

Agency: Cossette Communication - Marketing

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Claritin 'Humour' Campaign

INTRODUCTION

You don't have to be an allergy sufferer to appreciate the advertising breakthrough represented by Claritin. In a product category that has relied on bar charts and graphs, doctors and kindly pharmacists, sympathetic spouses and fellow hay fever sufferers to get the message across, Claritin tried another approach. On the air, its humorous TV commercials treated the annual allergy and hay fever binge as the annoyance that it is. On the drugstore shelves, Claritin's clear blue sky and drifting cloud packaging stood out among the serious and sparse graphic designs of its main competitors. It focused on the images of soothing relief and spoke visually and directly to the consumer about its end benefit rather than its pharmaceutical properties. In the mail and in the store aisles, targeted user groups were enticed with cost-saving coupons to help move the product from awareness to purchase.

It all adds up to a well-orchestrated, multi-faceted pitch for a share of what was and still is, a growing market. This was a campaign that used advertising to grab attention and combined it with an integrated marketing strategy to reinforce the message and clinch the sales.

If there was a risk to Claritin's approach, it would have come from being too loud and too strong in a category that was not known for innovative creative or aggressive selling. And indeed, for some antihistamine buyers, the approach was too much. But even their complaints became a talking point and a distinguishing feature of Claritin, and became the basis for a new round of commercials that poked fun at the advertising itself.

The off-the-wall approach, (as the Judges' comments describe it) is a good part of the reason why the product started to move so quickly off the shelf in pharmacies and drugstores. As the case shows, effective advertising needs not only a strong and distinctive message, but also sufficient media weight and in-store support to capture a share of the market. Claritin went from its initial launch as an over-the-counter drug to the second biggest selling antihistamine in Canada in a little less than three years. With all other variables being equal, the outstanding reason for this success was its advertising.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This study states very clearly that there was no unique product differentiation in the medicinal ingredients. The company, therefore, had to create a point of difference, and this was done through advertising, (and, less obviously through point-of-sale and direct-mail material). The case was made cogently, and with appropriate documentation in a well-prepared study.

The off-the-wall humour was used to get consumer interest. Humour and the continuity of the spokesperson subsequently gave the campaign a strong presence in the marketplace, and kept it front and centre in consumers' minds.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case story clearly demonstrates the contribution of communications to the successful 1990 launch of a new antihistamine product, Claritin, in the over-the-counter (OTC) drug market. The case also demonstrates the franchise's sustained growth as a result of advertising, allowing both brand and Schering Canada's objectives to be achieved in a highly competitive category.

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge was to introduce and establish a new brand of non-sedating antihistamine in a market dominated by two well-established giants, Seldane and Hismanal. Most importantly, this had to be accomplished while maintaining competitive margins for the brand in the medium term.

THE STRATEGY

The communications strategy was based on three key principles:

- Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate ... to clearly dominate;
- Differentiate;
- Translate awareness into purchasing, quickly.

The concentration strategy involved setting highly strategic priorities in terms of market and media selection, as well as identifying key support periods. Accordingly, the creative impression had to be truly distinctive and depart from traditional pharmaceutical advertising, even at the risk of alienating some potential consumers during the introductory phase. Finally, the communications mix had to strike the right balance between short-term sales objectives and long-term image building.

THE PLAN

The communications mix included television advertising, a direct-mail program, as well as target-mail and in-store coupons. The effectiveness of the campaign depended on proper integration of each element into the overall campaign.

The advertising was concentrated during peak annual sales periods in geographic regions in which high competitive brand development would allow Claritin to maximize its capture of market share from its competitors. The television launch creative - 'Jackhammer' and 'Heavy Metal' - used a strong metaphor to describe the annoyance of allergy symptoms and presented Claritin as the ultimate solution. The creative approach changed in the second and third year, although the objective was to continue entrenching Claritin's unique personality by featuring a humorous British presenter.

THE RESULTS

Three years after the launch, Claritin is now the number two brand, commanding a 23 per cent share of a market valued at \$92-million. This has been achieved with levels of point-of-purchase display activity and co-operative advertising similar to that engaged in by key competitors. Claritin has also sustained a price premium over the market average since the launch, enabling Schering Canada to build a strong, quality brand image.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Schering Canada, one of Canada's major pharmaceutical companies, has been in the antihistamine market for over 40 years with Chlor-Tripolon. The brand has always benefited from strong physician endorsement and is

well established among consumers. It accounted for over 50 per cent of OTC volume in the early 1980s.

