks and ringing alarms to convince consumers to be very concerned about their heart, their diet, and what they spread on their bread.

Competitive response was quick and aggressive. Nabisco's Fleischmann's (later bought by Lipton) used TV and print to show the emotional benefits of healthy living through healthy eating. Kraft launched Parkay Gold with comparative TV and print aimed at becel. The Dairy Bureau of Canada (butter) increased their already heavy advertising spending and introduced dietitians to their panel of advertorial

writers. Private label launched 'me-too' health margarines at significantly reduced prices.

By 1991, becel had established an 8.1% tonnage share, but was posting limited growth at 1.5% per annum. Legislative guidelines had stripped us of the ability to communicate a hard-hitting, rational message on television, so becel had been using print—but with reduced expenditures because of slow volume growth. In other words, despite having the best formulation available, strong branded support from healthcare professionals, and a marketplace more and more concerned about heart health, becel was struggling after its first 10 years.

becel was in a precarious position. New competitors. Failure to meet profit and share expectations. Aggressive advertising being thwarted by regulators before reaching the market. Was further investment justified?

becel needed stronger brand awareness, better trial, and a leadership image to kick-start profitable growth. We considered lowering price, but—quite apart from the profit implications—this was ruled out because health brands in other categories were commanding high price-premiums.⁽¹⁾

We wondered if there were too few Canadians concerned about heart disease. But heart disease was the #1 killer in Canada. We had a better formula than any other spread, so we considered a dramatic increase in advertising support—but soft volumes wouldn't allow for heavy investment.

So, the future of becel was placed in the hands of its advertising. We needed to draw lots more people to the franchise. After years of rational advertising in print, we began to wonder if becel needed to deliver an equally compelling emotional benefit, in television. ⁽²⁾

STRATEGY & EXECUTION

We identified four steps:

1. Introduce an emotional reason to aspire to the brand.
2. Don't overwhelm consumers with technical jargon. Find a way to make becel's superiority easy to understand.
3. Develop messages best suited to the legal regulations of the medium.
4. Use our unique relationships with healthcare professionals and heart organizations to our advantage in the advertising.

1. The Emotional Reason to Believe

Perhaps the Jimmy Durante song inspired us. Perhaps an 85 year old aunt had just remarried and taken up ballroom dancing. Regardless of how we uncovered Young at Heart, it became becel's ultimate emotional end benefit. People of all ages, sexes, nationalities and religions want it. They know that it means taking care of yourself physically and emotionally. And a brand that celebrates young at heart will help get you there.

So becel's 'Young at Heart' television campaign was born. The TV ads show the benefits of making the right choices (like becel) to ensure you get there. Rather than feeding fear of heart disease, becel television was feeding hope and optimism—as expressed in the tagline 'becel takes your health to heart'. It showed active, fit, outgoing seniors enjoying life to the fullest. Swimming. Dancing. Flying planes. Teaching their grandchildren. Falling in love all over again. Enjoying a healthy diet.

We decided to feature older people—breaking down the myths of age and health—because consumers

told us that seniors best demonstrate the benefits of living life to the fullest, taking care of your health along the way, and choosing becel. (3)

2. Superiority you can understand

Print advertising (magazine and newspaper) had been perfect for educating consumers about our superiority. But 10 years of technical, fact-laden print had taught us that great facts alone weren't going to convince enough consumers to choose only becel.

We developed a new approach for print. (4) We used the real life stories of the people in the ads. A 78 year old surfer understands the benefits of balance; becel offers you the best balance of fats. A 65 year old woman runs every day on a path; becel offers you tips to staying on the path to heart health. A 58 year old 'upstart' thinks he's going to beat the 72 year old; becel is the proud sponsor of the Canada Senior Games.

3. Messages that fit the regulatory environment

Because we focused on becel's emotional benefits (young at heart), rather than the heart health message, the regulatory boards could no longer keep becel off TV—and we could still use print to deliver the heart health messages not possible on TV. In addition, we launched the becel website (www.becelcanada.com) to let us speak to consumers in a more copy-intense, interactive and helpful way.

4. Using our healthcare relationships to our advantage

becel had built a strong relationship with the heart health community. Doctors and dietitians gave becel insights into heart health and becel gave them free patient counseling materials. As well, becel had sponsorships such as the becel Ride for Heart, through its relationship with the Heart & Stroke Foundation.

Years of building this relationship were paying off. Research with doctors and dietitians showed that becel was recommended more than any other margarine, by name. We brought this message to our print advertising—another reason to believe in becel.

