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Certs Minis Campaign

INTRODUCTION

When there is nothing dramatic in the product itself to motivate, stimulate or convince, it's up to the advertising to turn a little bit of news into a big event. It's not so much what you say, but how you say it.

Effective advertising shines when it discovers a new way to promote a familiar product. In the case of Certs Minis, they were not dealing with any kind of a major product breakthrough. In the crowded market of breath fresheners, a variety of competitors (both gums and candies) had cornered the market on mintiness and freshness. So rather than travel that familiar road, Certs opted to highlight the tangy fruit flavour of its new product. That became the point of differentiation. But still, something more than words was needed to get the message across that this product was different.

The Certs Minis case revolves around one commercial that took a simple product demonstration ('Here. Try it, you'll like it!') and married it with state of the art visual and audio effects. Easily said, but not so easily done. All too often these days, the video technology rides roughshod over the message and the viewer is left dazzled by the imagery and can't remember the name of the product. Not so in this case. While viewers listened to the even-handed delivery of the voice-over, the brand name and the product attributes were listed. All the while, the actor's face became visibly more animated and distorted until he finally broke into a maniacal grin of enjoyment. Funny. To the point. Memorable and well balanced. It was extremely difficult not to become engrossed in this entertaining commercial.

But this is more than a case about the successful launch of a brandline extension. The Certs brand name, itself, was rejuvenated. Certs Minis helped establish the base brand's identity with a younger target group- the hard-to-reach 15 to 24-year-old group. As members of this group start to abandon chewing gum and candy for the more mature pleasures of breath mints and handy workplace confections, the name 'Certs' acquired a top-of-mind awareness that it would not have enjoyed otherwise. This is a case in which the brand extension literally helped put a new face on the whole brand. In measuring the campaign's overall effectiveness, this investment in the future is equal, perhaps, to the shorter-term sales and market share goals that made this case a winner.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

In the opinion of the judges, the case study prepared on Certs Minis successfully concentrated on the launch phase of that product. The case was developed in such a way that it clearly recognized that the brand itself offered 'no product innovation or significant point of difference' and that the success was 'dependent on its advertising to differentiate the brand'. The mission thus stated was achieved in a readable and succinct manner. The writers were scrupulous to isolate the newly launched brand from the original, and not only presented specific share of market data versus the rest of the clearly delineated category, but also did a post launch comparison on the launch of a competitive brand citing such benchmarks as amount of advertising support, percent penetration into various retail categories and amount of promotion noise.

To quote from the case itself; the strength of the case is summed up by the sentence: 'To claim that the advertising is the only significant variable seems justified given the uniformity of the rest of the marketing elements.'

The judging committee also agreed that the use of the morphing technique of computer animation was most

successful in executing the creative strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Certs Minis were launched on 29 April 1992 as an extension to the Certs line of portable breath fresheners (PBFs). These are defined as branded hard candy. The category includes Life Savers, Tic Tac, Breath Savers, Clorets, Certs, Trident Mints, Mentos, Jolly Rancher, Ganong and Pez; all of which are extremely popular in Canada.

In the period covered by this case, the brand enjoyed a very successful launch and was able to maintain its market position. Certs Minis' volume, (AC Nielsen 12 months to May/June 1992) reported that the mini-category accounted for over 15% of total Certs brand volume and held a 4.1% share of market (SOM) in its category. This success is truly remarkable given category volume declines (- 4% and - 2% versus year ago) during the two 12 month periods preceding the launch.

Despite the homogeneity in this category (all brands offer more or less the same benefit) Certs Minis was able to differentiate itself, not through any breakthrough product innovation, but through its advertising. It was also able to secure a solid share of market in its first year. Even though Certs Minis was the fourth entry in the mini-mint segment (behind Tic Tac, Clorets, and Trident) it was able to secure 18.1 per cent of that segment in its first year.

In this category, brand volume is sensitive to advertising. When media support tapers off, so does consumer purchasing.

Advertising was a key element of this brand's successful launch, because it approached the category from a different perspective. The brand strategy challenged the advertising to differentiate Minis from the base Certs brand and target a younger user group

To do this, the advertising would have to create a young, vital and fun image for Certs Minis, at the same time maintaining the benefits of the base brand's heritage.