[Figure 1](#)

In 1988, Schering introduced its first non-sedating antihistamine, Claritin. At first, the brand was available to consumers only by prescription. As a result, Claritin was virtually unknown to the general public, unless recommended by doctors or pharmacists.

The market for all antihistamines in Canada grew substantially during the 1980s, culminating in the introduction into the OTC market in 1989 of two non-sedating products previously available only through doctors and pharmacists. Quickly, the allergy market was dominated by these two non-sedating brands: Seldane (Marion Merrell Dow) and Hismanal (Jensen Laboratories, a division of Johnson & Johnson). At that time, the two brands controlled over 60 per cent of the total OTC volume.

[Figures 2 and 3](#)

The functional advantage of the non-sedating brands allowed them to dominate the OTC market quickly, with Seldane's superior consumer investment being largely responsible for it achieving the number one position over Hismanal. It was in this environment that Claritin sought to capture market share when it began advertising in April, 1990.

THE MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

OVERVIEW

While a new allergy sufferer often selects a brand in accordance with physician recommendations, other users generally rely on past personal experience and perceived brand effectiveness to make their purchase decision. And, as for any medication, consumer trust is essential. However, a key factor in our favour was that allergy sufferers are always looking for ways to ease their suffering. The market has many 'self-medicators.' Thus, there was an opportunity for Claritin to entice consumers to try the brand if awareness could be built and reassurance about its effectiveness.

THE STRATEGY

Consumer behaviour in this category indicated we could launch a new brand of non-sedating formulation onto the OTC market and expect to gain some of the sales volume being lost to the competition. The strategy would involve introducing Claritin to consumers and continuing with efforts directed toward physicians and pharmacists to further secure the new user franchise.

[Figures 4 and 5](#)

EXECUTION

The communications challenge was to create awareness and interest and then quickly establish Claritin on the menu of brands considered by allergy sufferers. This meant we had to generate early trial by the consumer at the very beginning of the allergy season in the spring. Unfortunately, it was a cluttered market with competitors saying much the same thing. The two key product differentiators, within the antihistamine market are speed of action and the length of effectiveness. But advertising regulations prohibit comparative advertising, so other means were needed to help distinguish Claritin from its major competitors.

The communications strategy was based on three key principles:

- Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate ... to clearly dominate;
- Differentiate;
- translate awareness into purchasing, quickly.

To deliver the short-term sales objectives, the communications strategy had to recognize the various steps in the

consumer buying process (awareness, consideration, quest for information, brand selection, purchase) and reach consumers at all stages to ensure closing the sale. Advertising, the key component of the communications mix, had to provide the necessary leverage for other tools such as direct mail, target mail and in-store coupons. To be most effective, point-of-purchase material had to be fully integrated into the overall campaign strategy.

In the absence of any easy-to-establish functional or medicinal difference between Claritin and competitive products, advertising efforts had to generate a high level of competitive noise and build a distinct brand personality that would appeal to and get the attention of the users of competitive brands. To provide reassurance with respect to brand effectiveness, emphasis was placed upon the association with Chlor-Tripolon.

THE EXECUTION - ADVERTISING

Television was identified early on as the key medium that would help Claritin both dominate and concentrate. No print or billboard advertising was used during the campaign. Evening prime time slots were used to attract the major buyers in this category, that is, working women.

The strategy addressed the difficult task of setting priorities in terms of region, market and media selection, as well as key support periods. Advertising was concentrated in markets representing the highest volume sourcing opportunity against Seldane and Hismanal (high Brand Development Index), and minimal cannibalization from Chlor-Tripolon (low Brand Development Index). As a result, this was not a fully national campaign, but targeted to reach into active buying regions in Canada where it was possible to capture market share rather than grow the market itself. The objective was to clearly dominate competitive noise levels in a two-to-one ratio, and therefore, quickly build advertising and brand awareness to fully exploit the main allergy season which extends from March through September.

The commercials departed from traditional pharmaceutical advertising by relying upon the unprecedented use of humour for this product category. The aim was to break through the barrage of more traditional OTC pharmaceutical advertising. However, in so doing, there was a risk of alienating some potential consumers during the introductory phase. The two launch executions involved comparisons between annoying situations and allergy suffering. In both instances, Claritin was presented as the effective solution. The signature associated Claritin with the well-established Chlor-Tripolon.