RESULTS

Since its inception in 1992, the 'Young at Heart' campaign has driven remarkable growth for becel.

1. Volume & Dollar Share Growth

In a low growth category, becel has grown at double-digit rates in tonnage and dollars for seven years. Tonnage has more than doubled—from 22 million lbs in 1991 to 49 million lbs in 1998—and becel has become far and away the #1 brand in the category in dollars (30.5%), tonnage (20.6%) and HH penetration (30.6%). (see [Figure 1](#))

becel has outpaced the market in dollars and tonnage. (see [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#))

This growth has been sustained while commanding the highest price premium (137 price index) of any brand in the category, and in the face of aggressive competitive pricing.

2. Awareness, Trial and Loyalty

Brand awareness has risen from 58% to 92%. [\(see Figure 4\)](#)

Trial has increased from 25% to 72%. [\(see Figure 5\)](#)

In a category where brand switching is high, becel has achieved the highest loyalty of any brand at 50%.

Advertising awareness has grown from 22% to 30% [\(5\)](#). [\(see Figure 6\)](#)

3. Strong Brand Positioning

64% of margarine consumers say that 'becel is a good choice for heart-healthy living'. 50% say that becel is the heart-health expert, and 47% say that becel is the best choice. 53% of consumers say that becel is the brand for people who are or want to be young at heart. (Lipton Research.)

becel has continued to grow despite the introduction of several competitors in the health segment (Parkay Gold, Canola Harvest, Nuvel and Olivina).

ISOLATING ADVERTISING AS THE VARIABLE

A combination of factors leads us to conclude that the 'Young at Heart' campaign is inextricably linked to the growth and health of the brand.

1. The annual margarine tracking study (run in all years ex 95 and 97) shows that becel continues to improve against every measure. Since advertising was the only significant variable (in message and the addition of TV) we can conclude that it played a key role in these results.(see Table 1)

TABLE 1

	1988	1992	1993	1994	1996	1998
Brand Awareness %	58	76	81	84	89	92
Adv. Awareness %	22	27	35	27	26	30
Trial %	25	45	51	58	68	72
Used Most %	7	14	16	19	30	30
Top of Mind %	n/a	16	16	20	33	35

Source: *Historical Margarine Tracking Studies (Commins, Wingrove)*

2. Tracking also reveals high playback of key strategic messages, indicating they are successfully communicated and 'owned' by becel. (see Table 2)

TABLE 2:

Main message recall	1998
Good choice for heart healthy living	64%
Brand for people who are young at heart	53%
Of all margarines available, becel is the heart health expert	50%
Of all the margarines available, becel is the best choice	47%
becel is very good for heart and cholesterol	42% (+23% vs1988)

Source: 1998 Margarine Tracking Study (Commins, Wingrove)

- Quantitative research on the creative shows that the creative message is highly effective on all key variables, exceeding food norms and generally sustained or improved through each generation of the campaign.(see Table 3)

TABLE 3

	Category Norm	1992 TV Advertising	1995 TV Advertising	1998 TV Advertising
Entertainment Value	24	44	57	47
Product Rating	59	68	68	54
Impression of Advertiser	42	65	59	51
Sales Rating	47	64	59	62
Brand recall	81	81	86	87
Liking	48	59	68	67

Source: Historical Clucas Research

- The brand values communicated in the advertising are held strongly enough by consumers to sustain premium pricing (indexing 137 to the market). Also, becel has kept growing while taking price increases of 5% in each of 1994, 1997 and 1998 (inflation averages 1% per year).
- Advertising expenditures were relatively consistent year over year (1992–present) i.e. increased spending pressure was not a significant factor.
- All other aspects of the marketing mix have been stable (consumer promotion, distribution, packaging). Other factors which may also have contributed to becel’s growth include:
 - A refined and increased focus on health care professional communications.
 - Efforts to build and maintain a relationship with health care professionals under the becel Heart Health Information Bureau.
 - Strong public relations and media management of issues such as fat in the diet and transfatty acids.

CROSSOVER NOTES

- Pricing.** Different markets develop a different pricing psychology. For example, as consumers, we are all familiar with the pattern in the hi–tech markets: ‘Wait, and the price will come down.’ We can all thank the Early Adopters for going ahead and buying anyway. In gasoline, prices fluctuate, more or less simultaneously across competitors, because motorists will switch stations to save a penny a litre. In markets such as becel’s, pricing is more stable, and price reductions by premium products are rare, but they are not impossible. Most of the senior people in the packaged goods fraternity know the story of Pampers, which was priced too high in its original test markets. Consumers appreciated this marvellous new thing called a disposable diaper, but niched it for special occasions. It was only after Pampers reduced its price substantially that the market (and Pampers) took off.