In the year following the launch of the product, the Certs Minis commercial F/X was the primary means of communication with the consumer. During the launch year the only other consumer program was a small-scale promotion with Pizza Hut. Ultimately the advertising was to be the primary determinant of the brand's success or failure.

The TV spot focused on the tangy flavours of Certs Minis that were somewhat different from those offered by any other competitor. The creative accomplished this by making Certs Minis graphically come alive to demonstrate the excitement of tasting and enjoying Certs Minis. The final commercial was arresting, motivating, and entertaining.

LAUNCH ENVIRONMENT

All products in the category (including Certs Minis) offer essentially the same benefits to the consumer: fresh breath and great taste. Differentiating the product is difficult. An added threat within the category was the increased gum usage among PBF users. These factors contributed to an overall decline in the PBF category of - 4 per cent and - 2 per cent during the previous two years.

The only thing offsetting this trend was new product activity. New mini-mint products launched under the Clorets and Trident brands in 1989 and 1990 made mini-mints the only growing segment in the category.

The PBF market is dominated by large established brands: LifeSavers, Clorets, Breath Savers, Tic Tac and Certs. Each has over 10% of the market, and has held its volume and SOM for numerous years.

THE MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Within the category the only growing segment was mini-mints. The category was under-developed in the 15 to 24 age group. This group was still oriented to chewing gums and placed a high value on the taste hit they received from a product. The social need for a breath mint is not perceived as important in this age group compared with older consumers.

Certs Minis was not significantly different from any product in the market. The cherry and orange flavours that Certs Minis offered were not unique in the category. Certs Minis, however, was the only PBF to offer only fruit flavours. All other PBFs offer both mint and fruit and tend to focus advertising on their cooling mint flavours. This opened up a chance to differentiate the brand. Certs Mini's 'tangy' fruit flavour became the focus of Certs Minis' advertising.

Even so, it was neither a true product innovation nor was it a significant point of difference. So advertising alone had to differentiate the brand from the cluttered PBF market.

ADVERTISING ENVIRONMENT

All major brands in the PBF category (Certs, Breath Savers, Clorets, Tic Tac, Life Savers) advertised at moderately high levels in 1991, and had fairly high established awareness (see [Figure 1](#)). If one were to include the breath-related gums like Dentyne, Excel, and Clorets (a justifiable inclusion because users are prone to dual usage), the category becomes even more competitive as those brands spend at considerably higher levels than any PBF. In this highly competitive environment the Certs Minis advertising budget (\$1.6 million) was roughly half that of such major competitors as Clorets, Dentyne or Excel.

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

THE NEW PRODUCT

Certs Minis was designed to attract a younger age group into the PBF category. The combination of a mini-mint format and a fairly distinctive line of tangy, fruit flavours was shown in research to be quite appealing to the 15 to 24 age group that expressed high purchase interest.

CERTS MINIS ADVERTISING STRATEGY

Positioning

'Certs Minis is the fun, tangy way to enjoy Certs'. This positioning differentiated the line extension from the base brand, while maintaining the benefits that the Certs name holds for consumers. The Certs name meant trustworthiness in the minds of consumers, and it made sense for Certs Minis to benefit from this reputation.

Target Group

The primary target group was teenagers and young adults aged 15 to 24, with no gender skew. This target group was under-developed in the PBF category and held out the possibility that Certs Minis could grow market share in this segment of the market. This would satisfy a longer-term marketing goal of introducing the name 'Certs' to a younger category of buyers and help build loyalty to the brand when these consumers passed into the next age category.

Objectives and Strategy

The Certs Minis advertising strategy encompassed the following: convince consumers that Certs Minis were a significantly different product, not merely a line extension of Certs. Certs Minis had to be 'the most fun a Certs could be'. This was to be achieved by focusing on the product's primary point of difference: the tangy flavours.

The Creative Execution

The objective was to introduce a mini, fruit-flavoured candy into an already crowded confectionery category.

The challenge for the creative was to communicate an exciting new taste to the demanding and disbelieving younger target audience and motivate it to test taste the product and ultimately become regular consumers.