Ongoing advertising tracking was conducted throughout the campaign that showed both high awareness and comprehension. This provided the necessary information for fine-tuning creative executions. As anticipated, reaction to the campaign was mixed. Some people who claimed not to like the ads did like the product. This gave us the opportunity for a tactical creative execution developed in response to this 'consumer annoyance factor.' A second phase of 'Testimonial' executions was aired over a three-week period and generated high-awareness levels in addition to strong appreciation scores. The 1991 and 1992 campaigns further entrenched the brand's unique personality through the use of an unconventional and humorous presenter. Several executions were developed, each relating to a specific allergy season. The signature - 'Claritin. Everything you need to know about allergies' - was designed to position Claritin as the best in the antihistamine category.

THE EXECUTION - CONSUMER PROMOTIONS

The 1990 consumer promotions comprised two strategies:

- High-value, instantly redeemable coupons (IRCs) were offered to influence the purchase decision at the store level. This occurred in two separate waves, one in February, the other in August 1990. Adpads were produced for the Quebec market and on-package coupons for other regions in Canada.
- National direct mail targeted to medicating allergy sufferers, offered a high-value trial coupon and allowed for a more detailed personal message to be communicated about Claritin. There were three separate programs:
 - *Target mail co-op coupons, April 1990*
 - *Solo direct mail - Cloud Package, June 1990*
 - *Solo direct mail - Ragweed Package, August 1990*

The 1991 and 1992 programs repeated the essence of the previous year's strategy with a direct focus on Seldane users. A new creative was also developed to tie into the television presenter campaign.

In addition to the direct-mail programs, specific coupons and coupon advertisements were developed for the in-house publications of individual drugstore chains. Finally, a national consumer promotion was developed and included dealer loaders, a backer card display with pamphlet containing money-saving coupons and a mail-in offer with premiums. Sell-in sheets for sales representatives were also produced.

[Figures 6 and 7](#)

MEDIA SPENDING PROPORTIONS

- Advertising 85 per cent
- Direct Mail 15 per cent

OTHER PROGRAMS

The 1992 campaign also included the sponsorship of the Canada AM pollen report, and a small scale newspaper campaign in support of a 1-800 info-line.

RESULTS

Less than three years after the launch into the OTC market, Claritin is now the number two brand on a national basis, boasting a 23 per cent share of the \$92-million anti histamine market and delivering planned margins. Advertising was most definitely the key contributor for the following reasons:

- Claritin's market share is significantly greater in those regions which received the bulk of the media weight;
- Sales results were achieved while maintaining a price premium in the specific product category;
- Display, co-operative and weighted co-operative advertising were at equivalent levels to that of the key competitors;
- Distribution has remained stable for over 12 months;
- Brand image and effectiveness ratings are on par with Hismanal and Seldane (Source: Brand Tracking Study, December 1991);
- All advertising and brand tracking measures show a significant upswing with each additional flight of advertising

[Figures 8 and 9](#)

	Claritin			Seldane			Hismanal		
	1989	1990	1991	1989	1990	1991	1989	1990	1991
Share of Voice	*	35	42	n/a	42	34	n/a	23	14
Advertising awareness (Share of Mind)	n/a	9	25	n/a	32	39	n/a	27	22
Brand awareness (Share of Mind)	n/a	14	30	n/a	50	55	n/a	45	40
Share of Market **	6	16	23	45	38	36	32	27	22

* Spending in Ontario only. SOV during March to August period 51 per cent

** Each share point is worth approximately \$750,000

Sources: Brand Tracking Study, December 1991, Media Measurement Service 1991, A.C. Nielsen, 12 mos Rolling Nov/Dec 1991, M/J 1992

From the corporate standpoint, Schering now has two strong entries competing in this market and is just short

of reassuming category leadership.

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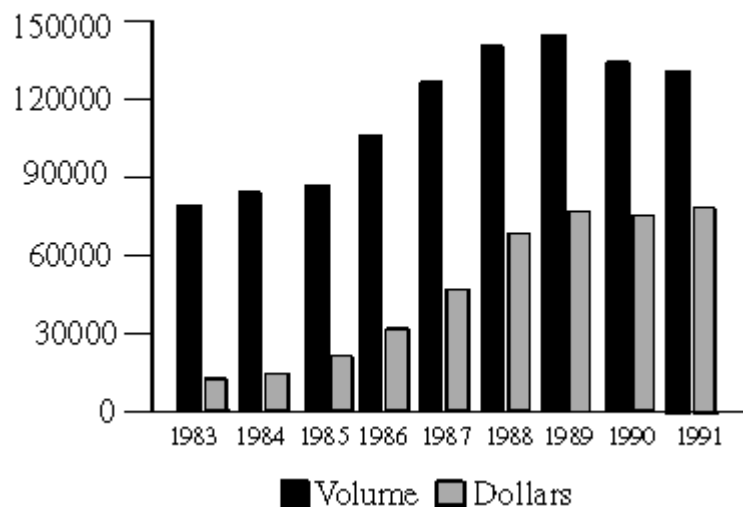
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NOTES & EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - HISTORICAL TREND

