

SANPRO MARKET

Exclusive article for Newmark Chemist Newslines

Recent statistical research has shown that while the British female population remains relatively static, the age profile of sanitary product (sanpro) users is shifting. Women are starting their periods earlier and reaching menopause later. This, combined with a higher concern for personal hygiene means that consumers remain in the sanpro market for longer.

Robinson Healthcare, with a number of firsts in the sanitary protection market to their credit, are looking forward to continued success through the 1990's. Last year, the company, one of the first manufacturers of external sanitary protection, celebrated their 150th Anniversary, a success built upon their established philosophy of "Care comes First".

According to Robinson, the volume of the sanpro market currently stands at 155 million units, representing a retail volume of 148.2 million. Independent chemists, including Boots account for 54.049 million units (35.2,%) with independent chemists alone accounting for 25.736 million units (15.7,%) (see table 1 for full breakdown of sales).

However, the company observe that chemists don't appear to be maximising their full potential in response to new emerging market sectors. Neither are they adequately displaying new ranges to meet the customers' requirements or taking fully into account the challenges posed by grocers, including supermarkets (grocers holding 49% of retail sales), who themselves maximise on the benefits of consumer advertising (including television). The improvements in absorption, comfort, quality and choice of product offered to the consumer have been significant factors in the dramatic growth of the sanpro market over the last few years. No longer do women have to suppress their normal daily routines or sporting activities due to menstruation.

More discretion is also offered by the current range of products, firstly with press-on towels replacing loops, followed by slimmer towels and shaped products.

In a market where quality and reliability are all important, Robinson's CAMEO range of sanitary towels has an established niche in the market. This comprehensive range includes external products to meet most needs.

Specially designed for comfort and protection, Cameo Press-On Towels are available in Mini, Regular, Super and Maxi absorbencies. Regular and Super Looped Towels, still popular with many women, are also available.

Although brand loyalty continues to remain high, the new generation of products fitting in with the current 80's/90's lifestyle approach has increasingly fragmented the sanpro market.

Slim and shaped towels account for the major share of sales to girls and younger women, with press-on and looped towels preferred by older women. Cameo Looped Towels from Robinson are unique in being the only looped towel on the market made with cotton wool.

With a 'wardrobe' approach to product usage growing steadily, the company predicts that the 1990's will see a continuing upward trend in the number of women using more than one method of sanitary protection on a regular basis.

Over 30 per cent of women now use both full-size towels and tampons; 12 per cent use fullsize towels with a slim towel, pant liner or mini pad and approximately 20 per cent use three methods, full-size towels combined with slim towels, pant liners and tampons, at different stages during the month. However, with the increase in use of protection throughout the month, Robinson predicts the market will continue to slowly expand, external towels representing approximately 55% of consumer purchases.

In a sector-by-sector breakdown, Robinson makes the following observances in relation to usage:

Tampons - absorbencies to match menstrual flow patterns

Press-on towels - own label products a rising influence

Slim towels - discretion offered both in and out of use

Pantliners - daily hygiene

Shaped - now a sector in its own right

Looped - sales declining although more consideration being given to usage as post-natal or incontinent towel

The newly emerging purchasing pattern coupled with continuing competition and heavy support advertising will maintain a buoyant market and ensure growth by value until 1992.

Manufacturers will encourage more regular changing of the product throughout the day for increased personal hygiene both in and outside the menstrual period.

As members of the Association of Sanitary Protection Manufacturers (ASPM), Robinson Healthcare are also committed to playing a positive role in safeguarding the environment. As a first step towards this, Robinson are looking to developing fluff pulp products bleached with compounds which do not contain chlorine, and with this in mind are planning a number of changes to their range.

Written for Newmark Chemist Newslines by Edward Moss, Fine PR on behalf of Robinson Healthcare.