Television

Television was chosen as the ideal medium that would allow the creative team ample scope for capturing the attention of the target group. Essentially, the script was a simple product demonstration. The execution, however, was quite novel in its approach. A young man is encouraged to 'try a couple' of the new Certs Minis. He is surprised and delighted when the pellets, 'bursting with flavour,' start ricocheting inside his mouth. With the help of a computer animation technique called morphing, his face is distorted and stretched, as if in response to all the activity going on inside his mouth. He can't believe what's happening and enthusiastically takes a few more of the candies.

At the time, morphing was a relatively new commercial technique that allowed Certs Minis to visually demonstrate the impact of great taste through an audio-visual medium. It was easily understood, compelling and entertaining. As research shows, the spot succeeded on all counts.

CREATIVE TESTING

A copy test (a Clucas communication test based on the responses of 120 people) was conducted before the final production. Despite the use of a rough version of the F/X commercial, a practice which inevitably dampens an audience's response, the spot achieved outstanding results. Below is a summary of a few of the key measures:

Main Point Recall

Claimed main point was taste or zest - 100%

Sales Rating

Total positive sales rating change - 79%

This includes all participants whose interest in purchasing the product increased after watching the commercial.

Advertising Objectives

- The commercial was advertising a Certs product - 98%
- They taste great - 88%
- These candies are mini-sized - 90%
- They are fruit-flavoured - 79%

Scene Objectives

The actor was enjoying the sensation of the taste 98%

The actor was really impressed by the taste 98%

The candy would taste great 84%

These scores indicate that even the rough version of the spot clearly communicated the strategy and was exceptionally persuasive.

F/X received exceptionally high scores particularly in the sales rating category. Entertainment and perception of advertiser scores are traditionally low given viewers' inherent cynicism toward advertising.

MEDIA PLAN

Certs Minis media activity started in August 1991 and ran until July 1992. The launch creative was a 30 second

spot that ran in 100% rotation until January 1992, after which the campaign ran the 30 second spot and an edited 15 second spot in a 50/50 ratio. They ran in English and French Canada on network, selective and speciality television. The campaign was supported by a \$1.6 million budget over the 11 months.

PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT EFFORTS

It was critically important that viewers had every opportunity to taste the product. This meant that sampling was a high priority. A cross-promotion was developed with Pizza Hut when the commercials were to air. Free Certs Minis sample packs were distributed through the Pizza Hut chain. This promotional effort proved to be a very efficient way of distributing samples of the product to the target group. Meanwhile, in stores and at the point-of-purchase, active displays or 'shelf-talkers' that picked up the image of the smiling actor in the commercial were created. This served as an immediate reminder of the product close to the point of sale.

COMPETITIVE SPENDING

Since the launch of Certs Minis advertising in August 1991, the brand has maintained a moderate SOV versus other portable breath products (see [Figure 2](#)). Clorets and Dentyne typically spend at higher levels and significantly outspent Certs Minis in the latter part of its campaign.

RESULTS

MARKET RESPONSIVENESS

Fairly heavy media support in August, September and December had a significant impact on share of market, driving the brand to a 4.4 SOM high in January. As the campaign concluded and media weights dropped, share subsequently declined. Given the impulse nature of this category, this positive correlation lends further evidence that the creative had a strong influence on the sales success of this brand.

Trident Mini-mints versus Certs Minis

Compared with a virtually identical product launch by a competitor, in which the only significant variable was the advertising, Certs Minis held 1.6 per cent greater SOM than Trident Mini-mints: (A 1.6 per cent share of market represents more than 1,700,000 units - approximately \$1,275,000 at retail.)

Post-Launch Comparison

	Trident Minis	Certs Minis
Ad support*	\$1.8 million	\$1.6 million
Media	TV	TV
Creative	30 and 15 seconds	30 and 15 seconds
Target group	15-24	15-24
Number of SKUs	2	2
Drug store distribution	86%	77%
Food store distribution	49%	48%
Product innovation	no	no
Base brand awareness	98%	96%
Promotion	sampling	sampling
Year one share	2.5	4.1
Incremental share	—	1.6

*as reported by Media Measurement services

CONCLUSION

The claim that the advertising is the only significant variable is justified given the uniformity of the rest of the marketing elements.

AWARDS

Certs Minis has won a number of international and national advertising awards, all of which exhibit the industry's recognition of F/X as entertaining, creative and persuasive advertising.