2. **Emotional versus Rational.** With hindsight, this may not not look like a hard decision, but it was. Although becel was starting to struggle in 1991, it was still market leader—with an 8% volume share and a 17% dollar share. Hard-hitting print advertising had been a big part of getting becel to this level. The regulatory environment forbade any such claims on TV, so a decision to go on TV would force becel to substantially reduce the rational story that had helped take it to market leadership.
3. **Showing the Target Audience—Yes or No.** Quite often, agencies present ideas that do not show the target audience identified in the Creative Strategy. A client might then ask (in polite words) 'Why don't we show the target audience.' The agency then responds (in polite words) 'Showing the actual target audience will be dull, boring and predictable.' The long-running and immensely successful Hamlet campaign from the UK is the archetypal example of not showing the actual target audience. Hamlet is a small cigar, and consumers see a motley crew of losers taking solace in the pleasure of Hamlet. This is an intensely image-driven category, and it would have been only too easy for someone to say 'I don't think we should portray our consumers as losers.' Even so, consumer have flocked to enjoy 'happiness from a cigar called Hamlet.' becel takes a different tack. The portrayals are all highly positive, but becel shows people who are on average older than the demographics in the Creative Strategy. In our youth-driven culture, this is a fine decision, and the success of it can be seen in the results.
4. **Evolving a Long Running Campaign.** becel changed its long-running rational print campaign to a more empathetic approach. In TV, 'Young at Heart' has also evolved, moving from vignettes to a 'single story', but always with the 'Young at Heart' song in various arrangements. This can be compared to Dove, which won the Longer & Broader Gold in CASSIES III. Dove used very different executions, though always to the same mildness strategy. Evolving a successful campaign goes far deeper than straight pool-outs, though these too can be successful. (For more on this topic, see St Hubert, Fido and AGF in this book. See also CASSIES III, where ten of the winning brands handled this question.)
5. **Cause and Effect.** This is a cautionary note about the need to have advertising awareness data interpreted by experts. Note that becel has been immensely more successful in hard business results than the Advertising Awareness figures—taken at face value—might suggest. This is a complex area, beyond the scope of these Crossover Notes. Suffice to say that the relationship between a successful campaign and Advertising Awareness is far from linear.

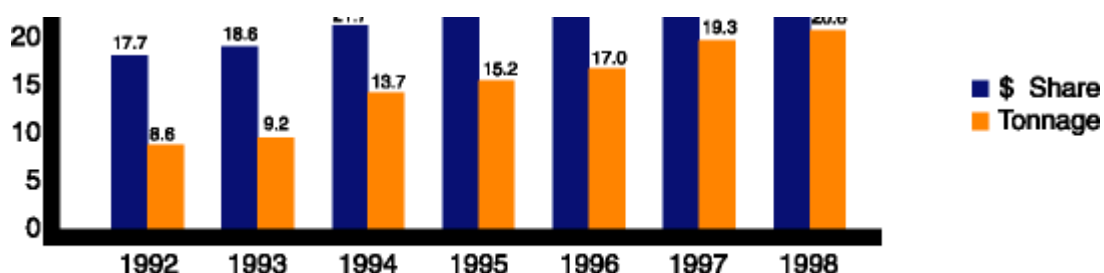


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NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1: VOLUME AND DOLLAR SHARE GROWTH



