CASE STUDY

DOWNY WRINKLE RELEASER PLUS

Prepared by: Steven Ebert

Contributed Research and Strategy Completed By:
Kyle Calkins | Christian Clay | Gregory Donnelly | Steven Ebert | William Jenkins
BACKGROUND
Downy is a brand name fabric softener sold within the United States. A subsidiary brand of Proctor & Gamble, Downy sells a variety of ancillary clothing care products including liquid softener, dryer sheets, scent additives and wrinkle releaser. Downy was introduced in a test-market in 1960, with mass market release in 1961. Downy products are sold internationally in Asia and Latin America, as well as in the UK & Ireland under the brand name Lenor. While rebranding efforts for Lenor were considered briefly, these plans were halted in 2002.

CATEGORY
Downy falls within the “fabric care” category, a multi-billion dollar segment that includes detergents, laundry additives and laundry enhancers. This, combined with the Home Care and Personal Power categories accounted for 32% of P&G’s 2013-14 fiscal year sales, as well as 26% of its earnings. P&G owns roughly 20% of these combined markets. P&G has seen a 1% increase in sales within this category year over year since 2012.

Several subsidiary brands compete within P&G’s holdings: direct competitors to Downy include Febreeze, Gain and Tide, all of which account for billions of dollars in sales. In addition to brands within P&G, other major competitors include Wisk, Cheer and Gain, as well as dozens of private label and small retail brands in the space.

PRODUCT
Downy’s specific offerings - softener, wrinkle releaser and scent additives - are all ancillary to a traditional laundry routine. It’s most recent product introduction, Downy Unscentables, is an in-wash scent booster that promises a lasting scent that won’t “die in your closet.”

Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus is the only major label within the US that sells wrinkle releaser. While DIY and craft websites promote recipes for homemade wrinkle releaser, there are no other major competitors. Wrinkle Releaser is marketed as an alternative to ironing, be it as an on-the-go travel item or in conjunction with a normal routine. In addition to removing wrinkles, DWRP has a scent additive to give clothing additional freshness.

POSITIONING
Downy’s primary marketing focus has been to give “added freshness” to laundry. Downy’s products are not targeted towards casual users: they are for individuals who care deeply about laundry and are willing to spend a significant portion of time on the activity. For those willing to take the extra step, Downy can provide a better “laundry experience” by making the clothes more comfortable, be it in texture, smell or appearance.

Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus has traditionally been positioned towards the popular “busy mom” segment. Marketing has been geared towards “#Wondermoms,” busy women whose use of Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus demonstrates their above and beyond care for their children. Additionally, Downy has attempted to capitalize on segment success by promoting tips and tricks from DWRP users, primarily other laundry and homecare tasks (removing wrinkles from curtains, un-creasing tablecloths, and freshening up blankets and pillows.)

CASE STUDY: DOWNY WRINKLE RELEASER PLUS
BUSINESS CASE
While Downy has seen success with this product, its marketing efforts have been stagnated by a narrow category focus. Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus has been relegated to the back burner; while other products are celebrated with detailed product demonstrations, graphics, and interactive web elements, DWRP is a footnote at best, inaccessible from primary navigation menus with minimal promotion or production quality.

Additionally, Downy’s segmentation is growingly trite; the “mom” category, though popular, is congested and inundated with media messages from every existing fabric care brand. How can Downy expand their marketing message and reach segments outside of the traditional common denominators within the category? What truth about the Downy brand can be celebrated that will ring true to both casual and committed laundry users? What other segments might still be reached?

RESEARCH
We conducted a qualitative study on laundry behaviors, attitudes and perceptions. We spoke to 154 individuals ranging in age from 18-64. Through a series of multiple choice, likert, rank order and free response questions, we sought to uncover common habits within laundry users, as well as motivators and factors contributing to these habits. Respondents were polled on a variety of topics including location, frequency and emotional drivers, as well as several questions regarding personal style, emotional response to laundry completion and perceptions of frequency compared to peers.

SEGMENTATION
We segmented our population based on four criteria:
- Usage: the location at which laundry was primarily completed.
- Frequency: how often a user completed a load of laundry.
- Perception: how often a user felt they completed laundry compared to their peers.
- Style: how users identified their personal style.

Using the above criteria, we unearthed five segments, three traditional and two non-traditional.

1. STUDENTS
Students accounted for roughly 52% of our survey respondency. Demographically, respondents represented both sexes equally, were between the ages of 18 and 24, and had no viable income source. Commonalities within the segment included 80% of respondents completing their laundry at their residence, 90% completing a load of laundry at least bi-weekly, 49% perceiving laundry completion as equal to that of a peer, and a low incidence (18%) of completing laundry for others.

