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Duracell Canada - Recharging The Brand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Duracell's business was softening as customers became less convinced of the brand's superior, long-lasting performance. Even loyal customers were brand switching, choosing either Duracell or Energizer on the basis of price.

In the fall of 1993, Duracell was able to improve the product's long life performance. As a result, there was now an opportunity to leverage this brand improvement in the 1994 advertising. However, the campaign had to be developed in two phases. Initially, until validated test results were available, Duracell could not promote its performance advantage over other alkaline batteries. Later, when test data confirmed the superiority of the brand, then Duracell could make comparison claims against all other disposable batteries, including Energizer.

The overall advertising strategy remained unchanged: build consumer confidence in the brand as the longest lasting disposable battery by showing a Duracell-powered device outlasting devices powered by other batteries. This time however, the message was modified to reflect the various phases of the product's improvement and available claim support.

Phase one involved three commercials; 'Evolution', followed by 'Blaster' and 'Photo Fish'. These announced that new Duracell was the longest lasting Duracell ever made, and then dimensionalized how much longer it lasted. The second phase used the commercial, 'Tortoise' to position the brand as longer lasting than all other disposable batteries, including Energizer.

In execution, the advertising needed to remain consistent with the existing 'Toys' campaign, while ensuring the product news was strongly communicated.

At the close of 1994, results showed all established targets were met or exceeded. Duracell saw renewed business sales growth, in spite of increased competitive pressure. The advertising re-established the brand's franchise. The perception of Duracell as the long lasting battery increased and helped recapture the loyal purchasers. And for consumers in general, the brand continued to be perceived as a likeable and confident brand leader.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

In the early 1990s, the disposable battery market began to fragment along price points. Lower-priced, poorer performing brands began to attract recession-weary consumers. The market leaders, Duracell and Energizer, lost some ground to these price brands. More importantly, however, each saw their consumer franchise eroding, as more and more of their loyal purchasers became brand switchers, picking either Duracell or Energizer on the basis of price.

This behavioural change reflected growing consumer uncertainty as to which of these alkaline brands really did last longer. In practical terms, it was nearly impossible for consumers to assess the long life performance of one brand over the other. And in their advertising, both Duracell and Energizer had historically made the same parity claim, implying that no other battery lasted longer.

In the fall of 1993, Duracell implemented a product change which improved its long life performance. This gave the brand an opportunity to communicate a tangible benefit and leverage this improvement in its 1994 advertising.

A key consideration in developing the advertising strategy was the two phases in which this improvement would occur. Initially, in the absence of validated test results, Duracell could not claim a performance advantage over the other disposable alkalines in the category. Later, the test data would allow a comparison of Duracell's long life versus all other disposable batteries, including Energizer.

With this creative limitation, the following objectives and benchmarks were set:

- Business growth would be measured by factory invoiced sales. This recognized that no single, independent audit system could accurately capture all consumer purchases. Many retailers that sell batteries are not included in traditional audit samples: hardware stores, department stores, warehouse clubs, convenience stores and specialty shops such as photography outlets.
- The defection of Duracell 'loyalists' to the switchers group (those choosing either Duracell or Energizer on price) needed to be reduced by increasing the percentage who believe Duracell outlasts all other disposable batteries, including Energizer. This would be measured through brand tracking.

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

The overall strategy remained unchanged: build consumer confidence in Duracell as the longest lasting disposable battery by showing a Duracell-powered device outlasting devices powered by other batteries.

However, the advertising was expected to register the 'news' of this product improvement without abandoning the familiar appeal and strengths of the popular 'Toys' campaign. Moreover, there would have to be a shift from an implied to a more overt superiority claim, as soon as valid test results could be used to support the claims.

Phase one - 'Evolution', 'Blaster' and 'Photo Fish'

In this phase, although we could not yet claim superiority over other alkaline batteries, there was a compelling strategic platform that allowed comparison between the new Duracell's performance and the existing product. In effect we could say, 'the longest lasting Duracell ever made'.

