

## KTP Associates Conference

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[www.brighton.ac.uk/ktp/ktp-conference.htm](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/ktp/ktp-conference.htm)

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### *Developing a Product for the Feminine Hygiene Sector*

#### **Abstract**

In recent years there has been increased awareness of waste issues in the UK. Government funded organisations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Program) set up in 2000, operate in the UK to raise awareness and have set up training programmes like Rethink Waste<sup>1</sup> to help companies reduce waste and improve resource efficiency.

The issue of waste is also very much in the public's eye. Many well-known brands such as Kenco<sup>2</sup> and Innocent<sup>3</sup> have taken measures to reduce the impact their products have on the environmental damage associated with landfill waste<sup>4</sup>. Because of this, many people are rethinking the products they buy and are purchasing products, which have better implications for the environment<sup>5</sup>. One such user market that contributes over 200,000 tonnes<sup>6</sup> of waste per year in the UK is the feminine hygiene sector. This market produces huge quantities of disposable products from intimate feminine wipes to tampons and sanitary towels. All of the end-of-life waste of these products goes to landfill, or if flushed down the toilet will end up blocking sewers and littering beaches<sup>7</sup>.

The menstrual cup, a reusable device that collects rather than absorbs menstrual blood has helped many women to change their habits, stopping over 700 million<sup>8</sup> disposable tampons going to landfill or sea littering. However, one of the existing problems with the menstrual cup for some women is that it is an internally worn device, which some women cannot use for reasons such as gynaecological conditions, vaginal discomfort or religious/cultural beliefs. With no other externally worn product on the market offering a similarly innovative solution to the Mooncup, there is an opportunity to develop a product for these women.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wrap.org.uk/business/sme/rethink\\_waste/more\\_about\\_the.html](http://www.wrap.org.uk/business/sme/rethink_waste/more_about_the.html)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kenco.co.uk/kenco2/page?siteid=kenco2-prd&locale=uken1&PageRef=623>. Eco-Refill bag uses 97% less packaging than glass jars.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/ethics/sustainable\\_packaging/PCR\\_bottle/](http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/ethics/sustainable_packaging/PCR_bottle/). Produce 100% recycled bottles and use 20% less material in their bottles than previously.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gogreenerscotland.org/35.html>. States that, "our waste rots away in landfill sites [and] releases methane gas. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, methane is about 21 times more powerful than CO<sub>2</sub> at trapping heat from the Sun in Earth's atmosphere (the cause of global warming).

<sup>5</sup> <http://press.kelkoo.co.uk/uk-consumers-pay-44-more-for-green-retail-products.html>. States that Green retail sales in the UK have risen by 451% since 2000, to a total of £8.04bn, and are set to rise to £17.1bn by 2015.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.knowaste.com/facts\\_on\\_nappy\\_waste.php](http://www.knowaste.com/facts_on_nappy_waste.php)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mcsuk.org/downloads/pollution/beachwatch/Beachwatch%20Big%20Weekend%202009%20-%20methods%20and%20full%20results.pdf>. In a recent Beach Watch report it was estimated that 5.4% of waste found on beaches in the UK is Sewage Related Debris, which includes feminine hygiene products, condoms, nappies and cotton buds.

<sup>8</sup> Data from <http://www.mooncup.co.uk/about.html>. Figure based on woman using 22 tampons per month with a woman having 12 periods a year, and the accumulation of not using these tampons during her menstruating lifetime

This paper explores the product development process of this alternative product. It will discuss how the first stage of the process, Concept Formulation, plays an important role in the development of a new product. It will also cover the following topics;

- the market research involved in such a vast, varied and generally unknown market
- the reluctance of many women to discuss a subject which affects them on a monthly basis
- the materials and innovations being made in similar markets such as nappies and incontinence pads
- issues related with developing a reusable product that will be comfortable, convenient, durable, cost effective and environmentally superior over disposable products, in terms of waste and energy reduction.

Along with developing an alternative product to the menstrual cup, building a New Product Development (NPD) process for the company is an important aspect of the KTP project. This NPD structured process will allow Mooncup to expand their product range and grow successfully in a sustainable and thoroughly considered way in the future. Throughout the paper, the development of the NPD Process for Mooncup will be considered, as it is being built upon as the KTP project progresses.

The paper will conclude with the completed outcomes of the concept formulation stage of the NPD process. The main outcome being the decision on what the type of product will be designed over the remainder of the KTP project.