International Broadcasting Awards

First prize, TV live action, 30-second

Bessies

Bronze - Confectionery/snack category

Art Director's Club of New York

Distinctive Merit

Mobius Awards

Certificate outstanding creative/special effects & Food - Candy category

Art Direction Magazine

Feature article

Art Directors Club, Toronto

Finalist

Cannes Film Festival for Advertising (Lions Award)

Finalist

Image du Futur, Montreal

Best Canadian production

CLIENT

Warner Lambert Canada Ltd.

Nancy Fenwick Product Manager

AGENCY

Backer, Spielvogel, Bates Canada Inc.

Michael Robitaille Account Executive
Brent Pulford Copywriter
Colin Priestly Art Director
Peter Cresswell Director (Propellor)
Neil Williamson Animator (Calibre Digital Design)

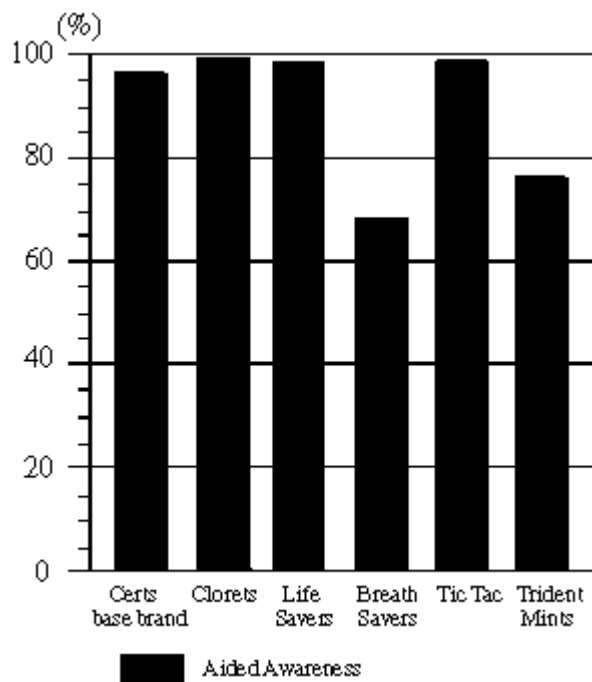


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NOTES & EXHIBITS

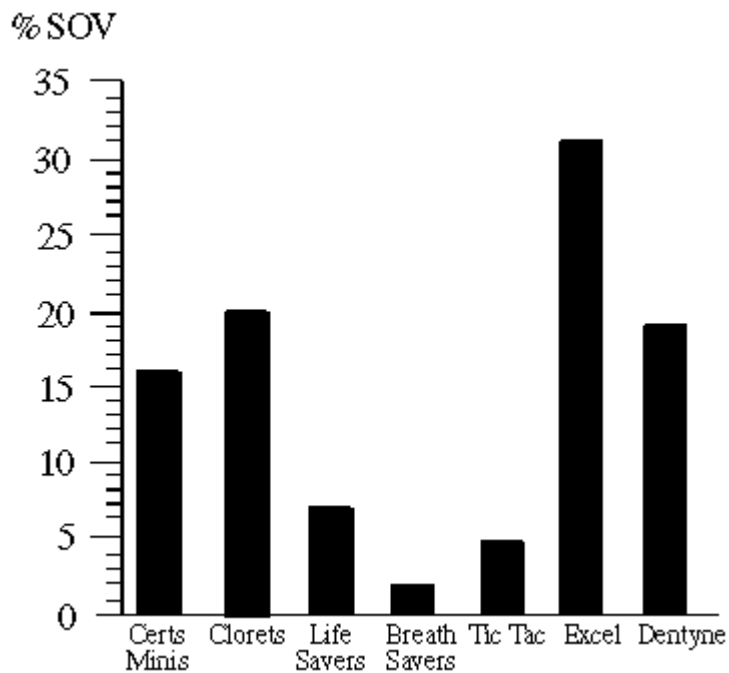
EXHIBIT 1: KEY PBF BRANDS - AWARENESS



All brands in the PBF category are well established

Source: MMS to May '92

EXHIBIT 2: COMPETITIVE SPENDING



The above represents MMS reported spending from August '91 to May '92

Source: MMS to May '92