There were several strengths in this positioning. First, it offered an improvement on Duracell as the 'gold standard' for long lasting disposable batteries and reinforced the brand's superiority. While a majority of consumers felt that Duracell and Energizer lasted about the same length of time, they also recognized that these two brands were, in fact, the longest lasting available. An improvement for either was more likely to propel it into a leadership position, rather than being perceived as addressing a performance weakness.

This message could build off the most important components of the 'Toys' campaign. By comparing earlier versions of the Duracell batteries with the new product, the advertising could continue to show a visual win for the brand - a key element in reinforcing superiority. Meanwhile, it also allowed a continuation of all the creative elements that contribute to the campaign's intrusiveness. The engaging toy characters, the memorable music and the humour of the commercial could continue giving an entertaining pay-off.

The resulting commercial - 'Evolution' - was designed to deliver on these strengths, by having a toy fish powered by new Duracell batteries, leaving other failed toy fish behind as it sprouted legs and began 'walkin' on dry land. Its claims of increased longevity were dramatically and humorously made.

To add breadth to this strategy, two additional executions - 'Blaster' and 'Photo Fish' - showed how much longer Duracell lasted. They introduced benefits that dimensionalized the degree of the improvement, in more hours, and in more flashes per battery. The objective was to make Duracell's improvement as tangible as possible and to further ensure consumer awareness of the brand's improvement, by departing from the familiar demonstration format used in the previous commercials.

Phase two - 'Tortoise'

By the fall of 1994, Duracell was able to support a superior long life performance claim over other disposable batteries, including Energizer. From a strategic standpoint, the task was now simpler. Executionally, however, it posed a new challenge: how to show the competition without damaging the friendly character of the brand. Through years of showing Duracell as the winner, without explicitly naming the competition, the brand had been above the hard-edged mud slinging that often accompanies comparative advertising. Moreover, that kind of aggressive approach was inappropriate in terms of the tone and manner of the "Toys" campaign.

The 'Tortoise' spot neatly avoided this pitfall by humorously updating Aesop's fable, 'The Tortoise and the Hare'. The story allowed the advertising to invite comparison with a turtle and a 'bunny' so the competitive point was wittily made while keeping totally within the brand's character.

RESULTS

All business objectives were met or exceeded.

Renewed business growth

Invoiced sales for Duracell showed solid growth in 1994 compared with 1993 ([Figure 1](#)). On the total business, dollar sales were up four per cent, in line with tonnage growth.

This performance was a considerable achievement for an established brand. With an estimated market share already over 40 per cent, the growth factor was significant.

Moreover, the marketplace became crowded with new 'long life' entries in the fourth quarter of 1994. Pure Energy launched as a rechargeable alkaline in October, with advertising that positioned the brand as lasting up to 25 times longer than the leading disposable alkaline batteries. Both Duracell and Energizer were named in this highly competitive advertising. Energizer also changed its strategy, by electing to support its premium-priced lithium battery in addition to its alkaline cells. The chemical composition of the lithium battery meant it could deliver the longest lasting performance available for specific applications. This allowed Energizer to call it 'the world's longest lasting AA battery'. All other marketing variables remained constant. Wholesale pricing, average retail pricing, the number and value of consumer promotions, and trade spending did not change year over year.

Protecting the franchise

The advertising made a major contribution to protecting Duracell's consumer franchise.

Duracell had historically enjoyed a top of mind (TOM) advantage over Energizer. In 1994, Duracell's advantage increased, despite Energizer's stronger share of voice (SOV) in television spending ([Figures 2, 3 and 4](#)).

Consumers' perception of Duracell as a long lasting battery showed a significant increase over the course of 1994 ([Figure 5](#)). While Duracell's rating slipped in the fourth quarter, probably reflecting the increase in competitive claims, it still had an index of 191, finishing the year significantly ahead of the previous year.

The advertising successfully increased Duracell's consumer franchise ([Figures 6, 7 and 8](#)). As measured in tracking, the proportion of consumers who 'would always buy Duracell', increased on a total adult basis and among the core target group of adults 25 to 44 years of age. Despite its media spending and the strong claim it was able to make in its lithium advertising, Energizer did not register an increase among their loyal purchasers.