Source: AC Nielsen

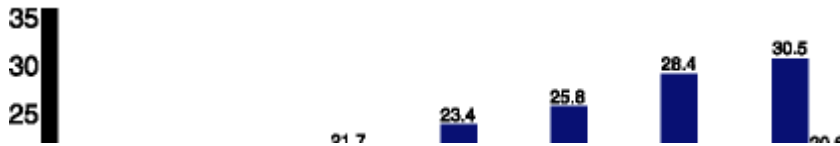


FIGURE 2: Dollar Growth: Market vs Becel

Dollar Growth: Market vs Becel

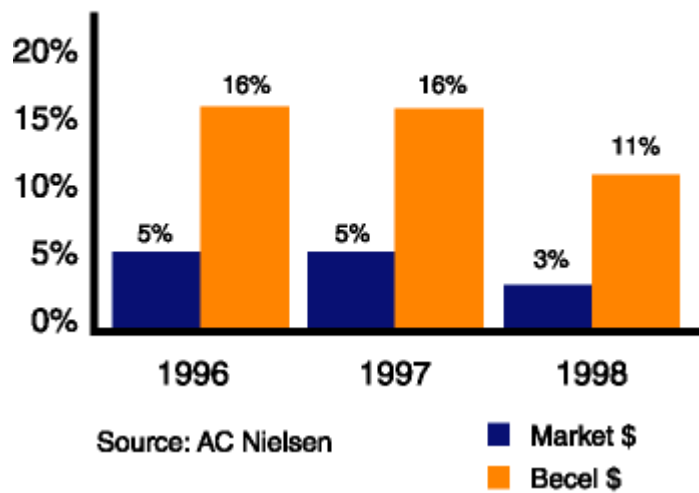
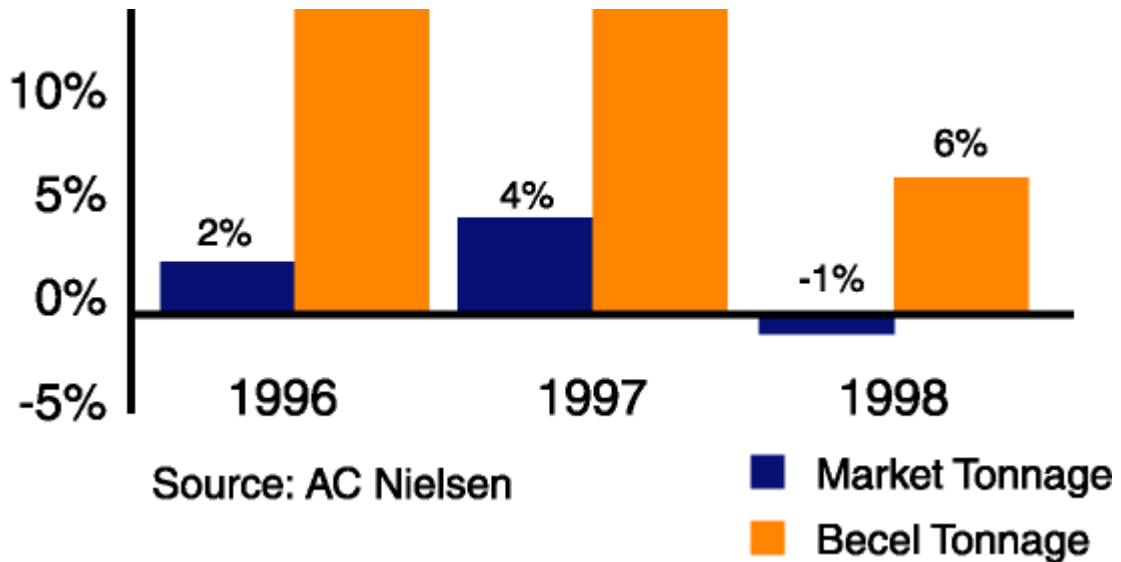


FIGURE 3: Tonnage Growth: Market vs Becel



Tonnage Growth: Market vs Becel

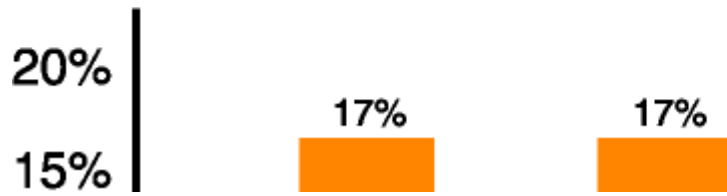


FIGURE 4

Margarine Tracking Study (Commins, Wingrove)