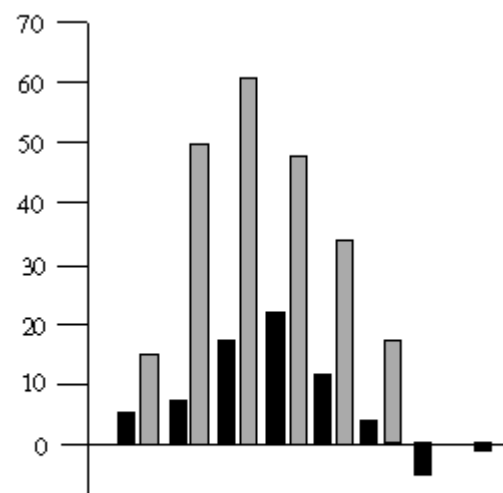
Volume vs. Dollars

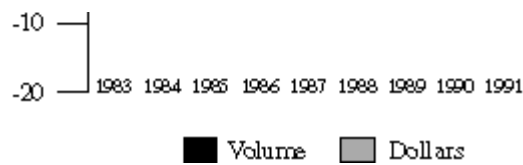


Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos N/D

EXHIBIT 2: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - HISTORICAL GROWTH

Unit vs. Dollar

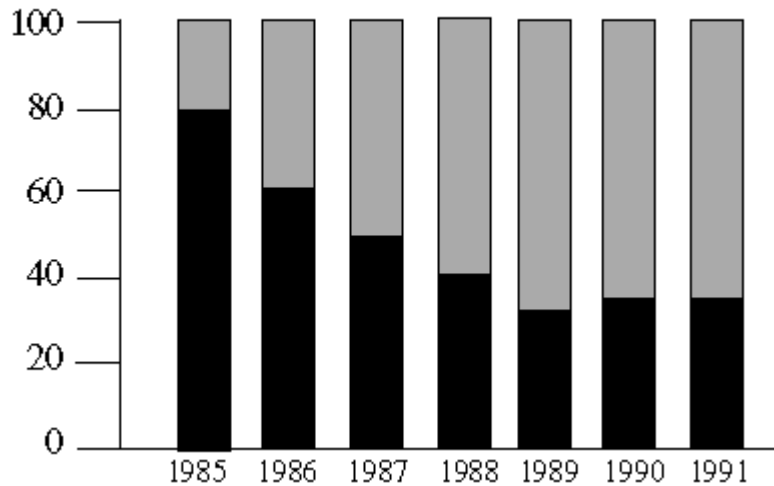




Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos N/D

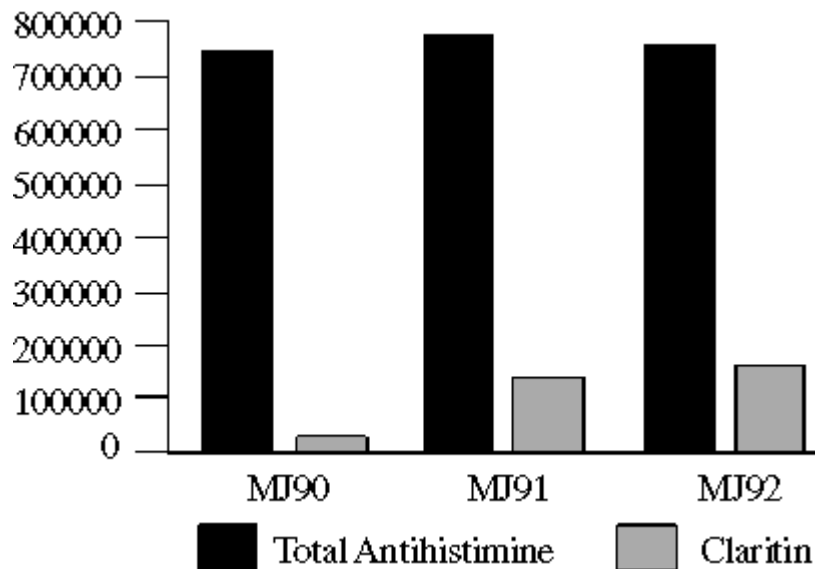
EXHIBIT 3: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - HISTORICAL TREND