Protecting the brand

It was important to ensure that brand credibility and likeability were not tarnished. That goal was also achieved. On a quantitative basis, brand tracking continued to show the high likeability scores that the 'Toys' campaign has always enjoyed ([Figure 9](#)). In qualitative research, consumers played back that 'Tortoise' was a subtle, witty

way of making a superiority claim. It made the point without seeming confrontational or disparaging towards the competition. In the words of one respondent, 'It's the way you'd expect Duracell to say it really does last longer'.

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NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1: DURACELL INVOICED SALES - TOTAL BUSINESS

Index - 1993 Duracell = 100

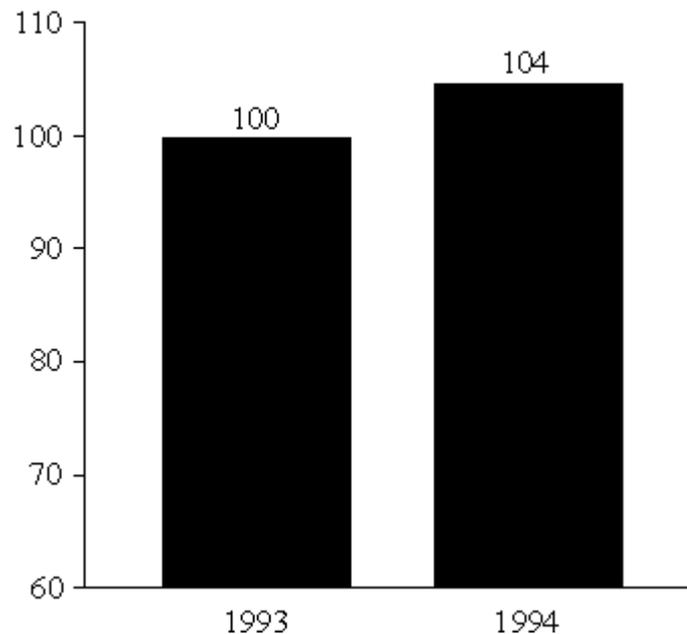


FIGURE 2: DURACELL TOP OF MIND AWARENESS

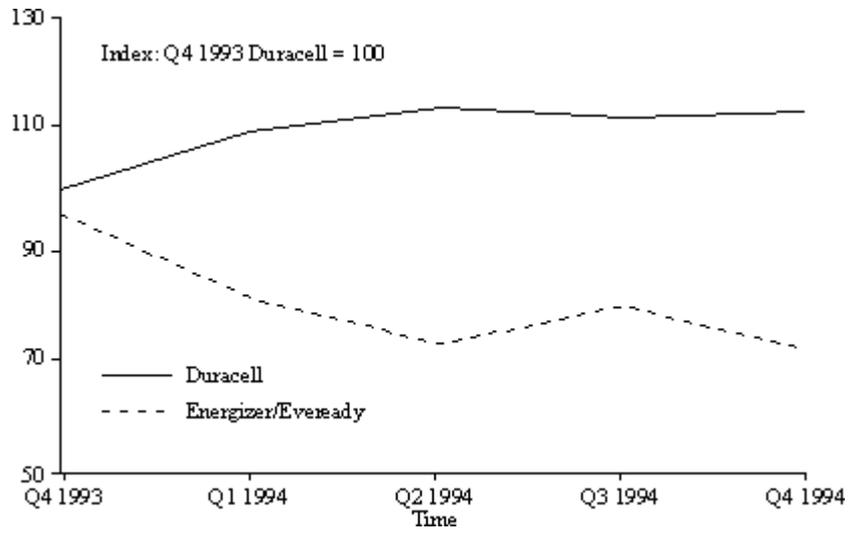
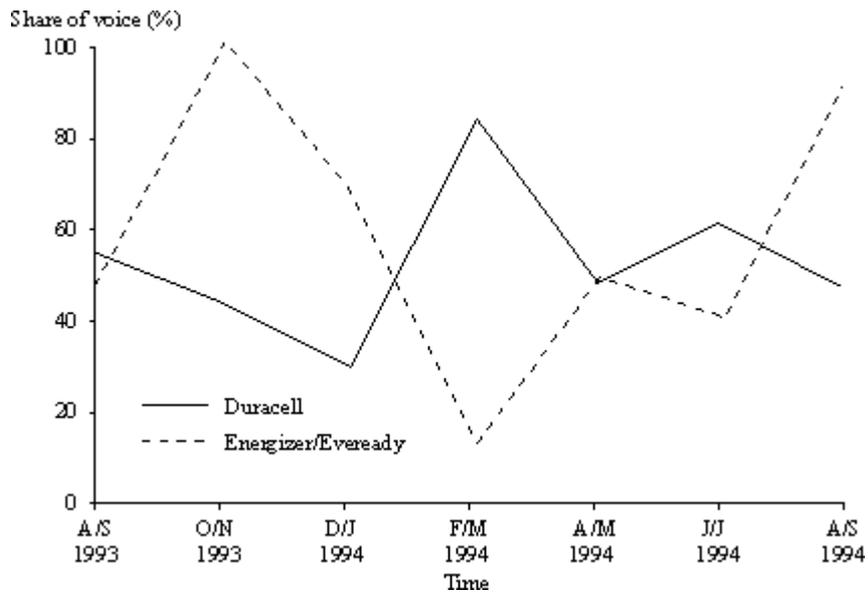
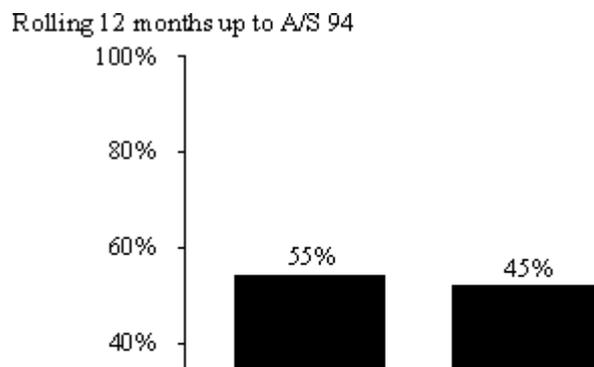


FIGURE 3: ADVERTISING SPENDING SHARE OF VOICE



Source: ACN

FIGURE 4: ADVERTISING SPENDING SHARE OF VOICE



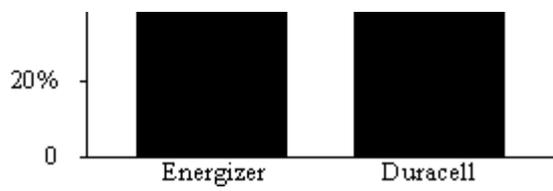


FIGURE 5: DURACELL LONG LASTING

Q: How much do you agree that Duracell is long lasting? Energizer? (Brands are rotated)