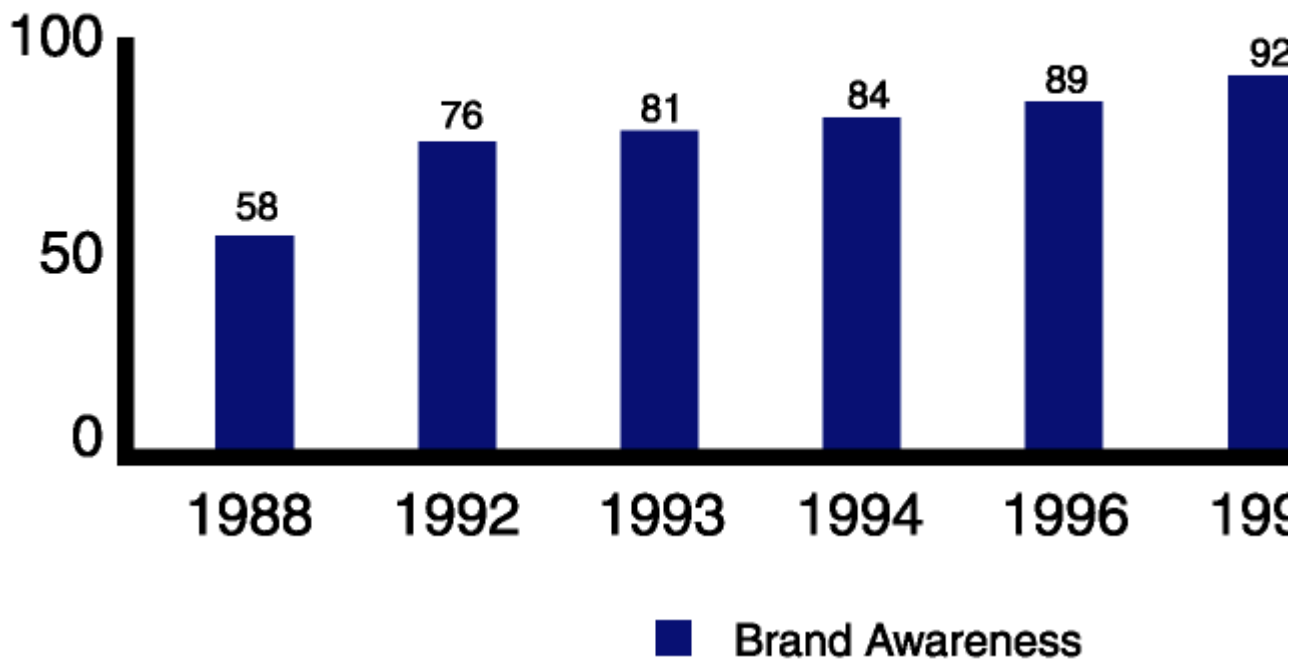


FIGURE 5

Margarine Tracking Study (Commins, Wingrove)

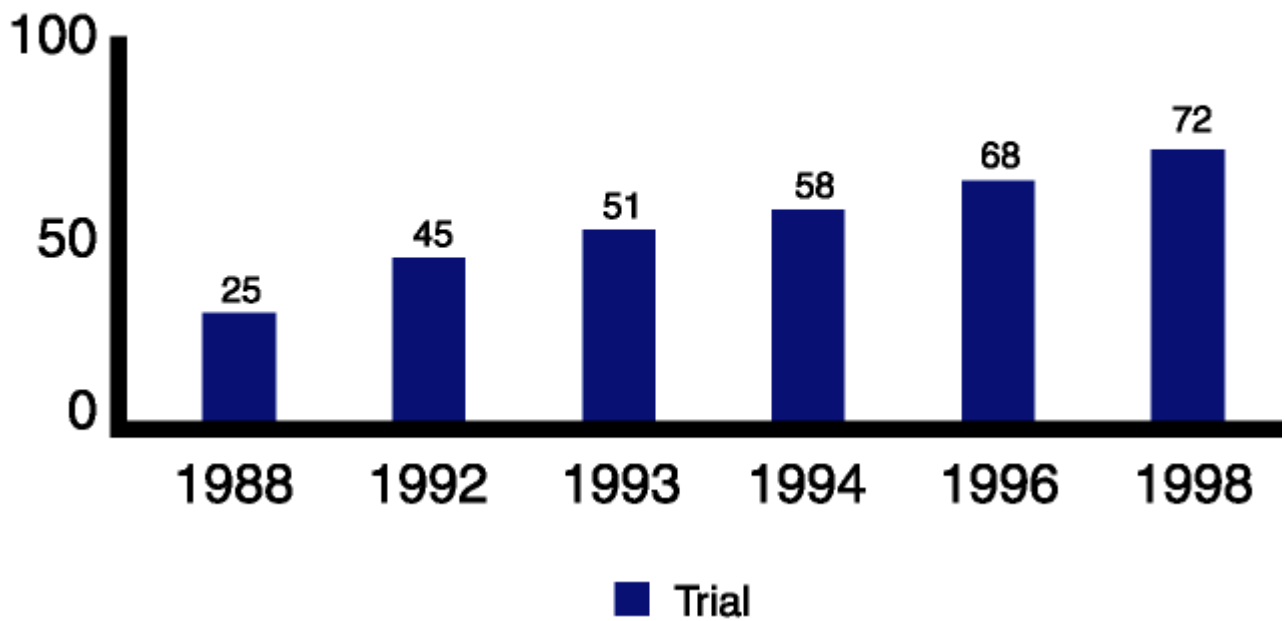


FIGURE 6:

Margarine Tracking Study (Commins, Wingrove)