Sedating vs. Non-sedating SOM



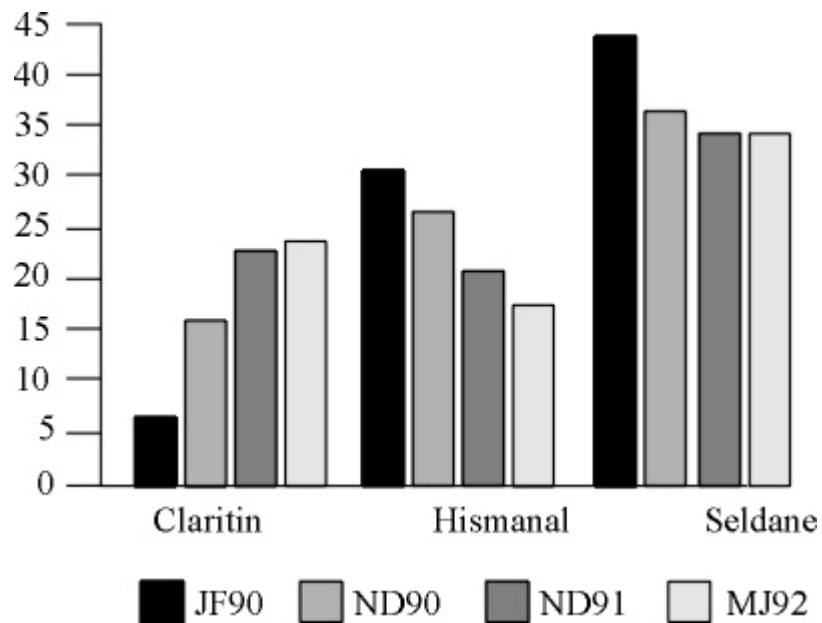
Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos N/D

EXHIBIT 4: CLARITIN VOLUME TREND



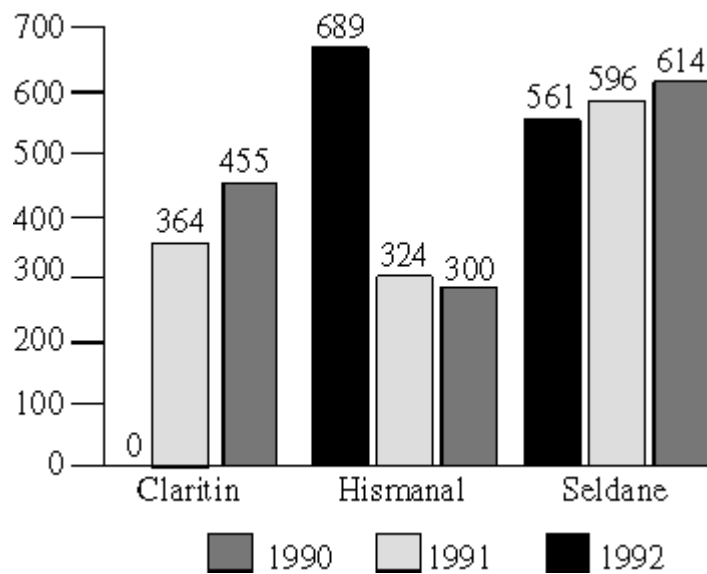
Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos (equivalent tables)

EXHIBIT 5: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - COMPETITIVE SOM



Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos Dollars

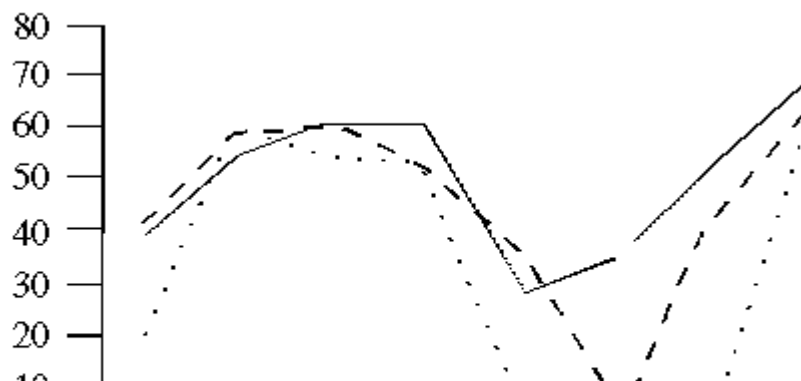
EXHIBIT 6: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - COMPETITIVE CO-OP ADVERTISING