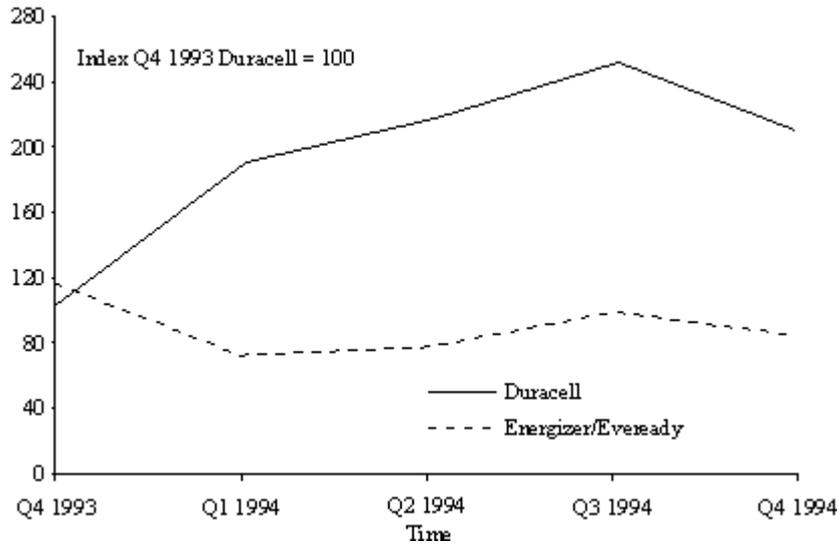


FIGURE 6: PURCHASE LOYALTY - ALL ADULTS

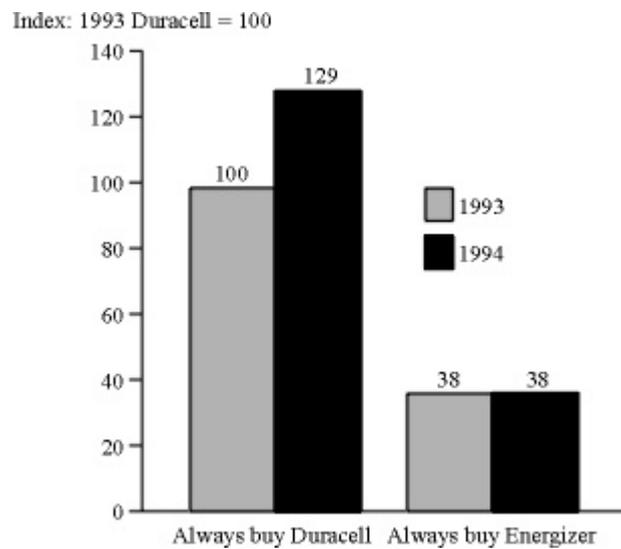


FIGURE 7: PURCHASE LOYALTY - ADULTS 25-34

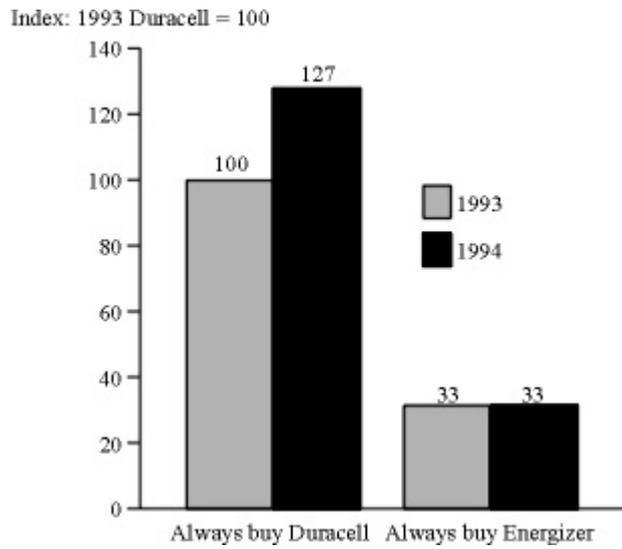


FIGURE 8: PURCHASE LOYALTY - ADULTS 35-44

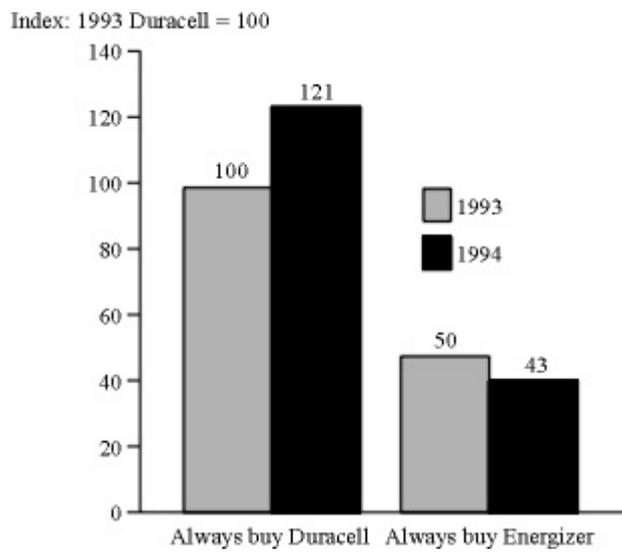


FIGURE 9: ADVERTISING LIKEABILITY