2. MODEST MOMS
This category is predominantly female, age 45-64 with an income of 80k - 140k. 92% of this category completes laundry at their residence with 74% doing a load of laundry once a week.
or more and 60% doing laundry for others. Most interestingly, while this segment did laundry the most frequently, 81% perceived that they did laundry less than or equal to their peers.

3. PROUD PROFESSIONALS
Predominantly male, 45-64 years of age with an income of 80k - 140k. 100% of respondents primary do laundry at home, 67% at least weekly. 75% perceive they do laundry more than their peers and 100% acknowledged doing laundry for others.

4. THE LAUNDRY ZOMBIE
The Laundry Zombie segment is comprised of individuals who fall outside of normal segmentation parameters. No conclusion or demographic profile could be garnered based on age, race or income; rather, this segment is comprised of common behavior and attitudinal factors.

Generally, Laundry Zombies cross economical, age, geographic and racial divisions. Commonalities are viewed within lifestyle constraints: these individuals have an abject relationship with laundry and often go to great lengths to avoid the chore. Many are able to go weeks at a time without doing laundry- 31% go four weeks or more. Motivators for ultimate action vary. 90% of zombies do laundry at home. While 30% do laundry for others, 100% of respondents in this segment believe they do laundry less than their peers. This is an important distinction: it is the only segment where both perception and action align. Additionally, while income is independent of segmentation, Zombies do not, on average, have the income required to hire a laundry service.

By dividing the segment into two smaller sub-segments, we were able to further explore common behaviors, as well as parse out demographic data.

A. THE APATHETIC- is generally male. They complete laundry bi-weekly. These individuals do not have a large wardrobe, but re-wear outfits often to avoid having to do laundry. Their ultimate motivator to begin the laundry process is running out of an essential: boxers, socks, etc. Once they have completed their laundry, they feel organized and responsible.

B. THE HOARDER- is generally female. She does laundry about half as frequently - on average, once a month - as their male counterpart. They rarely re-wear outfits; this is because their wardrobe is significantly larger than the apathetic’s wardrobe. They have so many clothing options, they need not repeat. This also means that when they do laundry they have significantly more items to wash. Their primary motivator is the need for a specific outfit. When they have finished laundry, they feel accomplished and relieved.

OBJECTIVE
Integrate Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus, an underutilized product within the Downy brand, into the lives of an unreached segment. Of the five aforementioned segments, we determined that Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus could most seamlessly integrate with Laundry Zombies. While these individuals are the most removed from the laundry process, their specific and
highly analogous actions (or lack thereof) and inherent attitudinal objection towards laundry, allows for Downy to position itself as a means by which Zombies can delay the chore. Downy can allow Laundry Zombies to remove wrinkles and mask potential odors of their already worn clothes so that they need not wash them right away. By acknowledging the lifestyle parameters that Laundry Zombies live within, Downy can assert itself as a staple in the day-to-day lives of the target.

STRATEGY
Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus has traditionally aimed to assert itself as an alternative to ironing, and to be used in conjunction with a traditional laundry routine. We wanted to celebrate the Zombie’s current behavior - avoiding laundry at all costs. Instead of suggesting DWRP as a functional equivalent to ironing, we positioned the product as a “clothes enlivener” - a product that brings old clothes back to life. Using the positioning idea “One More Day,” we empowered the procrastinator and delivered a message that flew in the face of the messages Zombies consistently heard: procrastination is bad, lazy, etc. By accepting the Zombie for who they are and how they act, Downy can integrate itself into the Laundry Zombie’s life and promise the consumer another opportunity to wear the clothes they otherwise would not have worn again.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS
In delivering this strategy to the creative team, we recommended they focus on three key considerations.

1. Education: Most individuals we spoke to were not aware that a product like Downy Wrinkle Releaser Plus existed. In addition to selling the functional benefits of the product, it is equally important to inform the audience of DWRP’s existence.

2. A Focus on the Solution: The common denominator within the target segment is a recognition that laundry is the enemy. Messaging need not waste time expressing these sentiments; instead, all creative should be focused on the solution that Downy Wrinkle Release Plus provides.

3. Instant Gratification is the Hero: The target’s lives are put on hold by laundry. Downy Wrinkle Release Plus provides what they so desperately desire: instant gratification. Instead of having to postpone their social outing 45 minutes to do a load of laundry, the target needs only 45 seconds. Spray, pull, release.
This case study was produced following the completion of a segmentation study and creative briefing assignment at the VCU Brandcenter. The information is not intended to serve as an endorsement of primary research, nor is it a representation of market ready concepts. This document, in full or part, may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, used in a spreadsheet, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without the expressed written permission by the author.