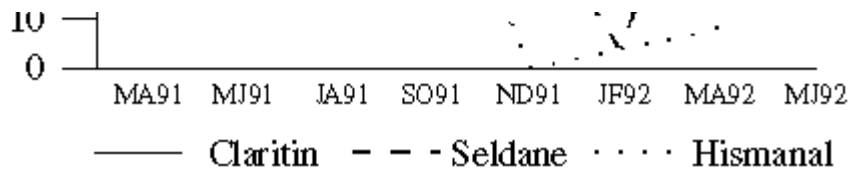


Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos

EXHIBIT 7: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - COMPETITIVE CO-OP ADVERTISING

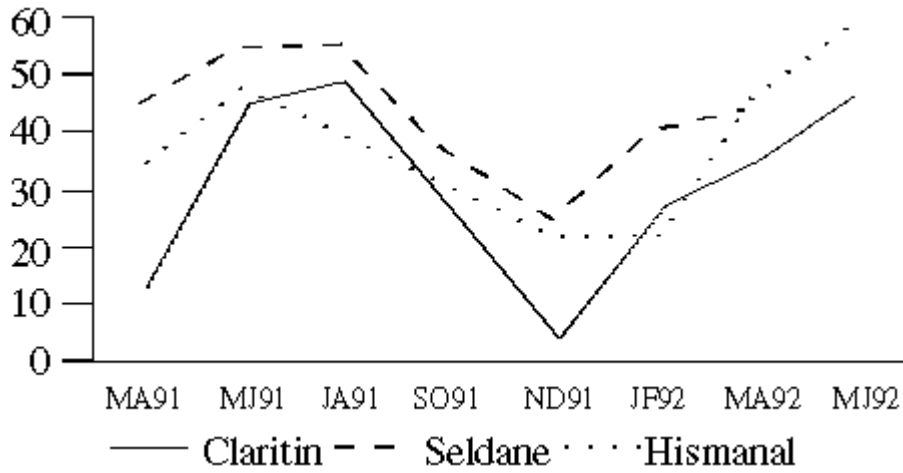
Volume vs. Dollars





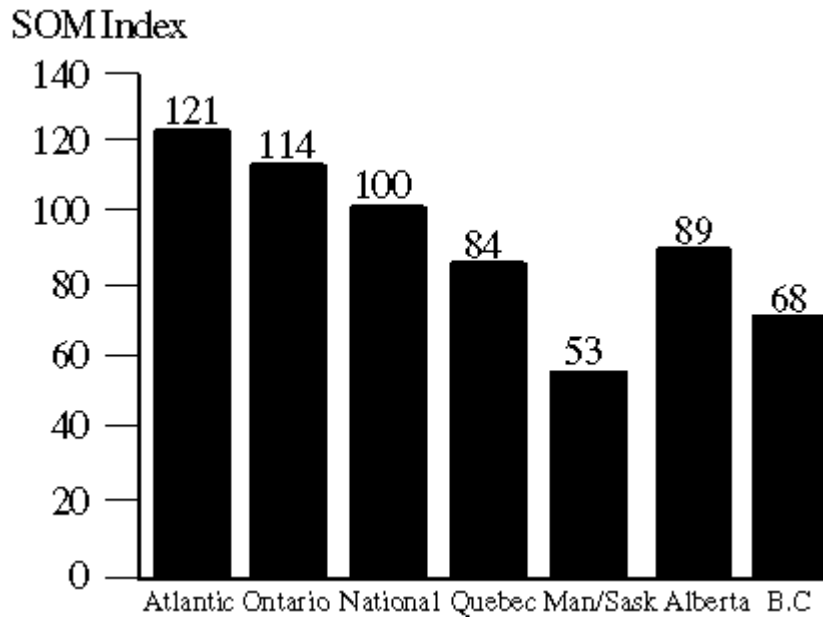
Source: AC Nielsen Rolling M/J 92

EXHIBIT 8: ANTIHISTIMINE MARKET - COMPETITIVE DISPLAY ACTIVITY



Source: AC Nielsen Rolling M/J 92

EXHIBIT 9: CLARITIN - REGIONAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT



Source: AC Nielsen Rolling 12 mos N/D 1991